

## Chapter 12

# The New Horizon of Public Relations: Community Management

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### ABSTRACT

*Consumers pay attention to other consumers' comments, advice, and interactions during the purchase decision process. Besides having a strong impact on consumers' brand decisions, these user-driven contents have an important effect on brand's online reputation, which is very important area for consumers to follow the information about the brand. Therefore, some of the public relations practices will be forced to change by this new communication eco-system. The increasing power of consumer-driven content could lead to the evolution of traditional public relations and marketing communication. Interaction and participation would be the main concepts in the coming future of public relations. Therefore, this chapter aims to explain the effect of consumers' interactions on brand's social media accounts that would lead to their brand selection decisions.*

### INTRODUCTION

The reputation is described as the management of communications between an organization and its target public groups (Hunt and Grunig 1984) represents the quality of an organization' communication skills with each member in its communication environment. The reputation indicates how effective or ineffective the communication approach of organization is on its publics' perception. In the early stage of the discussion about the reputation, the corporate managements adopted the strategic communication approaches based on achieving the main business objectives of an organization. The public's expectations were taken into consideration in the second step. As Grunig (2009) stated in his study titled Excellence Theory in Public Relations, these approaches started the discussion of one-way symmetrical communication management, which might be disadvantageous from in terms of the reputation (pp.92). In parallel with these discussions, the change in communication technology and its impact on the social

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-9697-4.ch012

behavior and collective perception made the perceived reputation a fundamental effort in the practical communication area (Grunig and Hunt, 2002).

The constantly developing communication technologies brought new aspects in discussions on the survival in newborn communication fields accepted by the publics as a determinant factor in creating the beliefs and thoughts by reconsidering the sum of a corporate's images on cyberspace. Within this scope, this chapter fundamentally discusses the issues that are crucial for establishing an efficient and sustainable reputation in the digital communication environment. Doorley and Garcia (2007) emphasized, a communication specialist should be conscious of the historical developments, the effects of the changing circumstances, and the process of society's adaptation to these changes, as well as following the new implications consisting of exchanging the communication tools with the publics (p.128). The first reason of that is the importance of having knowledge about the developments regarding the social behavior in order to integrate the corporate communication strategies into the new dynamics of communication environment (Bıçakçı and Genel 2016). Raub and Wessie (1990) highlighted the correlation between the corporate social behavior and the established perception from the aspect of publics (pp.628-629). From this point of view, grasping the extent of corporate reputation and the components constituting the reputation is an important aspect of the professional communication and the first part of this chapter aims to answer the questions and to provide the expected information about the scope of corporate reputation, as well as presenting a wider conceptual framework.

In the second part of chapter, the evolution of the Web technologies and the effects on audience's perception and behavior in social meaning were discussed. The aim of the second part is to understand the relationship between the development of communication technologies and the changes in audience's attitude. In order to carry out the public relations projects on the Web, it is important to understand the cause-and-effect process of the technologies and the reflections on the social, cultural and political areas. The social media playing an important role in the lives of millions is a new "multimedia" platform that the corporate communication departments should absolutely use in an effective way. Especially the communication in social networks must be planned in accordance with the company's long-term corporate communication strategy. Before planning, where the company or brand stands in social networks, should be carefully examined in order to understand the recall of brand/corporation. Therefore, the companies should cooperate with the communication experts, who can look at the communication from the corporate perspective, and have the knowledge about the corporate communication.

In the final section of this chapter, the research will discuss a Turkish case study in order to reflect the perceived reputation of a Turkish organization and to explain the attitude of Turkish publics through the reflections on the social media regarding the corporate reputation. This chapter is a resource to examine the reflections and effects of social media cluster on corporate communications and implications of corporate reputation.

## **BACKGROUND**

The significant role of reputation determines the company's asset and life cycle both at the market and country level. In academic researches, the importance of reputation was being studied from various aspects (Kanto et al. 2016). According to Chong (2012), the reputation influences the value of the company's equity, ability of attracting and retaining talent, and fundamental license to operate (p.1). Economists think that the reputation is a source of information about company's behavior in specific situations

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