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The Use of Corporate Websites as Dialogic Public Relations Tools by Ghana's Public and Private Institutions

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Abstract: Motivated by the non-visibility of literature about African countries, this work examines corporate websites as dialogic online public relations tools in Ghana. The explorative study used six case studies, three apiece from private and public organizations. Thirty respondents from these organizations debated the subject in focus group discussions and interviews. The transcripts show that, while public institutions use their websites to inform, educate, train, and develop positive relationships with their publics, profit-oriented organizations extend the usage to running advertisements to gain more profits. The findings also show that an organization's ethical systems can determine a website's content in dialogic communication. Besides ensuring regular updates and efficient feedback systems, we recommend that organizations have proactive public relations work ethics that make website content address visitors' issues without delay. Organizations can also incorporate video-on-demand and conferencing solutions to improve their dialogue and grow their relationship with the audience.

Keywords: Corporate websites, public relations, dialogic communication, corporate management, Ghana.

Introduction

Media technologies usage by private and public institutions for dialogic purposes, sustainability management, and corporate social responsibilities is visible globally (Van den Bulck & Moe, 2018). One area of note is relationship improvement between the citizens and these institutions (Karakiza, 2015; Wong & Dobson, 2019; Bevilacqua et al., 2020). On the flip side is the growing concern over privacy infringement, hate speech, data management issues, and other vices associated with these technologies (Khan, Swar & Lee 2014; Kamarulzaman, Lee & Siow, 2020).

In Africa, new media technologies are more common in private sector organizations than in public. Websites' use as public relations (PR) tools is attracting both sides' attention (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007; Gomez & Chalmeta, 2011). However, public institutions with fewer environmental attributes and weaker work ethics are noticeably less efficient in managing these tools. Such a situation can affect professional communication practices (Liu, Horsley & Abbey, 2010, p. 191), including public relations.

Literature (Osei-Kojo, 2016; Adu, Buabeng, Asamoah & Damoah, 2020; Quaye & Sneiders, 2020) indicates that Ghana's government is committed to improving public

service delivery through public relations practice via the use of digital technologies. Tagoe (2012) reveals that weak information communication technology (ICT) and other issues adversely affect the adoption of new technologies. On the other hand, Quaye & Sneiders (2020) indicate that some management staff's low appreciation of new technologies contributes to the private and public sector's low adoption rate. This work examines the part that Ghana's PR practitioners play in this regard.

Ghana is a West African state with 28 million people, 10 million of whom have access to the internet (Kemp, 2018). The continuous growth in internet usage in the country presents fresh opportunities in new media technologies in organizations. One such opportunity is using corporate websites as a public relations tool. They serve as interactive platforms for disseminating information and building relationships between the organization and its publics (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007; Ikpefan et al., 2019). How the tool usage plays out in Ghana's private and public sector organizations is the concern of this work. Social media constitutes the main focus of new media technologies in Ghana, with educational and financial institutions as the chief players (Andoh-Quainoo & Annor-Antwi, 2015, p. 38). This study conducted a comparative investigation into how selected

private and public institutions in Ghana used their corporate websites as dialogic communication tools and the ethical ramification of this usage.

Research Questions

To address the research objectives set for the study, the researchers sought to address the following questions at the end of the study.

1. What is the dialogic communication potential of corporate websites in Ghana?
2. How are corporate websites being used by public relations practitioners in the selected private and public organizations in Ghana?
3. What is the influence of organization ethics on corporate websites as public relations tools for online dialogic communications?

This study is significant because it deals with websites. This corporate communication tool is not significantly visible in literature in Africa compared to social media platforms, electronic mails, and short messaging, amongst others. This study zeroes in on the corporate website's use in managing corporate reputation and creating a mutually beneficial relationship with the external public through dialogic communication. The findings create a trajectory that could enable interested researchers to investigate Ghana and the entire African continent.

Literature Review

Corporate Website and Dialogic Communication

Websites can promote dialogic communication between an organization and its publics (Vorvoreanu, 2008, p. 223). The use of the world wide web has increased exponentially in the past decades. Esrock and Leichty (2000, p. 327) also note that the internet has become one of the main attractions for media users and communication professionals in public relations and marketing. In this respect, the PR strategists are concerned about using websites in engaging with stakeholders (Jiang & Wei, 2013; Akwari, 2017; Amodu et al., 2019; Adesina et al., 2019). Practitioners have realized the power that websites hold in building and maintaining relationships. Esrock and Liechty (2000, p. 328) support this assertion, adding that corporate websites can "revolutionize and reform the interaction between organizations and their publics."

According to Hill and White (2000, p. 46), websites help transmit information to the media and the right publics. They also present an organization with the opportunity to demonstrate organizational innovativeness to carve out a competitive edge. Scholars also

argue that corporate websites play a significant role in building and maintaining relationships with the essential publics (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Jo, 2005; Yartey et al., 2021; Okorie, Omojola & Loto, 2018; Folayan et al., 2018). Websites promote positive perceptions of organizations who invest in them (White & Raman, 2000; Nielson & Norman, 2000). Vorvoreanu (2008, p. 225) buttresses this point, stating that websites are promoters of loyalty in public relations practice that translate to the business's survival and success (Goldie, 2003).

Vorvoreanu (2008) and Akwari (2017) link websites with an organizational reputation when updated regularly with the relevant items. They add that with regular updates, websites could influence the perception a public has of an organization that bothers corporate credibility and goodwill.

Public relations has several definitions. Khodarahmi (2009) looks at it from the strategic management standpoint, while the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA, 2012) defines it as a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between a corporation and its publics. Seitel (2011) and Katheery et al. (2016) see it as an all-inclusive activity that gravitates public support toward an organization. However, the tendency exists to define public relations generally as a planned and coordinated activity to manage the communication between an organization and its publics. The management's purpose is to ensure a positive reputation for the organization in a way acceptable to its audience.

The publics of an organization constitute a crucial factor in public relations strategy. An organization's publics could make or unmake an organization's reputation (Okafor & Nwatu, 2018). "Publics" and "stakeholders" of an organization have been used interchangeably. Grunig (2013) and Itanyi and Ukpere (2014) argue that the two concepts can be used to segment the general population in which an organization operates into various forms of categories; as this would enable communication practitioners to identify publics strategically and consequently plan and evaluate the relevant public relations programs.

Ofori (2019) asserts that the public is a group of people bound together by a common purpose. A public can be passive or active in communicating with the organization (Itanyi & Ukpere, 2014). Heath, 2005 categorizes a public into three – target, intervening and influential while both Smith (2005) and Motion, Heath and Leitch (2015) provide a broad segmentation involving four public groups. Figure 1 integrates the various description of the public within the context of public relations.

Smith's (2005) groupings include Customers, Producers, Enablers, and

Limiters while other authors have grouped them into Supporters, Environmentalists, Conservatives, and Opponents. These segmentations are an extension of Heath (2005).

A closer study of the diagram revealed a succinct description of the four types of publics. Using a hypothetical private or public institution involved in the construction of a dual-carriage road in Cape Coast, four essential are visible. They are discussed and illustrated below.
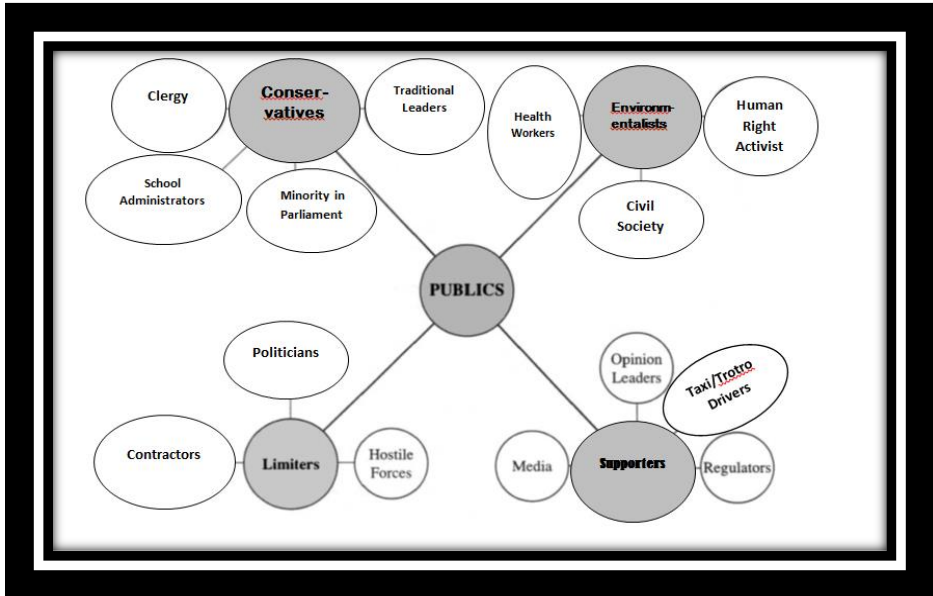

Figure 1: Categories of Publics

The first comprises the lovers of the initiative (the *supporters*). Second, are those who view the project from its impact on wildlife or the environment (*the environmentalists*). The third involves the individuals who argue that a road exists in the location already and there is no need for new construction. The fourth are the *conservatives* who do not favor the project and want it scrapped. For mutually beneficial relationships and enhanced reputation, the public relations strategists must address the four public components' standpoints to achieve the project's desired success. The strategy would involve developing effective dialogue and result-oriented dialogic communication systems in interacting with these publics.

Concepts of Dialogue and Dialogic Communication

Dialogue is a communicative forum for recognizing and acting on the second person's perspectives for mutually beneficial relationships. Taylor and Kent (2014) posit that dialogue is a vital instrument to the public relations profession because it mitigates power relationships, values individual dignity and self-worth to get participants involved in decision-making. Discussed below are the views on dialogue and how they relate to public relations.

Dialogue as recognition of another person

This view involves an effort of one person to recognize the value of the other person. Johannesen's (1971) work on dialogue works on reciprocity, mutuality, involvement, and openness. Kent and Taylor (1998, p. 324) assert that "For a dialogic relationship to exist, parties must view communicating with each other as the goal of a relationship." Hence, communication should not emerge as a means to an end. The communication process is an end in itself.

Dialogue defined based on the original language

Akwari (2017) indicates that
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dialogue has its roots in the Greek language, with "dia" indicating "through" and "logos," while Bohm (2013) adds that dialogue facilitates understanding of each other right from the time the communication starts. This understanding implies that dialogue helps people to understand each other's perspectives and be well appropriately informed.

Dialogue as a collaborative effort

Kent and Taylor (2011) indicate that dialogue is more of a "communicative orientation" than a process or a list of rules that one must obey. Similarly, Penman and Turnbull (2012) also assert that dialogue is an authentic interaction created through various processes such as openness to change, collaboration, and propinquity. This view means both the organization and its publics welcome different perspectives. They are willing to collaborate to understand each other's perspectives. In effect, public relations professionals should not undermine courtesy, respect, honesty, and recognition of their target audiences to the background irrespective of how offensive or appalling their attitude may appear. All interactions with these audiences must be conducted with respect
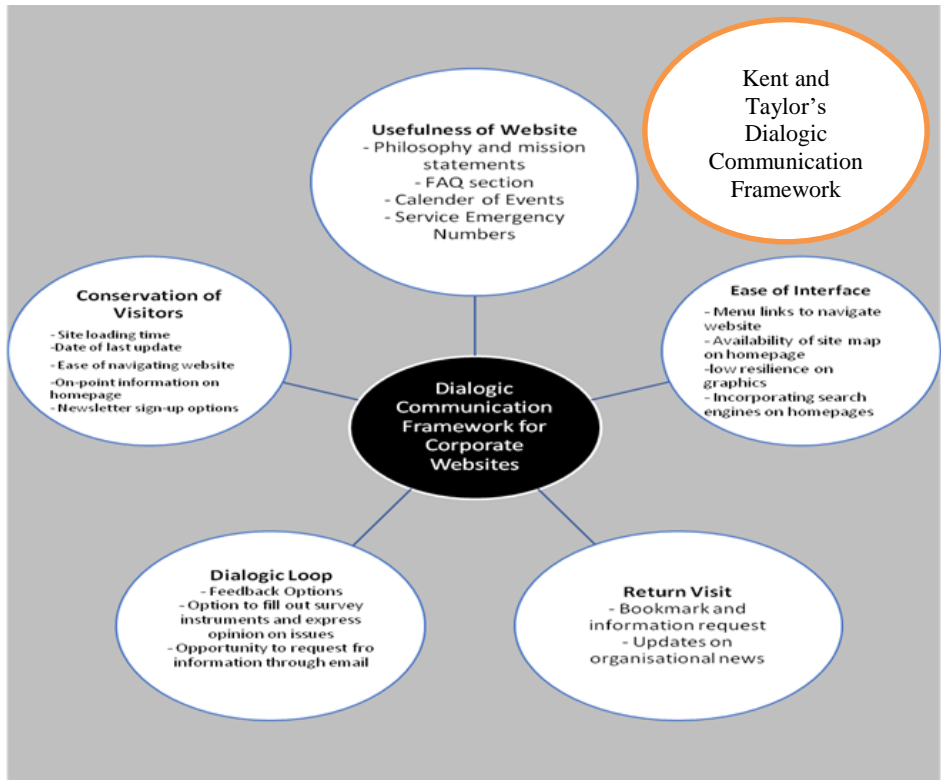
Figure 2 Adopted from Kent & Taylor's framework for Dialogic Communication

Scholars and experts playing in the public relations field have formulated a theoretical framework upon which viable dialogic communication via a corporate website can be achieved. This study adopted Kent and Taylor's (1998, 2002, 2014) classical conceptual framework for online dialogic communication. The framework was adopted because, unlike most of the frameworks on dialogic communication, it has been tested empirically and gained wide acceptance (Adogla, 2018).

The theory states that using the corporate website as a dialogic online public relations tool must conform to five principles to ensure effective communication for facilitating mutually beneficial relationships and reputation enhancement. These principles are the website's usefulness, dialogic loop, conservation of visitors, ease of interface, and return visits. Depicted in Figure 2 are the five principles and their relevance to public relations practice. A closer examination of the dialogic communication framework reveals that public relations

professionals in various organizations must integrate the five principles into a corporate website.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

Computer-mediated communication is the theoretical underpinning of communication via technologies and therefore deserves a discussion (Pang, Shin, Lew & Walther, 2018: Lee, 2020). Basing their study on two theoretical frameworks for CMC – the Social Information Processing Theory and Hyper Personal Model, Pang et al. (2018) provide insight into dialogic strategies institutions adopt to enhance their online communication with the public, including stakeholders.

The authors propose two-way (dialogic) strategies to facilitate the successful CMC application to the public relations role. The three principles developed by them are relevant to public relations roles and corporate websites, notwithstanding their social media focus. The principles are: initiating or experimenting, intensifying, and bonding or integrating. Applying this proposal requires the initiation of a program on the website to test the publics' reaction. If a favorable response is received, the strategists intensify it as a relationship builder. If some sustenance emerges, then the feature is permanently integrated into the website.

In another study, Lee (2020) defines CMC as "one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many exchanges of messages of varying modalities through networked computers, either synchronous or asynchronous." This definition exemplifies CMC as a form of exchange that involves one-to-many or one-to-one via networked computer or internet. Public relations often involves building relationships requiring exchanges of information that may be one-to-one at times or one-to-many. Lee's study fills the lacuna in the theoretical framework for mass-oriented CMC.

Lee's submission supports Kent and Taylors' (2002) principle of fairness or honesty and respect in dialogic communication. His assertion falls within an interpersonal context involving public relations professionals providing information for thousands of individual members of his organization's publics. Lee's empirical investigations demonstrate that source authenticity or truthfulness, message, and interaction are highly influential in relationship building.

The findings of Pang et al. (2018) and Lee (2020) underpin the focus of the current study. They demonstrate that interpersonal communication can be enhanced via computer-mediated communication, via experimenting, intensifying, and integrating the content of a corporate website or creating a transparent interaction that will influence the authenticity of the message, source, and interaction.

Method of Study
A qualitative research paradigm with multiple case study designs appears to be the most suitable for collecting rich and well-validated data, for a sufficient resolution of research problems, and coherence of research endeavor (Smith, 2014). The case study design, according to Thomas (2011, p. 64), entails the exploration of a "bounded system" or a "program, an event, an activity, or individuals." Gustafsson (2017, p. 4) indicates that a case study is an intensive study of a group or a unit with the primary objective of generalizing the findings over several units. A case study design explores real-life, contemporary multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. The qualitative approach is underpinned by the social constructivist paradigm, which seeks to understand the subjective and multiple meanings attached to complex human experiences (Creswell 2014). The choice of multiple case study design is justified as the study explores and made a comparison between how selected private and public organizations employ corporate websites as dialogic online public relations tools (Yin, 2003, p. 15, 2016, p. 25; Creswell, 2013, p. 28; Gustafsson, 2017, p. 4).

The purposive sampling method helped to select three public sector institutions and three private organizations. Twelve management staff members (two from an organization) and 18 public relations professionals (three from an organization) with at least ten years of experience were selected to discuss the subject and elicit relevant data. Discussion transcripts with the reports from the study of the websites elicited the conceptual framework on using corporate websites as dialogic online public relations tool, a process also noted by some authors (Creswell, 2009, 2014; Creswell and Poth, 2018). Cases were selected based on Gerring and Cojocaru's (2016, p. 395) recommendation, as depicted in Figure 3.

Goals/Strategies	*n*	Factors	Criteria for Cases
I. Descriptive (to describe)			
• Typical	I+	D	Mean, mode, or median of *D*
• Diverse	2+	D	Typical subtypes
II. Causal (to explain Y)			
1. Exploratory (to identify H_x)			
• Outcome	I+	Y	Maximize variation in *Y*
• Index	I+	Y	First instance of ΔY
• Deviant	I+	Z Y	Poorly explained by *Z*
• Most-similar	2+	Z Y	Similar on *Z*, different on *Y*
• Most-different	2+	Z Y	Different on *Z*, similar on *Y*
• Diverse	2+	Z Y	All possible configurations of *Z* (assumption: $X \in Z$)
2. Estimating (to estimate H_x)			
• Longitudinal	I+	X Z	*X* changes, *Z* constant or biased against H_x
• Most-similar	2+	X Z	Similar on *Z*, different on *X*
3. Diagnostic (to assess H_x)			
• Influential	I+	X Z Y	Greatest impact on $P(H_x)$
• Pathway	I+	X Z Y	$X \rightarrow Y$ strong, *Z* constant or biased against H_x
• Most-similar	2+	X Z Y	Similar on *Z*, different on *X* and *Y*

Note: *D* = descriptive features (other than those to be described in a case study); H_x = causal hypothesis of interest; $P(H_x)$ = the probability of H_x; *X* = causal factor(s) of theoretical interest; $X \rightarrow Y$ = apparent or estimated causal effect, which may be strong (high in magnitude) or weak; *Y* = outcome of interest; *Z* = vector of background factors that may affect *X* and/or *Y*.

Figure 3: Guidelines for case selection for intensive analysis
Source: Gerring and Cojocaru (2016)

The study is explorative; hence, "the diverse (2+ ZY) for all possible configurations of Z (assumption: X ∈Z)" is the most suitable criteria for case selection. The cases selected are diverse and represent all potential factors and any variation between organizational approaches to using the corporate website as an online dialogic public relations tool. Studying diverse cases helps to understand corporate websites' functions as an online dialogic public relations tool (Gerring & Cojocaru, 2016). The organizational ethics of private and public institutions are vastly different from each other, hence approaches to the use of the corporate website are expected to be different as dictated by the prevailing circumstances within which the public relations department operates. Kent & Taylor assert that the organizational culture and working conditions could influence public relations expertise.

The adoption of focus group discussions and interviews in such studies is supported in the literature (Akwari, 2017). The thematic

analysis deployed involves identifying textual data for trends and patterns that can form into the analysis themes (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules 2017, p. 1). Interviews and focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed. A moderator's guide, semi-structured interview schedule, and codebook were used to gather data during the focus group discussions, interviews, and content analysis (Golafshani, 2003). The transcribed data were fed into *NVivo 12 Plus,* which has features for automatic coding of the retrieved data. The manual coding outcomes were compared significantly with NVivo coding to arrive at the most reliable and encompassing results.

NVivo coding is often very detailed and may contain certain information irrelevant to the study. Compared with the manual coding, it helped streamline coding in NVivo to the most relevant data tallying with the study's focus (Zamawe, 2015).

As earlier indicated, the five classical principles of dialogic communication by Kent and Taylor (1998; 2002; Morah & Omojola, 2014) served as the basis for operationalization. The principles entail 1) ease of interface (ease of navigating the website and capability of the website to load in a few seconds), 2) conservation of visitors (regularity of updating information on website and section for frequently asked question), 3) usefulness of information (adequately cater for the information needs of organization's varied publics), 4) generation of return visits (Relevant and up-to-date information to encourage regular visits of publics), and dialogic loop (avenue or provision for users' response or feedback).

RQ 1: What is the dialogic communication potential of corporate websites in Ghana?

The crux of this research question is to elicit relevant information from participants on the extent to which their corporate website can effectively function as a medium for two-way communication.

Private institutions selected are Fan Milk Limited – Ghana, Ever Pack Limited, Ghana, and Accra Brewery Limited. Public institutions comprise the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Health. These organizations have several features on their websites relevant to this study. Comments from respondents and a study of each of the selected organizations provide some clues below.

Responding to the question of why each of the organizations set up a website, the following excerpts are archetypes of responses:

"We needed to communicate to a wide range of people like stakeholders…to connect to people nationwide and globally."

EVPRespond (PVT 01; 10 years of working experience)

"The website is very key as far as news media is concerned…stakeholders and partners want to know what is happening in the sector…you just visit the site and get yourself acquainted with what the sector is doing."

FMILRespond (PVT 02; eight years of working experience.)

"Our website, for instance, is generally used for dissemination of information and educating the public…For us, our publics…is the whole world because we help promote Ghana's Foreign Policy."

FoNRespond (PUB 01, 12 years of working experience)

"Our website is mainly designed to meet the needs of the adult population. Vital information regarding moderate use of alcohol and several of our products form the essence of the website".

ACBRRespond (PVT 01; 12 years of working experience)

Websites of the sampled organizations reveal that both private and public organizations do communicate dialogically with their publics. However, the question remains as to what extent do these websites' publics respond or provide feedback to the public. Each of the websites' homepage was physically examined and accessed to decipher, whether it could foster two-way communication.

An in-depth analysis of each homepage reveals that most organizations have features on their websites, showing its potentiality for dialogic communication within their operation frameworks. For example, the six websites visited have "contact us," promoting regular and return visits. However, only five have a social media widget that encourages more significant interaction with their publics. An examination of the six corporate websites shows that except for one public and two private, the remaining three organizations have a well-structured feedback mechanism that allows their publics to interact with them.

One of the public organizations interested in foreign affairs has a helpline on which individuals can call and put their concerns forward. It also has *Facebook* and *Twitter* accounts to connect with its stakeholders. One of the public relations practitioner of one of the private organizations, with 11 years of working experience, stated concerning feedback on their website:

Anyone with queries or other relevant issues needing feedback is directed to their Contact Us feature. At the Contact Us button, ample information regarding the individual, their e-mail address, and the specific information or inquiry made are requested. We will get in touch with the individual via the information provided. Such information will be subsequently deleted, except the

individual made a legal request to retain the data.

Another private organization with interest in packaging has contact us to which queries and comments are sent for clarifications on issues. Two public organizations and one private have well-structured feedback mechanisms, the most visible of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) hyperlink. A public relations officer in one of these two public organizations, with eight years, working experience, said that his department designates staff to attend those feedback and arranging for responses to it without delay

Kent and Taylor (1998; 2002) assert that the *Comment Box* in some websites exemplifies the potential for dialogic communication as the publics have the opportunity to relate with the organization. Only one of the public organizations has the Comment Box hyperlink, but all the remaining organizations have other links that enable their publics to express themselves.

The listed findings of the current are consistent with the results of some studies (Gustavsen & Tilley, 2003; Agozzino, 2015, p. 6; Akwari, 2017, p. 15), underscoring the potency of the corporate website to be used as a medium for two-way communication. Some 90 percent of the investigated websites have the potential for two-way communication. The 10 percent deficiency has to do with the absence,

on a few websites, of well-structured mechanisms designed purposely for feedback. Few do not have a search engine, while others do not possess social media widgets.

RQ 2: How can dialogic communication be used for the corporate website as an online Public Relations tool?

This question elicits useful information on how the selected private and public organizations' corporate websites come across as public relations role player and medium for two-way communication. Responses from discussants and interviewees attest to this. In their response to whether corporate websites can be used as an online public relations tool, 95 percent of the interviewees indicated a "Yes." However, the websites should have certain features that facilitate dialogic communication between an organization and its publics. The following excerpts are representative of the interviewees' comments:

We recommend that the ministry update its website with current information of interest to its shareholders.

EDURespond (PUB; 9 years of working experience)

Public Relations personnel scan newspapers and online portals daily, news stories related to the ministry are cut out and filed for future references. Important ones are

posted…

EDURespond (02; 11 years of working experience)

…the website must be attractive…website architecture is vital, and the content you put there should be very credible and reliable. In effect, the website's information should not be misleading, controversial, or misinform your public.

HEHRespond (PUB, 03 with 13 years of working experience)

But in our set-up, whatever information we put out there is measured, so we are cautious…I can't even engage a media person who walks in or throw light on certain things; I have to seek approval.

FoNRespond (03, nine years of working experience.)

"You know and get them to understand, but you cannot force them to understand…do not attach emotions or also act in that way by being harsh on the person."

FMLRespond (04, with eight years of working experience.)

The feedback mechanism used…is a link on the website labeled info@moe.com.gh. With this, stakeholders can ask questions for clarity on issues or information seen on the website…they are addressed and replied instantly.

EDURespond (03, with 11 years of working experience.)

People give us feedback then we take it up from there. We respond to them quickly with the help of other units.

EVRRespond (01, with 10 years working experience.)

The excerpts above show that most corporate websites function as an online public relations tool. The majority, 78 percent, indicated that their corporate website features had features that made it easy for visitors to navigate. The remaining 22 percent indicated that strict rules make websites less user friendly. However, the analysis shows that all organizations' websites contain relevant information to adequately educate and inform their public. The majority – 75 percent – of the websites contain *About Us*, *Resources*, *News Release*, *Photo News* and *Policy Documents*, and other hyperlinks. Findings in Kent and Taylor (1998) on the second principle of dialogic communication support this outcome.

The third principle of dialogic communication is the generation of return visits to websites. One public organization interested in health matters has a forum for web training and responding to feedback promptly, as indicated by its public relations officer with 14 years of working experience. He said:

The institutions' website is being monitored and updated on hourly bases because there is personnel charged with responding

to the public within one hour maximum.

The public organization related to education has a Comment Box for suggestions, recommendations, or expression of grievances, thus prompting its publics for visits and revisits to the sites. Likewise, the remaining organizations also have a forum for addressing feedbacks and generating comments from their publics. The education-related public organization and two private organizations have similar hyperlinks.

According to Kent and Taylor, the fourth principle of dialogic communication is the consolidation of return visits. Public relations professionals in the selected public organizations run this principle - as many of them, or 60 percent, indicated that they have well-structured frameworks for updating their websites and providing timely feedback to their publics. The last item in dialogic communication is the dialogic loop. For Kent and Taylor, using corporate websites as a dialogic loop within and outside organizations is not unusual.

All the interviewees also indicated that they employed their websites to manage communication, reputation, and address issues strategically in harmony with the five principles of dialogic communication. Since public relations tools should enhance public relations officers' work and accentuate the cordial relationship between the institution and their publics through dialogic communication, the websites are relevant as a versatile online public relations tool.

RQ 3: What is the influence of organization ethics on successfully deploying a corporate website as a Public Relations tool for online dialogic communications?

The question is concerned with the influence of organizations' ethics on public relations professionals' ability to manipulate, device, and incorporate relevant features into a corporate website to achieve dialogic communication. The quotes and paraphrases extracted from the focus group transcripts to address the question are presented below.

Not less than 85 percent of discussants agreed that public relations professionals' alignment with the ethics guiding their organizations places restrictions on how they incorporate information on their websites to promote dialogic communication. The PR officer from the foreign affairs-related public organization, with ten years of experience, had this to say:

"You cannot just insert anything on the website. You must follow a chain of authority that may take months or years before approval."

The professional from the private sector, with eight years of experience, asserted:

"Due to the nature of our product (being alcoholic content), all adolescents are not allowed on our website, and we are curtailed on the level of things we could place on the website in harmony with our work ethics."

The participants' responses above show that public relations professionals work within their organization's ethics or operation mode. The website of one private organization – a brewer- asks for birth details to ascertain whether the visitor is an adult or not. This request implies that the only adult with a mature mind and rational thinking is advised or permitted to consume alcohol.

Furthermore, a PR officer from the public organization in charge of foreign affairs said that Ghana's public institutions must align with the bureaucratic civil service regulations. Obedience to rules limits the number of features that a corporate website can contain. The civil service ethical system is not universal as it varies from one organization to the other. This variation influences the type or magnitude of content post-able. For instance, the organization in charge of foreign affairs does not have feedback features, while the two in charge of health and education do.

One focus group discussant – a PR practitioner with 12 years of working experience in the education ministry – said his organization and the organization in charge of health

matters are concerned with saving lives and educating people. These ethically-driven responsibilities imply that they should have viable, well-structured feedback systems that promote dialogic communication for better service delivery. In effect, the organization's ethics plays a significant role in determining the extent to which Public Relations professionals can incorporate certain features to facilitate dialogic communication with the organization's publics.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has shown that, while public institutions use their websites to inform, educate, train, protect reputation, and develop a cordial relationship with their publics in dialogic communications, profit-oriented ones do extend website usage to profit. The study has also demonstrated that irrespective of profit motives or the need for mutually beneficial relationships, ethical considerations also influence the extent to which public relations professionals can post materials on websites for dialogic communication. However, the findings do elicit the following recommendations:

1. The PR professionals of both the public and private organizations should cultivate a proactive work habit. A mapping of the organizations' issues should be

implemented to enable the website masters to create programmed answers to those that are common. Visitors to the websites would not need to wait for hours or days to have their issues resolved.

2. The private organizations' websites used advertisements as part of their dialogic communication strategy to boost profit. Public organizations can emulate this and generate income like their private counterparts.

3. Video-on-demand and conferencing solutions should be added to the dialogic communication portfolios of the organizations. Besides boosting the communication process, they serve as additional friendship and revenue sources.

4. Public Relations professionals in private and public organizations should make necessary recommendations to the appropriate authorities to incorporate research opportunities for the public just as it is done in the Ministry of Health Corporate Website.

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