Investigating How Millicom Ghana (Tigo) Employs Social Media as a Public Relation Tool in Managing its Organizational Issues

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Abstract

This study investigates into how Millicom Ghana (Tigo) employs social media as a public relation tool in managing its organizational issues in Ghana. The study was conducted under the framework of qualitative research, while a case study design was used as the research strategy. Millicom (Tigo) Ghana was purposively sampled out of nine (9) Telecommunication companies in Ghana. Interviews and Distanced Virtual Ethnography were used as the instruments for data collection while the analysis was done by way of content and textual analysis. The issues management and relationship management theories formed the theoretical basis of the study. Findings showed that social media utilisation aided very much the public relations roles played in Tigo Ghana's management of issues. The dialogic social media utilisation facilitated information giving/requesting between Tigo Ghana and its stakeholders. It was also found that the most recurring issue/theme on social media was information giving/seeking, and is in consonance with the corporate communication strategy. However, stakeholders also identified more with the corporate social responsibility communication strategy. These findings demonstrate that there was strong desire for stakeholders/customers to consume or give information on diverse issues. Both Tigo Ghana and its stakeholders/customers are able to build and maintain relationships. The use of social media this way reduced friction between Tigo and its customers/stakeholders. The study therefore recommended that organisations should prioritise their corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication strategy as it has been found to aid in stakeholder engagement.

Keywords: Social Media, Public Relation, Organizational Issues, Telecommunication in Ghana

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the view of Ivana (2010), the advent of the Internet has changed how companies do their business and how they communicate with all interested stakeholders. Communication is driven and empowered by new communication technology development. Stakeholders have raised their expectations and now require more information about companies, products and services (ibid). During its initial years, the practice of public relations (PR) was grounded in a journalistic approach and the main concern of practitioners was to generate publicity through the implementation of one-way models. Today, public relations also include such activities as public affairs, lobbying, issues management, investor relations, and relations with critical publics (Avidar, 2011). While public relations professionals in the past relied almost exclusively on the traditional media in order to distribute messages to the public, the internet opened up new opportunities for direct, two-way communication between organisations and their publics (Avidar, 2011). The field of online public relations involves the application of internet technologies by organisations to communicate and build relationships with key publics: customers and consumers, employees, investors and donors, community members, government, and the news media (ibid).

Organisations can use the influence of social media to proactively engage stakeholders. Due to the open nature of the internet, stakeholders have option to raise an issue about an organisation on social media. According to Pew Research (2014), social media has made it possible for organisations to interact with its publics. An organisation's active presence on social media would help the organisation to respond appropriately to issues raised on social media concerning the organisation. According to Center & Jackson (2003), Public Relations practitioners serve two masters. The first is their employer and the second is the public interest. The media is believed to stand between the PR practitioner and the public interest (ibid). Social media (Web 2.0) is not only a technological development that modifies existing channels of communication, but also a new way of thinking (Avar, 2011). This is how people now believe in things. How fast and wide a matter travels on an issue takes prejudiced position in peoples' minds. Once these perceptions are made, it becomes very difficult to change their minds. Such mindsets may go against a particular organisation if nothing is done to correct perceived error. The democratising force of social

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media is commonly understood to have created a more level playing field between those with power and those affected by the exercise of power (Jacques, 2012). In this current world where the consumers would want to have power to decide on the things that affects them, social media becomes a platform to freely and easily air their views. Issues rise and fall every time. It comes either for good or bad in different scenarios. Individuals and corporate bodies have to deal with issues every now and then. Social media in this age of technology have even expanded the reach of issues one has to handle. Its viral potential can take a good or bad issue far more than one would expect it to go, hence the need to address them up front when they arise.

Heath (2002) explains that issues management is an anticipatory, strategic management process that helps organisations detect and respond appropriately to emerging trends or changes in the socio-political environment. These trends or changes may then crystallise into an "issue," which is a situation that evokes the attention and concern of influential organisational publics and stakeholders (Institute of Public Relations, 2008). He (Heath) further intimates that issues management is stewardship for building, maintaining and repairing relationships with stakeholders and stake seekers (Heath, 2002). One role public relations practitioner perform is the boundary spanning role, this is supported by the assertion that issues management also is the process whereby organisations use information collected by boundary spanners to know and understand organisational environments and to interact effectively with their environments (Wartick & Rude, 1986).

Also, the worldwide use of social media means that information can pass through 'the system' almost instantaneously and generate instant dialogue and response before the organisation in question is aware of an issue (The Watson Helsby Reports, 2010). To avoid using a tactic like press release or event, social media can be used strategically as a public relations tool in achieving goals and objectives that contribute to the overall purpose and mission of an organisation. The strategic process involves using research to define the problem or situation, developing objectives and strategies that address the situation, implementing the strategies, and then measuring the results of such strategic efforts (Institute for Public Relations, 2015). In some cases, acronyms, such as John Marston's RACE (research, action planning, communication, evaluation) or Jerry Hendrix's ROPE (research, objectives, programming, evaluation) are used to describe the process (Marston, 1979). All these processes listed above can be implemented using social media in diverse ways. The internet gives social media great ability for the above processes to be much simpler. This study investigates the role social media play in issues management. The issues management theory and stakeholder theory are used to identify the role social media plays in Tigo's issues management.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines journal articles, books and other materials relevant to social media and issues management. The review of literature is sub-categorised under the following headings: social media, social media use in organisations, social media's impact on customer relationship management (crm), issues management, social media and public relations, the telecommunication industry in Ghana, and profile of Millicom (Tigo) Ghana. The theories that undergirded this study are also presented in this chapter.

2.1 Social Media

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) describe social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 60). Also, Wright and Hinson (2009b) define social media as technological platforms that give web-based information created by people with the intention to ease communication. The description and definition of social media suggests that social media primarily is internet-based and also bi-directional in its use for communication. Though, social media can be used for one-way dissemination of information, it is designed purposely to aid multi/bi-directional information exchange. The use of social networking tools is part of a trend that underscores relevance of two-way or multi-directional communication in public relations rather than the dissemination of information (Deuze, 2007; Ruler, Vercic, Buetschi, & Flodin, 2004; Wright & Hinson, 2009b).

Social media's ability to provide increased visibility into both behaviours and information separates them from other technologies and creates unique consequences (Boyd, 2010; Grudin, 2006). The opportunity offered by social media to use text, video and other graphical designs makes it unique for organisations to communicate in diversified forms with stakeholders on social media. Social media has brought numerous advantages to all users especially individuals everywhere with access to the internet can use any social media platform. The influence of internet development has caused stakeholders to raise their expectations for more information about companies, products and services. The development of the web, especially of WEB 2.0 with its two-way, mostly read-write web and ability of stakeholders to communicate with one another, social networking, among others make companies more vulnerable than ever before (Ivana, 2010).

Chang (2000) found in a Delphi study of senior public relations managers in U.S. corporations that only a few of participating organisations had an advanced environmental scanning system in their public relations departments. Social media is very essential to scan the environment for an organisation since solicited and unsolicited information appears on social media. Ivana (2010) observed that electronic communication component is a sensitive and important component of corporate communications in the 21st century. In this century where internet access and use hits different borders and escalates in its adoption, a good advantage can be taken in the use of it as a core part of communication. When an organisation excludes electronic/internet communication from its corporate strategies it is likely to suffer. In the same manner without nurturing the relationship of a company with its interested stakeholders, organisations stand in a disadvantage position in eventual critical issue or crisis. It must be noted that the open relationship an organisation has with its stakeholders makes them easily accessible, especially on social media. Efforts need to be put in place to strengthen electronic communication as it is still less developed than any other corporate communication function component of an organisation, according to Ivana (2010).

Additionally, the open nature of social media means that either stakeholders or organisations can tell their own perspective of a matter at any time and at anywhere. Ivana (2010) notes that the advent of the Internet has changed the meaning and process of corporate public relations. Organisations would therefore have the responsibility to respond to public inquiries and dialogue, very often with little opportunity to prepare for presenting their own version of reality. Similarly, Ihator (2001) agreed when he said that although the Internet allows companies to present their viewpoints directly to key constituents, control over information dissemination is lost. Technologies such as the Internet underscore the global character of communication (Goodman, 2000). People everywhere now can talk to, or talk with an organisation. Different uncontrollable views can easily come to bear on social media within a short period of time. If this information are unfavourable to an organistion, then its damaging effects cannot be underestimated. Constituents on social media can spread whatever stories they want from their own perspectives, making what they say part of the public record (Argenti, 2006).

Social media is particularly useful for building and cultivating relationships (Levenshus, 2010; Sweetser, 2010). Social media advances on its multi-directional communication ability to help organisations build strong relationships with stakeholders. Communication is a key component of human interaction since no one is isolated in the social existence of life, therefore in terms of corporate activities as well, communication should be prioritised. Ivana (2010) opined that internet is seen as not just a tool, but as a crucial factor in strategic orientation and development of corporate communication function. Social media has great ability to build and manage relationships, as well as its ability to facilitate multi-directional dialogue (Lee, Tisdale & Diddams, 2012). Building a real and virtual relationship has now become possible as a result of the influence of social media. The various forms of communication like video connectivity among other forms of connecting with people in pictures and words in real time has indeed enhanced relationship-building that social media provides.

Communication is traditionally thought of as being one-way or two-way but social media platforms allow multiple users to communicate simultaneously in multiple directions as illustrated by the multi-directional communication model (Thackeray & Neiger, 2009). Eventually, proactive use of social media especially by organisations should be done to ensure constant multi-directional engagement and not only one-way or two-way engagement with customers and stakeholders to bring mutual benefits.

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2.2 Social Media Use in Organisations

It has been established that customers/stakeholders have shifted from visiting organisations' websites to visiting social media pages (Haigh, 2012). Organisations therefore would do themselves a great disfavour if they fail to move to match up with trends of building interest in where customers/stakeholders have moved in. In the field of public relations, organisations use communication to build, nurture, maintain, and bolster stakeholder relationships (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000). In fact, there is no way any business can survive without the presence of customers/stakeholders who would use their services or products. Hence developing a close relationship with customers/stakeholders cannot be taken for granted with the aim of meeting expectations on both sides of organisations and their customers/stakeholders. The need for information is fundamental to any human communication. Organisations build and maintain relationships via the Internet by disseminating organisational information and promoting two-way communication (Johnson, 1997). The ability to give or receive information would go a long way to establish good relationship between an organisation and its customers/stakeholders.

It could be argued that the continual emphasis on one-way communication without necessarily receiving feedback (in stakeholder-organisation relationship) has contributed to the rise in customers refocusing attention in organisations' social media platforms. People want to know that they are being heard, for that matter any channel that will offer them that opportunity would be preferred. There have been contradictory findings in research concerning social media and stakeholders' engagement with it. For example, Emarketer (2010) posits that the major reason individuals like an organisation on social media is to learn about specials or sales, and new product features or services. This assertion by Emarkter (2010) is challenged by Haigh (2012) who claims rather that activities on Corporate Social Responsibility activities positively draws stakeholders to social media sites of an organisation. Kim and Reber (2008) support the claim and note that, corporate social responsibility is "a central relationship-building activity" (p. 341).

In effect there is going to be more interaction with organisations when they choose to use more corporate social responsibility approach on social media. Also, Haigh, Brubaker and Whiteside (2013) quipped that when organisations employ a corporate social responsibility strategy, stakeholders' perceptions of the organisation-public relationship were stronger than stakeholders who interacted with social media platforms employing a corporate ability communication strategy focusing on the organisation's products. It can be considered therefore that to sustain a positive perception that customers/stakeholders hold for an organisation, corporate social responsibility communication strategy should be used frequently. Interactivity and involvement promote relationships online (Men & Tsai, 2012). Using social media in an organisation goes a long way to sustain two-way communication and multi-directional participation that offers benefits for organisations and stakeholders alike.

According to Jacque (2012), social media has fostered a major change in users (customers/stakeholders) expectation of what is acceptable corporate behaviour, opening new areas of debate and raising the bar for corporations and executives. Furthermore, social media has dramatically increased the customers/stakeholder's capacity and willingness to express their expectations, and demand improved performance from organisations (ibid). In essence, social media has given customers/stakeholders power with organisations, rather than organisations having power over stakeholders. It is a shared influence and not a manipulative tool to one's advantage against the other.

2.3 Social Media's Impact on Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Customer relationship management is a combination of technology, business processes and people that want and seek to understand an organisation's customers (Chen & Popovich, 2003). It focuses on the incorporation approach on relationship development and customer loyalty (ibid). It is obvious from the preceding assertion that irrespective of the kind of business under consideration, for one to have a strong stakeholder/customer loyalty and good relationship development, the role of technology cannot be ruled out. This factor is underscored by social media as a tool that enhances relationship building. CRM is based on the background of relationship building and two-way communication to create value between an organisation and its customers. CRM then creates win-win situations, enhance customer lifetime value

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and increase profitability (Nguyen & Mutum, 2012). The processes, people, and technology all come together to help develop customers' retention and relationship. Improvement in technological advancement and processes in organisations are helping customer-centric procedures which in effect gives positive impact on the development of CRM. Organisations which implement CRM successfully, will gain customer loyalty and profitability (Jayashree, Pahlavanzadeh & Shojaee, 2010).

All employees in a firm are managers of customer relationship, irrespective of the role one plays in the organisation (Ronald, 2001). It is imperative that all actions taken on social media as business-related in any department of the organisation should focus more on building relationship with customers and all stakeholders. Personal engagements on social media by an employee could bring positive or negative impact on their organisation as well. Employees need to be educated and cautioned on the relevance of even their personal engagements on social media, so as to avoid any unlikely repercussions on their organisations. Customer relationship management focuses on the integration of customer information, knowledge for finding and keeping customer to grow customer lifetime value, and it also has an important role to play in helping organisations to keep their customers and to make them loyal (Fong and Yazdanifard, 2014). The information gained from customers on social media can give an organisation a deep insight of what trend an organisation needs to watch out for and be proactive to respond to. Billions of people have access on different social media platforms, the ability of the world to share and connect is infinite and from a business perspective, companies are now allowed to create a customer experience that has never been done in the past (ibid). Relating to customers has now been dynamic in a two-way and multi-directional communication due to social media.

Traditional CRM emerged in the 1990s and customer behaviour is in a very different phase today (Rich, 2010). It is difficult to easily predict what a customer is likely to do or say with social media. According to Vissing (2011) CRM is one of the most fundamental elements in any organisation because of the emergence of social media in the industry. Social media is able to bring in individual thoughts and perception on how organisation is performing in real time. There is a large perception gap between what the customers seek via social media and what companies offer (Baird &Parasnis, 2011). It is important for an organisation to actively monitor communication to identify people who can be of great influence on the organisation's market. In recent times social media is helping greatly in any aspect of business. For example, retailers today are working in a challenging era but they are now able to get closer to their customers and engage with them in a timely and relevant manner due to social media (Green & Starkey, 2011). Together with CRM, social media can achieve higher financial benefits to companies and it does not matter which sector they are in (Green & Starkey, 2011). The stakes of organisations using social media in customer/stakeholder relations has massive benefits, undoubtedly. For all benefits such as financial, loyalty and relational, that organisations desire from customers are possible through appropriate and strategic use of social media (Fong and Yazdanifard, 2014).

2.4 Social Media and Public Relations

Center & Jackson (2003) argue that Public Relations (PR) practitioners serve two masters: the employer and the public interest, respectively. The media is believed to usually mediate between the employer and the public interest (ibid). Today, Public Relations have been defined in many different ways; the definition often evolves from public relations' changing roles and technological advances, Supa (2014). The earliest definitions emphasised press agentry and publicity, while, more modern definitions incorporate the concepts of "engagement" and "relationship building". Cutlip, Center & Broom (2000:6) claim "Public Relationship is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends." According to PRSA (2014) a more modern definition of public relations is: "Public Relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics".

As a management function Supa (2014) analyses public relations to encompass the following:
- Anticipating, analysing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues that might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organisation.
- Counselling management at all levels in the organisation.

- Researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programme of action and communication.
- Planning and implementing the organisation's efforts to influence or change public policy.

Research shows that most Public Relations (PR) practitioners admit that social media has created a change in media relations (PRSA, 2014). Many practitioners of PR agree that relationships have become more 'personal' because of social media use (ibid). Social media has rapidly sprung up as an essential tool for public relations professional (Lee, 2013). In addition to the traditional media that still stands to be a trusted source of information due to relative checks and control on its content, yet, it has become almost impossible to see any organisation not being present on social media and using the technology as part of its (organisation's) public relations activities. Wright and Hinson (2008a, 2009b) have found that most public relations professionals believe that the use of social media has had a positive impact on public relations. In effect, regardless of how Public Relations begun, it is almost impossible for social media to be taken out of an organisations public relations efforts. Practitioners should however maintain the ethical standards the profession holds in order to make social media a trusted source of engaging beneficially with organisations.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the approach adopted in gathering data for analysis of the study. The population, sampling technique and sample size are discussed. Justification for the approach adopted is also provided. Again, the chapter discusses the categorisation and coding process employed for the establishment of the major themes of the study.

3.1 Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study. The qualitative approach emphasises the importance of participant's views and also stresses the setting or context under study (Creswell, 2008). Research using qualitative approach therefore focuses much attention on those who are affected or affecting others or situations in a given study. According to Denzin (2010), qualitative research approach provides complex textual descriptions of how people experience a phenomenon. In the view of Merriam (2009), qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. This implies that in qualitative studies, researchers give constructed meaning of the participants a paramount interest to the research. According to Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009) qualitative research is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena. That is to say, it aims to help to understand the world in which we (people) live and why things are the way they are.

That means since social interactions differ from one situation to the other, it is only qualitative approach that can underscore the special meanings which are embedded in social interactions. Qualitative research approach also concerns itself with the social aspects of our world and seeks to answer questions about why people behave the way they do; how opinions and attitudes are formed; and how people are affected by the events that go on around them, (Hancock et al., 2009). On their part, Parkinson and Drislane (2011) maintain that qualitative research is a kind of research that uses methods which result in a narrative, descriptive account of a setting or practice. This study finds the qualitative approach appropriate because of its interest in understanding the importance, relevance and effects of the Tigo Ghana experiences as a result of using social media to manage issues in their day–to–day operations.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is a very critical factor in undertaking any research work. It is the general principle that guides the study and is a holistic approach to investigating the topic understudy (Dawson, 2002).

3.2.1 Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)

"Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)is an approach of empirical and methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step

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models, without rash quantification," (Mayring,2000:2). According to Patton (2002:53), "QCA is any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings." Hence from the assertion by Mayring (2002), it can be said that unique contexts give unique meaning to texts for its analysis. In this study, attempt was made to investigate the various issues/themes embedded in Tigo Ghana's issues management on social media. Lee, Tisdale and Diddams (2012), for example have identified four roles social media play that are considered quite of public relations practice. These, they indicate as follows:

1. Technician role practitioners are more likely to use social   media in one-way (unidirectional) information dissemination.
2. Expert prescribers are more likely than practitioners enacting other organisational roles to use social media for non-aligned purposes.
3. Communication facilitators are more likely than practitioners enacting other organisational roles to use social media for dialogic social media utilisation.
4. Practitioners enacting the problem-solving facilitator role are more likely than practitioners enacting other organisational roles to use social media for organisational change (p.15-21).

Qualitative Content Analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text (Zhang & Wildermuth, 2009). The procedure allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner. The themes extracted from the posts (comments/messages, pictures, videos, sounds) on social media platforms (Twitter and Facebook) of Tigo were interrogated to understand the various themes present in Tigo Ghana's issues management.

According to Mayring (2000), qualitative content analysis is very scientific because it follows a laid down and diverse procedures. The dominant procedures noted by Mayring (2000) are deductive and inductive Qualitative Content Analysis. However, within the framework of qualitative approaches it would be of interest to develop/formulate the aspects of interpretation and the categories as near as possible in terms of the material/data been investigated (ibid). Patton (2002) has said that qualitative content analysis involves a process designed to condense raw data into categories or themes based on valid inference and interpretation. The content analysis in this study used the process of inductive reasoning, by which themes and categories emerge from the data through the researcher's careful examination and constant comparison. Weber (1990) agrees that QCA is mainly inductive. This study was based on the inductive procedure since it involves developing the aspects of interpretation and the categories as near as possible to the material/data obtained.

3.3 Population

The target population of this study is the entire telecommunication companies in Ghana namely, MTN, Vodafone, Tigo, Airtel, Glo, Expresso, Surfline, Broadbadhome/Zipnet and Blu. The last three are all data service providers only.

3.3.1 Sampling Technique

According to Palys (2008), the adoption of the sampling technique of a study is dependent upon the nature of one's research objectives. Owing to the objectives of the study, the purposive sampling technique, which according to Palys is virtually synonymous with qualitative research, was employed. "Purposive sampling is a form of sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research," (Palys, 2006: p.116). The researcher used personal judgment to select subjects that are considered information-rich to be representative of the population. Personal judgment is a nonrandom technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of subjects (Tongco, 2007). The technique of judgment sampling is used by researchers to decide what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience, (Bernard 2002, Lewis & Sheppard 2006). According to Baxter and Jack (2008), convenience is at the core of qualitative research. They assert that availability of participants who will provide data for the study is an important consideration in purposive sampling.

The researcher purposively sampled Tigo Ghana since it was very willing to participate in this research above all the other telecommunication companies. Tigo Ghana also extensively engages its stakeholders on diverse and multiple social media platforms for special effects. Again, the company prides itself as being a digital brand which means that most of the activities including issues management are handled on digital space.

3.3.2 Sample Size

Ghana has nine (9) main telecommunication companies namely, MTN, Vodafone, Tigo, Airtel, Glo, Expresso, Surfline ,Broadbandhome/Zipnet and Blu. Surfline, Broadbandhome and Blu are involved in data service only. Although all of thesehave social media platforms and engages stakeholders/customers on them, Tigo's willingness to participate and provide data for this research led to its selection for this study. The Corporate communication team, mainly the Head of Digital Communication and the Public Relations Officer who are in charge of the social media communications were sampled together with selected (18) posts from Facebook and Twitter that also captures complete interactions/information between Tigo and its stakeholders on social media. This sample size was to help the researcher to conveniently handle data. For, Baxter and Jack (2008) have indicated that convenience is at the core of qualitative research.

3.3.3 Unit of Analysis

Kimani (2009) defines unit of analysis as the smallest element or indicator of the phenomenon of interest in a content analysis. While Zhang and Wildermuth (2009) say it is the basic unit of text to be classified during content analysis. The unit of analysis might be a single word, a symbol, a theme, a story or an entire article. The unit of analysis for this study included the tweets, comments, updates, pictures, audios and videos on social media (Twitter and Facebook) of Tigo Ghana and its stakeholders.

3.4 Coding and Categorisation

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) define codes as linkages between the data and the categories posited by the researcher. They explain that codes serve as shorthand devices to label, separate, compile and organise data (ibid). "Categorisation is the process of characterising the meaning of a unit of data with respect to certain generic properties," (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 214). The focus of this study was to interrogate how Tigo Ghana uses social media to manage issues. The coding scheme designed for this study was generally based on the major themes embedded in the social media posts. The themes in this study were therefore established from transcripts and later coding and categorising online (posts/tweets) contents. The themes included:

1. Corporate Social Responsibility
A) Relationship building/management
B) Environmental scanning
C) Entertainments

2. Corporate ability
A) Information

3.4.1 Coding Process

Issues management is said to be a strategic set of functions used to reduce friction and increase harmony between organisations and their publics/stakeholders in the public policy arena (Heath, 2005). From this explanation provided by Heath (2005), it implies that all engagements on Tigo's social media in managing issues is aimed at reducing friction and increasing harmony between Tigo and its' stakeholders. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) assert that data must be subjected to several sessions of close reading to find several ideas, formations or instances in the data that relates to each other in such a way as to keep them under categories. The study is based on the inductive procedure of Qualitative Content Analysis. The idea was to formulate a criterion of definitions derived from theoretical background and research questions which determined the aspects of the textual material taken into account to form various issues/themes (Mayring, 2000). Codebooks are essential to analyzing qualitative research.

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According to DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall & Mcculloch (2011), a codebook can be said to be a set of codes, definitions, and examples used as a guide to help analyse interview data. MacQueen et al (2008) recommend that each codebook entry should contain the code, a brief definition, a full definition, and guidelines to know when to use the code, guidelines for when or when not to use the code. In achieving this, a coding sheet (as shown on Appendix I and II) which is used to record information as given in the codebook to reduce or re-organise data, was used. In order to establish the major themes in the posts, the researcher investigated the nature of comments, audio, visual implications and/or the subject matter of every post. The selected texts were queried and interpreted to formulate major themes. The categories and coding agenda (as shown in Appendix I) were revised thrice more to ensure the reliability of the study. Such themes, for instance, included "relationship management", "entertainment", "information giving/receiving" and "environmental scanning."

3.4.2 Coders

Qualitative Content Analysis lays emphasis on the need for coders to be trained in order to maximise validity (Mayring, 2000). According to Babbie (2004), a coder is someone trained by the researcher, to locate the variables and interpret the codes. Two coders who are undergraduate students in University of Education, Winneba (Department of English Education) were taken through the themes in order to serve as guides during the coding process. Again, Mayring (2000) states that inter-coder reliability must be tested in order to reduce errors as a result of the varying backgrounds of the coders. This also acts as a check on the subjectivity levels of coders. The coders were asked to code different selected posts, either updates or follow up comments by Tigo Ghana and stakeholders online. This was used to serve as a test for reliability and it was supervised by the researcher. The coders agreed on 9 posts out of 10 used for the test.

Turner (2006) and Mayring (2000) stipulate that 0.7 coder agreement is acceptable. That is:

Percentage of Agreement = Number of Agreement over (Total number of Agreement + Disagreement) times 100%

$$\text{Percentage of Agreement} = \frac{Number\ of\ Agreement}{Number\ of\ Agreement + Number\ Disagreement} \times 100\%$$

Therefore, 9 agreements represent 0.9 coder agreement on the scale of whole number one (1).
10 agreements minus (-) 1 disagreement out of total sample = 90% agreement in percentage or (0.9 out of a scale of 1)

$$\text{Percentage of Agreement} = \frac{Agreement}{Agreement + Disagreement} \times 100\%$$

$$\text{Percentage of Agreement} = \frac{9}{9+1} \times 100\%$$

$$= \frac{9}{10} \times 100\%$$

$$= 90\% \ (0.9 \text{ out of scale of } 1)$$

3.5 Data Collection
3.5.1 Interviews

Wragg (2002) notes that this instrument allows the interviewer to ask initial questions, followed by probes meant to seek clarification of issues raised. Zhang & Wildermuth (2009) assert that Qualitative Content Analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes, and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text. Interviews with the Head of Digital Communication and the Public Relations Manager of Tigo Ghana were used to collect data.

3.5.2 Distanced Virtual Ethnography

Evans (2013) refers to Distanced virtual ethnography as research which is constituted by the evaluation of sources such as texts, images, or emoticons and the observation (but not participation) of social interactions in online spaces. The Internet is an open context for social interactions where practices, meanings and identities are intermingled (Figaredo, Beaulieu, Estalella, Gómez, Schnettler and Read, 2007). To answer part of the research questions, the study adopted the distanced virtual ethnography. The data that was needed for this study was information that was already published and

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available on the social media platforms of Tigo Ghana. In this way, Slater (2000) explains that data can be located and archived from the internet without having the data recorded and transcribed as the traditional ethnographer would need to do.

In order to locate the issues/themes embedded in Tigo's posts, the researcher archived the selected posts from the social media platforms of Tigo Ghana. Again, in order to interrogate the kind of relationship or expectation fulfillment or gap–filling between Tigo Ghana and its stakeholders, posts considered to be under same issues were categorised and analysed. Selecting online posts can be done without sacrificing the need for the researcher to participate within the environment (Evans, 2013). Morton (2001) intimates that traditional ethnography involves the researcher embedding himself/herself within a community under research, but that is not necessary for researchers using the internet as the location for community as a field of study.

Unlike what happens in traditional ethnography where the immersion in a specific locality and participant observation are still the cornerstones of ethnographic research, Evans (2013, p. 3) notes that the concept 'field' in virtual ethnography is altered in an extreme manner, "since the field is now text on a screen and the group of people involved in the community can be scattered worldwide in physical geography." The field is undefined and unclear, notwithstanding the fact that social media, empowered by technology, provides common space for all users. The researcher was therefore able to collect data for the study without necessarily getting involved and participating in the environment. However, the researcher observed closely interactions on Tigo social media platforms for six (6) months. The selected posts were archived for analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis
3.6.1 Textual Analysis

Cross (2012) indicates that when we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text. In any particular culture, at particular times, texts are interpreted as an attempt to make sense of how the people make sense of the world around them (Herman, Swiss & Sloop, 1997). Also, textual analysis investigates the forms of texts in order to explore a text's main elements and the functions they serve in the creation of meaning (Silverman, 2001). Mckee (2003) asserts that textual analysis is useful for researchers working in Media Studies and Mass Communication. This study therefore employed textual analysis to investigate the themes found on social media by Tigo Ghana in managing issues with stakeholders for meaningful participation.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Study

Merriam and Associates (2002) believe that reliability is particularly problematic in the social sciences simply because human behaviour is never static, nor is what many experience necessarily more reliable than what one person experiences. However, according to Brink (1999), validity in research is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of scientific findings. Creswell (2014) provides a list of eight primary verification procedures/strategies found to be easy and frequently used that researchers can use to validate their qualitative study. They are prolonged engagement and persistent observation; triangulation; peer review and debriefing; negative case analysis; clarification of research bias; member checking; rich thick description, external audits and transferability. Three of the verification procedures namely, triangulation, rich thick description and transferability was adopted for this study. Four types of triangulations were found by Lincoln and Guba (2000): data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. In this study, data triangulation and respondent triangulation were used (Kusi, 2012).

According to Guion, Diehl and McDonald (2011), data triangulation examines the consistency of different data sources within the same methodology. In this study, data was collected from interviews and posts on social media. Kusi (2012) posits that research participants can be given the opportunity to review the findings by asking them questions such as: "what do you think about the finding," "do you agree or disagree with my conclusion?" When response confirms findings, then validity is assured. Noble and Smith (2015) posit that rich, thick, verbatim descriptions of participants' accounts provide support for the findings. Thick description is a term used to characterise the process of paying attention to contextual

detail in observing and interpreting social meaning when conducting qualitative research. This study provides detailed description of the findings of issues management by Tigo Ghana using social media. Noble and Smith (2015) refer to reliability as the consistency of the analytical procedures, including accounting for personal and research method biases that may have influenced the findings. In order to ensure reliability of the study, the researcher conducted a preliminary online content analysis and later conducted interviews. The researcher observed active followers/stakeholders online for some six (6) months. Data gathered was also subjected to rigorous interrogation before drawing conclusions for the study.

3.8 Access into the Field

The researcher took an introductory letter from his department, the Department of Communication and Media Studies, University of Education, Winneba, to the Head of Corporate Communications of Tigo Ghana to negotiate access. After two weeks a follow up call was made to ask for feedback. The researcher was then given access to commence data collection. A date was mutually scheduled and on the set date the researcher went to interview the Head of Digital Communication and the Public Relations Manager of Tigo Ghana. Also, as a result of the fact that this study is partly online research, it was necessary that the researcher gained access to the various social media platforms to be used in the study. The researcher therefore followed a series of steps in order to gain access into the field. First of all, the researcher followed and liked the various social media platforms used by Tigo Ghana. This was done since the researcher had personal social media accounts that gave him access to their social media platforms. Stakeholders' interactions with Tigo Ghana were also accessed from the social media sites since information on the social media there are permanent and can be archived.

3.9 Data Handling and Analysis

Data from the interviews were transcribed and after immersion into the data, issues/themes were developed to make meaning out of it (Creswell, 2008). To answer part of the research questions, the researcher made inferences from the transcription after several readings to make sense out of it. Tigo Ghana requested that the privacy of information given be protected. The researcher was given permission to do interviews, visit Tigo's social media and verify information from stakeholders online. Permission was granted for every data gathered from Tigo's social media. Analysis was done in three phases. The researcher read severally the posts on social media of Tigo Ghana for a deeper knowledge and understanding of the issues embedded in the posts/updates. After this, issues, scenarios, expressions and symbols pertaining to particular meaning(s) and suggested meanings were underlined and noted down. These underlined subjects were cross-matched to find similarities or differences in their meanings. The posts were re-read for the third and fourth times in order for the researcher to put the marked subjects into themes.

3.10 Summary

The above chapter discussed the research approach for the study. The chapter is organized as follows; research approach, design, population, coding and categorization, and data analysis. It elaborated on the categorisation and coding process employed for the establishment of the major themes for analysis. It also discussed the data analysis tool used for the research as well as the methods that were used to gather data for the research questions. Finally, the chapter presents the basis for the validity and reliability of the study as well as the ethical issues involved in the handling of data and analysis for the study.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS
4.1 Introduction

This study sought to examine the public relations roles social media play for Tigo. This question also sought to unravel which public relations role is extensively enacted/performed when Tigo uses social media to manage issues. The two respondents Head of Digital Communication (HDC) and the Public Relations Officer (PRO) at Tigo confirmed that social media played diverse roles in managing issues. Sha and Dozier (2012) observe that utilizations of social media are not public relations roles enactment in

itself. However, utilisations are considered to be the consequences of role enactment. This assertion agreed with Dozier & Broom (2006) saying that utilizations need to be treated as separate constructs for analysis sake, then correspond them to the public relations original set of roles. Hence, Lee, Tisdale and Diddams (2012) conceptualise social media utilisations corresponding to public relations roles as follows:

1. Technician role practitioners are more likely to use social media in one-way (unidirectional) information dissemination.
2. Expert prescribers are more likely than practitioners enacting other organisational roles to use social media for non-aligned purposes.
3. Communication facilitators are more likely than practitioners enacting other organisational roles to use social media for dialogic social media utilisation.
4. Practitioners enacting the problem-solving facilitator role are more likely than practitioners enacting other organisational roles to use social media for organisational change (p.15-21).

From the corresponding public relations roles to social media utilisations above, the various roles and utilisations are explained. Firstly, the communication technician role such as writing press releases, creating fliers, and updating media lists focus on the production and dissemination of public relations materials (Broom & Smith, 1979). This role is not involved with identifying or solving problems (ibid). Also, the expert prescriber identifies communication problems between an organisation and its publics and suggests solutions to those problems (Broom & Smith, 1979). Again, the role of the communication facilitator is to facilitate two-way communication between an organisation and its publics (Broom & Smith, 1979). The two-way symmetrical communication ensures that all parties have adequate information to make decisions of mutual benefit (Broom & Smith, 1979; Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Finally, the role of problem-solving process facilitator is similar to that of the expert prescriber in that the goal of the problem-solving facilitator is to identify and solve problems (Broom & Smith, 1979).

4.1.1 Social media for one-way message dissemination

The study found that social media platforms served to facilitate technician role once it allowed information to be channeled through it. Tigo Ghana used certain social media purposely for pushing information (one-way message dissemination) to stakeholders without necessarily expecting feedback on them. Some of the messages sent out via social media were on promotions, industry announcements and the organisation's information, among others. One example of industry announcement made on social media was when the National Media Commission decided to let all telecommunication service providers use the same code for recharging and checking credit/air time. Twitter and Facebook were sometimes also used to send one-way information which do not demand some kind of feedback at all cost. That is, even though Facebook and Twitter platforms can be used for two-way communication, Tigo chooses to use them sometimes as one way communication channel.

Technician role of public relations mainly is when one-way information is given out by an organisation. Whatever channel that helps the practitioner to fulfill the role of sending information to a target audience makes the technician role complete. Social media has also entrenched deeply the role of reaching target audience and even beyond. It has helped in terms of speed, reach, format of message and easy accessibility and retrieval of information coming from the organisation.

4.1.2 Social media for non-aligned purposes

Data gathered showed that Facebook and Twitter platforms once again served the non-aligned purpose role of social media for Tigo. Facebook and Twitter were used for non-aligned purposes such as giving information on corporate social responsibility endeavours and events sponsorships by Tigo Ghana. An example is the *Digital Change Makers* that give opportunity for Technology Savvies to compete with innovative ideas that use Technology to bring change to the youth and children. The most recent online evidence on *Digital Change Makers* competition as a non-aligned use of social media is the *'Autism Aid App'* which emerged as the best innovation in the competition within the period of the study. The use of the *Autism Aid Application (App)*, as the name suggests, is to help autistic patients to be able to do certain basic things for themselves. This was done in commemoration of the world autistic day celebration. Online evidence also shows pictures and videos of donations of oil palm machine to women of Aboaso in the

Ashanti Region of Ghana. Others were pictures and videos on donation of school buildings and learning materials given out to pupils in part of Greater Accra region among a host of others. But all other platforms of social media used by Tigo Ghana do support the role of social media for non-aligned purpose as well.

Figure 1: Images showing Tigo Ghana's corporate social responsibility on social media for non-aligned purpose.

Source: CourtessyTigo Ghana's social media retrieved by the researcher.
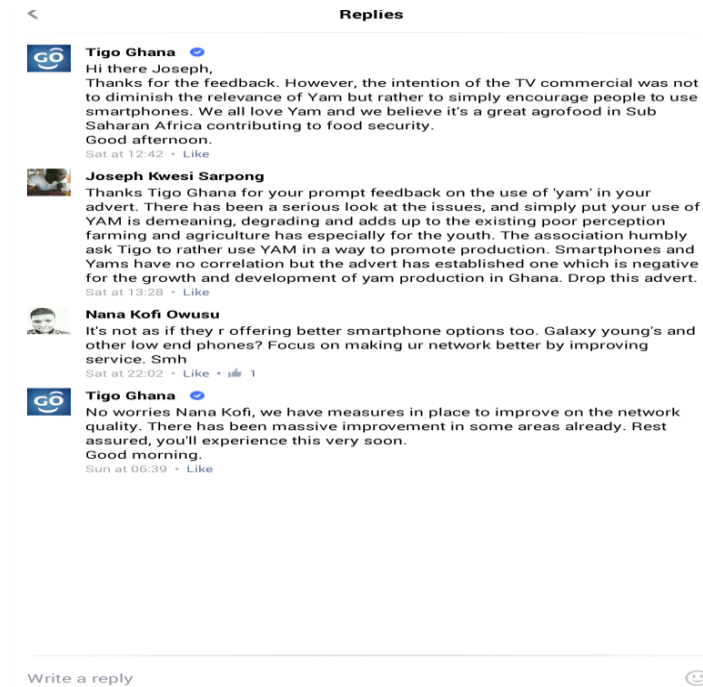
4.1.2 Dialogic social media utilisation

Interview response and online evidence showed that Tigo created diversified account like *Ask-Tigo* handle on Twitter purposely to discuss issues affecting customers. Both Tigo and customers used this account to engage in some questions and casual conversations from time to time. The example below captures the essence of the dialogic social media utilisation.

Customer: The network of the moment. No size.

Tigo Ghana: Certainly! (Name of customer mentioned: withheld). Hope you are gearing up for a smooth weekend.

Customer: Yesoo. But the terms and conditions attached to smart pack and *free bonto* is too much.

The conversation above is one of the many examples that illustrate the potency of social media to offer dialogic communication ability between an organisation and its stakeholders. Some of these conversations might not really be related to the organisation's operations.

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Figure 2: The texts below show a dialogic use of Tigo's social media on concern(s) of stakeholders

Source: Courtesy Tigo Ghana's social media retrieved by researcher.

The need to communicate with the feel of real human to human interaction via internet on the computer is very much sustained by social media's ability of two-way instantaneous communication function. The data below illustrates how two-way communication takes place on social media between Tigo and customers/stakeholders.

Figure 3: The figure below shows dialogic communication and relationship maintenance on social media.
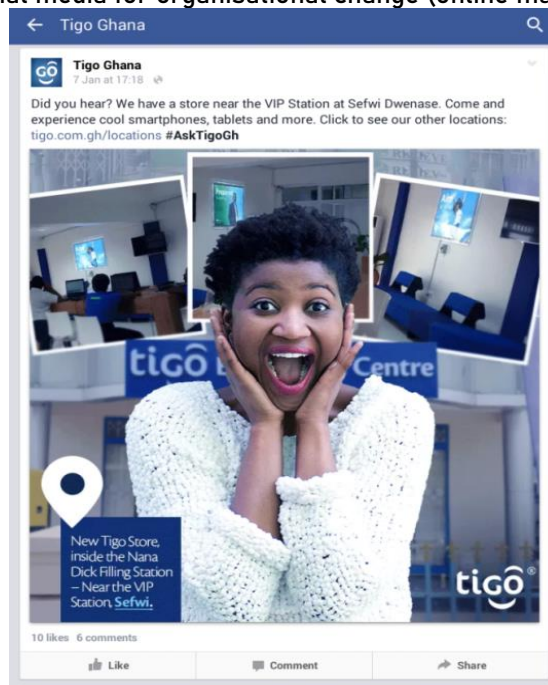

Source: Courtesy Tigo Ghana's social media retrieved by researcher.

4.1.3 SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Findings revealed that information from social media informs strategic decision making at Tigo Ghana. Interview responses both from the Head of Digital Communication and Public Relations Officer suggest that the different departments meet to determine how they use social media to achieve their goals ahead of time. The quote here supports the findings: We use the content calendar which is a plan of what you are going to plan on more frequent basis. It is based on market team, CSR etc on actions to be taken. So, every month we meet with all stakeholders such as product team, HR team and we plan exactly a month ahead to know what we can post on the social media. For example, when a brand like Samsung is going to release a new phone, we tweet for our customers to have firsthand information. Last month, we had a twitter chat with Head of Customer operations for customers to be educated and ask questions (Head of Digital Communication-Tigo Ghana).

In addition, social media has been used by Tigo to launch new phones, give pre-orders and advertise new shops were these products and more could be purchased. This is an extension of marketing team's strategy that is facilitated by social media.

Figure 4: Image showing social media for organisational change (online marketing).

Source: Courtesy Tigo Ghana's social media retrieved by researcher.

The above photograph gives information on social media use for organisational change (online marketing strategy). Tigo also goes beyond offering social media engagements with stakeholders. It (Tigo) assesses the effects of its online engagement has on stakeholders. Regarding online assessment, a social media survey form is available online for stakeholders to fill and submit. The implication of the feedback from the online assessment can lead to improvement in the quality of Tigo's services and products.

Figure 5: An Image showing a social media survey form that Tigo Ghana uses online to evaluate customer social media engagement satisfaction.

Source: Courtesy Tigo Ghana's social media retrieved by researcher.

Generally, it was found that Tigo was actively present on social media platforms but was most active and interactive on Twitter and Facebook. The mere presence and initiative of sending out any form of communication fulfils the public relations role of a technician (Broom & Smith, 1979). Tigo Ghana used the social media platforms to send out information to stakeholders. Lee (2012) reports that technicians are more likely than practitioners enacting other organisational roles to use social media for one-way message dissemination. With the exception of social media for one-way message dissemination (technician role), all other social media purposes (for: non-aligned purpose, dialogic communication and organisational change) are all considered to be managerial role of public relations.

Interview responses from Tigo's HDC/PRO revealed that Tigo appoints social media representatives to monitor and track conversations on social media. Also, interview response indicated that online software like sysomos and radian6 are also used to track conversation online, to know who is saying something about Tigo. Dozier (1989) remarks that tools that improve research capabilities are more beneficial to managers. According to the HDC interviewed at Tigo Ghana, the management is able to make informed decisions based on threats and opportunities they receive from social media. Hence, social media played the public relations role of a manager for Tigo.

Social media enacted expert prescriber role of public relations for Tigo. Findings showed that social media was used as a tool for corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities by showing texts (pictures, video setc) on CSR activities undertaken by the organisation. Facebook and Twitter were used by Tigo for Digital innovation competition like the '*Tigo Digital Change Maker competition*' – a competition that allows people to make use of technology to come up with innovation to help children and youth. Social media's ability to help Tigo to offer evidence on CSR activities and other non-aligned purposes like the *digital change maker* relates to playing the role of expert prescriber for Tigo, since it engages stakeholders on issues which do not relate to core activities of their business. Furthermore, the opportunity social media gives in relation to role of communication facilitator is the online evidence where Tigo could use Twitter and Facebook especially to engage stakeholders in online conversations. For instance, interview and online distanced virtual ethnography proved that on daily basis, Tigo receives

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tweets, questions, comments, and other online engagements like *'liking'* or *'sharing'* Tigo's online updates. Additionally, social media is used for organisational change by using information retrieved online to inform strategic decisions on the organisation. Data from interview showed that as part of Tigo's management meetings, a month ahead of time, different departments like Product team, Human resource team and Corporate social responsibility team come together to plan a month ahead the kind of strategic communication that would be on social media from each department. This reinforces the finding that social media is used for organisational change where it influences strategic planning of an organisation (Institute of Public Relations, 208).

From the findings above, technology plays a unique role in public relations. Role enactment and its relation to the adoption of new technology is something that came along time before social media or even the World Wide Web (Anderson &Reagan, 1992; Dozier, 1989). Each social media platform plays a unique role for different practitioners. New technologies might be more beneficial to managers or technicians, depending on what the new technology helps the practitioner do (Dozier, 1989). While neither had adopted technology more quickly, managers and technicians had adopted different tools based on the tasks they perform (Anderson & Reagan, 1992).

In sum, data from the study show the most occurring role social media was utilised for was information dissemination. This information dissemination was mainly one- to- many (Tigo - to - stakeholders) or one-to- one (Tigo-to-stakeholder/customer). It is not always a one-way affair, even though information disseminated might not have been sent to solicit response but social media give that opportunity for stakeholders to respond to any nature of information disseminated. Findings show that the widely used social media platforms for diverse public relations roles concurrently at Tigo are Facebook and Twitter. Social media enacts extensively the one-way message dissemination role in addition to less active roles such as social media for non-aligned purposes, dialogic social media utilisation, and social media for organisational change (Lee et al., 2012).

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Issues were found to be managed on social media in diverse ways these diverse ways include relationship building and mutual participation between Tigo and its stakeholders. The advent of social media applications such as Facebook & Twitter have provided both Tigo and its stakeholders the opportunity to use social media for mutual participation in resolving issues and relationship building. Those who practice public relations continue to agree strongly that social and other emerging media are changing the way public relations is practiced (Wright & Hinson, 2014).

The findings revealed that primarily, attempt by Tigo to send out information on any of the social media platforms played the basic function of a technician role of public relations (one-way message dissemination). That is, using social media to make any move to get information out for stakeholders' consumption is can be likened to the technician role of public relations. Facebook and Twitter were mostly used for technician role, even though all social media platforms can also enact technician role. Furthermore, social media platforms (Twitter and Facebook) used by Tigo for public relations enacted the managerial role (dialogic social media utilisation, social media for organisational change and non-aligned purpose). The choice of the use of a particular platform over the other depended on its ability to achieve a particular purpose per the objective of Tigo. For instance, Facebook and Twitter were very good for interactive dialogic communication. This quality of interactive nature is not available to all social media platforms.

In addition, social media interactions between Tigo and its stakeholders unveiled different themes that interactions revolved around. The interactions were basically on "information giving/seeking", "entertainment", "environmental scanning" and "relationship building/maintenance." Most communications on the social media platforms revealed that corporate ability communication strategy was employed the most. In the case of corporate ability communication strategy, emphasis was placed more on products and services of Tigo rather than seeking to build relationship with stakeholders. However, corporate social responsibility ability and a blend of both strategies were adopted at certain times. Corporate social responsibility ability was associated with more views, likes and sharing of contents of Tigo social media. The theories of issues management and relationship management together aim at mutual participation to

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settle issues and have mutual benefits, hence platforms that would offer such opportunities with respect to the social media platforms would be adopted depending on what Tigo seeks to achieve.

This study investigated the roles, issues and communication strategies regarding social media use in managing issues by Tigo Ghana. Based on the key findings that emerged, it can be concluded that Tigo was able to use different formats of communication tactically depending on which channel of social media they wanted to use and what kind of information they needed to send out. Facebook and Twitter support all format of information to be sent on social media. However, not all issues are managed to its final conclusion on social media. In some cases of further actions needed beyond social media platforms, actions are taken by Tigo to resolve issues with stakeholders and customers. Furthermore, the purpose of engagement online is to set the path for further actions to take place to resolve issues. Unlike traditional means of communication, issues can be followed and interrogated for immediate response on social media platforms.

The special ability of social media to facilitate participation in dialogic communication and engagement in addressing issues helps to strengthen relationship building for the good of organisations and individuals. The findings revealed that both Tigo and its stakeholders mutually participated and built relationships on social media as foundations for managing issues that arose from time to time.

From the results of this study, the recommendations below can be considered: firstly, organisations need to consider prioritising corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication strategy as it has been found to aid in stakeholder engagement. The first recommendation above agrees with Haigh et al's. (2013) assertion that when organisations discuss corporate social responsibility on their social media pages, stakeholders' attitudes, perceptions of corporate social responsibility, and purchase intent increases. When using social media, organisations take advantage of CSR communication strategy, it is very likely to increase its engagement with stakeholders for the benefit of both organisations and its stakeholders. Strategising in communication would help the organisation to interact and receive valuable feedback from its stakeholders.

A remarkable point that was found in analysis stage of the study was domination of "information giving" theme as compared to other emerging themes. Tigo mainly used social media to push information. A tactical approach of creating information to connect to stakeholders on personal level should be considered. Stakeholders should be able to identify with most messages that have "information giving" as primary theme from Tigo. Issues management is a strategic skill that needs to be proficiently intertwined in all forms of communication on social media.

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