

Analyse the Communication Strategies Employed by Tigo Ghana for its Issues Management on Social Media

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Abstract

This article is analyse the communication strategies employed by Tigo Ghana for its issues management on social media in Ghana. Fong and Yazdanifard (2014) assert that social media has unquestionably altered the way big companies and multinational corporations communicate with their customers/stakeholders in recent times. Social media has helped corporations tell customers (and potential customers) who they are. It has also helped organisations in their marketing strategies, among other uses (ibid.). One critical area that cannot be downplayed in stakeholder-organisation relationship could be the occasional issues and conflict of interests that arise on social media. Success in managing these issues or resolving such conflicts benefits both corporations and stakeholders (customers). Some of these online interactional benefits include the ability to relate to others, toleration of differing viewpoints, expression of thoughts and feelings in a healthy way, and the practice of critical thinking skills. Haigh, Brubaker and Whiteside found stakeholders' perception of an organisation to be more positive after they had interacted with the organisation's social media page. Tigo Ghana is one of the leading telecommunications companies in Ghana (Tigo-Ghana, n.d.). It provides information across all social media platforms. It operates on Twitter, Facebook, SnapChat, Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp. Though stakeholders/customers interact with Tigo Ghana on all the social media platforms, they however do most of these interactions on Twitter and Facebook. While Corporations have different experiences engaging their stakeholders on social media for diverse reasons and benefits, their consumers/stakeholders continually use these communication technologies to measure or verify the sources of information, insights, and opinions. Research related to social media use by the organisation and its stakeholders has largely been explored in the areas of interpersonal usage and its importance to individual users. Wright & Hinson for example have indicated that one task or set of tasks that has become more and more prevalent in the field of public relations is the utilisation of social media tools to engage stakeholders in two-way communication. Also, studies have shown that over the past few years, social media networking has evolved from a personal interest to a professional one and increasingly, businesses are finding ways to promote products and services, connect with customers, generate new ones, recruit employees and drive revenue all through social media (CareerBuilder, n.d.). This study, however, investigated how Tigo Ghana manages issues with its customers on social media; in effect, how the organisation involves stakeholders in their (organisation's) online engagements and responds to their needs.

Keywords: Major issues Tigo Ghana Handles/Manages Social Media, Public Relation, Organizational Issues, Telecommunication in Ghana

1.0 INTRODUCTION

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 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. 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.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This study of social media use in organisations is important especially to managers/practitioners of public relations using internet-mediated communication. The study would assist managers/practitioners using online communication technology to understand how stakeholders are affected and perceive their online engagements and how it influences stakeholders' relationship with an organisation. Again, this study will give deeper insights into relevant issues such as enhancement of products/services and customer care that needs attention of managers of internet-mediated communication in organisations to successfully manage issues; turning issues of potential threat into opportunities for the organisations' and stakeholders' benefit in the wake of social media usage. Also, the study increases awareness in managers of internet-mediated communication about the trends in social media use in organisations and improve the level of knowledge needed in managing online issues.

Furthermore, this study will give practical information on best practices and communication strategies managers of internet communication platforms require to assist them in dealing with stakeholders'/customers' desire/expectation to have online interaction with an organisation. This study will add to existing literature on social media use in organisations. Finally, the study will assist strategic management decision for organisations to invest more into online managing of issues in the advent of social media. The study is limited to Millicom Ghana (Tigo) and their interactions with stakeholders on social media. Though Tigo Ghana engages stakeholders on several social media platforms, however Facebook and Twitter would be considered due to their extensive use for interaction between Tigo and its stakeholders. The choice of Millicom Ghana (Tigo) was based on researcher's easy access and willingness on the part of Tigo to provide data for the study (Marvasti, 2005).

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, Ithor (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 organisation, 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 (Levenshush, 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.

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 disservice 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 Emarketer (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.

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 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, Broadbandhome/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 these have 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.

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%

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

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)

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

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

$$= \frac{9}{10} \times 100\% \\ = 90\% \text{ (0.9 out of scale of 1)}$$

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 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.

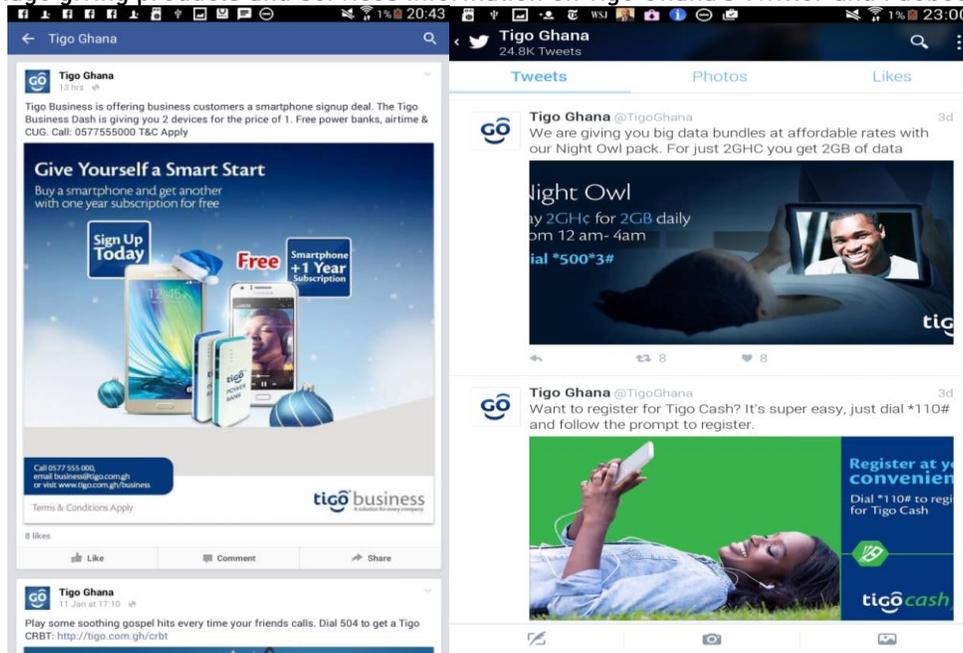
4.0 DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The essence of this question was to find out what communication strategies Tigo was likely to be using as it engages customers/stakeholders on social media. Kim and Reber (2008) assert that corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication strategy is "a central relationship building activity" (p. 341).

Findings revealed that every strategy chosen was dependent upon the particular kind of social media platform being considered. The data showed that Tigo mostly used corporate ability communication strategies on Twitter and Facebook. The tweets and posts within corporate ability communication strategy (Haigh, 2012) included information on Tigo’s organisational information, the organisation’s products and services. Corporate ability communication strategy gives information on organisation’s services and product while the corporate social responsibility communication strategy gives information on CSR and activities showing social concerns (Haigh, 2012).

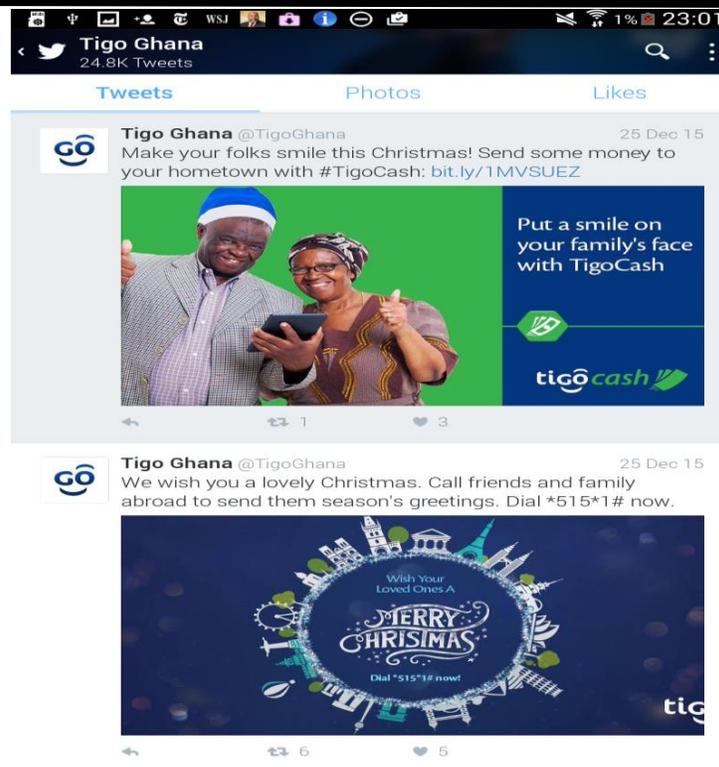
Figure 7: Image giving products and services information on Tigo Ghana’s Twitter and Facebook



Source: Courtesy Tigo Ghana’s social media retrieved researcher

The pictures above from Facebook and Twitter shows that Tigo uses both Facebook and Twitter extensively for information regarding their products and services, this fulfills the social media corporate ability communication strategy (Haigh, 2012). The information given in the figure above shows advertisements on products for sale as well as services/promotions on offer by Tigo. It was also found that occasionally, a blend of both corporate social responsibility and corporate ability communication strategies were used on all social media platforms. The picture below has a blend of Corporate Social Responsibility strategy with corporate ability communication strategy o social media. Their content partly says *make your folks smilethis Christmas*, which depicts the content is showing social concern while other part is drawing attention to Tigo’s service *send some money to your hometown with TigoCash*.

Figure 8: Image shows a blend of corporate social responsibility and corporate ability communication strategies.



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

The corporate ability communication strategy by Tigo affirms Haigh's (2012) assertion that organisations use more corporate ability on social media platforms. However, recurring focus on corporate ability communication strategy could deny Tigo the great benefit corporate social responsibility communication strategy can offer them (Tigo Ghana and stakeholders). Kim and Reber (2008) assert that CSR communication strategy helps and organisation to build relationships with stakeholders than corporate ability communication strategy does. There is therefore a likely disadvantage Tigo faces in using more of corporate ability communication strategy.

Findings on Tigo's official Twitter handle and Facebook page show that it actively used these platforms to engage in the direction of corporate ability communication strategy. More attention on corporate ability communication strategy does not support relationship building much and also does little to encourage participation in dealing with mutual matters which issues management seeks to achieve. This means organisations stand to lose more in terms of valuable relationships needed to build secure organization – stakeholder/customer relationship. Good relationship with stakeholders stands to help the organisation in regard to critical issues management. According to Haigh, Brubaker & Whiteside (2013) when organisations discuss corporate social responsibility on their social media pages, it enhances stakeholders' positive attitudes, perceptions of corporation, and purchase intent also increases.

In relating corporate social responsibility communication strategy to the 'expectation gap theme' under themes of issue, corporate social responsibilities communication strategy fills the gap of the expectation theme. Customers/stakeholders are likely to have a connection to what they think (expects) they should get from or be given by an organisation. The claim: *Official Twitter Account For Tigo Ghana. We focus on consistently meeting and exceeding customer's expectations and developing an inspirational brand* on Tigo's official Twitter Profile support the expectation theme of managing issues.

In this sense, corporate social responsibility communication strategy gives a positive perception of an organisation in the minds of stakeholders. In the stakeholders' estimation, the organisation makes effort to build relationship with the community that the organisation operates in. More attention on corporate ability communication strategy does not support relationship building that much and also does little to encourage stakeholder participation in resolving matters which issues management seeks to

achieve. This means that organisations stand to lose more as it contradicts the findings of Haigh, Brubaker & Whiteside (2013) which states that when organisations discuss corporate social responsibility on their social media pages, stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions of corporation reputation is enhanced, and purchase intent also rises.

Furthermore, it was found that some updates, tweets or posts sometimes contained more than one communication strategy. The study revealed that some of the strategies Tigo uses sometimes carry one main idea, for example, a non-aligned content such as music video but in the same content customers are given shortcodes that talk about cheaper charge on Tigo data plans. For instance, on the Tigo *deezer platform* meant for music content only which is linked to their social media, commercials on data plans could be seen alongside the music content posted. Such instances indicate that the video/picture content given has a blend of communication strategies.

From the social media platforms, findings showed that both pictures and videos on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) were present on Twitter and Facebook. Some of these pictures included donations of school buildings, learning materials for school children, donations to winners of events (for instance *Digital Change Makers winners*), Application development (Autism Application), oil palm processing machine to women in palm oil production, baby kits to mothers on Mother's Day among a host of them. The picture below shows CSR activities posted on Facebook and Twitter giving information on winners of events and others.

Figure 9: Pictures showing a presentation of awards to winners of Tigo's Digital Change Makers Competition



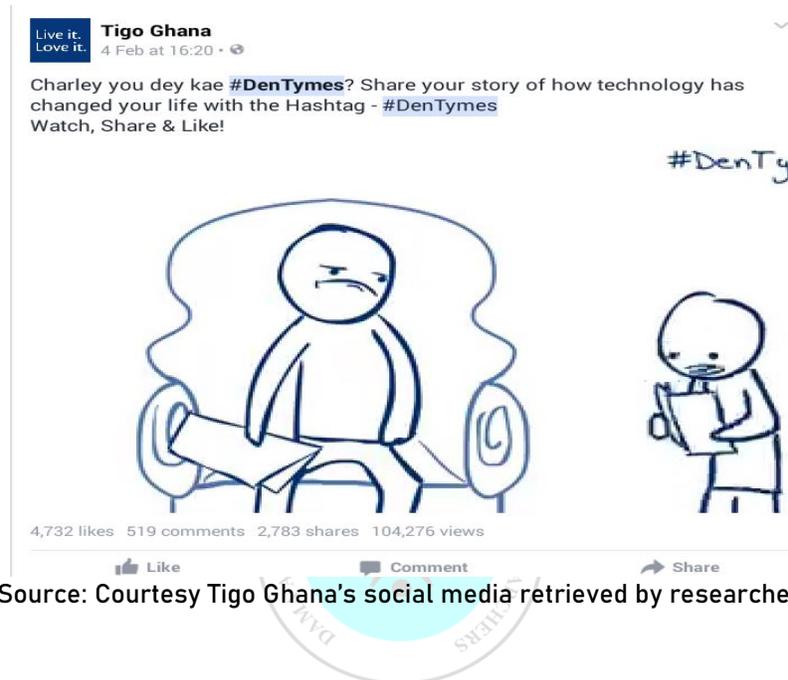
Source: Courtesy Tigo Ghana's social media retrieved by researcher

4.2 Corporate ability and corporate social responsibility communication strategies

The corporate ability information comprises information that shows what Tigo has to show off or give in terms of quality and competitiveness of services and products. Such information as shown on social media included awards won by Tigo, adverts on new promotion, sale of phones, pictures of staff

and many others. Findings revealed that online engagements by customers/stakeholders such as 'liking' a post, sharing post contents and making positive comments on posts were massively geared towards contents or information that pertained to corporate social responsibilities activities rather than those contents posted on corporate ability. To get the attention of customers to engage on social media therefore the organisation could strategically design the corporate ability contents to blend with corporate social responsibility in order to solicit more engagements with customers/stakeholders on social media.

Figure 10: A picture showing thousands of likes, shares and views of entertainment (corporate social responsibility communication strategy) content of post on Tigo's social media.



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 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.

Though the researcher sought to study both internal and external stakeholders' issues management on Tigo's social media, due to time constraint and strict internal controls at Tigo with regard to the use of social media the researcher had to study only external stakeholders. Finally, this study does not attempt to make any generalisations for all organisations and how they manage issues using social media but may be related to other telecommunication organisations on social media.

A further study could consider a quantitative approach to studying the assertion by Haigh et al. (2013) that when organisations discuss corporate social responsibility on their social media pages stakeholders' attitudes, perceptions of corporate social responsibility, and purchase intent increases. Also, a related study on the extent of social media use among other local and multi-national organisations in Ghana can be done. A study on the perceptions and expectations of stakeholders on social media needs critical research as well.

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