

Public Relations Discourse on X (Twitter) and Analysis of Public Relations

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ABSTRACT

In the twenty-first century, public relations gained a new form along with digital media, as well as having a wider area of dialogue. Especially social media offers new opportunities for the development of public relations strategies that focus on building and developing relationships with sharers. While creating dialogical, interactive and relationship development-oriented strategies with social media as a part of public relations, it is also thought to contribute to the development of theory and practice. As previous studies have focused on how web-based communication is used for public relations purposes, this study aims to reveal what is published about public relations on X (Twitter) and how the features of the platform can contribute to public relations practices. In order to examine how public relations discourse is represented on social media, the contents obtained by using the hashtags #halklailiskiler and #publicrelations on X (Twitter) were analyzed. Using content analysis, an exploratory research focused on the type of messages shared and the themes that emerged about public relations were evaluated qualitatively. As a result of the research, the possibilities of acquiring, developing and distributing information in the field of public relations and the ability to strengthen the public relations strategy of social media are emphasized. Since the study covers a two-month period and is researched through a single medium, it has been interpreted with limited data.

Keywords: *Public Relations, social media, X (Twitter), representation.*

INTRODUCTION

The approach that public relations has had since the time when it was professionally mentioned is to regulate the relations of an institution by establishing strategic communication with its target audiences. Public relations, which is an integral part of a successful institution, is used to strengthen the image, create new target audiences, and draw attention to a subject. Press releases are only one part of corporate mission and vision setting, image creation and public relations strategies. However, public relations, which is defined as a set of activities aimed at ensuring an integration between the institution and its environment, is tried to be understood with a two-pronged approach. The first of these involves the public relations or relations of an institution, while the other covers the branch of science used to describe a practice or technique (Göksel, 1994: 5). Today, public relations theory and practice are largely based on management perspectives and a multifaceted understanding that prioritizes a strategic focus on the

field. Public relations now proceeds with information focusing on multifaceted interdisciplinary inquiries (Valentini & Edwards, 2019). With this feature, an important aspect of public relations is to form ideas. This understanding has not only changed the way of communicating with digital networks and even the way of doing business, but has also dominated an area of managerial and organizational information where analyzes of (Dietrich, 2016: 17) public relations theory and practice can be made and monitored. In this regard, public relations has a changing and dynamic structure that progresses with the development of communication technologies. Generally, the internet can turn into a tool that provides solutions to modern public relations, providing feedback, crisis management, information production, and communication difficulties in a special context.

This study, which examines the issues discussed by public relations on social media, accesses public relations information and investigates its potential benefits, discovers the purpose for which right relations information is shared. In this context, it discusses how much social media includes public relations theory and practice through public relations discourse. Twitter, which creates new opportunities in public relations studies, examines how public relations discourse is represented by revealing the contributions of content that strengthens public relations theory and practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media serves as a vital tool for public relations practitioners, offering insights into effective communication strategies and optimal ways to engage their target audience. Beyond its role as an effective marketing medium, well-managed digital content on social media platforms has the potential to influence behavior (Sutjadi & Prasetya, 2021; Putri & Oktaviani, 2022; Tyas & Hutagaol, 2021). This transformative potential is evident in content tailored to the unique features of each social media tool. While many platforms share similar structures, each possesses distinct characteristics and user demographics, necessitating tailored PR approaches that align with platform dynamics and audience preferences.

Public relations focuses on establishing and developing relationships with social media and target audiences. And as for its base, it is based on dialogue. It is aimed to maintain the mutual relationship with the dialogue and to ensure participation. Therefore, digital communication platforms have an important place in public relations studies in terms of creating an interactive, continuous and meaningful communication/relationship strategy. An important element that emphasizes public relations messages on social media is Hashtags. Hashtags are one of the ways to initiate dialogue and draw boundaries to determine the categories of messages and shape the interaction process. It also facilitates the finding of relevant content and provides information exchange. Hashtags, which are an important tool for public relations in order to create a power that mobilizes the masses and to generate a community within the framework of a specific subject, can increase the value of shared content and thus play an important role in reflecting attitudes. Social media is used to present important

corporate values such as corporate news, product promotion, and event notification to the public, especially during periods of personal or corporate crisis. With social media, both institutions, corporate stakeholders and the public in general can request information, offer suggestions, help or request; in short, social media can be used as a method or technique of communication.

It is now one of the commonly accepted opinions that social media opens up new opportunities for the creation of innovative public relations strategies that focus on building and developing relationships with stakeholders on the basis of creating meaningful dialogue (Paliwoda-Matiolanska, vd., 2020). The reasons for the adoption and adaptation of this expanding sphere of influence of public relations in a short time are the formation of a competitive environment and easy and fast access to target audiences. So that a public relations process that cannot be active online and cannot communicate effectively will neither create the desired image nor maintain its existence (Petrovici, 2014: 80).

Social networks help target specific audiences in terms of public relations. X (Twitter) is used as an effective tool for this targeting. Despite Twitter being not the single and privileged platform, its short, instant and useful structure and real-time communication make this effect easier. X (Twitter), which is referred to as the biggest relational and communicative phenomenon on the internet aimed at sharing information and establishing connections with other users, offers much of this opportunity to communicate on social media (Xifra & Grau, 2010: 171) today, and since the basis of public relations is communication, it becomes an important tool that undertakes this function.

In their research with (2011) public relations practitioners, Evans et al. emphasize the importance of X (Twitter) as a tool that directly connects with the media and will not go out of style, but will always be at the forefront in creating an integrated campaign and communicating with the target audience. Xifra and Grau emphasize that as a result of (2010) the fact that this important tool also indirectly supports the development of public relations theory and practice, as well as being a tool of professional use, the contribution of shared professional experiences to the development of public relations knowledge and structure is clear. Saffer et al. made an approach about the description and perceptions of the profession in their research in which they showed that (2013) public relations is perceived as higher quality than a corporate account with high interaction. Accordingly, the level of X (Twitter) interaction affects the quality of the relationship.

The researches mostly provide recommendations by revealing opinions on how X (Twitter) is used and how it works successfully for public relations purposes (Evans vd., 2011) for (Su vd., 2017) (LaMarre vd., 2013) (Frame & Bratche, 2015) (Tarhan vd., 2022) (Yıldırım, 2014) (Algül & Daniş, 2020) (Çalışkan & Baytimur, 2018) (Dursun & Taşdemir 2021) (Arslan, 2017) (Tanyıldızı & Demirkıran, 2018). While these studies contribute to public relations practices, it can be assumed that they also improve public relations theory and practice since they reveal the use of X (Twitter) accounts according to the

interaction needs of followers. Furthermore communication has moved beyond one-way messaging, it has become digital and has become a goal as well as a tool for announcing campaigns. This purpose is experienced with social media, which carries the transparent cover of public relations. In this respect, social media has also revealed three communicative functions: information, participation and community (Su vd., 2017). For this reason, tweets have continued to increase their effectiveness by encouraging participation with informative content and community-building practices using hashtags. Therefore, it is no longer possible to keep public relations away or separate from these channels.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to focus on two main issues. The first is to consider the current state of Xifra and Grau's (2010) exploratory work. Hereunder, it is to determine what sharers post when they talk about public relations on X (Twitter) and how it contributes to and can be found in the theoretical and practical development of public relations. The second is; based on the (Taeyeon & Phua, 2020) views that hashtags are seen as a power to mobilize target audiences (Zahra, 2020), are used as community-building practices (Su vd., 2017) and reflect attitudes by increasing the perceived value of information, it is to evaluate that public relations discourse is used as an expression that shapes the content and draws attention to the content. From this point of view, the second purpose of the study is to determine whether the sharings made are used for public relations professions and practices or to draw attention to other issues.

Based on the aims of the study, analysing public relations discourse on X (Twitter) helps to understand how science and industry studies are constructed. In order to analyse how public relations discourse is used on X (Twitter) through the hashtags #halklailişkiler and #publicrelations, the research questions of the study were formed as follows on the basis of the question "What do X (Twitter) users say using the discourse of 'public relations' ?":

- a. What is the theoretical knowledge density of the posts made with the hashtag #halklailişkiler?
- b. What is the professional/practical knowledge density of the posts made with the hashtag #halklailişkiler?
- c. Has the hashtag #halklailişkiler been used in posts other than public relations profession and practices?
- d. What is the theoretical knowledge density of the posts made with the #publicrelations hashtag?
- e. What is the professional/practical knowledge density of the posts made with the hashtag #publicrelations?
- f. Has the hashtag #publicrelations been used in posts other than public relations profession and practices?

With this study, which adopts a qualitative approach to public relations discourse, the content published on X (Twitter) used to interact and disseminate

information, as well as the role it plays in following the general public and up-to-date topics are observed.

The data collected in the study were analyzed by content analysis. The data collected by content analysis are first conceptualized, then organized according to the concepts revealed and the themes explaining the data are determined. The aim here is gathering similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes and to interpret them by organizing them in a way that the reader can understand (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006: 227). Accordingly, categorical analysis was used in the research. According to this analysis, messages are grouped into categories according to certain criteria and then coded and based on the relevant dimensions of the research. After the categories are created, the collected data are placed in the categories and their frequencies are determined (Bilgin., 2014: 19). Qualitative and quantitative data are interpreted together, as the quantitative data obtained with this measurable analysis makes it possible to present a qualitative judgment (Koçak & Arun, 2013: 24).

Tweets, which are tweeted repeatedly and tweeted in response to a tweet were not included in the data collection process. The person or institutions sharing are not specified. The data were made under the same categories in both Turkish and English. The research covers two months between January and February 2023 with retrospective screening. The data obtained using the hashtags #halklailişkiler and #publicrelations were manually coded. A total of 366 tweets (#halklailişkiler=85; #publicrelations=281) were obtained and categorized to analyze the content after they were defined. In addition to the categories previously developed by Xifra and Grau in the categorization, new categories have been added:

- a. Job position: includes information about the announcements of job applicants and job seekers in the field of public relations for certain positions in public relations.
- b. Academic information-article: This category includes articles, comments and questions from people in the field.
- c. Application: It includes information sent by public relations executives as representatives of institutions.
- d. Press release: Contains links to press releases to be announced and read.
- e. General information about the public relations sector: It includes sharings about the communication strategies of the public relations sector or organizations.
- f. Research and surveys: It includes questionnaires and invitations that readers are asked to answer in order to find out their opinions.
- g. Announcements: The institution's tweets about the organization of events, announcements and seminars are included.
- h. Practice: It includes the posts about the practices made/to be made about public relations.
- i. Reward: Includes sharings about corporate or individual rewards received.
- j. Special day: It includes the sharings made about special days and meetings.
- k. Social responsibility: Sharings about social responsibility activities are included.

1. Visits: It includes sharings about corporate or individual visits.

The 12 categories created were grouped under three main headings as "public relations practices, theory development and information" and the fourth category was evaluated as others which are outside these three categories;

- a. Under the category of public relations practices, there are social responsibility studies, campaign and advertising, press release, research surveys, announcements of events.
- b. Under the category of theory development in public relations, there are academic studies and articles, theoretical information that can be useful in the sector, and educational programs where theoretical information is shared.
- c. The information category includes job application announcements, special day celebrations/commemorations and visits.
- d. In addition to these categories, the content is not related to public relations theory and profession, but only includes studies using hashtags.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part of the research, the data collected are analyzed and explanations are made to answer the research questions. The data in Table 1 shows the distribution of tweets containing the hashtag #halklailişkiler by categories. The data in Table 1 were obtained using Turkish characters and tweets in Turkish language were evaluated.

Table 1: Distribution of data collected with the hashtag #halklailişkiler

Theory development	Academic knowledge - Article	N = 11	28.95%	Σ N = 38 44.71%
	Sectoral publications	N = 19	50.0%	
	Education	N = 8	21.05%	
Public relations practices	Social responsibility	N = 1	4.55%	N = 22 25.88%
	Campaign-advertising	N = 5	22.72%	
	Press release	N = 3	13.63%	
	Research-survey	N = 1	4.55%	
	Announcement	N = 12	54.55%	
Informing-News	Job Position	N = 3	25.0%	N = 12 14.12%
	Reward	N = 1	8.34%	
	Special day/celebration/commemoration	N = 4	33.33%	
	Visiting	N = 4	33.33%	
Tweets using the hashtag #halklailişkiler, which relates to topics outside the theory and practical public relations and informing - news category.	The posts in this category were made for the purpose of complaint and criticism and the lack of public relations was mentioned.			N = 13 15.29%

$$\Sigma = N=85 = 100\%$$

According to Table 1, the theory development category includes 44.71% (N=38) of the analyzed tweets. The highest sharing rate in the distribution of theoretical knowledge is seen in sectoral publications (50.0%; N=19). The ratio of academic information and articles is 28.95% (N=11), and the sharings rate of education is 21.05% (N=8). The theory development category has the highest rate among other categories and has the most content sharing.

The public relations practices category contains 25.88% (N=22) of the tweets analyzed. Announcements constitute the majority of the posts in this category (54.55%; N=12). Consequently, campaign-advertising sharings are listed as 22.72% (N=5), press release as 13.63% (N=3), social responsibility as 4.55% (N=1) and research-survey as 4.55% (N=1).

The informing and news category includes 14.12% (N=12) of the analyzed tweets. Although the sharings in this category have the lowest rate among other categories, the distribution does not differ much in the categories within itself. Accordingly, in the informing and news category, special day/celebration/commemoration 33.33% (N=4) and visiting 33.33% (N=4) is rates are equal, while job position has a rate of 25.0% (N=3) and reward sharing has a rate of 8.34% (N=1).

Only #halklailişkiler tweets on topics other than theory and practical public relations studies were found to be 15.29% (N=13). The content of the posts in this category was constituted by complaints and criticism and the lack of public relations behavior in situations where X (Twitter) users expressed their dissatisfaction was mentioned.

Based on the data in Table 1, the answers to the research questions created within the framework of the subject specified on the basis of the research can be given as follows:

- a. The vast majority of the posts of those who post about public relations on X (Twitter) are the sharings about the theory of public relations and its practices. Academic articles, institutional publications and trainings can show that theoretical knowledge can be produced which can contribute to the practical aspect of public relations.
- b. Following theoretical information sharing, the most shared content consists of professional/practical information. These are the contents that directs communication, develops mutual relationships and aims for continuity of communication with followers.
- c. In addition to sharings of theoretical and practical public relations, it is also seen that the concept of public relations is used as a way that people use to draw attention to their problems. Considering that this ratio is higher than the informing-news category, it can be said that hashtags on social media offer an exit door to mobilize the relevant party, especially on controversial issues.

In Table 2, the data shows the distribution of tweets containing the #publicrelations tag by categories. The data in Table 2 were obtained using English characters and tweets in the same language were evaluated.

Table 2: Distribution of data collected with the hashtag #publicrelations

Theory development	Academic knowledge - Article	N = 34	20.86%	Σ N = 163 58.00%
	Sectoral publications	N = 115	70.55%	
	Education	N = 14	8.59%	
Public relations practices	Social responsibility	N = 9	30.0%	N = 30 10.68%
	Campaign-advertising	N = 13	43.34%	
	Press release	N = 6	20.0%	
	Research-survey	N = 1	3.33%	
	Announcement	N = 1	3.33%	
Informing-News	Job Position	N = 11	30.55%	N = 36 12.81%
	Reward	N = 6	16.67%	
	Special day/celebration/commemoration	N = 18	50.0%	
	Visiting	N = 1	2.78%	
Tweets using the hashtag #publicrelations, which relates to topics outside the theory and practical public relations and informing - news category.	Sharings in this category include posts related to public relations from corporate or individual accounts and posts that are not related to public relations.			N = 52 18.51%

$$\Sigma = N=281 = 100\%$$

According to Table 2, the theory development category includes 58.00% (N=163) of the analyzed tweets. The highest sharing rate in the distribution of theoretical knowledge is seen in sectoral publications (70.55%; N=115). The rate of academic knowledge and articles is 20.86% (N=34), and the rate of education-related posts is 8.59% (N=14). The theory development category has the highest rate among other categories and has the most content sharing.

The category of public relations practices includes 10.68% (N=30) of the tweets analyzed. Campaigns and advertisements constitute the majority of the posts in this category (43.34%; N=13). Following this, social responsibility sharings are listed as 30.00% (N=9), press release as 20.00% (N=6), research-survey as 3.33% (N=1) and announcement as 3.33% (N=1). Sharings in this category have the lowest rate among other categories.

It includes 12.81% (N=36) of the tweets analyzed in the information and news category. The sharings in this category are at least less than theory development among other categories, and a little more than public relations practice sharings. Accordingly, in the informing and news category, special day/celebration/commemoration has a rate of 50.00% (N=18), job position has a rate of 30.55% (N=11), reward sharing has a rate of 16.67% (N=6) and visiting has a rate of 2.78% (N=1).

The proportion of tweets using only the # publicrelations tag for topics other than theory and practical public relations and informing-news categories is 18.51%

(N=52). Sharings in this category include posts related to public relations from corporate or individual accounts and posts that are not related to public relations.

Based on the data in Table 2, the answers to the research questions created within the framework of the subject specified on the basis of the research can be given as follows:

- a. The vast majority of the sharings of those who post about public relations on X (Twitter) are the sharings of academic, sectoral and educational in the category of theory development. It can show that these posts develop theoretical knowledge that can contribute to the practical aspect of public relations.
- b. Following the theoretical information sharing, the most shared content consists of other posts that are not related to the posts where only the public relations tag is used and professional expressions/aphorisms related to public relations are included.
- c. Information in the informing and news category is the content that directs communication, develops mutual relationships and aims to maintain communication with followers, where a situation or subject is conveyed as news.
- d. Sharings containing public relations practices constitute the part with the lowest rate in the category.
- e. It is seen that more sharings were made with the #publicrelations tag in the English language during the data collection process, and all of the sharings were from the public relations theory and practical field. In addition, the hashtag was not used as a complaint tool in the data obtained in this language.

CONCLUSION

It is possible to realize that public relations discourse on X (Twitter) contributes to the development of theoretical and practical knowledge indirectly, if not directly, both through the content developed and as a result of the opportunities provided by the structure of the digital platform. Shaping the content of public relations discourse with information can contribute to the development of its theoretical structure and its use in a field that draws attention to the content can enable X (Twitter) to contribute to public relations as an important tool.

This study is one of the studies that examines how public relations discourse can contribute to the field on X (Twitter) by using public relations discourse and how public relations discourse is represented. The results of this study discuss the data on how public relations are and can be used in social media. While the studies on the subject address the use of social media in the conduct of public relations campaigns, the current study is examined in terms of its contribution to the theory and practical development. The common conclusion of all of them is that everyone is now aware of the integration of X (Twitter) into public relations communication strategies.

The use of public relations discourse on X (Twitter) of the data obtained as a result of the research is as follows:

- a. The posts made under the public relations hashtag show that theoretical and practical information is shared more intensively in both languages. The aim is to inform the public about public relations theory and the practices carried out.
- b. Within the scope of the study, it is seen that people look for help with the public relations hashtag at the point of solving their problems on X (Twitter). The fact that public relations is placed on the basis of a complaint can be argued that the concept and its applications are not fully understood or public relations is seen as the first stage of the solution process.
- c. It is seen that the research data is used beyond one-way messaging. Accordingly, it can be said that the sharings were made for the purpose of an announcement and informing the public. Feedback was expected only in research surveys.
- d. In the scans made in foreign language, it was determined that more sharings were made in the data collection range compared to the scans made in the mother tongue. The fact that these sharings are mostly in the category of theory development highlights the contents of the scientific contributions of public relations.
- e. Public relations discourse is practiced not only by professionals but also by people who are interested in public relations.

In particular, the opportunities offered by X (Twitter) to individual or corporate public relations in many subjects such as public relations discourse, crisis communication management, solution seeking, campaign communication, marketing, informing/news sharing on social media are developing day by day. All content contributes to the theoretical and practical aspects of public relations for practitioners and theorists, as well as providing a resource area for the exploration and development of new topics. X (Twitter) is an earned media for public relations and one of the easy ways to understand and monitor the development of the industry. It is an important tool in creating a successful public relations strategy and ensuring that stories are heard. X (Twitter), where all kinds of content can be published, allows other people to speak about their posts. In X (Twitter), some content promotes products or links are placed in press releases. Since public relations practitioners need to follow the media, it is essential that they also master this tool. Keeping the audience up-to-date, watching what stakeholders share, increasing the number of followers is important in terms of sharing public relations on X (Twitter) and learning about public relations.

Public relations' presence on X (Twitter) is not only about crisis management but also about building and maintaining relationships with target audiences. With this approach, announcing sectoral and scientific developments in the field and sharing new topics for public relations practitioners, educators, students and anyone interested in the field will both indirectly lead to the development of public relations in terms of content and facilitate stakeholders to master the theory and practice of public relations.

X (Twitter) has created a more transparent world. It can be said that it can inform public relations theory by helping everyone in the field of public relations to gain insights about public opinion and to analyze these insights in order to make improvements. It

can lead to the development of knowledge as much as it allows the spread of knowledge. In this respect, X (Twitter) can be defined as an integrative tool that can be used to add value to public relations theory and practice. It seems inevitable that different social media tools will help gain interest and knowledge in the field of public relations in the context of their features.

Social media is now used by everyone for different purposes and in different ways. It constitutes an effective way of word of mouth communication process. Since both public relations and social media are used to build and maintain trust in institutions and their messages, it has become usual for them to be integrated. Each social media platform can be used in its own unique way to help public relations, and each offers possibilities for how it can be used to add value to public relations theory and practice. Information that will help public relations activities can be produced from the platform features. It can ensure the development of up-to-date information. It can provide information by using various and unique ways of conducting research. Opportunities are offered to obtain, develop and distribute information about the sector. It also has the ability to strengthen its public relations strategy.

The sharing of public relations theory and practice may indirectly contribute to the development of the field by increasing the value of information perceived by the target audience, leading to the production and research of new information, or expanding the areas where the shared information is used. The accumulative nature underlying science leads social media, which is one of the important tools of public relations practices, to shape the form and content of professions and practices.

As a result, since the study covers a period of two months and was researched through a single medium, it was interpreted with limited data. In this respect, since the study covers a limited period of time, in terms of time interval, it can be expanded by using different public relations-based hashtags and different social media platforms.

BIODATA

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