

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Public Relations Review



Smartphones, publics, and OPR: Do publics want to engage?

Ruth Avidar^{a,*}, Yaron Ariel^{a,1}, Vered Malka^{a,2}, Eilat Chen Levy^{b,3}^a Department of Communication, The Max Stern Yezreel Valley College, Yezreel Valley 19300, Israel^b Faculty of Management and the Center for Internet Research, University of Haifa, Israel

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 29 July 2014

Received in revised form 30 October 2014

Accepted 2 November 2014

Keywords:

Smartphone

Engagement

Relationship building

ABSTRACT

Smartphones offer new opportunities for public-organization engagement. The current study focuses on the actual usage of smartphones, as well as users' willingness to engage with organizations via smartphones. A survey among a representative sample of 515 Israeli smartphone users, and 60 personal, in-depth interviews with undergraduate students were conducted. The findings show that interaction between organizations and publics through smartphones exists, but at a lower rate compared to other activities, and that users perceive engagement as beneficial primarily for organizations but as less beneficial to themselves. The findings also emphasize the importance of practicing participatory engagement rather than one-way engagement.

© 2014 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Recent developments in the field of mobile communication technologies have generated a renewed scholarly interest in the usage of mobile phones (Campbell, 2013; Helles, 2013). For the first time, mobile technology enables the ubiquitous usage of Web 2.0 and social media in what are best known as smartphones. Smartphones reveal new opportunities for public-organization engagement and relationship building through various online platforms.

According to Yaxley (2012), "the development of digital communication presents an opportunity for public relations to evolve in order to apply its existing strengths in earning coverage, building online relationships and managing corporate reputation" (p. 431). Nonetheless, despite growing interest in information communication technologies (ICTs) and their contribution to public relations practice, when exploring engagement through social media, most studies that explore the potential contribution of new technologies to organization–public relationship (OPR) building focus on organizational perspectives rather than the perspective of users (De Moya & Jain, 2013; Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009). Adopting a different approach, the current study focuses on publics and their actual usage as well as their willingness to interact and engage with businesses and nonprofit associations through their smartphones.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +972 54 667 5009.

E-mail addresses: ruthav@yvc.ac.il (R. Avidar), yarona@yvc.ac.il (Y. Ariel), veredm@yvc.ac.il (V. Malka), eilatlevy@012.net.il (E.C. Levy).¹ Tel.: +972 54 227 7282.² Tel.: +972 54 288 7110.³ Tel.: +972 54 494 4960.

1.1. Smartphones

Over the last three decades, the emergence of Web 2.0 and social media elements, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, have presented public relations practitioners with new and exciting platforms for two-way communication and engagement with various strategic publics. One of the new elements that became popular in recent years is the mobile phone, particularly the smartphone. During the last few years, mobile communication markets have witnessed significant changes resulting from the breakthrough and massive penetration of smartphones (Goggin, 2009, 2011; Watkins, Hjorth, & Koskinen, 2012). According to Portio Research (2013), by the end of 2014, the world will contain 7.5 billion mobile subscribers, and this number will reach 8.5 billion by the end of 2016. In 2013, when the world population reached 7.1 billion, there were 6.8 billion mobile-cellular subscriptions – in other words, the world contains almost as many mobile-cellular subscriptions as people (ITU, 2013).

In recent years, researchers have increasingly turned their attention to users of mobile phones (Brown, Green, & Harper, 2001; Katz & Aakhus, 2002; Katz, 2006; Ling & Helmersen, 2000; Rice & Katz, 2003). Early studies indicated that the growth in mobile phone adoption may be attributed to safety and accessibility (Palen, Salzman, & Youngs, 2000; Schejter & Cohen, 2013). Within this context, the usage of mobile phones came to symbolize the complex interactions among adolescents (Ling & Yttri, 2002) and students (Chen & Katz, 2009), who attribute great importance to mobile phones (Harris Interactive, 2009). Indeed, mobile phone usage has become an integral part of daily life and has well eclipsed standard communication through voice telephone calls (Ling, 2004).

According to Jenkins (2004), a fundamental process of media convergence that occurred in the media arena of the 21st century, has completely changed the relationship among existing technologies, markets, industries and audiences. As the smartphone demonstrates, new mobile technologies enable the usage of various tools that involve making voice calls, receiving and sending text messages, playing games, taking pictures, downloading information from the Internet and consuming either traditional media content or audio and video that were specifically created with this market in mind. Hence, smartphones may be an effective public relations tool because they enable public-organization engagement and relationship building around the clock. Indeed, according to a recent survey conducted among 2777 European communicators from 42 countries, the primary opportunities attributed to mobile communication were enabling communication with stakeholders at any time, facilitating user-friendly content presentation and reaching younger users (Zerfass, Tench, Verčič, Verhoeven, & Moreno, 2014).

1.1.1. Smartphones and the Israeli market

Although 3G smartphones entered the Israeli market prior to 2008, this year is considered a milestone in the brief history of smartphones in Israel. The reason that 2008 is such a watershed moment is that iPhones were first introduced to local markets during that year, marking a new era in terms of rapidly growing penetration rates beyond that point. Since then, the number of users has continued to grow rapidly. Israel's mobile phone usage patterns position mobile phones as instruments of great importance and as multipurpose, interpersonal devices used in everyday life (Avidar, Ariel, Malka, & Levy 2013; Lemish & Cohen, 2005; Schejter & Cohen, 2013). According to an international comparison of smartphone penetration rates, smartphone use has reached 57% among the Israeli population, and Israel was ranked second in the world and ranked as a world leader in smartphone-enabled Internet surfing and social networking activities (Our Mobile Planet, Google, 2013). Other findings suggest that Israelis use smartphones to browse the Internet (93%), utilize search engines (86%), update social networks (82%), view videos (77%) and download applications (84%) (Our Mobile Planet, Google, 2013).

1.2. OPRs, dialogue and engagement

In recent decades, public relations theory has been dominated by theories emphasizing the importance of two-way communication, dialogue and relationship building among organizations and publics. These theories include the co-creational approach, the relational approach and the dialogic communication approach. The *co-creational approach* placed OPR at the center of public relations research (Botan & Taylor, 2004). This approach uses research to advance understanding between groups and organizations and views communication as a means of helping negotiate changes in these relationships. The co-creational perspective emphasizes the important role of communication in enabling publics to become co-creators of meaning. The *relational approach* regards the building, management, and maintenance of OPRs as central to public relations activity (Botan, 1992; Huang, 2001; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, 2000). Ledingham (2003) proposed relationship management as a general theory of public relations, and Bruning and Ledingham (2000) argued that the relationship management perspective fundamentally shifts the practice of public relations from manipulating public opinion to building and maintaining mutually beneficial OPRs. In the past three decades, the topic of OPR has become increasingly important in the field of public relations as it has been demonstrated that one of the field's main contributions to organizational effectiveness is the building of long-term, positive, and trusting relationships with key publics. The *dialogic communication approach* added to OPR building the notion of dialogue and "dialogic communication" as the theoretical framework for building a relationship between organizations and publics (Botan, 1997; Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002; Pearson, 1989a, 1989b). Although the term "dialogue" appeared in public relations literature more than 5 decades ago (Sullivan, 1965), Pearson (1989a, 1989b) was the first researcher to present dialogue as a theoretical approach to public relations. He considered dialogue to be the most ethical form of public relations. Botan (1997) explained that traditional approaches to public relations view the public as a

secondary actor that must meet the policy and marketing needs of an organization, whereas the dialogic approach raised the public to the status of a communication equal. The dialogic communication approach suggests that to create effective communication channels, organizations must be willing to communicate with publics in honest and ethical ways (Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001).

1.3. Engagement

Although the concept of “engagement” appeared in public relations literature in the last two decades of the 20th century, it became increasingly popular among public relations practitioners and scholars with the emergence of the Internet, particularly social media.

Traditionally, the concept of engagement has been used to describe people's activities in relation to the external world (Heidegger, 1927/1996). In the past, engagement was described as a cognitive behavioral and affective construct (Jacques, Preece, & Carey, 1995; Laurel, 1993). Scholars have defined engagement as a one-dimensional, two-dimensional or multidimensional construct. Surveying the literature on engagement reveals multiple conceptualizations and various disciplines. For example, in psychology, social engagement is regarded as a behavioral construct (Huo, Binning, & Ludwin, 2009). In political science, engagement is considered to be an iterative process focused on political behavior, such as voting (Resnick, 2001). Organizational behavior research has focused on employee engagement (e.g., Luthans & Peterson, 2002) and the meaningful connections among employees in the workplace. Marketers claim that online consumer engagement can build relationships between a corporation and its consumers and can positively influence brand loyalty, identification, affinity, and sales (e.g., Evans & McKee, 2010). According to marketers, online consumer engagement can assume many participatory forms; consumers can download, read, listen to and view content provided by a corporation, and marketers appear to agree that online consumer engagement is crucial to the success of social networking sites (Ibid).

According to Taylor and Kent (2014), the concept of engagement has been described inconsistently in public relations literature; they suggest “engagement is part of dialogue and through engagement, organizations and publics can make decisions that create social capital.” O'Brien and Toms (2008) defined engagement as the quality of user experience based on factors such as the esthetic appeal and novelty involved in an experience and the usability of the system. Engagement is also focused on users' thoughts (Laurel, 1993); feelings (Jacques et al., 1995), and activities (Laurel, 1993). User engagement has been found to be correlated with user satisfaction and is often viewed as the quality of user experience involving a positive human–computer interaction (Quesenbery, 2003).

According to Taylor and Kent (2014), “engagement is both an orientation that influences interactions and the approach that guides the process of interactions among groups.” Building on Pearson's work (1989a, 1989b), Taylor and Kent have suggested that dialogic engagement has many advantages for organizations and stakeholders because this form of engagement improves understanding among participants, assists in making decisions that benefit all parties involved, and encourages a fully functioning society whose decision making is based on information. Other scholars, such as Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013) have demonstrated the advantages of engagement for both publics and media industries while focusing on the television industry and emphasizing the important role of active and involved publics in creating value and expanding engagement with respect to various media properties.

1.4. Organizational versus public perspectives

The theories of co-creation, OPRs, dialogic communication, and engagement largely emphasize organizational perspectives rather than public perspectives. In other words, many studies of public relations and new technologies focus on whether organizations or other entities use social media or online dialogic elements to engage and build relationships with various publics (Adams & McCorkindale, 2013; Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton, 2012; Wigley & Lewis, 2012). According to Taylor and Kent (2014), most studies of social media engagement describe the advantages of engagement for relationship building from an organizational perspective. Few studies have explored whether publics actually engage with organizations or whether they are willing to do so. Indeed, according to Taylor and Kent (2014), “the mantra that ‘organizations should engage in dialogue’ suggests that when organizations want to dialogue, its publics should be ready to jump up and engage.” Similarly, the term “publics” is also defined in public relations literature from an organizational perspective based on strategic and dialogic approaches. The strategic approaches view publics as consumers of targeted organizational messages, whereas the dialogic approaches view publics as equal and active participants (Leitch & Neilson, 2001). However, both approaches emphasize the organizational perspective rather than the perspective of publics, which are considered organizational constructs that exist only when organizations identify them as publics without their actual involvement in the ongoing construction of their identities, strategies, and goals (Leitch & Neilson, 2001).

We argue that the underlying assumption that publics always want to engage and build relationships with organizations should be questioned rather than accepted as fact. Indeed, various scholars have suggested further conceptualizing and exploring the term “relationship.” According to Heath (2013), after 60 years of using the notion of “relationship,” researchers must now refine and extend its conceptualization. The work of Coombs and Holladay (2013) challenges the dominance of the relationship approach in public relations theory. The authors asked whether the emphasis on relationships and OPRs has enlightened public relations research and raised concerns regarding how people benefit from relationships with organizations. Similarly, Botan (1997) argued that publics do not always want to engage in dialogue with organizations.

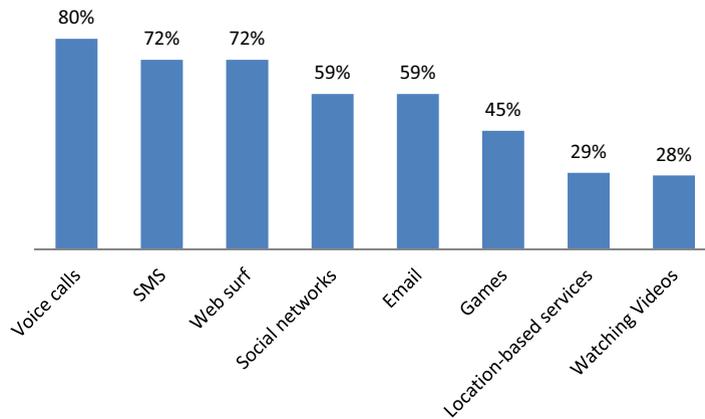


Fig. 1. Smartphone usage.

The current study raises a similar concern. This study embraces the relational and dialogic communication approaches from public relations theory as well as Taylor and Kent's (2014) conceptualization of engagement while also questioning the common assumption that publics always want to engage with and be approached by organizations. Indeed, a previous study conducted among young Israeli smartphone adopters aged 21–31 revealed a low level of interaction between adopters and organizations (Avidar et al., 2013). Indeed, research has shown that most young adopters use their smartphones throughout the day and for various purposes. However, only a small group of adopters use their smartphones to interact with businesses and nonprofit associations; to read messages from organizations; to purchase products, services or goods; and to utilize location-based services.

The aim of this study is to further explore engagement and the willingness to engage with organizations via smartphones among users from all age groups. Two key questions guide this study:

(RQ1): To what extent do users engage with businesses and nonprofit associations through their smartphones?

(RQ2): How do users perceive engagement with businesses and nonprofit associations via their smartphones?

2. Sample and methodology

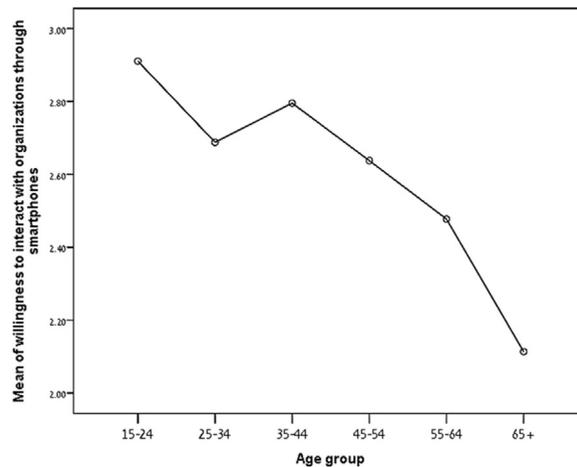
The data for this study were collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods. First, a survey was conducted using a representative sample of 515 Israeli smartphone users from all age groups (with a maximum sampling error of 4.5%). The survey contained 65 questions referring to (a) the profile of the smartphone user, (b) the frequency and types of usage, (c) perceptions of smartphone usage and (d) perceptions of smartphone usage to engage with businesses and nonprofit associations. Second, 60 personal, in-depth interviews were conducted with Israeli undergraduate students. The interviews, each with a duration of approximately 1 h, explored the students' perceptions regarding smartphone usage and the frequency and type of usage as well as their personal experiences with these new devices. The interviewees were provided with a brief introduction related to ethical issues (e.g., to assure the interviewees that no personally identifying information would be disclosed) and were asked to speak as freely as possible. The population of undergraduate students was chosen for the qualitative part of this study because young people tend to be early adopters of new technologies (Skinner, Biscope, & Poland, 2003); many students use smartphones, and they serve as members of the strategic publics of various businesses and nonprofit associations.

3. Findings

The sample had an even distribution of females (51%) and males (57%), and the users' ages ranged from 15 to 76, with a mean of 40.8 (SD = 15.64). Specifically, 76% of the participants paid their own smartphone bills, 52% had unlimited access to the Internet via their smartphones (with no additional charges), and 32% had wide yet limited access to the Internet. In terms of religion, 57% of the users considered themselves to be non-religious. Regarding the level of education, 36% of the users had 8–12 years of education, 29% held a bachelor's degree, and 10% held advanced degrees. The participants' income showed an even distribution.

The findings reveal that smartphones are largely used for interaction-based purposes, including interacting with friends and family through voice calls, text messaging, social networks and e-mails, as well as for Internet-surfing and entertainment (Fig. 1).

The findings indicate a low level of interaction among users and organizations; more than half (54%) of the respondents "never" or "rarely" use their smartphones to engage with businesses and nonprofit associations, and only 24% use them often for this purpose. Furthermore, 40% never use consumer applications (e.g., eBay), and only 27% use consumer applications several times a week. Half (51%) of the respondents use business applications (e.g., Domino's Pizza), but only 15% use them



Graph 1. Mean plot of one-way ANOVA test: the willingness to interact with organizations through smartphones by age group.

several times a week. Most users (77%) use service applications (e.g., public transportation), and 39% use service applications several times a week. Among the respondents, 40% “never” or “almost never” use their smartphones to search for deals and sales, and similarly, 54% rarely use their smartphones to purchase services or goods.

With regard to the willingness to engage and enhance their engagement with businesses and nonprofit associations, 68% “pay little attention” or pay attention “not at all” to messages sent by businesses or nonprofit associations. Nearly half (48%) of the respondents completely ignore or immediately erase such messages. Only 29% want to receive coupons or messages on sales and price reductions on their smartphones, and 35% do not want to receive these messages even when they have joined these mailing lists voluntarily. Nonetheless, 53% of the respondents indicated that businesses and nonprofit associations should use smartphones more often to engage with their publics.

We generated an index variable to measure the “willingness to interact with organizations through smartphones” ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 0.93$). The index was based on three items ($\alpha = 0.70$) measured on a five-point Likert scale: “When an organization sends me a message via smartphone, I read the message carefully”; “Organizations should use smartphones more often to contact the public”; and “Nowadays, every organization needs to have a smartphone application.” A one-way ANOVA was used to test the willingness to interact with organizations through smartphones among age groups. The willingness to interact differed significantly across age groups ($F_{(5, 498)} = 5.71$, $p < 0.001$). Post-hoc comparisons using the Scheffe test showed that the mean score for the youngest (15–24) age group ($M = 2.91$, $SD = .89$) was significantly higher than the score for the 55–64 age group ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.02$) and the oldest (65 and older) group ($M = 2.11$, $SD = .83$). The results are displayed in [Graph 1](#).

Spearman’s rank-order correlation was employed to determine the relationship between the willingness to interact with organizations through smartphones and the level of education. We found a statistically significant negative relationship ($r = -0.18$, $p < 0.001$). In other words, users with higher levels of education tend to be less willing to interact with organizations.

Further statistical investigation revealed that the willingness to interact with organizations was positively correlated with users’ existing smartphone activities. For example, users who had previously purchased items via their smartphones ($r = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$) or had experience using organizational smartphone applications ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$) were found to be more willing to interact with organizations.

A multiple linear regression model examined three possible predictors for the willingness to interact with organizations: (a) “perceived personal benefits,” (b) “environmental context usages” and (c) user age. The “perceived personal benefits” index ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.78$) consisted of six items ($\alpha = 0.74$) measured on a five-point Likert scale to measure the personal benefits of smartphones: “my smartphone helps me manage my daily routine”; “my smartphone helps me to connect with people”; “my smartphone helps me to manage my life”; “my smartphone is helping me in my work/study”; “my smartphone is ‘my world’”; and one item that was reverse coded: “my smartphone is an annoyance for me.” The “environmental context usages” index ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.11$) was based on four items ($\alpha = 0.84$) measured on a five-point Likert scale measuring agreement with the role of smartphones in linking users to communities (“feeling a part of the community”), organizations (“staying in touch with businesses and organizations”), events (“taking part in local events”) and places (“a feeling of belonging to a place”). “User age” was measured as a numeric variable. These predictors explained a significant proportion of the variance found in the “willingness to interact with organizations through smartphones” ($R^2 = 0.25$, $F = 54.38$, $p < 0.001$). A main effect was found within the index “environmental context usages” ($\beta = 0.33$, $t = 7.08$, $p < 0.001$). Age was a negative predictor ($\beta = -0.13$, $t = 3.24$, $p < 0.001$), and the “perceived personal benefits” index was a positive predictor ($\beta = 0.18$, $t = 3.7$, $p < 0.001$).

Similarly, the interviews revealed a lack of smartphone-based engagement between the public and organizations. Many interviewees did not even consider using their smartphones to interact with organizations. The interviewees who did consider interacting with organizations objected to the idea of enabling businesses or even nonprofit organizations to have a

“shortcut” and “easy access” to their lives. However, all participants indicated that they use their smartphones for interpersonal and social interactions as well as for information “mining” (especially news). Furthermore, many interviewees noted the need to own a smartphone and use specific applications (e.g., Facebook and WhatsApp) to “stay in touch” or “to be a part of” their community rather than being ignored by their friends. Itamar (a senior student) explained why owning a smartphone has become a necessity:

“From the beginning, I resisted smartphones. Why did I buy it in the end? I started a new job working as a bartender; two weeks later came a new employee. Soon he became one of the guys; everyone loves him; he gets all the best shifts; he always knows everything. I took it hard; I did not understand what was going on – how did he manage to fit in this fast? Then I realized – he logs on to the employee’s pub WhatsApp. Since I did not own a smartphone, I was out of touch. Shortly after, I bought myself a smartphone.”

Escapism-oriented activities were much less popular among the interviewees, such as watching clips, movies, and sports games; listening to music, or playing games. Although many interviewees stated that they used their smartphones for routine errands (such as checking their bank accounts, medical test results or college grades), only a few reported that they use their smartphones for shopping. Among those who did report such use, eBay and similar other applications appeared to be popular. Other usage included seeking coupons on designated sites or applications and seeking and sometimes purchasing up-to-date products, especially through popular fashion brand applications. Hila (a senior student) enthusiastically explained how she uses her smartphone:

“I have all these applications of fashion brands that I love. I would check out the apps to see what’s new and then go into stores to actually buy these clothes. Now, there’s this cute fashion brand; I really like them, but they have no application, and that makes me so upset . . . How come you have no application???? I can check their website, but that’s so old-fashioned . . . The Castro [a leading fashion brand in Israel] app is so neat; you can tell they are serious . . . I also follow them on Facebook and Instagram using my smartphone.”

By contrast, none of the interviewees reported using a smartphone to interact or communicate with nonprofit associations.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Drawing on Pearson’s seminal research (Pearson, 1989a), Taylor and Kent (2014) emphasized the importance of engagement as a rational act that “enables organizations and stakeholders to interact, fostering understanding, goodwill, and shared view of reality.”

Given the findings of our study as well as the previous study (Avidar et al., 2013), it is clear that smartphone users do not regard “engagement” as beneficial to them as Pearson did. The findings suggest that there is little interaction (and even less engagement) between organizations and publics through smartphones. Although smartphones play an important role in the daily routines of Israeli users, most users rarely use their smartphones to interact with businesses and nonprofit associations, to download consumer or business applications, to search for deals and sales, or to purchase goods and services. Furthermore, most users do not pay attention to messages sent by businesses and nonprofit associations, and nearly half of users completely ignore or immediately erase such messages.

If the reason for the low level of interaction among smartphone users and organizations was the technological incompetence of users or a lack of previous experience with smartphone usage, then we would have suggested that it was only a matter of time until users would gain more experience and knowledge regarding smartphone usage and thus begin interacting with organizations. However, the survey and the in-depth interviews suggested that the main reason for this lack of engagement is users’ lack of willingness to interact with businesses and nonprofit associations rather than technological incompetence. In fact, fewer than one-third of users want to receive coupons or messages communicating sales and price reductions on their smartphones, and approximately one-third do not want to receive these messages even when they have joined these mailing lists voluntarily.

A more in-depth analysis of the willingness to interact with organizations through smartphones reveals that age is an important factor; younger people tend to be more willing to interact with organizations. Indeed, as previous studies suggested, young people tend to be early adopters of new technologies (Rogers, 2003), which may at least partially explain the greater willingness of young users to engage with organizations compared with the willingness of older users to do so. Similarly, previous experience with online purchase and organizational applications increases the willingness to interact. Additionally, personal benefits, especially linkage with nearby communities, organizations and events, serve as the primary predictors of the willingness of publics to interact with businesses and nonprofit associations.

It is worth noting that more than half of the study participants agreed that businesses and nonprofit associations should use smartphones more often to engage with their publics. In other words, users appear to perceive engagement as beneficial primarily for businesses and nonprofit associations but as less beneficial to themselves. Furthermore, education was negatively correlated with the willingness to engage with organizations; thus, educated people tend not to perceive “engagement” as beneficial and worthwhile. This finding warrants further research and investigation because education has traditionally been positively correlated with digital divide measures, with greater access and usage being associated with more highly educated users.

Although the current study did not further explore the reasons for the low level of interaction and unwillingness to engage with organizations through smartphones, Pearson's writings (1989a) regarding the benefits and importance of engagement (as summarized by Taylor and Kent) may provide insight: "the key to effective dialogic engagement was for participants to understand and agree upon the rules of the game, for organizations to play fair, and for the game to be organized in favor of the underdog rather than in favor of corporations." Indeed, during the in-depth interviews, our interviewees painted a different picture, in which businesses misuse smartphone capabilities by sending one-way promotional messages that generate antagonism in users' attitude toward any interaction with organizations. Similar to the findings of most studies of social media engagement, engagement largely appears to occur as a one-way communication process from organizations to followers rather than as a participatory form of engagement (Taylor & Kent, 2014).

Given the great potential of smartphones to serve as tools of engagement, it is suggested that public relations practitioners practice participatory engagement rather than one-way engagement. Indeed, according to Taylor and Kent (2014), public relations conceptualizations of engagement rely on five components: secondary research conducted by organizations before initiating interaction; demonstration of positive regard for the public's input, experiences and needs; interaction for relational purposes; interaction with the public for advice and counsel on issues of mutual concern; and interaction that contributes to a fully functioning society while acting together for the good of the community. Similarly, we suggest that practitioners offer valuable content to the public via their organizational applications aiming to benefit users and encourage them to view themselves as equal partners and co-creators of engagement in an optimal situation. Based on the "predictors for the willingness to interact with organizations" found in this study, it is recommended that public relations practitioners use various engagement strategies that enhance users' ability to interact with their immediate environments and to gain personal benefits. For example, in 2013, Magen David Adom in Israel, a nonprofit association resembling the Red Cross, developed an application aimed at encouraging blood donations. The application provides users with brief life-saving video clips that serve as a mobile first-aid guide. Connected to Google Maps, the application also shows the locations of blood-collecting vehicles in real time and contains updated information on donors' addresses, blood types, and recent donations; hence, this application enables the sending of customized push notifications to users on whether, where and when to donate blood. This application was downloaded by 20,000 Israelis within a few months after its release, demonstrating that better engagement strategies and more valuable content may encourage users to interact and engage with organizations.

In further conceptualizing the term "relationship," we suggest that in the age of social media and mobile technology, more emphasis should be placed on public perspectives of engagement and OPR building, on motivations for engagement, and on the value of close relationships for publics (Coombs and Holladay, 2013).

References

- Adams, A., & McCorkindale, T. (2013). Dialogue and transparency: A content analysis of how the 2012 presidential candidates used twitter. *Public Relations Review*, 39, 357–359.
- Avidar, R., Ariel, Y., Malka, V., & Levy, E. C. (2013). Smartphones and young publics: A new challenge for public relations practice and relationship building. *Public Relations Review*, 39(5), 603–605.
- Botan, C. H. (1992). International public relations: Critique and reformulation. *Public Relations Review*, 18, 149–159.
- Botan, C. H. (1997). Ethics in strategic communication campaigns: The case for a new approach to public relations. *Journal of Business Communication*, 34, 188–202.
- Botan, C. H., & Taylor, M. (2004). Public relations: State of the field. *Journal of Communication*, 54, 645–666.
- Brown, B., Green, N., & Harper, R. (Eds.). (2001). *Wireless world: Social and interactional implications of wireless technology*. London: Springer.
- Bruning, S. D., & Ledingham, J. A. (2000). Perceptions of relationships and evaluations of satisfaction: An exploration of interaction. *Public Relations Review*, 26(1), 85–95.
- Campbell, S. W. (2013). Mobile media and communication: A new field, or just a new journal? *Mobile Media and Communication*, 1(1), 8–13.
- Chen, Y. F., & Katz, J. E. (2009). Extending family to school life: College students' use of the mobile phone. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 67(2), 179–191.
- Coombs, T., & Holladay, S. J. (2013). Public relations' "Relationship Identity" in research: Enlightenment or illusion. *Public Relations Review* (in press).
- De Moya, M., & Jain, R. (2013). When tourists are your "friends": Exploring the brand personality of Mexico and Brazil on Facebook. *Public Relations Review*, 39(1), 23–29.
- Evans, D., & McKee, J. (2010). *Social media marketing: The next generation of business engagement*. Indianapolis, Indiana: John Wiley & Sons.
- Goggin, G. (2009). Adapting the mobile phone: The iPhone and its consumption. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 23(2), 231–244.
- Goggin, G. (2011). Going mobile. In V. Nightingale (Ed.), *The handbook of media audiences* (pp. 128–146). United States: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.
- Google. (2013). *Our mobile planet*. Retrieved from <http://think.withgoogle.com/mobileplanet/en/>
- Harris Interactive. (2009). *Harris mobile report*. Retrieved from <http://www.harrisinteractive.com>
- Heath, R. L. (2013). The journey to understand and champion OPR takes many roads, some not yet well traveled. *Public Relations Review*, 39(5), 426–431.
- Heidegger, M. (1927/1996). *Being and time: A translation of Sein und Zeit*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press (J. Stambaugh, Trans.).
- Helles, R. (2013). Mobile communication and intermediality. *Mobile Media and Communication*, 1(1), 14–19.
- Huang, Y. (2001). OPRA: A cross-cultural, multiple-item scale for measuring organization–public relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 13(1), 61–90.
- Huo, Y. J., Binning, K. R., & Ludwin, M. E. (2009). Testing an integrative model of respect: Implications for social engagement and well-being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20(10), 1–13.
- ITU – International Telecommunication Union. (2013). *ITU world telecommunication (ICT) indicators database*. Retrieved from <http://www.itu.int/ict/statistics>
- Jacques, R., Preece, J., & Carey, T. (1995). Engagement as a design concept for multimedia. *Canadian Journal of Educational Communication*, 24(1), 49–59.
- Jenkins, H. (2004). The cultural logic of media convergence. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 7(1), 33–43.
- Jenkins, H., Ford, S., & Green, J. (2013). *Spreadable media*. New York: NYU.
- Katz, J. E. (2006). *Magic in the air: Mobile communication and the transformation of social life*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Katz, J. E., & Aakhus, M. (Eds.). (2002). *Perpetual contact: Mobile communication, private talk, public performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (1998). Building dialogic relationships through the World Wide Web. *Public Relations Review*, 24(3), 321–334.
- Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (2002). Toward a dialogic theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 28, 21–37.
- Laurel, B. (1993). *Computers as theatre*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

- Ledingham, J. A. (2003). Explicating relationship management as a general theory of public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 15, 181–198.
- Ledingham, J. A., & Bruning, S. D. (1998). Relationship management in public relations: Dimensions of an organization–public relationship. *Public Relations Review*, 24, 55–65.
- Ledingham, J. A., & Bruning, S. D. (2000). *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to the study and practice of public relations*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Leitch, S., & Neilson, D. (2001). Bringing publics into public relations: New theoretical frameworks for practice. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations* (pp. 127–138). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lemish, D., & Cohen, A. (2005). On the gendered nature of mobile phone culture in Israel. *Sex Roles*, 52(7), 511–521.
- Ling, R. (2004). *The mobile connection: The cell phone's impact on society*. San Francisco: Morgan Kaufmann.
- Ling, R., & Helmersen, P. (2000). *It must be necessary; it has to cover a need: The adoption of mobile telephony among pre-adolescents and adolescents*. Oslo: Paper presented at the Social Consequences of Mobile Telephony.
- Ling, R., & Yttri, B. (2002). Hyper-coordination via mobile phones in Norway. In J. E. Katz, & M. Aakhus (Eds.), *Perpetual contact: Mobile communication, private talk, public Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lovejoy, K., Waters, R. D., & Saxton, G. D. (2012). Engaging stakeholders through Twitter: How nonprofit organizations are getting more out of 140 characters or less. *Public Relations Review*, 38, 313–318.
- Luthans, F., & Peterson, S. J. (2002). Employee engagement and manager self-efficacy: Implications for managerial effectiveness and development. *Journal of Management Development*, 21(5/6), 376–387.
- O'Brien, H. L., & Toms, E. G. (2008). What is user engagement? A conceptual framework for defining user engagement with technology. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 59(6), 938–955.
- Palen, L., Salzman, M., & Youngs, E. (2000). *Going wireless: Behavior and practice of new mobile phone users*. Philadelphia: Paper presented at the ACM 2000 Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW'00).
- Pearson, R. (1989a). *A theory of public relations ethics* (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Athens: Ohio University.
- Pearson, R. (1989b). Business ethics as communication ethics: Public relations practice and the idea of dialogue. In C. H. Botan, & V. Hazleton Jr. (Eds.), *Public relations theory* (pp. 111–131). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates.
- Portio Research. (2013). *Mobile factbook*. Retrieved from <http://www.portioresearch.com>
- Quesenbery, W. (2003). The five dimensions of usability. In *Content and complexity: Information design in technical communication*.
- Resnick, E. (2001). Defining engagement. *Journal of International Affairs*, 54(2), 551–566.
- Rice, R., & Katz, J. E. (2003). Comparing Internet and mobile phone usage: Digital divides of usage, adoption, and dropouts. *Telecommunications Policy*, 27, 597–623.
- Rogers, E. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). New York: The Free Press.
- Schejter, A., & Cohen, A. A. (2013). Mobile phone usage as an indicator of solidarity: Israelis at war in 2006 and 2009. *Mobile Media and Communication*, 1, 174–195.
- Sullivan, A. J. (1965). Values of public relations. In O. Lerbinger, & A. Sullivan (Eds.), *Information, influence and communication: A reader* (pp. 412–439). New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Skinner, H. A., Biscope, S., & Poland, B. (2003). Quality of Internet access: Barrier behind Internet use statistics. *Social Science and Medicine*, 57(5), 875–880.
- Taylor, M., & Kent, M. L. (2014). Dialogic engagement: Clarifying foundational concepts. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26(5), 384–398.
- Taylor, M., Kent, M. L., & White, W. J. (2001). How activist organizations are using the Internet to build relationships. *Public Relations Review*, 27(3), 263–284.
- Waters, R. D., Burnett, E., Lamm, A., & Lucas, J. (2009). Engaging stakeholders through social networking: How nonprofit organizations are using Facebook. *Public Relations Review*, 35(2), 102–106.
- Watkins, J., Hjorth, L., & Koskinen, I. (2012). Wising up: Revising mobile media in an age of smartphones. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 26(5), 665–668.
- Wigley, S., & Lewis, B. K. (2012). Rules of engagement: Practice what you tweet. *Public Relations Review*, 38, 165–167.
- Yaxley, H. M. L. (2012). Digital public relations – revolution or evolution? In A. Theaker (Ed.), *The Public relations handbook* (pp. 411–432). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Zerfass, A., Tench, R., Verčič, D., Verhoeven, P., & Moreno, A. (2014). *European Communication Monitor 2014. Excellence in Strategic Communication – key issues, leadership, gender and mobile media. Results of a survey in 42 countries*. Brussels: EACD/EUPRERA, Helios Media.