A Test of Technology Acceptance Model in the Use of Social Media among PR Practitioners in Nigeria

Mukhtar El-Kasim
Department of Communication
International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)
melkassim@gmail.com

Syed Arabi Idid
Department of Communication
International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)
sarabidid@iium.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Many public relations scholars believed that, the emergence of social media has accentuated the public relations practice in recent times. Social media provides public relations practitioners opportunities for creating, sharing, posting, documenting as well as interacting communication content on the net between organizations and their key public members for enhancing mutual and long-term positive relationships. The purpose of this paper was to investigate whether the perceived usefulness and ease of use of social media influence the behavioral intention of practitioners to use it for the enhancement of mutual relationships between with their publics. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was adopted as the theoretical guide of this study. Using self-administered questionnaire, data were collected from 513 practitioners and analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The results revealed that perceived usefulness ($β=.251$, $t=4.723$, $p=.00$) and perceived ease of use ($β=.514$, $t=9.649$, $p=.000$) exerted significant positive effect on the PR practitioners’ behavioral intention to accept social media for enhancing mutual relationships. Further, the results suggested that perceived ease of use had a significant indirect effect on behavioral intention through perceived usefulness. In addition, it was found that, practitioners’ perception on the ease of use of the social media was the strongest indicator for its utilization for the enhancement mutual relationships. Recommendations and limitations are further discussed.

Keywords: Social media use, public relations practitioners, perceived usefulness, perceives ease of use, behavioral intention

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In recent times, public relations practice has focused on creating, nurturing and maintaining balance and mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their key constituents. This relational management perspective of public relations practice holds that for an organization to realize its target goals, its relationship with its key publics shall not only be cordial but a balanced one. From the relationship management perspective, Cutlip, Center and Broom (1994) viewed public relations as “management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (p. 2).

In their study on dimensions of organization-public relationship, Ledingham and Bruning (1998) defined organization-public relationship as “the state that exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political and/or cultural well-being of the other entity” (p. 62). Hence, they further defined the ideal organization-public relationship as the “state that exists between an organization and its key publics that provides economic, social, political, and/or cultural benefits to all parties involved, and is characterized by mutual positive regard.”

Jo (2003) documented that the central notion of public relations as relationship management suggests that public relations should focus on developing long-term behavioral relationships between organizations and key constituencies. Perceived public relations roles, which rely on symbolic activities designed to enhance organizational image, have been extended to a new paradigm, fostering long-term relationships that lead to mutual benefits for both organizations and key publics.

The advent of social media in the mid of 2000 has provided public relations practitioners and their organizations more chances of maintaining mutual relationships with their key publics. Mayfield (2007) defines social media “to be a group of new kinds of online media, which share most or all of the following characteristics: participation, openness, conversation, community and connectedness”. He observed that, a
good way to think about social media is that all of its characteristics are actually just about being human beings sharing ideas, cooperating and collaborating to create, art, thinking and commerce, vigorous debate and discourse, finding people who might be good friends, allies and lovers.

Mayfield’s (2007) description of social media function has concurred with organization-public relations mission of maintaining long-term and mutual relationships through openness, involvement, commitment and sharing of ideas between organizations and the key public members. Hallahan (2004) observed that, public relations practitioners today find themselves in a brave, new Internet world. People develop expectations about organizations and assess an organization’s performance based upon subtle cues found within the online environment. These fragile relationships can be damaged when expectations are not met or when organizations appear to behave badly online. Practitioners must become informed about how others use or misuse informational or reputational data as well as about the rights of organizations to protect themselves.

While some argued that social media have posed both threats and opportunities for public relations practice. Farrish (2009) opined that the viral environment involved in social media has raised major concerns and challenges for public relations practitioners. As Leong, Krishnan and Lee (2012) observed that today’s business environment has increasingly put pressure on public relations practitioners to indicate how public relations activities helped in achieving organizational goals, hence, the advent of new media particularly social media adds to that pressure. The challenging structure of social media, affords practitioners greater opportunities to reach out to a segmented audience that had been previously neglected and realize organizational objectives with much ease.

Since its emergence, scholars studied the utilization of social media for enhancing relationships with the strategic publics. Wright and Hinson (2008) conducted nine different studies from 2006 to 2008 examining the impact new technology particularly social media are having on public relations. Reporting the findings, Wright and Hinson (2008) stated “we found the phenomenon of blogging and other aspects of the social media already are bringing dramatic changes to many aspects of public relations. We have found the development of various new technologies has significantly empowered a wide variety of strategic publics by giving them dynamic new media many are using to communicate effectively with a variety of internal and external audience” (p. 1).

With reference to public relations, Harte (2007) stated that social media is now complimenting the dominant role played by the traditional media before its advent. Some scholars argued that with the rise of social media as primary tools for communication, the mediating role played by traditional media between companies and publics has diminished. Instead, a company must monitor individuals’ comments regarding its products or services online 24/7 and must also directly manage a crisis in a timely manner should one occur.

The motivation of the current study was to investigate the perceptions of the Nigerian public relations practitioners on the usefulness and ease of use of the social media in the promotion of mutual relationships with their publics. Davis’s Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was used as the theoretical framework of the study. Social media is defined according to the current study to mean the use of Facebook; Twitter; and other forms of social media such as WhatsApp, Viber, BB Messenger by the public relations practitioners for the purpose of promoting mutual relationships with their strategic publics.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW
Public relations practitioners aspire to create, nurture and maintain long-term and mutual relationships between organizations and the strategic stakeholders. Hon and Gruning (1999) established that effective organizations choose and achieve appropriate goals because they develop relationships with their constituencies, which public relations practitioners typically call publics. They found that organizations generally make better decisions when they listen to and collaborate with stakeholders before they make final decisions rather than simply trying to persuade them to accept organizational goals after decisions are made.

From the relationship perspective, Gruning, Gruning and Dozier (2002) stressed that the best way of achieving balance and a long term relationship should be through maintaining a symmetrical relationships between organization and the key publics. Gruning (2000) emphasized that, two-way symmetrical communication is the best for effective communication and excellent public relations as it help to maintain better and long – relationships with publics more than other models of public relations. It is believed that the current social media milieu provided the public relations practitioners with a platform of achieving symmetrical relationships between organization and their target publics because of its interactive potentials.
2.1 Public Relations Practice and Social Media

The advent of social media has made public relations scholars to examine its potential of enhancing mutual coexistence between organizations and their strategic publics, particularly through usefulness and ease of use. Grunig (2009) has applied his four models of public relations to social media. He stated that social media used to its full potential can provide public relations with a more two-way and interactive, global, strategic, and socially responsible approach.

Solis and Breakenridge (2009) documented that the utmost need of social media in building relationships and modern public relations practice “In the realm of social media, conversation is king, and only active engagement and listening can lead to meaningful relationships. This is the new era of influence, and you have the tools and channels to emerge as new influencer” (p. 67). They further stressed that public relations on net which was termed as PR 2.0 is rooted in democratized content, strengthened by enthusiasm and market intelligence, and powered by conversation.

Going in the same line Coombs and Holladay (2010) pointed that a large amount of today’s public relations organizations are online and argued that ethical online public relations should include interactivity, accuracy of content, access, and usability. They further encouraged public relations practitioners to make organizational websites transparent and interactive which is part of the key ethical practice in public relations.

Many empirical studies established the relevance and impact of social media in enhancing relationships between organizations and their stakeholders. In their nine-year-long international survey of public relations practitioners Wright and Hinson (2013) examined the impact blogs and other social media are having on public relations practice. Their study findings show these new media are dramatically changing public relations. Results indicate blogs and social media have enhanced what happens in public relations and that social media and traditional mainstream media complement each other. The study also finds the emergence of blogs and social media have changed the way their organizations communicate, especially to external audiences. Their findings suggest social media complement traditional news media, and that blogs and social media influence coverage in traditional news media. The study reports blogs and social media have made communications more instantaneous by encouraging organizations to respond more quickly to criticism.

Eyrich, Padman and Sweetser (2008) investigate the working public relations practitioners about their adoption of 18 social media tools and their perception on the growth of social media trends in public relations practice. Overall, their survey revealed that, practitioners have adopted nearly six different social media tools professionally. Practitioners have clearly adopted the more established and institutional tools (e-mail, Intranet), yet practitioners also seem very comfortable with blogs and podcasts. The findings further showed that practitioners are slower to integrate more technologically complicated tools that cater to a niche audience (e.g., text messaging, social networks, virtual worlds).

In another study, Nah and Saxton (2013) investigate what motivates organizational adoption and use of social media through a model build around four key factors namely: strategy, capacity, governance, and environment. Their study used Twitter and Facebook and other data on 100 large US nonprofit organizations. Their study confirmed the utility of social media for enhancing efficient and effective organizational governance and capacity building.

Similarly, the study of Seltzer and Mitrook (2007) on the dialogic potential of weblogs in relationship building observed that, a gap exists between the relationship building potential of traditional web sites, the objectives of public relations practitioners and the actual design of organizational web sites. Their study extends the investigation of online relationship building through a content analysis of 50 environmental weblogs. A comparison of weblogs to traditional Web sites suggested that weblogs incorporate dialogic communication principles to a greater degree than traditional Web sites, potentially making them better suited for online relationship building.

In another study, Bhargava (2010) investigate the use of internet in public relations and its impact on the practice in New Zealand. Through a mixed method approach the study explored the application of various internet tools in the public relations practice of New Zealand and the impact these have on certain key aspects of the practice such as skills, encroachment, gender balance and ethics. The study findings demonstrated that there are considerable variations in the use and application of the different online tools in the New Zealand public relations practice. The discrepancy was found to have been influenced by the area of work and experience of the practitioners along with their knowledge of the Internet and the organizational environment they operated in. It was further revealed that, it appears that practitioners do not have a full grasp of the nature of online tools and their scope of utilization in the practice.

However, the issue of major concern is that, most of the studies that examined the social media relevance and impact to public relations practice and practitioners were not theoretically guided. Currently,
there is no strong theory which explains the adoption process of social media among organizations and practitioners for enhancing mutual co-existence between them. Additionally, as observed by Caers et al (2013), most of the empirical studies that investigate the impact of social media in the public relations domain were carried out in the west. Therefore, there is need to replicate and expand these studies to settings that are non-western with different demographic characteristics and cultural tune.

It is against this background, this study investigate the perceptions of public relations practitioners on the utilization of social media in their work place for enhancing mutual relationships with their publics. This study employed Technology Acceptance Model as a theoretical framework to explain the determinants of social media use among public relations practitioners in a country which is non-western. Technology Acceptance Model is discussed in the following section of the literature.

2.2 Technology Acceptance Model
Technology Acceptance Model was developed by Davis (1989) when he adapted and modified Theory of Reasoned Action by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). According to TRA, the attitude toward a behavior is determined by the person's beliefs that the behavior will lead to certain outcomes and the evaluations of these outcomes. Subjective norms refer to the social pressure exerted on the person to perform (or not perform) the behavior.

Technology Acceptance Model was specifically developed to explain computer usage behavior. The model replaces the attitudinal determinants of TRA with two variables namely perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. Kwon and Chidambaram (2000) documented TAM theorizes that actual computer usage is determined by behavioral intention, but differs in that the intention is jointly determined by the person’s attitude toward using the system and perceived usefulness. The attitude toward computers is also jointly determined by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

Technology Acceptance Model evolved to answer the question: Why do people accept or reject information technology? Davis’ (1985) investigation revealed that among the many variables that may influence to the acceptance or rejection of information technology are: First, people tend to use or not use an application to the extent they believe it will help them to perform their job better. Second, even if potential users believed that a given application is useful, they may, at the same time, believed that the system is too hard to use and that the performance benefits of the usage are outweighed by the effort of using the application Davis (1989). This made him theorize that people accept new technology according to their perception of its usefulness and their perception on its ease of use.

According to Davis (1985) “a potential user’s overall attitude towards using a given system is hypothesized to be a major determinant of whether or not he actually uses it” (p.24). He further explained that attitude toward using is a function of two beliefs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived ease of use has a causal effect on perceived usefulness. Davis (1985) theorized the relationships in the TAM model to be linear, as the case in the TRA.

Davis (1989:2) defined Perceived usefulness as “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance”. This was derived from the definition of the word useful which means capable of being used advantageously. He also defined Perceived ease of use to refer to “the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort”. This was also derived from the meaning of “ease” which means freedom from difficulty or great effort. Davis (1985) also defined use to refer “to individual’s actual direct usage of the given system in the context of his or her job”.

Davis (1989) hypothesized that Perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness positively affect the attitudes toward an information system; and further, positively affect the individuals’ intentions to use and the acceptance of the information system. In addition, perceived ease of use positively affects the perceived usefulness, and both of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are influenced by external variables. It is against this background, Davis (1985) summarized that the theoretical importance of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as determinants of user behavior is indicated by several diverse lines of research. However, the study of Davis, Bogazzi and Warshaw (1989) which revised TAM replaces attitude with intention.

Studies established the applicability of TAM to explain user acceptance of a particular information system. From marketing field, Lule, Omwansa and Waema (2012) conducted a study which applied Technology Acceptance Model to investigate the factors that influence the adoption of M-Banking in Kenya. The survey extended TAM by introducing new variables (perceived self-efficacy and perceived credibility) as additional determinate of user acceptance of M-banking. The study involved 395 bank customers that are users of M-Kesho, an M-banking application. The findings of the study indicated that perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, perceived self-efficacy and perceived credibility have
significantly influence on customers’ attitude towards using M-banking. In a similar study, Ramayah and Ignatius (2010) investigate the impact of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment on the behavioral intention to shop online. Their survey administered questionnaire to 150 respondents to explore the relationship between three variables under investigation. The result of the study showed that perceived ease of use and perceived enjoyment greatly influence customers’ intention to shop online. In addition, their study suggested that perceived ease of use was a significant predictor of perceived usefulness.

Henderson and Divett (2003) carried out a study that applied Technology Acceptance Model to test the applicability of the model within an electronic commerce setting. Specifically, the study explores the relationships between perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and three electronic applications with the context of an electronic supermarket. Attitudinal measures were completed by 247 respondents. The study found TAM explained up to 15% of the variance in the behavioral indicators through perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness.

Technology Acceptance Model was also applied and extended in many studies in education, for example, Kripanont (2006) conducted a survey using Technology Acceptance Model to examine academic acceptance of the internet in Thailand. The survey collected data from 455 respondents and employed Structural Equation Modeling for analysis. The study proposed new variables as an extension to TAM namely self-efficacy, subjective norms and Facilitating environment. The findings of the study indicated that user adoption of the internet in the academic environment was significantly influenced by perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, self-efficacy and facilitating condition.

Park (2009) studied Technology Acceptance Model in understanding university students’ behavioral intention to use e-learning. Data was collected from 628 university students and analyzed with LISREL programme to explain the students’ adoption of e-learning process. Five e-learning predictors were examined in the study: self-efficacy, subjective norms, system accessibility, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. The study findings showed self-efficacy to have greater influence on the students’ behavioral intention to adopt e-learning among all the variables under examination. Hence, the study found TAM to be a good theoretical tool to understand users’ acceptance of e-learning.

From the internet perspective, studies tested the utility of TAM, Porter and Donthu (2006) employed TAM to explain how attitudes determine internet usage. Their study introduced two new variables (perceived access barriers and demographics) as additional predictors of users’ use of internet. The findings of the study suggested that characteristics of internet user such as age, education, income and race are differently associated with beliefs about the internet; however, these beliefs have significant influence on consumer’s attitude towards the use of internet. The result further indicated that access barriers have a significant effect on internet usage, so also perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness.

In a similar study, Norazah and Norbayah (2011) explore the relationship between perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, attitude and consumers’ intention to use 3G mobile services. The authors collected a cross sectional data from 150 respondents and analyzed using SPSS by means of Factor analysis, correlation and regression. The results of the study showed that perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and attitude are responsible for the subscribers’ behavioral intention to use 3G mobile service. Hence, perceived usefulness was the higher predictor of subscribers’ intention to use 3G mobile services.

Social media literature also indicated that numerous studies that investigated social media milieu utilized TAM as theoretical framework. Some of these studies include: Shen, Lafley, Lin and Huang (2006); Yang and Lin (2011), Suksa-ngiam and Chaiyasootthorn (2011), Nasri and Charfeddene (2012), and Mulero (2012).

Yang and Lin (2011) conducted a survey which explores Factors affecting the employees’ intention to use Facebook to support problem-based (PBL) learning in Taiwanese manufacturing company. Specifically, the aim of the study was to examine behavioral intention and other five predictors that affect Facebook use for assisted PBL. The five determinants include perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, social influence, perceived enjoyment, concentration and computer self-efficacy. The survey collected data from 377 respondents, and found perceived ease of use to be a strong predictor of user intention to use Facebook than the remaining predictors. In addition, the study found TAM to adequately explain users’ intention to use Facebook to support problem-based learning among employees.

In a similar study, Nasri and Charfeddine (2012) employed Technology Acceptance Model and Theory of Reasoned Action to investigate factors that determine the adoption of Facebook among students in Tunisia. The model of the study add snoop, news, perceived enjoyment, information receiving and self-efficacy as new variables to the existing variables of TAM and TRA. Data was collected from 240 respondents and confirmatory factor analysis was used to the measurement efficacies. The findings of the
A Test of Technology Acceptance Model in the Use of Social Media among PR Practitioners in Nigeria

study supported the predictive power of both TAM and TRA. The main variables of TAM and TRA have significant influence on the students’ intention to adopt Facebook according to the findings.

Mulero (2012) extended Technology Acceptance Model to investigate the acceptance and impact of social networks marketing by Small and Medium Enterprises in South African. The survey collected data through questionnaire from two groups: consumers and small and medium-scale enterprises (SMSs) comprising 143 respondents. The data was analyzed using linear regression and the result confirmed that perceived credibility and perceived usefulness were the strong predictors of user’s intention to use SNM.

3.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Perceived Usefulness

Studies on Technology acceptance established that perceived usefulness is a strong determinant of actual use of information system. In some instances perceived usefulness proved to have a direct influence on adoption of information system without the influence of a mediator. Davis (1993) suggested that in contrast to what he initially predicted, perceived usefulness could also have a direct influence on actual information system use. Henderson and Divett (2003) tested the Technology Acceptance Model within an electronic commerce setting. They examined the relationship between the perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness and electronic supermarket. The findings revealed that perceived usefulness uniquely contributed to the prediction of behavioral intention more than perceived ease of use. In a nutshell, perceived usefulness proved to be direct predictor of actual use of electronic supermarket among the respondents.

Similarly, Norazah and Norhayah (2009) explored the relationship between perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment, attitude and subscribers’ intention towards using 3G mobile services. Cross sectional data were collected from the study respondents through a survey. The result indicated that Perceived Usefulness was found as a key factor that influences subscribers’ intention to use 3G mobile services. While perceived usefulness is seen as the degree to which use of new technology would enhance user’s performance and effectiveness in workplace (Davis, 1989), for this study perceived usefulness refers to the “degree to which a public relations practitioner believes that utilizing social media would enhance his performance and effectiveness in enhancing mutual relationship with his strategic publics”. Thus, the following hypothesis was tested for this study:

H1: There is positive perception on social media usefulness among the practitioners

3.2 Perceived Ease of Use

Studies that use Technology Acceptance Model established perceived ease of use as strong determinant of adopting an information system. In many instances, it was established that perceived ease of use influences perceived usefulness towards forming intention of acceptance of an information system. Lane and Coleman (2009) examined technology ease of use through social networking media. The study assessed student’s view of the technological complexity of social networking media in a survey. The findings revealed that higher perceived ease of use led to higher perceived usefulness and ultimately greater intensity of use of the social networking media.

Kwon and Chidambaram (2000) study examined patterns of cellular phone adoption and usage in an urban setting. One hundred and seventy-six cellular telephone users were surveyed about their patterns of usage, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, perceptions about the technology, and their motivations to use cellular services. The results of the study confirmed that users’ perceptions are significantly associated with their motivation to use cellular phones. Specifically, perceived ease of use was found to have significant effects on users' extrinsic and intrinsic motivations.

In addition, a study was carried out by Alarcon-del-Amo, Lorenzo-Romero and Gomez-Borja (2012) to analyze the users’ use and behavior in social networking sites. The study applies Technology Acceptance Model as theoretical framework. The findings indicated that there is significant positive effect of perceived ease of use of SNS on perceived usefulness and attitude. In turn, perceived usefulness has a positive and direct impact on intention to use them, and indirectly through attitude. Otherwise, intention to use positively influences the degree of final use of SNS. Davis (1989) defined perceived ease of use as the degree to which new technology user believes that using that technology would ease his/her mental and physical suffering particularly in his/her workplace. In the current study therefore, perceived ease of use is defined as “the degree to which a public relations practitioner believe using social media would ease his efforts and difficulties in promoting mutual relationship with his target stakeholders”. Thus, the following hypothesis was developed and tested:

SEARCH Vol. 8 No. 2, 2016
H2: There is positive perception on social media’s ease of use among the practitioners.

Numerous studies (King and He, 2006; Ma and Liu, 2004; Sharp, 2007; Yousafzai, Foxall and Pallister, 2007) have provided evidences that perceived ease of use has significant impact on the users’ behavioral intention to use computer technology in his/her workplace. Thus, this study developed the following hypothesis:

In addition, the model projected that, perceived ease of use positively affects the perceived usefulness, and both of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness are influenced by external variable. Therefore, perceived usefulness assumed a mediations role between perceived ease of use and behavioral intention according to the model. Here, we also hypothesis that:

H3: Perceived usefulness mediates the relationship between the perceived ease of use and behavioral intention to use social media.

3.3 Behavioral Intention

Extensive studies examined the effect of behavioral intention on determinants of accepting or rejecting information i.e. perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use and the actual use. Park (2009) carried out a survey to analyze the Technology Acceptance Model in understanding university students’ behavioral intention to use e-learning. A sample of 628 university students took part in the research. He used structural equation modeling (SEM) technique with LISREL program to explain the adoption process. The general structural model, which included e-learning self-efficacy, subjective norm, system accessibility, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitude, and behavioral intention to use e-learning, was developed based on the technology acceptance model (TAM). The result proved TAM to be a good theoretical tool to understand users’ acceptance of e-learning. E-learning self-efficacy was the most important construct, followed by subjective norm in explicating the causal process in the model.

Alarcon-del-Amo, Lorenzo-Romero and Gomez-Borja (2012) analyzed users’ use and behavioral intention in the acceptance of social networking sites. The study developed a technology acceptance model (TAM) in order to analyze the factors influencing the level of acceptance and use of SNS, applying a structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques. The findings revealed that there is significant positive effect of perceived ease of use of SNS on perceived usefulness and attitude. Their study also showed that, perceived usefulness has a positive and direct impact on intention to use them. Hence, intention to use positively influences the degree of final use of SNS.

Yang and Lin (2011) studied factors affecting the intention to use Facebook for support problem-based learning among the employees in a Taiwanese manufacturing company. Based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the objectives of the study were to explore behavioral intention and the factors perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, social influence, perceived enjoyment, concentration and computer self-efficacy affecting Facebook use for assisted PBL. The study findings revealed that among the factors explored, perceived ease of use (PEOU) was a stronger factor affecting the intention to use Facebook to support problem-based learning among the employees compared to others.

In a similar study, technology acceptance model was investigated in its relations to examining students’ behavioral intention to use an e-portfolio system Shroff, Deneen and Engenian (2011). Survey method was used for the study. The study developed an E-Portfolio Usage Questionnaire using existing scales from prior TAM instruments. Seventy-two participants completed the survey questionnaire measuring their responses to perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitudes towards usage and behavioral intention to use the e-portfolio system.

The results of the study indicated that students’ perceived ease of use had a significant influence on intention towards usage. Subsequently, perceived ease of use had the strongest significant influence on perceived usefulness. Their research further demonstrated that individual characteristics and technological factors may have a significant influence on instructors to adopt e-portfolios into their courses.

Fishbein and Azjen (1975) defined behavioral intention to mean a person’s subjective probability that he or she will perform a certain behavior. The current study views the behavioral intention to means “the degree at which public relations practitioner intends to use and continue using social media for enhancing mutual and long term relationship with his/her publics”. Thus, the following hypotheses were developed and tested:

H4: Perceived usefulness influenced practitioner’ behavioral intention to use social media.

H5: Perceived ease of use influenced practitioners’ intention to use social media.
A Test of Technology Acceptance Model in the Use of Social Media among PR Practitioners in Nigeria

4.0 METHOD
This paper employed quantitative survey for data collection and analysis. The data was collected through systematic random sampling from 513 public relations practitioners in Nigeria. The practitioners that participated in this study were selected from two regions of the country: north and south regions. The survey was collected through self-administered questionnaire.

4.1 Measures
The first section of the questionnaire deals with demographic profile of respondents which include gender, age, education, occupation, organization, length of service etc. The second section asked questions related to social media use in workplace by the respondent, example type of social media use, time and frequency of use. The third section contains questions that deal with the major variables under study namely: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and behavioral intention.

4.2 Perceived usefulness
Nine items were developed to measure perceived usefulness construct: “Using social media improves my relationship with my stakeholders; Using social media enhances my performance in relating to my publics; Using social media enhances my performance in relating to my publics; My publics find social media useful in our relationship; My publics relate to me through social media more effectively; I prefer sharing information to my publics through social media than other media; I prefer maintaining good relationship with my publics through social media than other media; Generally, I find social media useful for enhancing organization-public relationships”.

4.3 Perceived ease of use
This variable was also measured by nine items, the items include: Using social media eases my physical efforts of promoting good relationship with my publics; Using social media reduces my mental efforts of promoting good relationship with my publics; Using social media to reach my publics saves my time; My interaction with my publics through social media would be clear and understandable; I find social media to be a flexible way of promoting strong relationship with my stakeholders; I find it easier to get to my target publics through social media; My publics find it easier to communicate with me through social media; I find it easier to share information to my publics through social media; Generally, I find social media easy network for enhancing organization-public relationships.

4.4 Behavioural intention
The third variable, which is behavioral intention was measured by five items: I feel that I am using social media because it enhances my performance in relating to my publics; I believe that I am using social media because it makes my relationship with my publics more effective; I believe my intention of utilizing social media is to ease my physical effort of maintain good relationship with my publics; I feel that my intention of utilizing social media is to ease my mental efforts of maintaining good relationship with my publics; Generally, I believe that my intention of utilizing social media is to enhance organization-public relationships. All of the 23 items used for measuring the three variables were adopted but modified from Davis (1989). There items were also measured using five-point likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.
Before conducting the data analysis, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was carried out to confirm the established factors structure. The result of the EFA revealed that all of the for each item exceeded the required 0.55, which met the essential significant level of convergent validity. Moreover, the items for each of the three constructs were tested for reliability using Cronbach’s coefficient. The Cronbach’s alpha values for total score of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and behavioural intention were .912, .910 and .955 respectively. These exceeded the minimum cut-score of .6 as suggested by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham (2006). Consequently the constructs measures were found reliable and used for further analysis. Table 1 displayed the descriptive statistics of the constructs along with reliability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived usefulness</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.912</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>.764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived ease of use</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.910</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>.818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural intention</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.955</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>.790</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and Reliability analysis

5.0 RESULTS
The data collected demonstrated that male respondents were (60%) and female (40%), in terms of age practitioners between 26 to 30 years of age formed the majority (45%), they were followed by 31-35 age group (24%), 18-25 years (23%) and 36 years and above (8%). For educational qualification, about half of the respondents (48%) are holders of Bachelor degree with PR certificate, participants with Bachelor degree only were (16%), Master degree holders plus PR certificate were (12%), those with National Diploma were (12%), other educational qualifications constituted the remaining (12%). The data also depicted that 62% of the respondents practiced in the southern region, while 38% were practitioners from the northern region. In case of type of organization, private employees were the majority (53%), they were followed by government workers (33%) the remaining (14%) were either independent workers or PR consultants.

In the case of length of service as public relations practitioner, it is gathered that the majority of the respondents (43%) spent not more than five years as practitioners, (28%) are within 5 to 10 years in the profession. While about one-fifth (18%) spent 11 to 15 years as public relations practitioners. Those with most years of practice are those who spent 21 year and above (4%) as public relations practitioners. The result also revealed that (51%) of the respondents are utilizing Facebook and Twitter for public relations activities in their workplace, (31%) are using Facebook only for their PR job, (18%) are utilizing Twitter only for the same purpose. However (21%) of the entire respondents indicated that they are utilizing other social media such as WhatsApp, Viber, Instagram, BB messenger, Google+, emails and so on for their public relations activities in the workplace.

A descriptive statistics of the items that measured the three main constructs of this study, namely, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and behavioral intention was carried out in order to ascertain practitioners’ perception on the individual items. Perceived usefulness was measure by nine statements; perceived ease of use was equally measured by nine items, while behavioral intention was measure by five items.

5.1 Perception on Perceived Usefulness Items
Perceived usefulness refers to the degree at which practitioners believed that using social media would enhance their job performance particularly in promoting mutual relationships with their publics. This variable was measured with five point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. The analysis below provided descriptive statistics of the nine items that measured the variable which include mean, standard deviation of each item.

Ninety percent of the respondents agreed with the tenth item “Generally, I find social media useful for enhancing organization-public relationships” (M = 4.54, SD = .830). The respondents agreed that, “they prefer maintaining relationship with public through social media than other media (M = 4.08, SD = .944); using social media enhances my performance in relating to my publics (M = 4.14, SD = .781); my publics relate to me more effectively through social media (M = 4.12, SD = .884); using social media makes it easier for PR personnel to communicate with their publics (M = 4.10, SD = .782)”. In addition, a reliability test was conducted using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient to ascertain the internal consistency and coherence among the nine items that measured the perceived usefulness construct. According to Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010) a variable is considered reliable and internally consistency when it obtained a Cronbach’s alpha of more than .70. However, a Cronbach’s alpha of .60 and above is also considered acceptable in the literature (Bowling, 2009). The Cronbach’s Alpha calculated for the perceived usefulness construct was found to be .912, indicating that it has achieved the acceptable threshold.
5.2 Perception on Perceived Ease of use Items

Perceived ease of use for this study refers to the degree at which practitioners believed using social media would ease his/her physical and mental efforts of enhancing mutual relationships with their publics. Table 4.16 below showed the descriptive statistics of the perceived ease of use variable. These include the mean, standard deviation as well as the percentage of all the 9 items that measured the variable. Five point Likert scales were employed for measuring these items.

The results depicted that, 90% of the respondents expressed their agreement with the item “Generally, I find social media easy network for enhancing organization-public relationships (M = 4.54, SD = .830). In addition, 84% of them agreed with the statement “I find it easier to share information to my publics through social media (M = 4.20, SD = .829), other items ranked high were “I find it easier to get to my target public through social media (M = 4.13, SD = .855); My publics find it easier to communicate with me through social media (M = 4.13, SD = .912); Using social media to reach my publics saves time (M = 4.10, SD = .818)”. The reliability of the perceived ease of use construct was also calculated using Cronbach’s Alpha value. The result of the reliability test indicated an acceptable reliability for the construct (α = .910).

5.3 Perception on Behavioral Intention Items

Behavioral intention variable measured practitioners’ intention to use and continue using social media for promoting mutual relationships between their organizations and publics. This variable was measured using five point Likert scale, where 1 = very unlikely and 5 = very likely. The mean, standard deviation of the five items that measured behavioral intention variable were calculated.

The analysis indicated that 82 percent of public relations practitioners expressed positive behavioral intention of utilizing social media for enhancing mutual relationships (M = 4.10, SD = .729). The item with the highest mean was “Generally, my intention of utilizing social media is to enhance organization-public relationships (M = 4.42, SD = .903). This was followed by the statement “I feel that my utilization of social media is because it allows instant and immediate feedback from my publics (M = 4.16, SD = .849)” Other items that followed according to the highest mean were “I believe that my intention of utilizing social media is to enhance interaction with my target publics (M = 4.09, SD = .829); I feel that my intention of utilizing social media is to enhance my publics (M = 4.07, SD = .830); I believe that my intention of utilizing social media is to enhance my social media with my target publics (M = 4.06, SD = .826)”. The reliability test of these items stood at .97 which attained the acceptable cut-score according to the Cronbach’s alpha.

5.4 Perceptions of Practitioners on the Usefulness and Ease of Use of Social Media

A one sample t-test was conducted for the TAM two main variables under study (perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness) to ascertain the general perception of the respondents on each one of them. The result indicated that public relations practitioners perceived the major variable as vehicles for enhancing public relations practice. Table 2 below displayed the distribution of practitioners perception in respect to the main variables, perceived usefulness (τ = .40740, P = .000); perceived ease of use (τ = 29.920, P = .000) Overall, the findings demonstrated that respondents had a positive perception on the usefulness of social media towards enhancing organization-public relationships. Majority of the respondents expressed a positive perception (M = 4.12, SD = .627) on usefulness of social media for enhancing organization-public relationships. Additionally, practitioners expressed positive perception on social media’s ease of use towards enhancing organization-public relationships as depicted by the mean and standard deviation of the nine items (m = 4.10; SD = .818).

Thus, the findings supported our H₁ and H₂ hypotheses which posited that public relations practitioners have positive perception on the social media’s usefulness and ease of use in enhancing mutual relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Perceived usefulness</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>.627</td>
<td>40.740</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Perceived ease of use</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td>29.920</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: One-sample t-test on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use variables

5.5 Mediation Effect of Perceived Usefulness

In order to test the mediating effect of the predictor on the criterion variable, a partial correlation was conducted. The assumption of Technology Acceptance Model was that perceived usefulness mediates between perceived ease of use and behavioral intention. Therefore, perceived ease of use served as predictor here, and Behavioral intention is the criterion variable, while perceived usefulness served as the mediator. Table 3 provides the results of the partial correlation.
According to Baron and Kenny (1986) among the factors of determining mediation effect is when the relationship between the predictors and the criterion variable is either insignificant or reduced when the mediator is controlled. The result of the partial correlation revealed a significant positive correlation between perceived ease of use and behavioral intention (Beta = .721, p=.000). A significant positive correlation was also found between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness (β = .826, p=.000). The result further demonstrated a significant strong positive correlation between perceived usefulness and behavioral intention (β = .676, p=.000). However, when the mediating variable (perceived usefulness) was controlled the relationship between perceived ease of use and behavioral intention was reduced from Beta .721 to Beta .393, this suggested that there is partial mediation of perceived usefulness between perceived ease of use and behavioral intention. This means, the result also supported our hypothesis 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Step 1 Behavioral intention</th>
<th>Step 2 Perceived usefulness</th>
<th>Step 3 Behavioral intention</th>
<th>Step 4 Behavioral intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predictors</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived ease of use</td>
<td>.721</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.826</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Mediation Effect of Perceived Usefulness between Perceived Ease of Use and The Behavioral Intention Variable

5.6 Impact of Usefulness and Ease of Use on Behavioral Intention
A multiple regression was conducted to ascertain the impact of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as predictors on behavioral intention as criterion variable. Table 4 displays the predictors, Beta, t-test and significance value (P-value). The result of the regression indicated a significant correlations of the two predictors (perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use) with the criterion variable (behavioral intention), R = .735, F=299.633, P=.000. Perceived usefulness (β = .251, t= 4.723, p=.000) and perceived ease of use (β = .514, t= 9.649, p=.000) have positively and significantly influenced the public relations practitioners’ intention of utilizing social media for enhancing mutual relationship. Additionally, to determine the best predictor of behavioral intention among the two predictors, we looked at the beta values. It is assumed that, the higher the value of the beta, the higher prediction of that variable on the criterion variable. Based on the regression result perceived ease of use has the higher beta value (β = .514) which suggested that, perceived ease of use was the best predictor of the practitioners behavioral intention for utilizing social media for enhancing the PR practice. The result of the study here supported our H2 and H3 hypotheses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficient</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficient</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. (Constant)</td>
<td>-.414</td>
<td>.153</td>
<td>2.702</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Perceived usefulness</td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>.251</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Perceived ease of use</td>
<td>.663</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.514</td>
<td>9.649</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F=299.633, df1=2, df2=510, R=.735, R²=.540, (P=.000)

Table 4: Multiple Regressions of the Predictors on the Behavioral Intention as the Criterion Variable

6.0 DISCUSSION
This study was set out to investigate the perceptions of public relations practitioners with regard to the social media use in PR practice. Specifically, the study examined the perceptions of public relations practitioners on social media’s usefulness and ease of use in public relations practice. Perceived usefulness is a primary determinant of technology acceptance among potential users according to the Technology Acceptance Model. Thus, the first hypothesis of this study posited that public relations practitioners have positive perception on the usefulness of social media for enhancing mutual relationships with their publics. The results confirmed this assumption where by practitioners indicated positive perception on the usefulness of social media in managing relationships with their publics. This finding was consistent with the survey
results of which investigated the adoption of social media among public relations practitioners (Wright and Hinson 2008; Wright and Hinson 2012; 2013; and Alikilić and Atabek, 2012).

In addition, the study posited a positive perception of public relations practitioners on the social media’s ease of use in promoting good relationships with their publics. Perceived ease of use was the second determinant of accepting or rejecting an information system among the potential users. The projection of the second hypothesis was also confirmed, as practitioners showed positive perception on social media’s ease of use in enhancing cordial relationships with their publics. This finding was in conformity with the Technology Acceptance Model studies (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh and Davis 1996; Lane and Coleman, 2009).

The third hypothesis tested the mediation effect of perceived usefulness between perceived ease of use and behavioral intention. TAM posited that perceived usefulness was a primary determinant of user acceptance, while perceived ease of use was a secondary determinant. Therefore the relationship between perceived ease of use and behavioral intention goes through perceived usefulness. This mean that no matter how easy to use a particular information system is, the potential user would not use it until he/she find it usefulness to his/her job. The result of the partial correlation conducted for this study confirmed this hypothesis. Hence, perceived usefulness was found to mediate the relationships between perceived ease of use and the practitioners’ intention to use social media for enhancing mutual relationships with their strategic publics. Similar findings on the mediation role of perceived usefulness were found in the studies of Davis and Venkatesh, 1996 and Park (2009).

Additionally, this study posited that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use influenced practitioners’ behavioral intention to use social media, particularly to enhance mutual relationships with their publics. The results of the two hypotheses (H4 & H5) confirmed this assumptions, as it was found that practitioners intention to use social media was significantly influenced by its usefulness and ease of use as suggested by the regression analysis conducted. These findings were also the same with the studies of Adams, Nelson and Todd 1992, Venkatesh and Davis 1996, Venkatesh 2000, and Ramayah and Ignatius 2010. Hence, the results of the current study was consistent with the assumption of Technology Accepted Model which was used as the theoretical framework of the study.

7.0 CONCLUSION
Most of the previous studies that examined the relevance of social media in the public relations practice were carried out in United States and European countries. There were inadequate studies that highlight how social media accentuates public relations practice in developing nations, particularly Nigeria. This study provides an insight on the influence of social media in the PR practice from one of the most understudied part of the world. Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use proved to be determinants of social media use among practitioners as posited by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Thus confirming the applicability of the model in explaining why public relations practitioners accept social media in the public relations practice. Still, there is much to be done in order to understand the opportunities and challenges of social media to public relations practice in Nigeria in particular and developing nations in general. Some of the many areas that need to be investigated include how practitioners utilize the symmetrical potentials of social media for enhancing mutual relationships with their publics; the role of social media in shaping Organization-public relationships; the level of adoption of social media among public and private organizations; the relevance of social media in providing effective public relations services among others.

REFERENCES
Blackwell.

SEARCH Vol. 8 No. 2, 2016
A Test of Technology Acceptance Model in the Use of Social Media among PR Practitioners in Nigeria


SEARCH Vol. 8 No. 2, 2016
**Mukhtar El-Kasim** is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Communication, International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIUM). He has research interest in public relations, new media and communication theories.

**Syed Arabi Idid** is a professor of communication in the Department of Communication, International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIUM) His research areas are public relations, communication theories and research. He wrote numerous articles and books in these fields.