



Arab American University – Jenin

Faculty of Graduate Studies

**Corporates’ Use of Social Media Influencer
Marketing to Manage Reputation:
Corporates in Palestine as a Model**

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Declaration

I am Taleen Maher Joudeh (ID: 85888293); a student at the Arab American University – Faculty of Graduate studies in Ramallah. I submitted the thesis titled with “Corporates’ use of social media influencer marketing to manage reputation: corporates in Palestine as a model”.

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work and effort, except where there’s an appropriate citation, and that this thesis has not been previously included in a thesis submitted to this or other institution for a degree or other qualifications.

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Abbreviations

PR.....Public Relations

IM.....Influencer Marketing

SMIM.....Social Media Influencer Marketing

RM.....Reputation Management

RPMT.....Reputation Management Theory

RLMT.....Relationship Management Theory

E(WOM).....Electronic Word of Mouth

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore how corporates in Palestine manage their reputation through social media influencer marketing. Influencer marketing means brands collaborating with influencers for advertising. To achieve this, the study's objectives were; (1) to measure the extent to which corporates use social media influencer marketing to manage their reputation; (2) to measure the extent to which corporates manage their relationship with influencers; (3) to model the perception of influencer marketing by corporates in Palestine; (4) to explore the degree to which reputation management through influencers and relationship management with influencers predict the variation in public-related wants and needs from corporates' point of view. The research was anchored on two theories; reputation management theory and relationship management theory. The research design was a survey, which employed quantitative approach. Data was collected using questionnaire. The target population was public relations practitioners, marketing officers and brand manager in corporates located in Palestine West Bank. Purposive sample was used to select 120 corporates that offer a product or a service in Palestine, with a corresponding response rate (85%). The findings indicated that (1) Social media influencer marketing is highly used by corporates in Palestine to manage their reputation and very effective, as it seeks to serve the corporate's goals and directions. (2) Working with minimum number of confident influencers that are relevant and have the right target audience, and have engaged followers can help managing the corporate's reputation. (3) Having a good relationship with influencers through respecting them and valuing them, is beneficial for a successful collaboration. (4) the better relationship with influencers is the more corporates is inclined to use IM and vice versa. (5) when public needs is in the picture, relationship management becomes insignificant while influencer marketing is significant. The study recommends the following; spreading awareness of public relations roles in corporates, offer market study trainings for employees to understand the competitors and customers, and corporates to be more transparent and involved in social media responsibilities.

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CHAPTER

I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

One of the most effective ways for companies to reach their target audience and actually have impact on them is by managing the corporates' reputation, through social media influencers, regardless of the objectives. Reputation is the main cause for success or failure of a corporate, that's why corporates' nowadays try to maintain a good reputation. However, influencer marketing is a special case, corporates have to study the influencers to know which influencers are most suitable for their brands, and will achieve the desired goals. Influencer marketing is a combination of electronic World of Mouth (e-WOM) and product placement, therefore, it's considered very effective for corporates. When a corporate wants to promote its product or service on social media, it needs more than just using their own professional page, for several reasons; a corporate's main goal is to constantly grow and become more successful along the way, if it stayed where it is, it will definitely fail among competitors who are always trying hard to be visible and proof their existence. So for a corporate to grow, maintain its reputation and become better, it needs to search for new effective ways. For example, maintain current consumers, reach bigger audience, and engage with consumers to build brand loyalty. These ways can be executed through SMIM. Basically, corporates pay a social media influencer to recommend the product on their social media platforms by posting a picture, video or a story. That way it would be easier for the company to reach larger networks, and most importantly it does not sound like an ad, most consumers don't notice that it is pure marketing, they think that social media influencers are genuinely recommending a product the way they see it. By approaching influencers, PR professionals can measure the success or failure of a

campaign, they also can get feedback instantly through audience engagement and data analytical tools.

In order to rest assure that the collaboration will have positive effects, PR professionals need to build a good relationship with the influencer, by keeping a regular contact with them, the more you share with your brand influencers, the more they will give back. We must note that social media influencers have changed the role of public relations when it comes to reaching today's audience. Particularly that people tend to have more trust in people present on social media more than traditional marketing or advertising.

The implementation of this study methodology with its instrument helped the researcher measure the impact of corporates use of SMIM on managing its reputation in Palestine, and it includes an explanation of the procedures that corporate is following to verify the validity and stability of this tool. Moreover, the study deals with statistical treatments used in analyzing data and extracting results.

The study used a comprehensive questionnaire to analyze the dependent and independent variables of its dimensions, to answer the study's questions, and to test for hypotheses.

This study will be using two main frameworks:

I. *Reputation management*; It is the process through which companies, customers, co-operation partners (e.g., suppliers), and competitors' actions and perceptions are tracked, monitored and reported (Fombrun & van Riel, 2004, Heinonen, 2006, Aula & Mantere, 2005). In line with this, the researcher tested how corporates manage their reputation, and what strategies do they follow to do so.

II. *Relationship management*; is the relationship perspective of public relations, which suggests that balancing the interests of organizations and public is achieved through management of organization-public relationships. From that perspective, public relations is seen as the “management function that establishes and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends (Ledingham, 2000).

Research Problem

The main research problem is the lack of sources that revolves around PR practitioners’ perceptions and awareness of the role influencers can play in shaping corporates’ reputation. Highlighting these perceptions will excrete why do PR practitioners’ use influencers in the first place, on what basis they approach them, how they use them (i.e., what frames they adopt), and the value this new practice of digital PR through influencers adds on managing the companies’ reputation. This study investigated how digital PR in corporates in Palestine approach and perceive social media influencers, and to what extent they are being utilized to improve corporates’ services and external image to the public, and to manage its reputation.

Research Justification

Nowadays, PR practitioners have to be very immediate and active to follow up and cope with technological developments. And one of the crucial roles of PR practitioners is managing the corporate’s reputation by using powerful ways to reach prospects and customers. Studies confirmed that social media influencers are a great effective tool to connect ‘your brand with your target.’

Generally, many of the studies tackled by the researcher focused on analyzing social media influencers approach on conveying a message to the audience not giving much attention to the most important factor which is PR practitioners in companies who actually provide the content to influencers. This is why the research found that this study fills in a valuable gap that should be further investigated. Therefore, the study examined corporates approach of influencer marketing and how they are being perceived as a tool to manage corporates' reputation in line with its mission, goals, vision, and ultimately, to make profit.

It is worth noting that managing corporate's reputation is the lead to drive sales and build brand awareness and loyalty. The real question is to what degree are corporates attentive to the importance of social media influencer marketing in achieving good reputation? In accordance to that, the study fosters two main dimensions (1). PR practitioners in corporates' use and perceive social media influencers in Palestine, (2). and how PR practitioners manage their relationship with influencer for a successful collaboration?

Research Objectives

Following a thorough review of relevant research papers, books, and articles, the researcher found that the literature on the topic in-hand is limited. The emerging new influencer community is wielding significant power over the perceptions of brands and companies, largely driven by the rapid expansion of social media channels through which influencers communicate. The "nobodies" of the past are now the new "somebodies" demanding the attention of PR professionals who seek continuous engagement with targeted consumers throughout the various channels of the social web. As pointed out above, the purpose of this study is to explore corporates' use of social media influencers

in Palestine as a tool to manage their reputation through building good relationship with influencers.

Thus keeping in view the gap identified above, the researcher set the following study objectives:

1. To measure the extent to which corporates use social media influencer marketing to manage their reputation.
2. To measure the extent to which corporates manage their relationship with influencers.
3. To model the perception of influencer marketing by corporates in Palestine.
4. To explore the degree to which reputation management (RM) through influencers and relationship management with influencers predict the variation in public-related wants and needs from corporates' point of view.

Research Questions

In congruence with the objectives of this study, the main question of the study is **how do corporates in Palestine use social media influencer marketing to manage its reputation**. This research questions are further divided into the following questions:

1. To what extent corporates use social media influencer marketing to manage their reputation?
2. To what extent corporates manage their relationship with influencers?
3. What is the perception of influencer marketing by corporates in Palestine?

4. To what extent reputation management through influencers and relationship management with influencers predict the variation in public-related wants and needs from corporates' point of view?

Key Terms

- **Corporate:** “Is an organization—usually a group of people or a company—authorized by the state to act as a single entity (a legal entity recognized by private and public law "born out of statute"; a legal person in legal context). and recognized as such in law for certain purposes “(Scott, 2018 p.13).
- **Corporate reputation:** The collective perception of the organization’s past actions and expectations regarding its future actions, in view of its efficiency in relation to the main competitors (Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun and Rindova, 2001; Walker, 2010).
- **Social media Influencers:** “Influencers in social media are people who have built a reputation for their knowledge and expertise on a specific topic. They make regular posts about that topic on their preferred social media channels and generate large followings of enthusiastic, engaged people who pay close attention to their views” (Influencer marketing hub, 2020).
- **Influencer marketing:** “is a hybrid of old and new marketing tools, taking the idea of the celebrity endorsement and placing it into a modern day content-driven marketing campaign. The main differentiator in the case of influencer marketing is that the results of the campaign are collaborations between brands and influencers” (Influencer marketing hub, 2020).
- **Reputation management:** “is the practice of attempting to shape public perception of a person or organization by influencing information about that entity, primarily online.

What necessitates this shaping of perceptions being the role of consumers in any organization and the cognizance of how much if ignored these perceptions may harm a company's performance at any time of the year, a risk no entrepreneur or company executive can afford” (Farmer, 2018, p. 2-13).

- **Relationship management:** “is a strategy in which an organization maintains an ongoing level of engagement with its audience. This management can occur between a business and its customers. Relationship management aims to create a partnership between an organization and its patrons, instead of viewing the relationship as merely transactional” (Kenton, 2019).

Research Design

The purpose of this section is to give details and explain the methods and data collection techniques that were deployed to collect data for the current study. It contains the research approach, sample size, sampling procedure, instruments for data collection, and how data was analyzed and presented.

Through the methodology the researcher measured the extent to which corporates use social media influencer marketing to manage their reputation in Palestine, and it included an explanation of the procedures that were followed to verify the validity and stability of this tool, and dealt with the statistical treatment used in analyzing data and extracting results. Methodology is a “set of procedures and mechanisms generally accepted by scientists that can be used to observe, uncover, and investigate knowledge acquisition and access to facts” (Mohammad, 2018, p. 9).

Methodology

This study adopted one research method primarily in analyzing the sample of the study, which presents a literature review followed by a quantitative approach, to be able to collect data and numbers on corporates use of influencers. In quantitative research the researcher collected numerical data through google forms, and was later analyzed through SPSS and Excel.

Statistical Treatment

The researcher generated the following variables according to several studies and sources:

- *Reputation management variable* consisted of the following standards;
 - **(Aula & Mantere, 2005)**. the corporate's reputation serves the corporate's goals, strategies and directions,
 - **(Watson and Kitchen, 2010)**. reputation management is moving more into social media than traditional media,
 - **(Pires and Trez, 2017)**. the corporate's profitability is highly dependent on its reputation,
 - **(McGovern, 2016)**. considering customers' expectations through market analysis, feedback, polls and more,
 - **(Kartailia, 1999)**. transparency through publishing your corporate's financial regulation and rules,
 - **(Logan, 2019)**. involving in social responsibility activities,
 - **(Kartailia, 1999)**. maintaining high visibility online, maintaining high visibility offline, building trust with publics through continuous communication on social media platforms, consistency by using the same

theme and elements, responding effectively to publics' feedback, creativity by coming up with new interesting ideas and campaigns.

- *Corporate reputation management through influencer marketing* variable consisted of the following:
 - **(Eccles et al. 2007)**. influencer marketing helps the corporate maintain its reputation, influencer marketing raises brand awareness, promotes the products/ services and achieve tangible results,
 - **(Inkybee, 2016)**. engagement rate such as likes, comments, shares and reach is a standard component of success,
 - **(Dholakiya, 2018)**. increase reaching a wider target audience base,
 - **(Escobedo, 2017)**. corporates can measure and track performance when working with influencers.
- *Relationship management variable* consisted of the following:
 - **(Crowdtap, 2017)**.; the corporate should personally interact with influencers, meaning sharing, liking and commenting on their posts, the corporate should value and respect its influencers, the corporate should give space and freedom to the influencers to do their thing creatively, the corporate should respect the time needed by influencers to create authentic and engaging content. For future research, it can be measured through interviewing the influencers themselves.
- *Public needs variable*, is what satisfies the expressed or observed needs of the public, and was measured as follows:

- (McGovern, 2016). it consisted of the following; customers' expectations, trust with publics through continuous communication on social media platforms, and responding effectively to publics' feedback.

Data Collection Tools

In light of the study's goals and questions it seeks to answer, the researcher decided to use several tools to collect data:

Observation

The most common method used for getting information about things around us, is through observation. Observation means not just see things, but watch and try to understand thing in-depth. Observation is useful for generating in-depth descriptions of organizations or events, for obtaining information that is otherwise inaccessible, and for conducting research when other methods are inadequate. It is a very direct method for collecting data that is very dependable and consistent. Therefore, it enables the researcher to describe existing situations using the five senses, this helps the researcher to develop questions that are relevant to the study.

The researcher used this tool while selecting the sample corporates, by collecting data on the corporates in Palestine that advertise through influencers, through following the influencers accounts, this helped the researcher determine who approaches influencers and interacts with them several times. It definitely developed a holistic understanding of how corporates and influencers collaborate. Concisely, observation is very beneficial for this study, since the sample is purposive sample, this means every corporate has been

chosen by observation, through following the influencers accounts, and check corporates in Palestine who work with them.

Survey

A survey was conducted to collect data. Survey research is defined as “the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions” (Check & Schutt, 2012, p. 160). Which allows for a variety of methods to recruit participants, collect data, and utilize various methods of instrumentation. Surveys may include demographic questions in addition to valid and reliable research instruments (Costanzo, et al. 2010).

Therefore, a questionnaire; as a research tool has been prepared and distributed to provide answers for the main research questions; (1). to examine how corporates in Palestine manage their reputation through social media influencer marketing, (2). to what extent corporates’ in Palestine manage their relationship with influencers, and (3). to model the perception of influencer marketing. Furthermore, it provided estimates from a sample that is related to the entire corporates that use social media influencers in their PR strategies.

Sample of The Study

The sample procedures were chosen based on the following approach; scientific research and observation:

Scientific approach: According to social baker’s report and a research done by the Arab Middle East search engine & directory, the fastest growing brands pages in Palestine are Friends motors, PAC which includes (Hyundai, Alfa Romeo, Fiat and Jeep)., Paltel, Jawwal, Unipal which includes (XL energy drink, Pantene, Always, Heinz, Kellogg’s).,

Bank of Palestine, Sbitany, Mercedes-Benz, la2ta, Al Takaful insurance, BCI, Nestle, APIC, Sky advertising, MSS (Medical supplies & services).

A purposive sample was chosen for this study, which is also known as judgmental or selective sampling, in which researchers rely on their own judgement when choosing members of the population to participate in the study, it is “a type of nonprobability sample, it produces a sample that can be considered representative of the population of interest” (Lavrakas, 2008).

Observational approach: the researcher followed platforms of Palestinian influencers to pinpoint corporates in Palestine that advertise through influencers. Based on a sample list of 120 corporates in Palestine that advertise through influencers, the researcher managed to fill out 102 questionnaires (response rate was 85.0%).

All corporates are located in Palestine (West Bank), mostly in Ramallah, which made it easier to reach and get in contact with. All corporates offered a product or a service. The corporates specialized in a variety of fields, there were food brands, car brands, restaurants, small cafes, service brands, and beauty brands. The list was as follows:

Table 1: Corporates in Palestine that use influencer marketing

1. XL Energy drink	28. Joy box Palestine	55. Mermaid group	82. Ayah Aldeek Designs
2. Black bird	29. Ramzi Jewelry	56. CSB	83. Bronze Tanning
3. Ramallah municipality	30. Nino Digital Marketing	57. Edmondsfashion	84. Sharqi Restaurant
4. Siniora	31. Bayte rael state	58. CSB	85. Husari Trading
5. Pantene	32. Inggez	59. Innotech	86. DGhannam clinic
6. Ferrero	33. Palestine automobile - hyundai	60. HRD	87. Farhity
7. Unipal/ Perfumes (Hugo boss)	34. La petit salon	61. Galleria	88. al nabaliandfares
8. (Givenchy, Dior and Lacoste)	35. Rantisi	62. Millennium tech	89. J's boutique
9. Pringles - Kellogg's	36. Buzz	63. Maramia	90. Lebseh_onlineshop
10. MSS	37. Fovero	64. Raghda Designs	91. Glory smile Palestine
11. LC WAIKIKI	38. LAREIN.PS	65. Unipal	92. Arabian girl
12. Media Clouds	39. Ooredoo palestine	66. Louz w Sukkar	93. VatrIn
13. Quds bank	40. Shoroq Clinic Diet	67. Borderline JLM	94. Farhity
14. Near East Distribution Company	41. Jericho karting	68. Wrigley	95. Lacasa mall
15. MSS	42. Call U ISP	69. Etek	96. Mirai store
16. Bravo	43. Families for Occasions	70. Salam	97. Maalchat
17. Sky Advertising	44. PAC - FCA	71. Golo wear	98. Mekal
18. IQOS	45. Families for Occasions	72. Woodberg	99. Travel house for travel
19. Afrah Express	46. BrokenPyramid	73. Ajjawi Shop	100. Salehkhalf
20. Segafredo	47. Mirai store	74. Kizlar Outifit	101. Qubtan clothing
21. PalEat	48. Tomfrank.pal20	75. PalEat	102. Slice restaurant
22. Domino's	49. Mayoral	76. Dili-jan	
23. Aker Sweets	50. Golden Rose	77. Handmade-croche	
24. BradsLine Co.	51. Bilal_fashion1	78. SnapShot	
25. Nino Digital Marketing	52. Zamn premium coffee	79. Doppio	
26. Girls Can	53. Qubtan clothing	80. Smart	
27. Omega Vape Store	54. Moayyad Pizza	81. Rukab	

Reliability

Reliability is concerned with the consistency, stability and repeatability of the informant's accounts as well as the investigators' ability to collect and record information accurately (Selltiz et al., 1976)., thus alpha Cronbach reliability test is used to measure the internal consistency of the survey. This test indicates "how closely related a set of items are as a group (Bruin, 2011)", the reliability coefficient of 0.7 or higher refers to high reliability and considered acceptable (Bruin, 2011). Table (2). illustrates the value of alpha; and it was clear that the research tool is highly reliable as the total Alpha Cronbach equals to 0.98.

Table 2: Cronbach's reliability test

Index	# of items	Alpha
Reputation management	12	0.88
Relationship management	4	0.90
Influencer marketing	5	0.90
Total	21	0.92

Validity

Validity is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of scientific findings (Le Comple and Goetz 1982: 32). The researcher presented the research tool (survey). in its initial form to a group of arbitrators with experience and expertise in the fields of scientific research, and who are qualified in the field of the subject of study to judge it. The researcher asked the arbitrators to express their opinion on the extent of clarity of the search tool phrases, their relevance to the axis to which they belong, their stability, and the categories of analyzing the content. In light of the directives shown by the arbitrators,

the researcher made the amendments referred to by the arbitrators, whether by amending the wording or by deleting some phrases after identifying the topics of confusion and weakness in them, or adding new expressions.

The arbitrators were Dr. Elias Kukali, Dr. Omar Abu Arqoub, Dr. Shadi Abu Ayyash, Dr. Alaa Ayash, and Dr. Hussein Al Ahmad.

Afterwards, the researcher calculated the validity of items using Pearson correlation; by calculating the relationship of each item with the newly-generated variable of each index. The results revealed that the items are highly correlated with their respective indexes. Meaning; the indexes measure what they were meant to measure.

Research Limitations

The researcher determined study limitations as follows:

Time limits

The study period is one month starting from December 2020 till January 2021.

Spatial boundaries

The spatial boundaries were corporates that are located in the West Bank, Palestine.

Moreover, due to Corona Pandemic and lockdown, surveys were sent to the corporates via email or Facebook, then a follow up phone call was made to make sure they received. Some corporates were visited face to face since the researcher couldn't reach them by phone or email.

Human frontiers

Public relations practitioners, marketing officers, brand managers who work in corporates located in the West Bank, Palestine.

CHAPTER

II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Reputation management is very much needed in every corporate, having a good reputation is the main goal of any corporate. Due to the constantly evolving and changing market, consumers nowadays spend most of their times on social media, so being able to reach all the consumers is just remarkable and that's what influencer marketing is here to do, it has many benefits and effects. This theoretical literature review is divided in three parts.

1. The first part discusses the theoretical framework used in this study.
2. The second part is divided in to three sections, "PR and corporate reputation management", it covers the identification of Reputation management, its importance and impact on corporates.
3. The third section focuses on "Corporates reputation management through Influencer marketing, it covers the identification of influencers, and how corporates manage their reputation through influencers.
4. The last section is "Relationship management with influencers" which covers how corporates manage their relationship with influencers to build a good reputation.

Theoretical Framework

There are many writings describing public relations; its history, practices, and processes, in addition to the availability of many theories that provide a perspective on why and how to practice public relations and an understanding of how to make public relations more effective for organizations and society. In essence, theories predict the way things will work or happen, providing an understanding of the relationship between actions and events.

Of course, there is no single theory that explains all public relations practices. Public relations practitioners take into account many theories when making decisions about how to build successful relationships with their audiences. Sometimes, the relatively modern field of public relations resorts to cognitive theories, psychology and other sciences through which public relations practices are embodied.

However, and based on the current study data and its objectives, the researcher relied on a set of theories in an attempt to understand to what extent corporates in Palestine use influencer marketing to manage their reputation. The theories on which the researcher relied included reputation management theory (Fombrun, 1996). and relationship management theory (Ledingham, 2000). Where the researcher employed the assumptions of these theories and their axes to guide the researcher in understanding the research problem and linking its variables to answer the research assumptions and make recommendations on its basis.

Reputation Management Theory (RPMT)

Corporate reputation can be defined as the “collective perception of the organization's past actions and expectations regarding its future actions, in view of its efficiency in relation to the main competitors” (Fombrun et al. 1996, p.129).

Assumptions (Fombrun et al 2000)

It is known that building a reputation can be a time-consuming and complex process, but it only takes few discontented and loud enough employees to collapse it. A company's reputation consists of the employees, investors and customers' opinions are, and they all have an impact on the perception of the corporate's reputation. Profitability is connected to corporate's reputation, it increases the interest among customers, especially when

corporates own high quality products and services and strategy. Which leads to better economic results. Corporate strategy consists of the reputation management and its values. It also cares about social responsibilities and environment. The process by which campaign about a corporate is advertised, affects how it is viewed, and thus affects the corporate's reputation. Corporates with good reputation draws accomplished and informed work force as well as the right stakeholders. Online reputation management company helps improving the corporate's image by increasing publicity and search ability of the positive things that are associated with you.

Charles Fombrun wrote about the topic of corporate reputation. Saying that corporate reputation "is a subjective concept, which can be defined as the collective (aggregate). judgment about the effectiveness of a company, comparing its past actions and future projections based on a pre-established pattern" (Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun and Rindova, 2001; Walker, 2010, p.40) came up with a model clarifying the standards of measuring reputation based on his own initial qualitative research in international Focus Groups in seven countries.



Figure 1: Standards of measuring reputation

(Fombrun, 2004).

Fombrun et al (2000) proposed an alternative form of measurement, the RQ, which has six dimensions of reputation taken from the literature: governance, high quality products, environmental responsibility, workplace, innovation and performance. The researcher will check if these six dimensions are the main factors of measuring corporates' reputation management in Palestine or not.

Piles and Trez (2017) suggested three different streams of thought regarding corporate reputation. The first is **social expectations**; corporates do everything to satisfy the needs and wants of the public by listening to them and be as expected. The second is based on

corporate personality; the personality qualities that people attribute to corporates. Davies et al (2003) made a contribution, using thoughts related to the image and identity of corporates to assess their personality, it deals with the perception of consumers and employs about the corporates' personality, The third is **trust**, the corporates honesty, reliability and benevolence as the main elements. By analyzing Palestinian corporates, the researcher will notice which has more attention in our corporates.

FMAC scale is a scale that includes executives and market's perceptions about human resources management, quality of products and services, long-term investments, management quality, innovation, financial soundness, use of assets and corporate social responsibility

On the one hand, the RQ considers seven dimensions, namely, performance, products and services, innovation, work environment, governance, citizenship and leadership, and can be used to get information on corporate reputation from the standpoint of customers, employees, suppliers and/or investors.

Flanagan et al (2011), studied the relationship between the evaluations of Fortune Most Admired Companies (FMAC) and the economic-financial performance of the corporates, and found that the relationship between the two still exists even if sapped, as initially identified by Brown and Perry (1994). Conferring to that, Pires and Trez (2017) created this table (3). on the relationship between reputation and corporate performance, which is a summary of the main methodologies for corporate reputation assessment. it listed the advantages and disadvantages of each study and during this research.

Table 3: Relationship between reputation and corporate performance

Models	Advantages	Disadvantages
Fortune Most Admired Companies (FMAC)	Evaluations cover several dimensions of the organization It is acknowledged by academy and by corporations It is widely used It does systematic evaluations	It has a poor theoretical basis Focuses on the organization's financial performance Considers only the judgment by executives and market analysts
Reputation Quotient (RQ)	Evaluations cover several dimensions of the organization Considers theoretical assumptions It is widely used	Focuses on the organization's external stakeholders
Corporate Personality Scale	Considers the perception of customers and employees Anticipates that stakeholders may have different perceptions about the evaluation of the same company	Does not consider the view of other stakeholders

Piles and Trez (2017).

This framework is definitely very beneficial for this study as the main aspect is reputation management and how corporates build and maintain a good reputation through influencers. As mentioned above, reputation management is very essential in corporates, it requires corporates to listen to the people who supports them by monitoring, collecting and analyzing reviews, you can understand what customers are talking about and how they feel. This study examined how corporates in Palestine manage their reputation through influencer marketing, tactics and strategies they use to build a positive reputation through influencer marketing. It is worth noting that corporates approach influencers since they are considered trusted, and people do what influencers do, reaching out to influencers is one of the best strategic moves to improve the corporate's reputation through conveying a certain message.

Relationship Management Theory (RLMT)

Relationship management is a “strategy that can occur between a business and its customers in which an organization maintains an ongoing level of engagement with its

audience, aiming to create a partnership, instead of viewing the relationship as merely transactional. The relationship perspective of public relations suggests that balancing the interests of organizations and public is achieved through management of organization-public relationships. From that perspective, public relations is seen as the “management function that establishes and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (Ledingham, 2000, p.15). According to that, relationship management is the process of managing organization–public relationships in such a way as to benefit organizations and publics alike. Ledingham further defined relationship as “the state which exists between an organization and its key publics in which the actions of either can impact the economic, social, cultural or political well-being of the other” (Ledingham ,2003, p. 184).

Grunig and Hung (2002) comrade reputation management with relationship management, Corporate reputation should be assumed as being the product of management behaviors’ and corporate-public relationships. Authors indicate that PR strategies improve relationships with diverse publics, adding value to the corporate. Relationships, in turn, effects reputation. Moreover, “one characteristic of effective corporate is their ability to achieve their goals through the development of relationships with their publics” (Grunig, Grunig & Ehling, 1992, p.65). This means that a possible way to determine the value of PR, communication programs, and reputation management is by measuring the quality of relationships the corporates has with strategic publics. Based on the academic literature, there are 10 key findings for practitioners charged with managing relationships (Lendinghum, 2003, p. 57):

Assumptions

1. The domain of public relations is relationships.
2. Successful relationships include benefit both for a corporate and for interacting publics.
3. Organization–public relationships are dynamic; that is, they change over time.
4. Relationships are driven by the needs and wants of corporates and publics, and relationship quality depends on perceptions of the degree to which expectations are fulfilled.
5. Effective management of organization–public relationships leads to increased understanding and benefit both for organizations and publics.
6. The success of an organization–public relationship is measured in terms of relationship quality, rather than message production or dissemination.
7. Communication is a strategic tool in managing relationships, but communication alone cannot sustain long-term relationships in the absence of organizational behavior.
8. Organization-public relationships are influenced by relational history, the nature of the interaction, the frequency of exchange, reciprocity, and other dimensions.
9. Organization-public relationships can be categorized by type (personal, professional, community), and whether they are symbolic (communication driven). or behavioral (program driven).
10. Relationship building is applicable in all aspects of public relations study and practice.

Connection to current study

In the past, PR practitioners considered their job as, conveying a persuasive message through media to improve the corporate's reputation or its products and services. They used to measure performance through communication. The public's satisfaction was not considered as a necessary part of public relations function. In contrast, nowadays, public relations, sees the function of PR is managing the relationship between a corporate and the public by using practice applications such as special events, as well as community relations (Landighue, 1999).

An important key component of the relational concept is mutuality, as it is linked to long term relationships between internal public and external, positive perceptions of a corporate's public positions, and loyalty toward its products or services. Relationship management involves strategies to build client support for a business and its offerings, and increase brand loyalty. It includes trust, credibility, openness, mutual control, intimacy, emotion, similarity, immediacy, agreement, issue perception, shared interests, relational history, and in certain cultures, face and favor.

This framework can be easily associated with this study, the main focus of this study is to examine to what extent in which corporates use social media influencer marketing and manage their relationships with them to maintain a good reputation. nonetheless, a focal key to maintain a good reputation is having a good relationship with influencers to make a collaboration successful and reach the right target audience.

Conceptual Framework

PR & Corporate Reputation Management

The first part of this literature review presents the connection between Public relations and reputation management, and to what extent PR strategies seek to manage the corporates' reputation.

There's a big connection between public relations and reputation management, in recent decades' reputation management was known as public relations, if it is to emerge as a significant business function, clearly rests on a foundation of what is traditionally termed "public relations," which has become known commonly, in a corporate context, as "corporate communication," "corporate affairs," "corporate relations" and similar terms (Hutton, 2001).

Reputation

It is the overall esteem in which a company is held by its constituents (Fombrun, 2004). Reputations consists of the following perceptions (Pitkänen, 2001).; *conception*, a corporate should show in its actions, decision making process and other operations that it is trying to promote itself as environmentally friendly. *Social responsibility*; the capability to reduce the reputational threats and to enhance the corporate image, by being involved in social responsibilities, the company is able to upturn its "reputation capital". *Culture*: should be considered when thinking about the corporate's reputation. "Ignoring the impact that culture has on reputation can be fatal in some areas" (Heinonen, 2006, p.31-32).

Reputation's effects on the audience

Reputation has many effects on the audience, a good reputation is very important for the customer as well as for the stakeholders and employees. If customers are asked to choose between two competitor products that are from different brands, they will probably go for the one who has a good reputation. In view employees, corporates who have good reputation makes it easier for them to hire new employees and keep the current ones they have. When it comes to stakeholders and investors, a corporate with a good reputation is a way more interesting, than a corporate with unclear reputation (Fombrun & van Riel, 2004).

Corporates' reputation management

Many academic studies assume that corporates nowadays are thinking from a reputation management perspective, repositioning traditional PR and communication strategies as reputation management (Hutton, 2001). The main reasons for reputation management becoming such a big issue in corporate management scenes are "Rising sophistication of the stakeholders and environment, sharp competition, growing demand for corporate transparency and social responsibility" (Smaiziene & Jusevicius, 2009).

Reputation from corporate's point of view

Reputation collects conceptions and images of a corporate. It reflects a corporate's strategies, goals and directions. Other important indicator of the impact of a good reputation is attraction, which affects the performance in the market, in other words economic success, how attractive the corporate is for customers, stakeholders and staff (Aula & Mantere, 2005).

However, in reality, some corporates do not even consider “reputation management” a terminology in job titles or divisions, and reputation management theory is being far away from the reality of corporates. Assuming that reputation management exists despite the fact that only minimum respondents labeled their job description or position as reputation management (Davies and Miles, 1998). On the other hand, David Finn, Doug Newsom (1997). and others focused on the management part of the reputation, pointing out that concepts such as “reputation” and ‘Image” cannot be managed directly, but are pervasive and the global result of a firm’s or individual’s behavior. Trying to manage one’s reputation might be compared to trying to manage one’s own popularity. (Finn, Newsom, 1997).

Nowadays, and with the technological development, reputation management has partly moved from traditional new media towards communication through social media, where audience can be reached easily, conveniently and cost efficient (Stieglitz et al. 2014). According to that it’s therefore very important for PR practitioners and executive managers to learn how to steer corporate reputation using the new modern methods, as in social media strategies (Floreddu et al., 2014).

The researcher will investigate more on the identification of corporate’s reputation management and how it can be managed. Scholars have defined corporate reputation as a “perceptual representation of a firm's past actions and future prospects that describes the firm’s overall appeal to all of its key constituents when compared with other leading competitors” (Fombrun 1996, p. 72). Some define corporate reputation as “collective opinion of stakeholders towards an organization”. “It has also been described as a method of building and sustaining of an organization’s good name, generating positive feedback

from stakeholders that will result in meeting strategic and financial objectives” (Kartailia, 1999, p.78). An empirical study of Fortune 500 companies has acclaimed the importance of every corporate to manage its reputation, suggesting that it is gaining ground as a driving philosophy behind corporate public relations (Hutton, 2001, pp 247). Klein and Leffler (1981). agree with the study and they talk about the importance of a good reputation and that it is a crucial objective for any company. From a business-to consumer perspective. Many advantages can be offered from a positive reputation which is mainly generate higher sales, build relationships and attract more customers (Klein and Leffler 1981; Roberts and Milgrom 1986).

Corporate reputation management is very essential and should be taken very seriously. It’s about building and maintaining its strength. It can impact the company’s market value, revenue and ability to retain on top (Bassig, 2019). “You can take 30 years of building a reputation and in 30 seconds destroy it says Jim Kartlia (1999)., he explained by going in details listing the effects of corporate reputation on its ability to sell products and services, to attract investors, to hire talented staff, and to exert influence. And insists on the idea of protecting your identity and reputation is very important (Kartalia, 1999).

So it is obvious there’s a huge necessary for reputation management and that’s what some advocates assured seeing it as a guiding new force or paradigm for the entire field, in keeping with Warren Buffet’s admonition that losing reputation is a far greater sin for an organization than losing money (Watson and Kitchen, 2010). Tom hoog, president and CEO of Hill and Knowlton USA confirms by saying that “Corporate reputation has become a driving factor in the business of managing the nation’s largest corporations” (Miller, 1999, p57). Winkleman also agreed to that saying that corporate reputation

management is very essential and should be taken very seriously. Reputation management is about building a sound corporate reputation and maintaining the strength. PR professionals agree that reputation is a mighty thing worthy of nature, deserving of praise, and once lost or tarnished, it would be incredibly difficult to regain (Winkleman, 1999). Steve Millers chairman and CEO of Waste Management pointed out that having a reputation behind you on every front, from sales to customers, while dealing with suppliers, employees, recruitment, is definitely easier to deal with (Donlon, 1998).

Reputation management is not limited to achieving a positive impression with external clients only, but rather starts from within and builds a close relationship with employees at all levels, which creates an environment conducive to creativity. Reputation management in other words means that a corporate's, its customers', and competitors moves and actions are followed, tracked, monitored and reported. (Fombrun & van Riel, 2004, Heinonen, 2006, Aula & Mantere, 2005, etc.). Studies show that more than 20,000 people in the United States surveyed. The results speak for themselves as more than 60% Respondents say they will "definitely buy a product or service" from companies that have been rated as having a strong reputation. Compare this to those at the bottom of the listing listings since only 5% are likely to buy or recommend others to buy a product or service.

"Certainly ethics in business practices is crucial, but reputation includes things like leadership and vision, quality of products or services, workplace environment, financial results, and corporate citizenship, for example," says John F. Schleicher, director of audit and accounting at Chrischer Miller. But the challenge is to balance all of these elements in a way that creates a reputation for business success. Engaging in society by participating in nonprofit councils, sponsoring social events, or making charitable

donations is another essential component of building a company's reputation, but this must be done with a real desire to contribute. Self-promotion in these endeavors can lead to less than desired results. Intense interest in the project and enjoyment of participation is key to corporate citizenship.

Reputation management requires an ability to recognize changes in the markets, dealing with them in a beneficial way, having a clear vision and strategy, ability to adapt and evolve, understanding the business environment, as well as the corporate's internal operations, doing a SWOT analysis is also very operative (Heinonen, 2006, 102 and Aula & Mantere, 2005, 171).

Corporates' should consider the following to maintain a good reputation:

Customer expectations; should be taken into consideration when you're building your reputation. You want to fulfill the needs and wants of a customer. People nowadays are being opposed to more info and more options than they can possibly handle in the time at hand. So to abridge their purchase decision, buyers go with the most well-known brand, product, company or service that has a good reputation (McGovern, 2016).

Transparency; It is very easy for journalists, stake holders and customers to get information about your company, service or product, so if the source of information is a disgruntled journalist who doesn't have all the facts, then your company is at a great risk (Kartalia, 1999).

Social concerns; being a good corporate citizen is important no matter what their business activity is. It helps you build your identity and maintain your reputation (Logan, 2019).

Financial performance: Companies with better reputation have better financial performance, according to Fortune magazine annual survey report covering 400 companies in 49 industry groups (Ferry, 1983). Therefore, in the corporate world, reputation is seen as a major element for financial performance (Argenti and Druckenmiller, 2004).

Developing a good corporate reputation

UK public relations industry leader Adrian Wheeler suggested 6 reputation components that help the corporate to develop a good reputation; be passionate about your product or service, confidence, availability, confess faults, customers' interests, vision.

Strategies for sustainable corporate reputation

The Reputation Institute has identified specific forward-looking good practices (Serrat, 2017, p.481-487); “adopt a common model for reputation management across organizational functions, understand what the seven reputation dimensions and attributes mean to different stakeholders, align corporate messaging and reputing activities with key drivers for their stakeholders, create employee alignment with their reputation platform, create a cross-functional reputation committee to ensure coherent actions, monitor reputation with different stakeholders against relevant competitors, integrate reputation management into business processes, corporate leaders must also develop sustainable corporate reputation strategies to maintain the desired image and reputation”:

Corporate Reputation management through reliability and responsibility: By ensuring quality, service and innovation, they acquire a reputation for reliability among customers and suppliers. They gain responsibility among community and public constituencies.

They also achieve reputation for accountability among competitors and industry (Petrick, et al., 1999).

Reputation through PR communications: Managing corporate reputation through PR activities, such as advertising, promoting through campaigns, relations with all stakeholders and customers, and relations with trades, since all are effected by the image of the brand which is created through the above PR communication activities (Saxton, 1998).

Corporates Reputation Management through Influencer Marketing

Public Relations & influencer marketing

The second part of this literature review presents the definition of influencer marketing, PR and corporates. We will discuss how PR practitioners can include influencer marketing in their PR strategy. Public relation industries work hard to build a good reputation by executing brand awareness strategies both online and offline. With the advanced media and technology, corporates now can choose from several options the way they want to market their products, PR thrives on influencers, because influencer marketing shape brand image (Alexandrove, 2020). This is where it's called digital PR which is associating with social media influencers to generate reliable brand through social media accounts. Social media influencers can become your brand ambassadors, when you engaging the most effective and most operative brand ambassadors in your PR strategy (Dholakiya, 2018), they can represent your corporate through customized and personalized content on their personal social media platforms, whether it's Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and YouTube (Glucksman, 2017). Dholakiya (2018). pointed out that one of the many benefits you can get from influencers is reaching a wider target

audience base. Glucksman (2017). explained that building and maintaining a relevant audience indeed is not an easy thing to do especially when trying to reach the target audience. However, he agreed with Dholakiya on the fact that you can actually reach your audience wherever they are, by approaching influencers.

Influencer Marketing

We'll walk through brief history of influencer marketing, before social media existed, people relied on what they saw on TV, radio and newspapers for product recommendations. Then social media appeared here's the road to modern influencer marketing became real. But through different phases, phase one is the pioneers, phase two is fictional characters, phase three is celebrity endorsement. Phase four is reality TV, phase five is influencer marketing (Kim, 2020). According to a business dictionary, influencer is "an individual who has the power to influence others' decisions through their own authority, knowledge, position, or relationship" (BusinessDictionary, 2019).

Bathelot (2015). defined an Influencer "as someone who has access to a large audience, can persuade others, and creates trends on social media" (p. 45). It is also called "efluencer". Therefore, we now know that influencing people, fans and other individuals' who track their communication, performance, and appearance, since they are considered persuasive, is the most main activity of influencers. In another note, Freberg focused on another aspect which is shaping audiences' attitudes and behaviors saying that "influencers are a new type of independent third party that shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and other social media" (Freberg et al. 2011, p. 90-92). Singh, Lehnert and Bostick went deep into understanding this point and confirmed that they are everyday normal people who actually do influence shopping decisions, by using what's

available on the internet, such as blogs, social networking sites, podcasts, etc (Singh, Lehnert, and Bostick 2012). This means that influencers use different online platforms such as YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram or any other channel to publish and share their opinion on (Helsinki, 2020).

On the one hand, Pehilvana (2015). defined Influencers marketing as a form of “stealth” and indirect marketing, where its goal is to purposefully influence the audience while not being very obvious about it, it can be as disguised manner without the audiences being aware of these activities (Charry, 2017, p. 7). On the other hand, Wong (2014). looked at influencers marketing from another perspective, indicating that people follow influencers they trust and this is how he defined influencer marketing, who try to have this trust with their audiences to enlarge their network. The strategy influencers use to gain trust through, is personalization, they talk about a product for example out of their experience with this product, offering and informal advice or information which has effects on the audience (Keller and Kotler, 2016). But why are they considered influential? Liu have an answer to that, saying that their opinions matter and have an effect on the audience and even more, media coverage and organizations. They try to be relatable and relevant opinions to meet the audiences’ emotional needs on some issues (Liu et al., 2012). “Even Influencers are inspired by other influencers, as 83% of influencers say they purchased a product they saw on social media within a month” (Soltysinska, 2017).

Fisherman’s influencer marketing model benefits corporates identify possible influencers and their societies, and later uses them as a base for additional research and analysis in this matter. This model proposes influencing the biggest social community to achieve purchasing results (Brown and Fiorella 2013). It’s recommended by Brown and Fiorella

for every corporate to use Fisherman's influence marketing model as a first step in their marketing plan.

To identify potential influencers, PR practitioners should pay attention to the following characteristics; *relevance*, influencer's content should match to the brand management. *Engagement*, is an indicator of the interaction between followers and a given influencer in comments, responses, and sharing. *Reach*, corporates should only consider unique profile or blog visitors if they are focusing on reach where followers are only relevant if influencer reaches the target audience of that brand. *Frequency*, how often an influencer is active meaning publishing stories and posts and how often user return to him. And *authenticity*, as shown in the figure below (Vodak, et al., 2019).

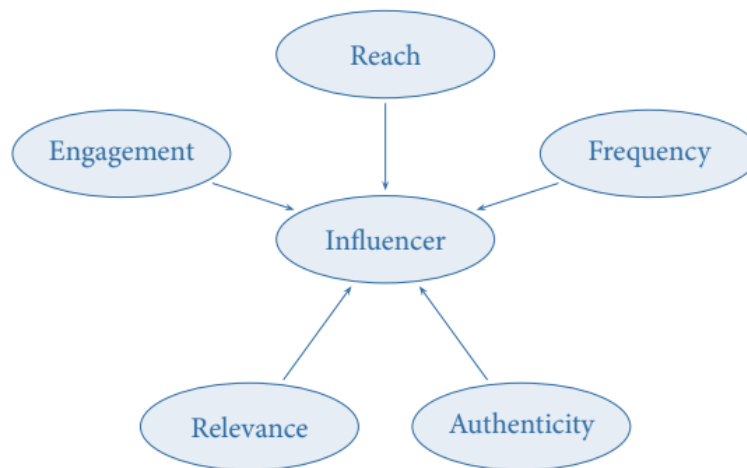


Figure 2: Characteristics of Influencer
(Vodak, 2019)

In line with this, the relationship between managing corporates reputation and influencers is compatible. "Influencers" are considered one of the protuberant tools of modelling people's opinions, promoting products and services, achieving tangible results for brands

and raising brand awareness. Managing a corporate reputation does not happen easily, it takes a lot of time and effort, it needs more than just using their own professional page on social media, for several reasons, a corporate's main goal is constantly growing and becoming more successful along the way, staying where it is will make it fall fast especially among competitors who are always trying hard to be visible and proof its existence (Eccles, et al., 2007).

Reputation management through influencer marketing

Therefore, for a company to grow, shine, maintain its reputation and become better, it needs to search for new effective ways. For instance, maintain current consumers and reach bigger audience, engage with the consumers to build brand loyalty, through influencers. However, influencer marketing is a special case, companies have to choose the influencers wisely based on their field to achieve the desired goals. Dholakiya listed the reasons why social influencers should be included in your PR strategy:

1. *Their popularity*: they are more popular than mainstream celebrities
2. Consumers want *conversations* not advertisements
3. *Cost effective*: According to a recent study, 22.0% of the surveys marketers said influencer marketing is the most cost- effective PR tool.
4. *Trackable and measurable*: measuring online PR strategies such as influencer marketing or measuring the success of a PR campaign has become a lot easier

Influencers can endorse your company and share your content. You only need to search, find, follow, connect and learn how to use them effectively. Whether you're establishing credibility in the market or creating social conversations around the brand, or driving online or in-store sales of your product, these are all influencer marketing goals. By

working together with influencers, PR agencies can draw the attention of brand consumers and promote appropriate and applicable content to consumers. Lately, this strategy has become mainly centered around social media (Glucksman, 2017). A study conducted by Morgan Glucksman (2018). as a fulfillment of the requirements in an undergraduate senior in strategic communication course in Elon university 2017 with the title “The Rise of Social Media Influencer Marketing on Lifestyle Branding: A Case Study of Lucie Fink, defining influencer marketing as a process of identifying, supporting individuals who create conversations with a corporate’s consumers, engaging, and it is a growing trend used in public relations initiatives (Glucksman, 2017).

Influencer Categorization

According to a paper on the topic “**Who is Influencer and How to Choose the Right One to Improve Brand Reputation?**” that was conducted by Vodak, et al, 2019. The basic distribution of influencers, according to the size of the followers, can be divided as follows:

Table 4: Typology of Influencers

Mega-influencer	Over 1 million of subscribers	They can be famous people working with big brand, are not very effective when it comes to publics’ behavior.
Macro-influencer	100,000 to 1 million of subscribers	Business partners
Micro-influencer	1,000 to 100,000 of subscribers	Mostly on Instagram, considered more authentic when interacting with followers and more interactive than a traditional celebrity (Senft, 2008, in Marwick, 2010).
Nano-influencer	Less than 1,000 of subscribers	They have a huge impact on a relatively narrow market.

(Vodak, Novysedlák, Čakanová, Pekár. 2019).

Corporates use of influencer marketing

The Association of National Advertisers, report found that 86% of public relations are including influencer marketing in their PR content strategy. Whereas, 0,6% find influencer marketing not valuable at all, on the contrary, 53% of corporates think it is valuable, and 36% finds it very valuable (ANA, 2016).

Thus, Global enterprises are hosteling to understand the impact of social media on their brands. Studies confirmed the importance and value of social media tools especially nowadays since they are considered one of the most essential elements of a communication strategy in an average consumer's life (Glucksman, 2017). Because of the power of technology and internet that brings people who share common interests closer, influencers are gaining a huge share of voice and their opinions are being expressed and shared (Booth, Matic, 2012). Influencers are part and one of the main social media effective tool, and has taken lead in social media marketing (Social influencer Guide, 2020). As Delaney once said that people trust influencers more than other social media tools (Delaney, 2012).

This were definitely taken into consideration in terms of corporates. Corporate management is indorsing a new level of activism influencing the public. Moreover, consumers are impacting brand equit. This alarms corporate marketing practitioners with the responsibility for brand management (Booth, Matic, 2012). Therefore, there's an obvious relationship between the brand, audience, media and influencer. Thomson said that "at a basic level, the brand represents the identity of a commodity (a product, service or firm)., and its main function is to convey a certain level of quality. But to reach the target audience (at an optimal frequency). with its message, the brand owners (or

advertisers). have to pay media organizations for the advertising. When an influencer, or a human brand, is introduced into the picture, the dynamics change slightly. A human brand is defined here as ‘any well-known persona who is the subject of marketing communications efforts’ (Thomson 2006, p. 104).

Following that, the rise of influencer marketing has helped the corporates understand that they need a shift of focus. Corporates finally understand that direct marketing is not as effective as it used to be in the past, simply because people are now open to new digital media and get influenced by them. Which as Delaney mentioned that it creates the need for the assessment of a branded content strategy (Delaney, 2012). Soltysinska confirms in his research that social influencer marketing is most effective for brands wanting to reach a “younger” audience. since idealistic consumers are deflecting traditional media. They are moving more towards online media and following some trusted influencers who share their interests (Soltysinska, 2017).

A thesis study conducted by three students, Bernitter, Verlegh, and Smit in 2016 says that if a corporate want to advertise itself and its brands on social media, it needs to approach influencers, using its own professional page is not enough. Which can happen by simply paying them to advertise and recommend the brand on their own platforms in their own way, through organizing competitions, contests, pranking videos (Bernitter, Verlegh, and Smit, 2016). Influencer marketing is the way to reach larger networks, in very specific niches. Not “tasting” like a direct advert to the receiver. Some “followers” think the influencer is sincerely endorsing a product, they don’t notice the pure marketing. (Laura, 2018). According to eMarketer, half of PR practitioners have improved their investment in influencer marketing in 2017. Brands and marketers consider that the voices of reliable,

confident profiles are much more likely to break through the ad blockers (Gilbreath, 2017).

We now understand the importance of influencer marketing but the challenge here to be able to reach your audience and fulfill the consumer's wants and needs, in order for it to be effective (Booth and Matic, 2011). Your job as a corporate doesn't end here, it actually starts, you fulfill the consumers' needs by listening and monitoring what is being said throughout many online platforms about your corporate. Corporates must listen first, then act. Whether the conversations generated are positive or negative, this way you'll be able to be aware of what's happening around you and enable you to turn an unhappy consumer into a happy satisfied one. What facilitates this, are the platforms that are being used by consumers, where they all give the opportunity for consumers to interact with the brand by commenting, asking question, and giving feedback. A study on the benefits of social media for businesses noted that, "Individuals and groups suddenly have a radical new ability to voice opinions through this new media, a channel never before available," (Merrill, Latham, Santalesa, & Navetta, 2011, p. 1). due to its instantaneous nature

Aichner and Jacob (2015) explained that social network users expect a response to their questions and concerns within hours now due to the fast-paced nature of the world of social media. They expressed that, "If companies ignore their users or react too late on critics this may evolve to global discussions about the weaknesses of the company itself or of its products, which eventually results in an economic damage for the company" (p. 261). Although, when criticizers complain on social platforms, they create potential chances for businesses to show other consumers that the situation is getting fixed (Periasamy et al., 2011). The brand's exposure and sales can be increased if the influencer

has faithful followers, through recommendations by publishing stories or posts about the corporate's product or service involvement. It's worth mentioning that a lot of corporate's use influencer marketing to get consumers exposed to the brand and its story not to sell a product (Alderton, 2014).

To sum things up, Influencer marketing turns out to be so powerful that it facilitates many people to take an interest in a number of products. Companies approaching influencers has made the brands discover the far-reaching, impact and viral growth potential of approaching influencers to promote their products (Wong, 2014).

How many Influencers is enough?

Based on a study conducted by Linqie in 2016, "most brands work with ten to twenty-five influencers per campaign. Working with more influencers is less customary, because the process of managing influencer Marketing can be very time-consuming" (Linqia, 2016, p.7). Figure (3). projects precise percentages.

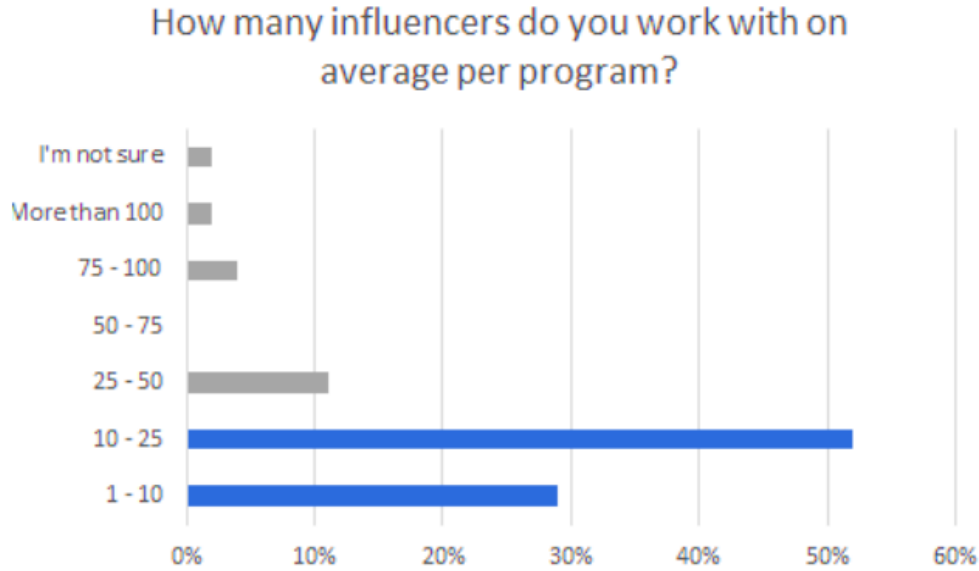


Figure 3 - Number of influencers per campaign
(Linqia, 2016, p. 7)

However, Russel (2018). pointed out that there's no specific number of influencer a corporate should consider and work with, it all depends on several factors which are, your investment, the type of influencers you want to approach, how relevant the influencers are, and your engagement approach (Russel, 2018).

How do influencers work?

Each influencer has built their own self-branding and their own image, they try to impact people by being relatable to the audience and acting their own way, in a way that defines their characteristics. According to Ledbetter, "When a party attempts to influence another to take specific actions, a dynamic ensues that can change the course and content of their relationship" (Ledbetter, 2017, pp 3). This way, and through the openness and candidness with consumers, they can actually make the ultimate connection between a brand and a consumer (Buyer, 2016). This is why the phenomenon is so successful comparing it with

traditional marketing where it's harder to reach the target audience while influencers have the unique ability to target niche audiences that have until now been unreachable (Ledbetter, 2017).

Influencer marketing & electronic Word of mouth

Influencer marketing is an extension to the original concept of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). marketing, but performed in a more professional way, while focusing on a social context. Sugha and Sheena (2017) defined it as a “form of relationship building which may be very helpful for brands that seek to expand their audience and turn them into loyal customers through trust and authenticity” (p 23).

Lee and Youn agree with Sugha and Sheena (2017) adding that Word of mouth is known to be one of the most trustworthy and reliable sources of marketing. Social media influencers are masters at eWOM. Electronic word of mouth refers “to any positive or negative statement made by all type of customers, potential, actual, and former customers about a product or company online” (p.76). eWOM inspires consumers to be encouraged to share their opinions with other consumers. “Social media influencers take on the role of forming consumers’ opinions on products and services. That said, it is in the interest of the company as well as the influencer to keep online conversations positive and persuade other consumers to try products in a way that makes it feel as if the decision to make the purchase was in the interest of the consumer as opposed to the persuasion of the influencer” (Lee and Youn, p76).

There's a connection between the number of followers and word of mouth, as Talavera (pointed out, higher number of followers may result in larger reach of the (commercial). message and may thus leverage the power of WOM at scale (2015). Nowadays companies

seek to gain positive customer experiences in order to reduce the negative word-of-mouth messages which would be easily spread within the social media platforms to other, potential customers.

Selection of influencers

There are different opinions in regards what makes an influencer popular, is it the number of followers? When searching for influencers, corporates always check the number of followers first thing. The more followers you have, the more reach you'll get, it implies that many people are interested in the content a certain influencer is creating, Jin and Phua (2014). say that people actually rely on this cue to assess one's popularity. According to Inkybee marketing software (2016). states that the most important parameter of an influencer is: audience size, posts published, and level of engagement. A study on the topic "Marketing through Instagram influencers: impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude", was conducted as complementary note to obtain a master's degree in faculty of political and social sciences at Ghent university by student Marijke De Veirman, revealed that Instagram influencers with high numbers of followers are considered more likable, and considered more popular. And very low numbers of followers might negatively impact popular influencers' likability (Vierman, 2018).

Cha, Haddadi, Benevenuto, and Gummadi, (2010). explained why a high number of followers is a good pro to the effort of opinion leadership as ideas are spread more widely and rapidly and consequently, interpersonal influence is improved. However, contrary to these findings, Gilbreath disagree with that, he clarifies that numbers are not always reliable because some influencers actually buy fake followers. What really matters here is the engagement rate, which is a percentage that reveals the amount of "real" followers

a profile has (Gilbreath, 2017). Similar, Romero Galuba, Asur and Huberman (2010), found out that having many followers indeed is an indication of popularity however, that does not mean the followers will engage with the content (Romero Galuba, Asur and Huberman, 2010).

Another important factor that should be taken into consideration when searching for appropriate influencers is that corporates and PR practitioners should consider the type of product they want to promote. As there's a relation between number of followers and its effects on the uniqueness of the brand, Machleit (2000). found in his study that a high number of followers can trigger the idea that the product is not that unique after all, as many others are interested in it, so the effect of uniqueness appeared to be stronger when influencer's number of followers was moderate compared to high (Machleit et al., 2000).

Gilbreath suggested the following characteristics for every corporate to look for in an influencer when approaching; *Influencer Confidence*, drives confidence in the brand itself, which leaves impact on the followers and causes for them to become a consumer of the product of service.

Influencer Interactivity, through interactive content whether a video or image, influencers draw attention on brand products and invite their followers to purchase a product and experience it themselves. *Content Focused Communication*, the messages should be mixed to show every aspect of the corporate and highlight the quality of the corporates' products or services. Riddle suggested that Infographic is a good tactic to be used to push content and boost it through social media platforms. Infographics could be very helpful to the readers and easier for them to get and understand the messages and concepts conveyed (Riddle, 2016).

According to the Influencer Orchestration Network, “51 percent of marketers believe they get better customers from influencer marketing. That is because the relationship began with the trust of the influencer” (Burgess, 2017).

A guide for business have been described when selecting influencers, by Brown and Fiorella 2013: You need to do background check on influencers you want work with, their education, knowledge, interests, work and image. And most importantly their ability to produce creative results. There many qualities and criteria for influencers, both Booth and Matic (2011). and Biaudet (2017). suggested some. While Booth and Matic focused on the type of post itself and statistics related to the account, Biaudet focused more on general qualities that should be in every influencer.

Table 5: Influencers qualities

#	Booth and Matic (2011, p. 184-191).	Biaudet (2017, p.65)
1	Number of followers per month (number of visits per month).	Knowing the product or service and expressing a sincere interest in it,
2	Linking (the number of links to or from a blog).	Should be an expert leader in his area.
3	Frequency of posts (number of messages/posts over time).	Should have the right target audience for the company,
4	Blogger media citations (the amount and level of media quoting influencer).	Should know how to produce appropriate content – such as stories, videos, images, posts,
5	Industry Score – the number of points it receives from authorities that are key to a sector-related issue (notes, continuity, panel collaboration).	Should understand marketing and be involved in commercial cooperation,
6	Evaluation of social cooperation – level of participation in social sites (eg Twitter, other blog communities, LinkedIn, etc.).	Should have a sufficient number of followers on the relevant social media

7	Exposure Index – frequency of responses and observer comments.	Should have good cooperative skills and should understand the value of their work.
8	The amount and speed of topic-related posts.	
9	Qualitative review of posted topics and comments/contributions.	
10	Identification and suitability of influencer on social networks based on the above variables.	

(Booth & Matic, 2011, Biaudet, 2017).

Challenges in Selecting Influencers

Identifying and selecting the right influencers that are relevant for my corporate who have strong impact on their audience, is the major challenge, because the right influencers can convince the public about a product or a service by incorporating the corporates' products in their posts (Wong, 2014). When choosing an influencer there are some major points that must be taken into consideration: number of followers reflect network size and serves as an indication for popularity, which may result in larger reach and thus leverage the power of WOM (Talavera, 2015), although this could be considered a challenge, since now we know that number of followers does not indicate the popularity on an influencer. Instead one should search for the most likeable trustable influencer which has a high value as opinion leader, to increase the messages impact. The other challenge is that you need to choose the influencers who are seen as a valuable source of information by consumers rather than only popularity.

Measuring influencers success

Corporates need to always improve their work with influencers and know where they stand, by measuring and demonstrating the success of practices (Dorfman, 2015). Rachel Miller an influencer marketing manager at TopRank marketing once said that” the impact is measured by the size and value of the response it provokes’. The response must be measurable and increase brand value (Escobedo, 2017, p.62). There should always be a way to measure brand benefit in both math and marketing, as there should also be a balance between the followers of an influencer and the number of likes/interactions he has on his posts. For instance, someone who is followed by 34,000 people should not only have 700 likes without any comment. If the numbers don’t fit, get away from them. It means that influencer is ineffective or has bought fans (fake followers). Or both (Escobedo, 2017).

Goals and purposes differ from one corporate to another, so it’s important to note that success is measured based on the goal and purposes set by the corporate. If the main goal of a campaign is growth and becoming more visible and measurable, is the number of new potential customers who have learned about their work through this campaign. Thus, if the main goal of a campaign is engagement, it is measured in amount depending on the number of ‘like,’ comments, interactions, video viewing, sharing, or clicks. Engagement is an indicator that shows what customers think about a brand not just about the product (Westwood 2017).

Corporate’s reputation can be measured by stock price, a prime determinant of which is a company’s earnings. Quality of management, quality of products or services, value for of products, client orientation, credibility of advertising claims, treatment of employees,

dedication to charitable and social issues, and commitment to protection of the environment (Gabbioneta, Mazzola, Ravasi, 2011).

Influencers content

There are various types and forms of influencer marketing on influencers' channels, from blog posts, videos, to images, infographics and more. This means contexts cooperation. It may be content including a photo or name of the influencer. Influencer marketing can also be used for events, travel trips and workshops, widgets and display ads (Biaudet 2017).

Influencers impact on the corporate

Corporates have always focused on targeting their consumers' wants and needs, social media influencers help achieve this target, influencers help corporates build direct relationship with their end consumers, this way a brand loyalty is established. Influencers are trusted voices, because they approach their followers through two-way conversation, while a corporate does not have a total control over its online conversation (Booth and Matic, 2011). According to Gillin, influencer marketing is increasingly getting popular for several factors, ranging from difficult-to-measure criteria such as "quality of content," to highly measurable factors including page views and search engine rank. These criteria can easily change depending on the improvement of media platforms. In addition, other criteria for evaluating influence include participation level, frequency of activity, and prominence in the market or community (Booth and Matic, 2011). On another note, social media influencers work to build and manage good relationships with their followers, by improving reputation of the business/ corporate, following up on their comments and feedback (Booth and Matic, 2011). As for results, a survey found that 34% of daily U.S.

Instagram users bought something because an influencer recommended it. That's a prove that influencer marketing can lead to business results.

In another research conducted by Linqia (2016), surveyed 170 American marketers, the statistics revealed that the most important advantage is creating authentic content about a brand as 89% answered. While others responded that the second essential advantage is engagement on a product or service. The third advantage is driving traffic to brand's website or page (Linqia, 2016).

Influencer Relationship Management

If you're looking for long-term benefits to your corporate, then managing your interactions with influencers is the right way to go. it helps corporates establish real connections with them, therefore have positive and strong impact on the audience. Influencers are considered your strategic partners, meaning you should focus on creating strategic relationships with them. This allows corporates to manage their influencer relationship effectively which results in building trust if it is done the right way, and develop a controlling position. However, it's not an easy task to do, you need to have a clear planned strategy and you need to make sure your influencers are invested enough in your campaigns to build strong credibility. This will increase brand awareness, consumer trust and increase your return on investment (ROI). which can impact your sales and revenue (Barker, 2020).

How to develop strong relationships with influencers?

As mentioned above, managing your relationship with influencers is not an easy task and requires time, effort and discovery to build good collaborations. Know how to choose

your influencers, relevance is the most important key things to have an effective influencer relationship management. A Crowdtap study revealed and analyzed influencers' motives to collaborate with corporates. 44% of influencers said that they would like to work with brands whose offerings are relevant to their followers. Emphasizing that relevance is the #1 motivator for influencers. The study also revealed that 49% of influencers are ready to collaborate more than once if they get relevant opportunities.

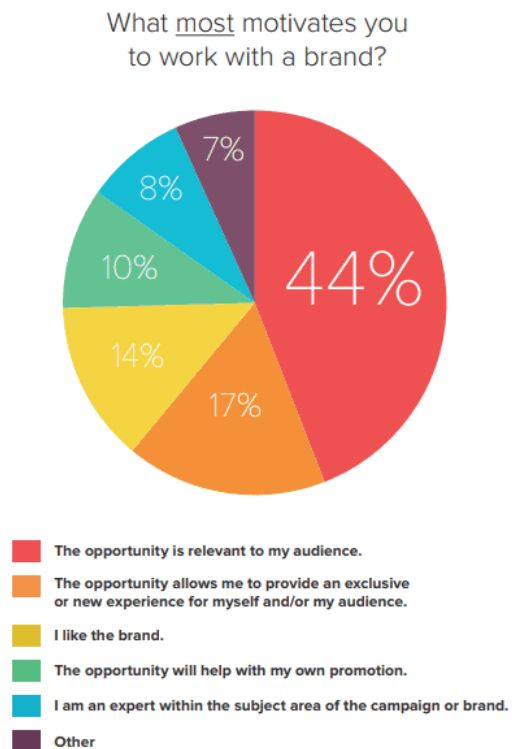


Figure 4: What most motivates you to work with a brand

(Crowdtap 2017)

Warm outreach strategy

Building relationships with influencers require you to interact with them personally before as a brand. Meaning you can share, like, and comment on their posts on a regular basis. This will make the influencer remember you and you'll stand out from the crowd.

Fair compensation

Influencers need to feel valued and respected by you. And that their efforts are appreciated and you do not expect them to promote your brand free of charge.

Creative freedom

You should understand that your audience know better the tastes, preferences and opinions of their followers. Since you're targeting your influencer's audience you're targeting. They know better what content will engage their audience and attract new followers. So your job is to give them space and freedom to do their thing creatively.

This is further supported by the Crowdtap study on "The State of Influencer Marketing." The study revealed that 77% of influencers would collaborate with a brand more than once if creative freedom is provided.

Adequate time

Respecting your influencer's time is also a good strategy to build solid relationship management. Influencers need passable time to create authentic and engaging content.

The Tap Influence study revealed that 32% of influencers don't like collaborating with brands that don't give them enough space time.

Connection of The Literature Review to The Study

Corporates in Palestine have same goals which is mainly maintaining a good reputation. They understand that a good reputation is what drives a corporate to succeed or fail. Hence, in order to develop a good reputation, a corporate need to target the right audience, convey a certain message that satisfies the public wants and needs. Research found that influencer marketing is a great tool to do so, and help maintain the corporates reputation through using relevant, confident influencers that have number of followers which are engaged. Corporates in Palestine also indicated that influencer relationship management is very important and leads to successful collaboration.

Previous Studies

Previous studies are the backbone of any scientific study, they enrich the study with knowledge and useful information based on actual theories and experiments. Also, they provide the researcher with a large number of resources and references, which saves the researcher time and effort. Accordingly, previous studies are in themselves, a full research; as they form the basis for launching new studies, especially when defining the research problem. Furthermore, they represent strong arguments and justifications for scientific research, and highlight the scientific gap in the field of study. Many previous studies have been conducted around the same concept of this study, therefore, this section will present a comprehensive review of related literature upon which the general framework of this study was established. The sub-sections are: studies investigating how PR use social media, other studies focused on influencer marketing, and how corporates

utilized this marketing tool. Followed by studies about reputation management and PR, the impact of influencer on consumer behavior, and how corporates manage their relationship with influencers.

Public Relations and Social Media

Nina et al (2008)., conducted a study on the topic “**PR practitioners’ use of social media tools and communication technology**”, the study distributed surveys to PR practitioners questioning their adoption of 18 social media tools, and examining their usage of social media growth in PR practice. Results revealed that PR practitioners have used approximately six different social media tools. adopting the more established and institutional tools such as (e-mail, Intranet), moreover, they are also very pleased with blogs and podcasts.

Sakali (2017). conducted a study on the topic “**Examining the use of social media in Public relations practice in the Kenyan government: a case of immigration department**”. The purpose of this study was to examine the use of social media in public relations practice in the Kenyan government, a case of Immigration Department. its objectives were; analyzing the styles of social media platforms embraced by PR officers at Immigration Department; to examine whether social media use has improved achievement of PR practice objectives in Immigration Department.

The findings indicated that social media is used in PR practice in Immigration Department yet, with limited use in relation to inner communication. Results revealed that the most preferred tools are Facebook and Twitter for external publics, primarily because of ease, reach and speed in use. As for internal public, WhatsApp was preferred primarily as an

alternative to traditional media. These social media tools are used mainly for informational updates and response to enquiries. The study concluded that social media is rich in meeting communicative and service objectives in public relations practice in government, but there was lack of right approach to implement it. The study recommends the following. Development of a harmonized media strategy, offer training to officers and embrace social media tools appropriate for internal publics with a bit of friendliness.

Influencer Marketing

Zietek (2016). conducted a study on the topic “**Influencer marketing- The characteristics and components of fashion influencer marketing**”. The thesis aimed to provide a guideline of the characteristics of influencer marketing to fashion brands. To accomplish this, the researcher chose a qualitative approach by interviewing experts from the fashion industry. As they were questioned on their work with influencers, asking about their daily work with them and challenges that face, to satisfy their needs. Four main components were laid through the interviews; authenticity, long-term relations, co-creation and micro-influencers. One of the important conclusions of this study is that micro influencers are a key component of influencer marketing.

Glucksman (2017). conducted a study on the topic “**The Rise of Social Media Influencer Marketing on Lifestyle Branding: A Case Study of Lucie Fink**”.

The researcher has investigated the growth of which influencer marketing is becoming a big trend is PR initiatives. Through conducting a pentadic analysis in addition to qualitative content analysis of social media influences’ posts. Results revealed that the

interaction between the consumer and brand has changed, and the barrier between the two has been broken.

Influencer Marketing and Corporates

Norman et al (2012). conducted a study on the topic “**Mapping and leveraging influencers in social media to shape corporate brand perceptions**”. The paper created a customizable valuation algorithm to identify “the new somebodies” who are influencers, that create brand awareness for corporates. The algorithm measures a cross-section of variables that numerically rate influencers in the social media conversation about a particular company, product or service. The results of the research revealed that this marketing channel allows PR practitioners engage with the influencers directly. PR Practitioners must continue consumer conversations by listening and acting strategically and immediately. Having said that, the vital key to any social media strategy is evaluating and analyzing the most influential, especially with the immense growth of social media bloggers and influencers.

Joseph et al (2019), conducted a study on the topic “**Who is influencer and how to choose the right one to improve brand reputation**”. It provided insights on the emerging growth of influencers, which is driven by the big significant power of social media, over the perception of brands and corporates. The paper managed influencers in a well-arranged way, describes its factors and common features for their classification. It describes the main features in influencer selection, identification and the common qualities for their classification. Results revealed that influencer marketing has very effective impact on the corporate’s financial and strategic policy, despite the area of its activity. However, the approach is different based on the internal and external factors

affecting the interaction when goals are set. Results also revealed that influencer marketing integrates several activities that are combined to deliver an operational and rich, long-term business. Choosing influencer marketing is a challenge and can be complicated, depending completely on the type of goals of the corporate itself.

Veirman et al (2018), conducted a study on the “**topic “Marketing through Instagram influencers: impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude”**”. The study aimed to provide the characteristics insights of influencers that would make them efficient above and beyond their possible reach. The study explores which is the best influencer for marketing in terms of number of followers by investigating if having high number of followers is perceived as a symbol of popularity. Or if it causes people to ascribe opinion leadership to the influencer. The study also investigates the connection between the number of followers and likability.

Findings from the experiments show that those who have high number of followers on Instagram influencers are considered more likeable, mainly because they are more popular. Furthermore, only in limited cases, perceptions of influencers number of followers’ popularity lead to perceptions of opinion leadership. Moreover, having low number of followers can affect negatively popular influencers likability. Finally, having high number of followers might not always be the best marketing strategy to promote different products.

Reputation Management and Public Relations

James et al (2001), conducted a study on the topic “**Reputation management: the new face of corporate public relations?”** The study focuses on current corporate

philosophies in regards to reputation management through an empirical study. The study questioned about reputation management from descriptive and prescriptive perspectives. Results revealed that there's a need for tremendous discussion, review and examination, given the many theoretical problems with defining and measuring reputation, the disconnect between most PR literature and the usual philosophies of many practitioners, and the wide range of current practitioner philosophies.

Watson et al (2018)., conducted a study on the topic “**Reputation Management: Corporate Image and Communication**”. The purpose of the study was to prepare the individual definition of reputation management, ascertain the best reputation management practices, realize the transnational nature of reputation management, and prepare PR strategies to plan, research and evaluate reputation in corporates. The results from this study indicate that reputation is the main key component of all corporates, identifying the perspectives of stakeholders to whether the corporate is good or bad.

Pires et al (2018), conducted a study on the topic “**Corporate reputation a discussion on construct definition and measurement and its relation to performance**”. The purpose of this study is to discuss different approaches to the corporate reputation construct, to be able to identify an inclusive definition which can be used for measurement purposes. When the researcher identified a comprehensive definition for the reputation construct, it also indicated ways for the construct's measurement, by considering the following; the judgment by the stakeholders; periodical evaluations under different corporates perspectives; attention to theoretical assumptions, among other aspects. It also enhances the understanding of the reputation construct measurement, considering the approved definition and the conversation of the attributes of the main ratings on corporate

reputation. It discusses one of the most important intangible resources for organizations, contributing to the understanding of the difference between the market value and the book value of public companies. “Besides it should be considered that there is one lack of a definition directly related to the measurement of the reputation construct in the literature, a gap in which this study contributes” (p. 24).

Impact of Influencers On Consumer Behavior

Laura (2018)., conducted a study on the topic “**what is the impact of Instagram’s social influencers on consumer attitude and purchase behavior of lifestyle products of young Belgian women**”. The objective of this study is understanding the impact of Influencers marketing through Instagram on the consumer behavior of lifestyle products of young Belgian women. Additionally, the researcher did a research on elements as attitude, credibility, persuasion attempt and sponsorship disclosure of Influencer Marketing through Instagram. The methodological approach is a qualitative study where the researcher has interviewed 8 Instagram Influencers, one company applying Influencer Marketing, and eleven young Belgian potential consumers during the qualitative phase. The second part consists in a quantitative study to confirm a set of research hypotheses.

Among the results reached in this study are: the research has discovered during that 96.5% consults social influencers on Instagram, of which 50.7% “often” to “each time when they join to their Instagram account, they confirm that the audience accords more credibility to social influencers when they disclose the sponsorship, which leads to more effective campaigns.

Sudha et al (2017)., conducted a study on the topic “**Impact of Influencers in Consumer Decision Process: The Fashion Industry**”. This study ascertains how fashion industry is using influencer marketing, examines the impact of influencer marketing on the consumers buying decision process in fashion industry, and finds out the influencer marketing techniques used by fashion industries. The results indicate “that blogs can have a significant impact on how young women behave after reading a positive comment on a purchase, as they enjoy not only having a reliable source telling them their opinions on the products and having a source of information, but also that they enjoy reading texts by someone they relate to” (p. 35).

Elli (2017)., conducted a study on the topic “**The phenomenon and rise of Influencer Marketing and how it affects customer opinion and helps or damages brands.**” The aim of this study is analyzing the phenomenon of influencer marketing, its rise and its effects on consumer behavior and brand perception. This study was in collaboration with a Greek footwear retail shop. In-depth research with a qualitative one was conducted. The findings of the study revealed that in order to avoid any unsuccessful campaigns and failure, the characteristics of influencers and challenges need to be aware, this concerns influencer and brand that use social media influencers.

Influencers’ Relationship Management

Pang et al (2016)., conducted a study on the topic “**building effective relations with social media influencers in Singapore**”. This study inspects how corporates can build effective relations with social media influencers using the Mediating the Media model as its theoretical lens. In-depth interviews were conducted with 10 Singapore-based SMIs. Findings revealed that media philosophy is irrelevant, however, methodology on content

judgment, media routines, economic and social goals and roles, and extra-media forces matter to the social media influencers. This study has provided as well a useful framework for practitioners to foster media relations and engage social media influencers.

Leding-ham et al (1998)., conducted a study on the topic “**Relationship Management in Public Relations: Dimensions of an Organization Public Relationship**”. This study investigates the relationship dimensions upon which good organization-public relationships are commenced, developed, and sustained through a qualitative and quantitative research. Local telephone subscribers who lived in territories that were opened to competition for local telephone service were the respondents. Furthermore, 384 respondents have been surveyed. Results revealed that the “relationship dimensions of trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment differentiate those respondents who indicated they would stay with the current provider, would sign up with a new provider, or were undecided as to what they would do” (p.67).

Commentary on Previous Studies

This study focused on three main aspects: corporates, reputation management and influencer marketing. It explored how corporates in Palestine manage their reputation through influencers. After reviewing the above studies (Nina et al., 2008; Sakali, 2017)., it has shown that many studies have been conducted on corporates, reputation management and influencer marketing, but did not meet this study’s objectives all in all. For instance, there were studies (Zietek, 2016; Glucksman, 2017). that focused on the adoption of social media in Public Relations practice, similar to this study, however, one of the studies took Kenyan government a case study which is not close to the type of sector this study is highlighting. Regardless of that, it was useful since it provided an

overview of the adoption of social media in public relations practice, knowing that nowadays, social media has a huge impact on a performance of any and every type of sector.

Other studies (Sudha et al. 2017; Elli, 2017; Pang et al. 2016). focused on influencer marketing by providing an identification of influencer marketing and providing a guideline of the characteristics of influencer marketing, coming up with applicable core components. Booth and Matic study created a “customizable valuation algorithm” to identify influencers, which is very valuable since it measures and rates influencers. Other studies (Watson et al. 2018; Laura, 2018). focused on reputation management which is the core of this study, it gave indications on how to measure reputation, and practices in reputation management. Other very effective studies (Veirman et al. 2018, Joseph et al. 2019). were about managing relationship with influencers to deliver the best messages to the public and build good reputation which is also a part of this study. Concisely, there aren't many studies that focus on all components this study is concentrating on, however there are many studies that focused on some, which is very helpful for this study, thus, the findings of these studies will be tested on corporates in Palestine.

CHAPTER

III

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Overview

This chapter discusses research findings that emanated from quantitative data collected during the study. The sample of the study was 102 corporates in Palestine, these corporates have filled out a survey responding to several questions on how they approach influencers and collaborate with them. The study aimed at finding out the use of social media influencer marketing in corporates in Palestine. The survey answered the following research questions:

1. To what extent corporates use social media influencer marketing to manage their reputation?
2. To what extent corporates manage their relationship with influencers?
3. What is the perception of influencer marketing by corporates in Palestine?
4. To what extent reputation management through influencers and relationship management with influencers predict the variation in public-related wants and needs from corporates' point of view?

The main objective of the study was to explore the use of social media influencer marketing in corporates in Palestine to manage their reputation. Specific objectives were to explore the use of social media influencer marketing to manage the corporate's relationship with influencers, and to understand how corporates' in Palestine perceive influencer marketing.

The targeted sample was 100 purposive corporates in Palestine that work through influencers. 120 surveys were administered to target respondents, out of these, number of people who answered the survey was 102 corporates.

Table 6: Response rate

Sample population	Questionnaires responded to	Complete questionnaires	Incomplete questionnaires	Response rate
Corporates in Palestine	120	102	18	85%

The study samples have been presented as follows:

Sample Description

The respondents were divided into two type of brands: product brand, service brand. 54.9% were product brands such as (Pantene, XL energy drink, Nivea, Givenchy, LC Waikiki, Fovero, Saleh Khaaf and more)., they sell specific products to the publics, the other 45% were service brands such as (Pal eat, travel house, Maalchat, Borderline JLM, Zaman coffee house, Broken Pyramid, Sky advertising, Nino digital agency, and more)., they sell a service. Most of these corporates are established and located in Ramallah in which they represent 81.3% of the whole sample, and 19% for the other locations including (Nablus, Bethlehem, Hebron and Jericho). Furthermore, 58.8% of the corporates were established newly in between (2017-2020). 20.5% were established in between (2010- 2015)., 11.7% were established in between (2000-2009)., and finally 11% of the respondents were established in the nineties. Those who worked at these corporates were 36.2% brand managers, 21.5% were marketing officers, 18.6% were owners, 15.6% were public relations practitioners, 4% were communication officers and 4% were social media specialists.

Corporates' direction in advertising

The first question was to check how many of these corporates target their audience through online only or offline only or use both ways to advertise. Results revealed that

43% of the respondents advertise through only online advertising, 3% advertise through only offline advertising and 53.9% of the respondents advertise through both (online and offline). The findings above clearly point that there is a huge shift of focus on online media rather than offline. This is a good indication that adoption of social media has come at accelerated pace. Online advertising allows you to connect with the public, it also provides varied platforms, it helps reach specific target audience.

At the same time, the results show that most corporates nowadays are headed towards advertising through both online and offline tools, depending on the corporate. Results show that even corporates that advertise offline, do it on a quarterly basis. That means they're shifting the focus online without losing the chance to advertise offline every now and then. The perfect strategy is one that combines both online and offline advertising methods, which means you can cover all bases without missing out on a particular demographic. In addition, it helps spreading the message further.

As for the offline platforms used, respondents use billboards, street signs and LED screens whereas, TV, radio and newspaper is used much less, because nowadays space in traditional media is more occupied by the governmental sector than of the private one.

Targeted age group of corporates

The most popular age group for corporates is between 15-45 years old. This means that approaching online advertising is very effective.

Reasons for using social media platforms

The most used platforms by corporates are Facebook and Instagram, as 96% of respondents use them, for three main reasons; these platforms are the most popular in Palestine which indeed is true because as shown in the below figure 5.

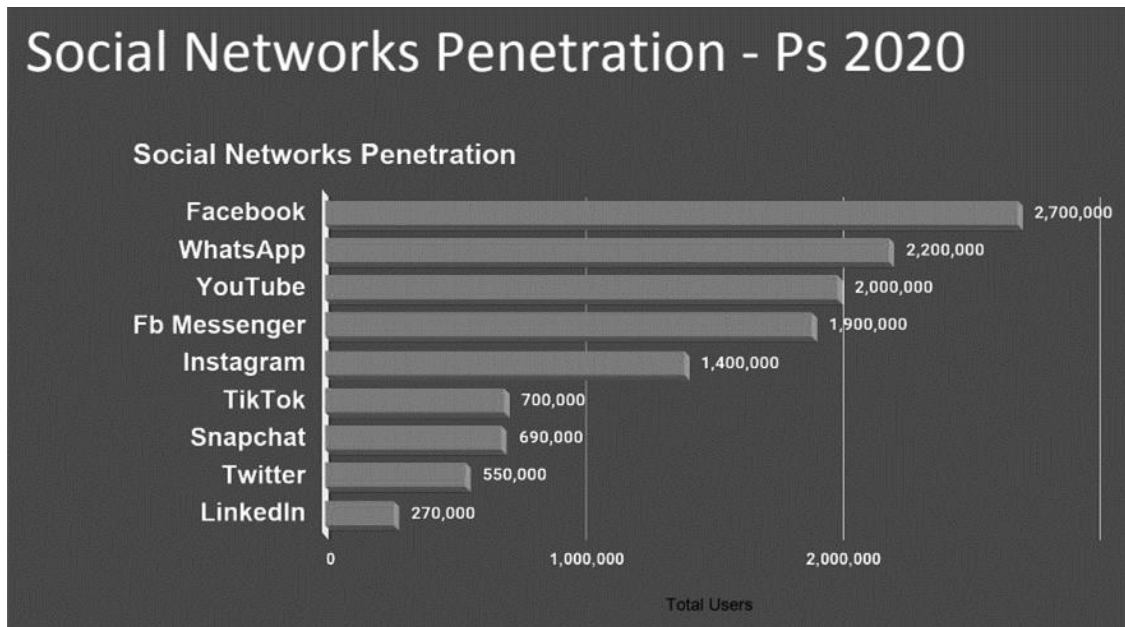


Figure 5: Most popular platforms in Palestine in year 2020

18% of the respondents use these platforms because the target audience are there, 15% of the respondents use these platforms for marketing purposes. The other reasons were to target and interact with the audience, analyze our audience preferences, immediacy and content creation, and because other corporates use them.

How is the platform used?

66% of the respondents use their platform as an interactive platform to engage with their audience, allowing continuous two-way communication. While 34% use their platforms as an informative platform to only inform their audience about a product or service. Some respondents considered interactive platform a merge between informative and interactive,

meaning they can easily use their platform to interact with the audience and inform the audience at the same time.

Factors that affect the corporate's market share

When corporates were asked about the major factors that affect their market share, responses were as follows, from most important to least important.

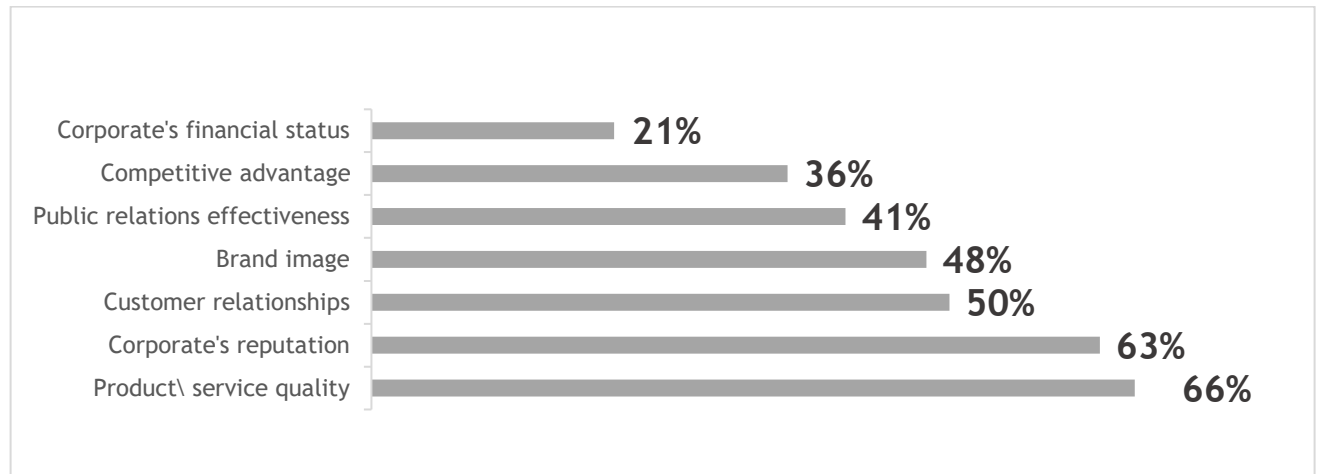


Figure 6: The major factors that affect the market share

This indicates that the most important factor is the quality of the service/ product and the least important is the corporate's financial status, which implies that corporates tend to be more "customer-oriented" as evidenced in the results depicted in figure 6. Customers always come back when a product is good, even if the price is high, which creates unshakeable customer loyalty.

Reputation management

The first three questions investigated the dependence rate of corporates on reputation and how much they prioritize it. When respondents were asked if their corporate's reputation serves the corporate's goals, strategies and directions, 42% agreed with it, and 17% disagreed. These corporates work with influencers, this indicates that advertising through them does really achieve the corporate's goals and values.

Furthermore, respondents agree that reputation management in their corporate is moving into social media than traditional media, this emphasizes the huge growth of online advertising.

Corporate's profitability

When they were asked if the corporate's profitability is highly dependent on its reputation, 84% of the respondents agreed. This means that having a good reputation is the most essential factor for having high profitability.

Corporate's reputation standards

The next question was to find out to what extent the corporates find the following procedures important to maintain their corporate's reputation, the results indicate that maintaining high visibility online is one of the most important factors to maintain a good reputation, as 50% responded that it is, and 56% responded that creativity is also a very important factor for reputation management, meaning coming up with interesting ideas and campaigns, 48% believe that responding to the publics' feedback is very effective to maintain the corporate's reputation. And 41% agree that consistency by using the same elements and theme is highly important and 41% also agree that building trust with the publics can maintain a good reputation through continuous communication. Other

procedures were not very important for corporates, as only 27% respondents said that involving in social responsibility activities will maintain the reputation, and 22% respondents agreed that they need to present offline, and only 21% respondents said that transparency is important to manage the corporate's reputation through publishing the corporate's financial regulations and rules.

Managing Corporate Reputation Through Influencer Marketing

First we needed to know how frequent do corporates approach influencers for marketing purposes, responses were as follows:

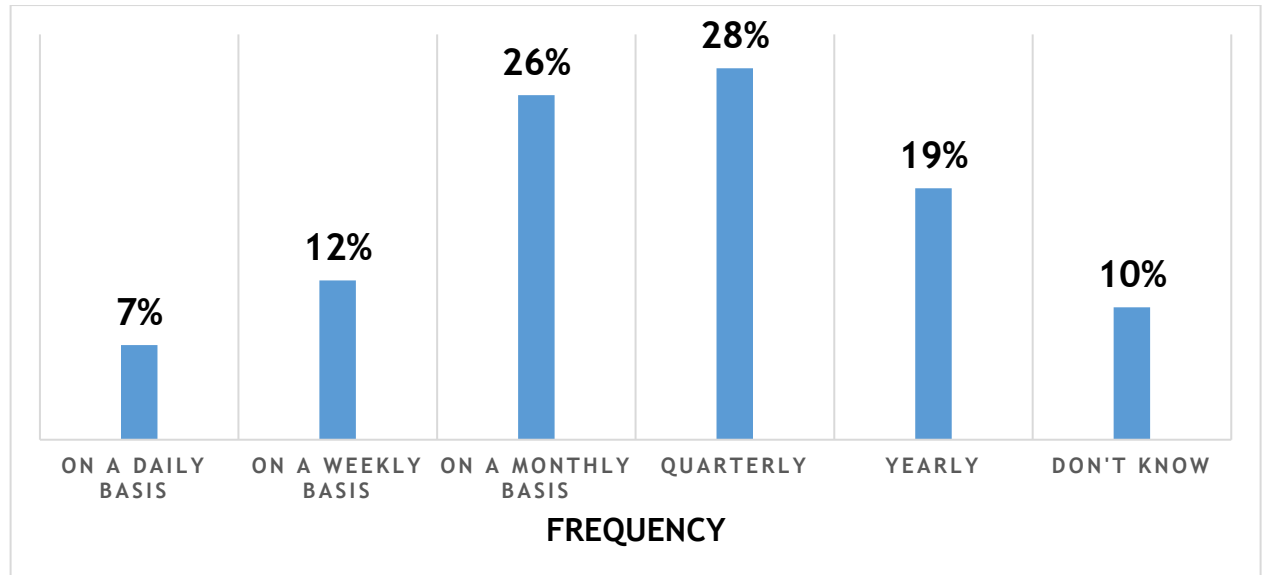


Figure 7: How frequent do corporates approach influencers

Influencers' best characteristics

The three main most important characteristics corporates consider when working with influencers are engagement which is an indicator of the interaction between followers and the influencer, then reach then number of followers. Which serves the previous question about using their platform as an interactive one, as they seek to engage and interact with

the followers. And of course reach matters, because when corporates reach the right audience, they can easily interact with them, that's why corporates should only consider unique influencers if they are focusing on reach. and higher number of real followers means higher interactivity.

Influencers included in PR strategy

62% of the respondents said that they include influencers in their public relations strategy, because it's easy to track and measure, corporates want to evaluate the success or failure of a campaign. 48% said that it's because they are popular, and 45% said that they improve customer's experience, 28% said because they have high reach and localized content, and 20% said because they help increase number of reach. By doing the above with influencers, corporate's in Palestine manage their reputation.

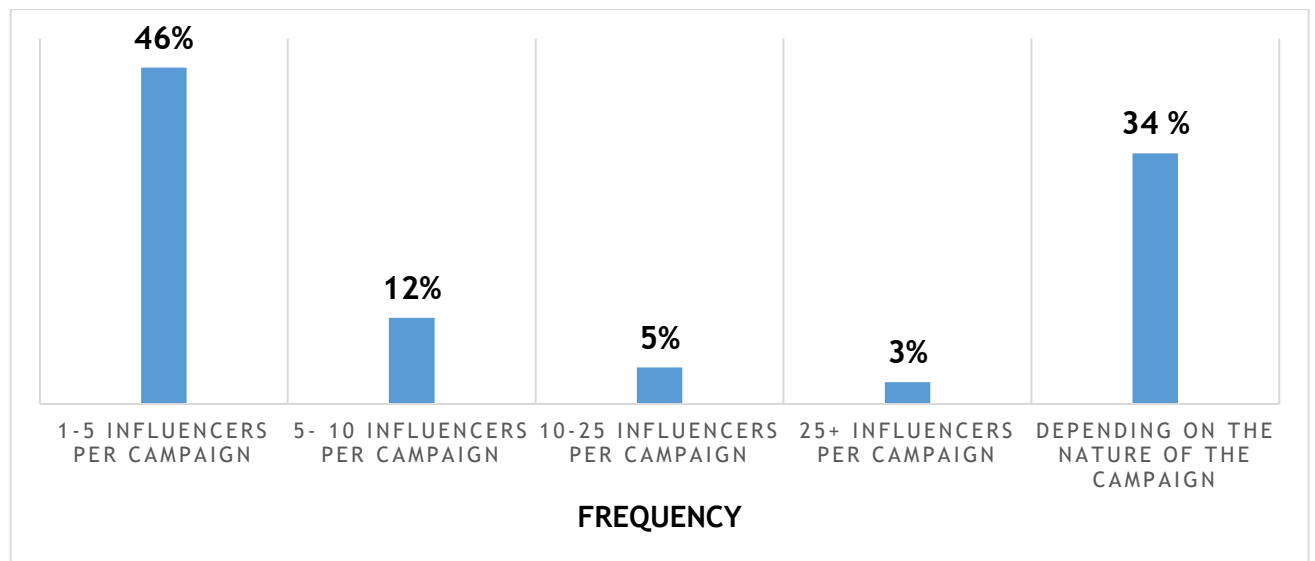


Figure 8: How many influencers are enough per campaign

When corporates want to approach influencers most of them think that 1-5 influencers are enough, maybe it's because there's not as many Palestinian influencers relevant to their brand, or maybe because sometime too much of a thing can lead to negative feedback. Or working

with more influencers can be very time-consuming. Or maybe as the respondents said, it depends on the nature of the campaign.

Types of influencers

44% of the corporates usually prefer to work with Micro-influencer (1K-100K followers), 38% of the corporates work with Macro-influencer (100K-1 million followers), 10% of the corporates responded with don't know, 6% responded with Nano-influencer (less than 1K followers), and 1% responded with Mega-influencer (over 1 million followers). These numbers make total sense since the influencers we have in Palestine are mostly Micro-influencers.

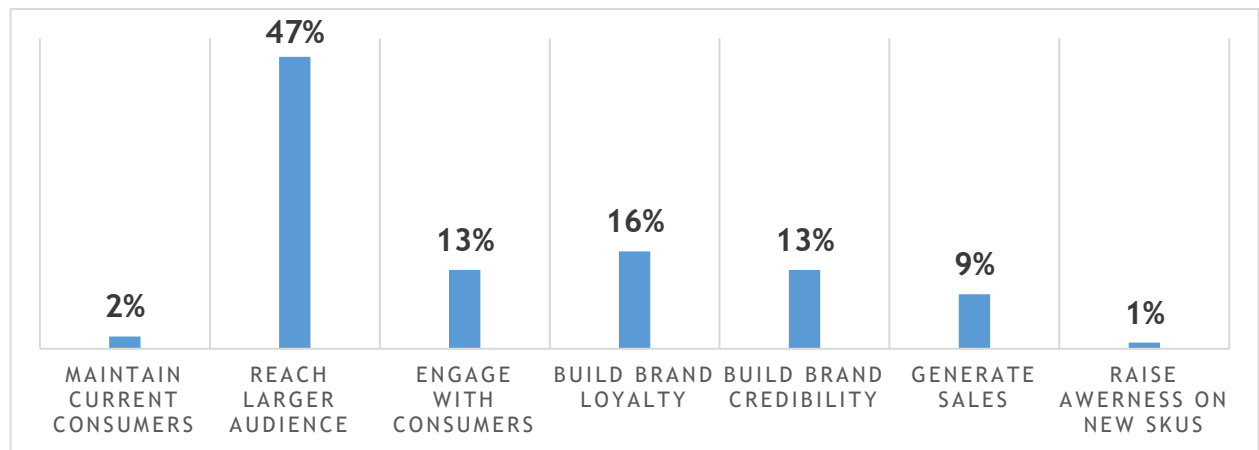


Figure 9: The main goals for approaching influencers

As results have shown, corporate's manage their reputation through influencers when they reach larger audience, build brand loyalty, engage with consumers, build brand credibility and generate sales, maintain current customers and raise awareness.

Influencers' qualities

The respondents were required to specify the three main influencers qualities that they take into consideration when choosing an influencer. The respondents agreed that the below three main qualities are the most important:

1. Number of followers (57%).
2. Influencer interactivity (52%).
3. Influencer confidence (38%).

These three main qualities help the corporate manage its reputation, because high number of followers, high interactivity and influencer confidence serve the corporate's main goal which is to be visible, and being visible translates to good reputation. Corporates want influencers who are confident to promote their products/ services, because this promoted confidence in the brand as well. Which leaves a lasting impression on followers. Through interactive content, the influencer shed a positive light on corporate's products/ services and invite their followers to purchase to experience it themselves,

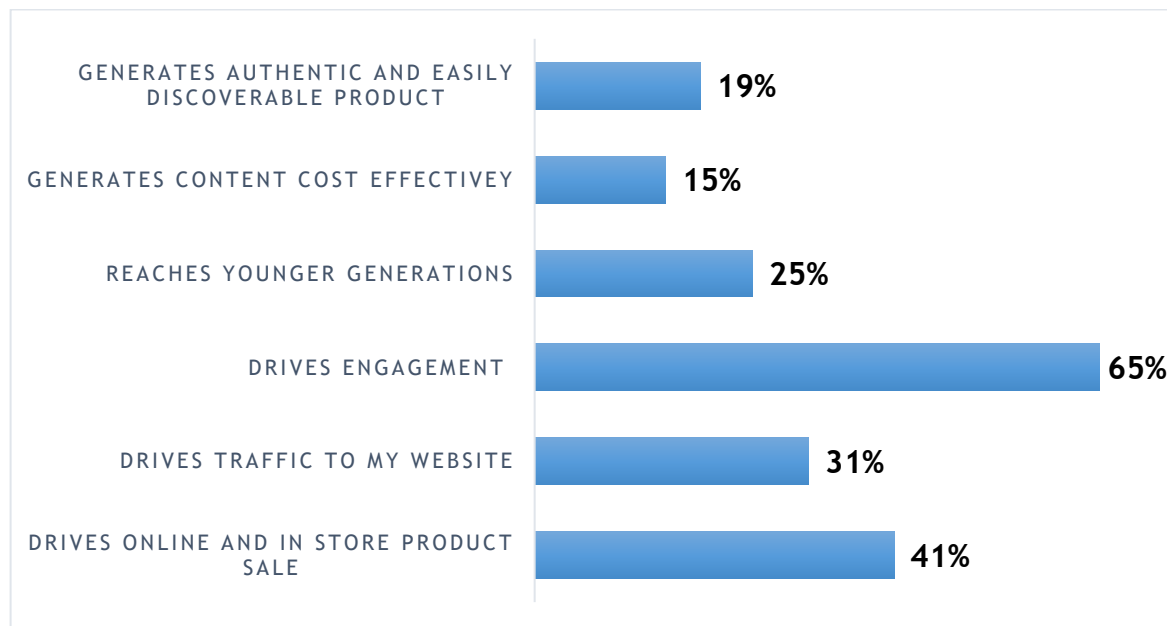
The other qualities were also important to some corporates, as 35% responded that having the right target audience is very essential, and 31% responded that loyalty to the product is important as well, other responses varied in between 11%-27% for expertise in the area, understands marketing, their past performance and the cost of hiring influencers.

Corporates were also investigated on when they approach influencers, their responses are summarized in the table (7). below.

Table 7: When do corporates approach influencers?

Items	Percentage
Launching a new product	34%
Increasing awareness and visibility	40%
Reminding customers of the product	13%
Repositioning the corporate in the market	13%

All of the above mentioned goals help maintain the corporate's reputation, so when corporates approach influencers to achieve any of the above, in the end they're doing all of these to manage the reputation.

**Figure 10: Top benefits of approaching influencers**

When corporates were asked if the level of engagement of influencers' followers matters, 70% of the responses were yes it matters a lot, 24% of the responses were it matters a bit, 6% of the responses were it does not matter at all. Since the main goal of these corporates

is interactivity, and since they use their platforms as an interactive platform so of course they should care of the engagement of the influencers' followers.

Type of content

Moreover, it was determined that the types of content most respondents prefer are images with a percentage of 87% and videos with a percentage of 74%. Only 27% responded infographic and 18% responded text. This means that they want to draw attention to people, using images and videos is the key for that. However, infographic is even a better type of content that increases attention. So the researcher believes, respondents don't know yet what infographic means.

Strategies for influencer marketing

As for the strategies used when approaching influencers, responses differ based on the style of corporate, for instance, 49% responded contests and giveaways is the best strategy to approach influencers, 45% responded gift packages, 36% responded discount codes, and 21% responded trips and free activities. Only 4% responded training workshops. Most of the corporates provide a product or service, so no need for training workshops for these kind of corporates.

Influencer marketing effectiveness

Respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing based on their own experience and responses were as the chart below.

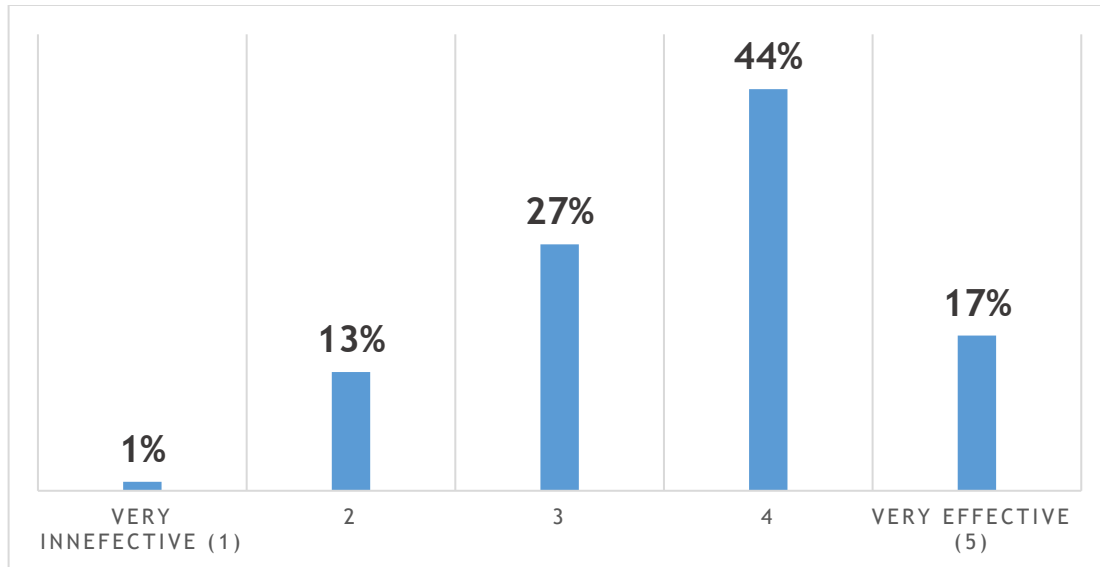


Figure 11: Corporates' experience with influencer marketing

Reputation Management Through Influencer Marketing

The final questions for this part was to check the relationship between influencer marketing and each corporate based on their own experience, results show that 74% of the respondents agree that influencer marketing does really help the corporate maintain its reputation, though, 25% don't agree with this, and 2% don't know whether it helps the corporate to maintain its reputation or not. When they were asked if they agree or not if influencer marketing help raising brand awareness, promotes your products/ services and achieve tangible results, 80% of the respondents agreed, 18% didn't agree and only 2% don't know whether influencer marketing helps raising brand awareness or not. This is how influencer marketing can play a huge part in maintaining the corporate's reputation.

85% of the respondents believe that engagement rate such as likes, comments, shares and reach is a standard component of success. 14% don't believe so, and 2% don't know. This question is related to the previous questions asked about engagement. Having engagement truly helps the corporate to increase visibility and visibility maintains

reputation. 84% strongly agree that influencer marketing helps reaching a wider target audience, though 13% don't think so, and 3% don't know whether it really helped them reach wider target audience base or not.

We now know that most respondents love working with influencers because they can track and measure the performance, as 84% believe that it is true, however, as usual there's 14% who don't believe that they can track and measure performance, and 3% maybe haven't even tried. Those who don't believe they can measure are corporates that didn't even try to do it.

It is known that influencers are considered one of the "prominent" tools of shaping people's perceptions, raising brand awareness, promoting products and services, and achieving tangible results for brands. This is how corporates use social media influencer marketing to manage their reputation. In order to develop a good reputation through influencers, a corporate must have these components, which are good quality, confidence, availability, and engagement. These components have been mention above and most of the respondents agreed with them.

Relationship Management with Influencers

The final part was focusing on if corporates find it important to manage their relationships with influencers and if they believe it's a component for success.

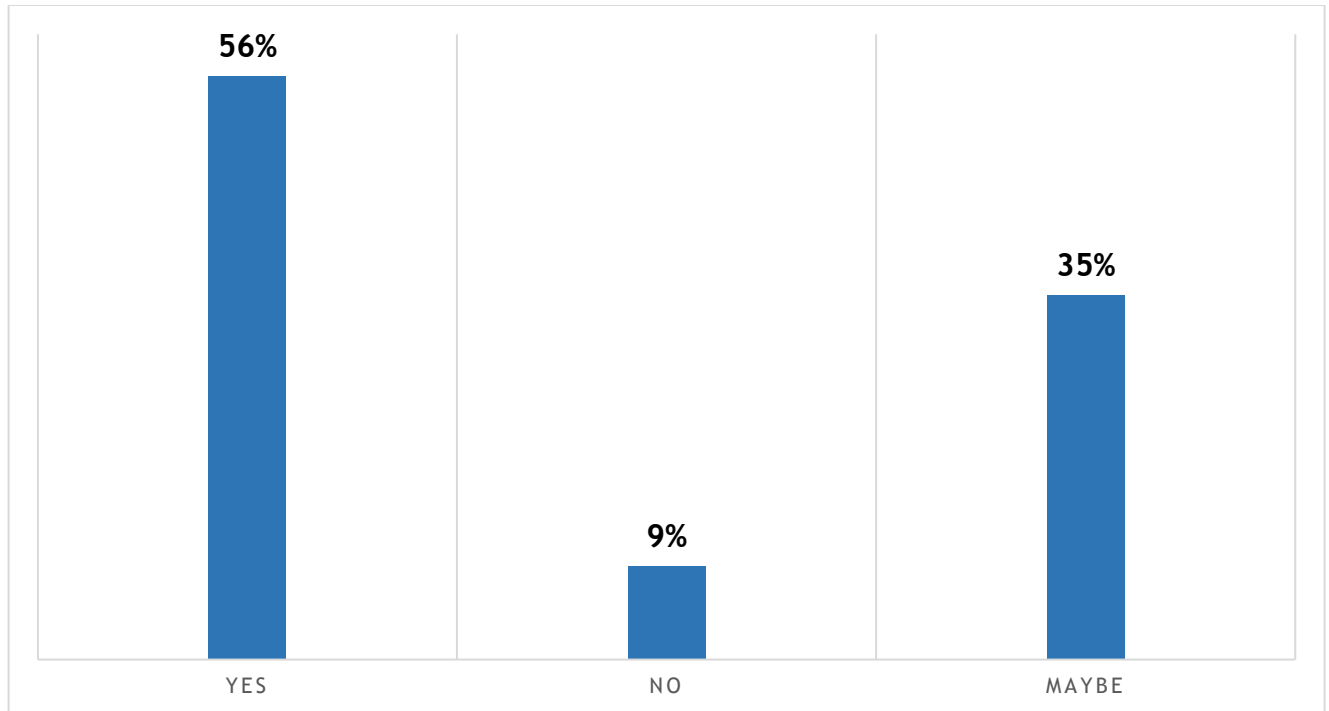


Figure 12: Is having a good relationship with influencers the reason for a successful collaboration?

When the respondents were asked on what makes a collaboration with influencers successful, responses were all related to the public, as 63% responded that listening to the public wants and needs will make the collaboration with influencers successful, 60% said getting closer to the public by being present, 50% responded that fulfilling the public's wants and needs will make a collaboration successful and last but not least 30% agreed that personalization is the reason for a successful collaboration. Personalization helps you to be trusted by the public, talking about a product/ service by their own experience, build trust with the public.

The final questions were to find out how much are the corporates engaged and involved in influencers they're collaborating with.

So when they were asked if their corporate personally interact with influencers, meaning sharing, liking and commenting on their posts. 67% agreed, and 31 didn't agree with this, and only 2% don't know. But when they asked if they value and respect the influencers they're working with, 69% agreed, and 29% didn't agree at all, 1% don't know. 71% of the respondents give space and freedom to the influencers to do their thing and get creative, 27% of the respondents provide the content to influencers and don't give them space and 2% don't know. 73% of the respondents respect the time needed by influencers to create authentic and engaging content, 26% of the respondents' pressure influencers and don't give them the time needed, and 1% don't know.

This means corporates manage their relationship with influencers through following them and interacting to their posts by sharing, liking and commenting, as well as giving them space and freedom to get creative, respect and value the time influencers need.

Answers to Research Questions

(1) To what extent corporates use social media influencer marketing to manage their reputation?

Corporate's reputation and influencer marketing work in parallel and complete each other. If you have a reputation as a trustworthy and valuable corporate, then you have a good reputation. On the other hand, if your corporate has a reputation for shoddy products, bad attitudes and poor customer service, then you clearly will have a bad reputation. Having said that, reputation management is the practice of controlling all the factors that influence your corporate's reputation. So if you want to build affinity with

your customers, improve your chances of brand loyalty, and convince prospects to convert into paying customers, then everything starts with a good reputation.

Corporates believe that working with influencers help to manage their reputation, raise brand awareness, promote their products or services and achieve tangible results. Hence, 51% of the corporates usually prefer to collaborate with 1 to 5 Micro influencers who have 1K-100K followers, per campaign on a monthly or quarterly basis, for three main reasons; 62% said because influencers are considered a tool that is trackable and measurable since corporates tend to keep track of their performance, 48% said because they are popular and 45% said because they improve customer experience. The main goal for approaching them is to reach larger audience, as it's only when corporates reach bigger audience effectively that they will be able to drive more sales. The main characteristics considered when working with influencers are, level of engagement (likes, comments, shares and reach is a standard component of success)., number of followers and relevance, to have a successful collaboration, corporates must work with influencers that are pertinent and have amenable audiences, and fit with corporate's theme and seek to achieve the same values and goals.

As for the main three qualities corporates look for in an influencer are; first, influencers' number of followers, as 57% of the respondents answered, having lots of followers means the opportunity to reach and interact with more people and gather feedback is bigger. Second, influencers' confidence, confidence begets more confidence, when an influencer is confident he/she will communicate more effectively, leading to building trust between the followers and their respective influencer. Third, having the right target audience for the corporate, which narrows down the audience of a corporate to a group of people of

similar characteristics, traits and interests and this makes reaching them and interacting with them a lot easier.

Based on the respondents, 34% of the corporates approach influencers when launching a new product or 40% when increasing awareness and visibility, influencers already have the base of relevant followers to the corporates' audience.

Respondents agreed that social media influencer marketing is beneficial for the corporates as it drives engagement and drives online and in-store product sale. When corporates were asked on the type of content they prefer, many agreed that videos and images are the best type of content to use; they are much more attractive and easy on the eye than only text for instance.

When respondents were asked on the strategies they use when they approach influencers, 49% of them responded with contests, giveaways and gift packages as they drive engagement and motivates influencers to talk about the corporate.

(2) To what extent corporates manage their relationship with influencers?

By realizing that influencers are the corporate's strategic partners, not its employees, they can manage their influencer relationship effectively. As 56% of the respondents said, a successful collaboration between an influencer and a corporate is somewhat if not "all" dependent on the relationship between the two. Influencer relationship management is all about creating strategic relationships with influencers which results in building customer trust if done the right way.

Corporates admitted that they personally use a warm outreach strategy by interacting with influencers on their platforms, through sharing, liking, and commenting on their posts, they will become closer and this reflects on the confidence between the two.

Corporate “provide creative freedom”; influencers know their followers better than corporates do. They know their preferences and opinions, this means that influencers know what kind of content will engage their audience, thus, the corporate’s part is to give space and freedom for influencers to get creative and do their thing. 73% of the respondents provide adequate time, by giving them the time needed to create authentic and engaging content. In order for influencers to be productive, corporates must respect the influencers’ time and not put pressure on them. 70% of corporates also agreed that respect is part and parcel of having a good relationship with influencers.

Influencer marketing can be a great way to improve your image in a specific niche. Then, once you have started to gather a following, if something goes wrong, your influencers can step in to start changing public perception. As with any business partnership, it’s important to make sure that you choose the influencers that are going to have the biggest impact on your brand. Select the people that speak best to your buyer personas, and work on building a strong relationship with them so that they are ready to support you when “things go south”.

(3) What is the perception of influencer marketing by corporates in Palestine?

Respondents consider influencer marketing a big opportunity for corporates to achieve its goals and manage its reputation especially if done right. by reaching larger audience and collaborating with the most relevant influencers who have the right target audience

and by tracking and measuring the level of engagement on their platforms. Accordingly, Influencers in Palestine are perceived as a good marketing tool to manage the corporate's reputation, and based on their own professional experience, 88% of the respondents find influencer marketing effective, and has brought satisfaction to the corporates. It helped them raise brand awareness and promote their products and services to achieve tangible results.

(4) To what extent reputation management through influencers and relationship management with influencers predict the variation in public-related wants and needs from corporates' point of view?

To answer the above question, further analysis of the data has been conducted using SPSS, and generating several variables (i.e., Reputation management, relationship management and influencer marketing). to study the relationship between them.

The researcher has examined the following:

- a) The correlation between influencer marketing and relationship management of influencers.
- b) The extent to which reputation management through influencer marketing predicts from the variation of the overall reputation management.
- c) The extent to which influencer marketing and relationship management predict from the variation of the public "wants and needs", from corporates' point of view.

Answer to (a): Results revealed that the relationship between corporates' reputation management through influencer marketing and relationship management with influencers is a positive and statistically significant correlation ($r(100)=0.56, p.<0.05$). This means that the better relationship with influencers is the more corporates is inclined to use influencer marketing and vice versa. A poor corporate relationship with influencers will not only weaken relationships with the influencers, it may also result in ineffective influencer campaigns. This emphasizes on one of the survey questions about "does having a good relationship with influencers drive to successful relationship with them?" Most respondent said "maybe" and "yes". If the corporate maintains a good relationship with the influencer, it makes the influencer excited to be working with the corporate, which motivates him/her to do the best he/she can to make this corporate satisfied with the collaboration.

Additionally, when the researcher tested if there's a difference of product brand or service brand in regards to usage of influence marketing, results revealed that product brand and service brand both approach influencer the same way.

Answer to (b): In order to answer this question, the researcher ran a bivariate regression with influencer marketing as a predictor (independent variable). and corporates reputation management as a dependent variable. The results of the bivariate regression show that the influencer marketing variable explains a significant 35.7% (value or R^2). of the variation in the dependent variable $F(1,100). = 57.1, p.<0.05$. Moreover, Beta coefficient value indicates that an increase in influencer marketing variable in one unit, leads to an increase of 0.603 in the reputation management. Meaning that reputation management through influencer marketing in Palestine seek same values and goals as

they follow the standards of reputation management. Influencer marketing helps corporates maintain a good reputation by considering customers' expectations, transparency, maintaining high visibility online, building trust with the publics through communication, consistency, responding effectively to the public wants and needs, and creativity. This indicates that influencer marketing in Palestine is following the right trail for maintaining a good reputation.

Answer to (c): The results of the multiple regression analysis show that the independent variable of influencer relationship is insignificant, when compared to influencer marketing, which significantly predicts a sizeable 31.7% in the variation of publics' wants and needs, $F(1,99) = 24.3, p < 0.05$. Meaning: when public needs is in the picture, relationship management becomes insignificant while influencer marketing is significant. This can be explained through going back to one of the survey's questions which is about relationship management with influencers, as 56% said they believe that a good relationship with influencers is the reason for a successful collaboration, 35% said maybe it is the reason while 9% said that no need to have a good relationship with them for a successful collaboration. As corporates main goals when it comes to the public is building trust and good experience with them through influencer marketing, by listening to the public wants and needs, fulfilling their wants and needs, and getting closer to them. Customers' expectations are being considered through market analysis, and responding to public's feedback.

Models Summary

- Influencer marketing significantly predicts 35.7% of the variation in the dependent variable of reputation management.
- Influencer marketing significantly predicts 31.7% of the variation in the dependent variable of public wants and needs. But relationship management is insignificant to do so.

To sum up, there's a strong significant relationship between influencer marketing and relationship management, the reasons behind this result is due the big role influencers play in advertising the corporate and reach larger target audience, however, the role of relationship management is insignificant when it comes to influencer marketing to meet the public needs.

CHAPTER

IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Social media influencer marketing use is important in public relations practice. Corporates in Palestine ought to understand how social media influencer marketing support and manage the reputation of a corporate, if it is used effectively. Whether corporates can use social media influencer marketing depends upon how well corporates see, understand and attend to these needs. The purpose of this study was to examine the use of social media influencer marketing by corporates in Palestine to manage their reputation. Specifically, it sought to identify the type of influencers used, qualities of influencers, their relationship with them, and if it all achieves the corporate's goals and values.

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study, giving conclusions and recommendations that reflects the answers to the specific questions for possible action and suggestions for further research.

Summary of the Findings

The study aimed at finding out the use of corporates in Palestine social media influencer marketing to manage their reputation. The study concentrated at corporates that are located in Palestine who offer a service or a product that work to advertise it through influencers. Most of these corporates were established in the twenties, which make them new and fresh.

The following major findings emerged; the study confirmed that there's a shift of focus on online advertising than offline advertising, where all respondents agreed that it is very essential to be present on social media, yet corporates still didn't give up on offline, but

advertising through offline alone will not get them to achieve their goals. It was determined that there are two popular platforms that are mostly used by all of the respondents to interact with the public, which are Facebook and Instagram. Communicating with the public is mainly the focus of the studies sample. Moreover, it was determined that the main reasons for using these two platforms is that because these platforms are the most popular in Palestine, the target audience are on these platforms, and for marketing purposes. Having said that, these corporates target ages between 16-45 years old, these ages are on social media.

It was exposed that most of the people who work with influencers to manage the reputation of a corporate, are brand managers and marketing officers, whereas public relations practitioners were less mentioned.

Overall, the analysis revealed that the corporate's reputation, products/service quality and customer relationship, brand image affect the market share. This implies that corporates are customer oriented as mentioned before, they care for their reputation, they care for their relationship with the customers.

The study revealed that corporates in Palestine understand what corporate's reputation is and work with influencers to manage it. Also they make sure the corporate's reputation serves the corporate's goals, strategies and directions. Knowing that the corporate's profitability is highly dependent on its reputation. Stressing that being visible online, creativity, listening and responding to the public feedback are the main reasons for effective reputation management of a corporate.

On another note, the study revealed that working through influencers is very effective and manages the corporate's reputation however, it depends on some factors, frequency, type of influencers, their characteristics, qualities, number of influencers, goals, timing, type of content, strategies.

Concisely, what makes a collaboration with influencers effective as per the study revealed, is working with 1-5 micro-influencer (1K-100K followers). per campaign on a quarterly basis, to reach larger audience and build brand loyalty. Also corporates choose influencers based on their number of followers, interactivity, and confidence. It's best to work with influencers when launching a new product and increasing awareness and visibility. Most agreed that influencer marketing drives engagement through creating contests and giveaways. Videos and images are the best types of content to be published. This way the respondents believe that influencer marketing helps the corporate to maintain its reputation.

The study revealed that building a good relationship with influencers helps the collaboration with them to succeed. The ways to have this good relationship with them is related as well to the public wants and needs, this attributes being engaged with the influencer, following them, liking and engaging on their posts, give them freedom to get creative, don't pressure them in time, give them the time needed to produce great work.

Finally, the study exposed that the better relationship with influencers is the more corporates is inclined to use influencer marketing and vice versa. And when public needs is in the picture, relationship management becomes insignificant while influencer marketing is significant.

Frameworks Testing

Reputation Management Framework

The study emphasized the significance of corporate reputation management in corporates in Palestine, highlighting the fact that a good reputation can increase a corporate's profitability and interest among customers, in which are customers' opinions are considered, but most importantly corporates in Palestine care mostly about the functioning products or services, because as long as the products or services are good quality, this will maintain good reputation. Corporates in Palestine seek to maintain its reputation by delivering and conveying the message through influencers that are relevant and have lots of followers, to increase publicity and search ability of the positive things that are associated the corporate. These are taken into consideration because how the message is conveyed affects how the information is viewed and this affects the corporate's reputation.

The study tested Fombrun (2000). reputation management form, and results revealed that high quality products bring value for money and is customer oriented, which definitely affects corporate's reputation, however, social responsibility is not considered a lot by corporates, supporting good causes is not on corporates' minds. Despite that, consistency is especially important in corporates as it develops routines and forms habits that become almost second nature, which could lead to great achievements gained slowly over time.

The study tested as well Piles and Trez streams of thought regarding corporate reputation, as corporates in Palestine are customer oriented meaning they take into consideration customer expectation, listen to their wants and needs, try to fulfill them and respond to

their feedback. They also seek to build and maintain trust with their customers through working with influencer marketing.

Flanagan et al (2011). study about the relationship between the economic-financial performance of the organizations, and corporate reputation, found that the relationship between the two still exists, even if weakened. However, corporates in Palestine don't think that the financial status is very important factor for corporate reputation.

Relationship Management Theory

Based on this study finding, corporates in Palestine believe that having a good relationship with influencers is a key for successful collaboration. It's a strategy that can occur between a business and its customers whereas, in this case the business is the corporates and customers are influencers to maintain good reputation in which the corporates maintain an ongoing level of engagement with its influencers, aiming to create partnership with them, and create a beneficial relationship, instead of viewing the relationship as merely transactional. The main goal for these corporates when approaching influencers is to improve customer experience, that's why influencer relationship management is crucial.

Relationships between the corporate and influencers, in turn, have an effect on reputation. Moreover, the quality of relationship in corporates in Palestine based on the survey responses is very good as they engage with influencers by following them and interacting on their platforms, they value and respect them as well which leads to increased understanding and benefit for both. They give them space to get creative and respect the time they need to come up with great work.

This framework can be easily associated with this study, the main focus of this study is how corporates build a good reputation, and a focal key in that is having a good relationship with the audience, in this case, we're going to learn how corporates build a good relationship with influencers to manage their reputation through.

Conclusions

The study concluded that corporates in Palestine use of social media influencer marketing to manage their reputation is very effective. All studied corporates were conscious of it. The study nonetheless determined the best possible ways to approach influencers to maintain a good reputation.

However, for all its good, the study concludes that most corporates don't have public relations practitioners, the ones who manage the reputation of the corporate are brand managers and marketing officers. This means that there's no awareness of the role of public relations in corporates.

It was discovered that, most corporates find advertising through online and offline platforms can be very beneficial for managing the reputation of the corporate, whereas the advertising online daily and advertising offline on LED screens, billboards and street signs quarterly.

The corporates use their platforms as interactive platforms to reach the right target audience and engage with them, which is the right direction since they always search for engagement in influencers' characteristics. The study also concludes that social media influencer marketing has been instrumental in enhancing corporate's reputation through being visible and engaging with the public and satisfying their wants and needs.

The study also assessed whether having a good relationship with influencers is the reason for a successful relationship or not. Results concludes that of course a corporate should have a good relationship with influencers through sharing, liking and commenting on their posts, through respecting and valuing them, through giving them the space and freedom to get creative, and through respecting the time needed to produce wonderful work.

The study revealed that the relationship between influencers' relationship management and reputation management, is directly proportional and the relationship between reputation management through influencer marketing and corporate reputation management is directly proportional as well. Whereas, relationship management role was not important when it came to reputation management to satisfy the public.

Recommendations

The study recommends that corporates should be aware of the importance of a having a public relations division as they are responsible for managing the corporate's reputation. Based on the study, many other divisions work the role of public relations practitioner. This will enable its other division to focus more on the real roles they should be doing, and enhance the position of the corporate in the market. This would solve the issues of not understanding the role of marketing, communication officer, owner and public relations practitioner.

It was noted that most corporates don't really care much about analyzing the audiences' preference, whether because they believe there are much more important things to do or because they don't understand how to do it and how effective it can be to maintain a

reputation. In addition to the competitive advantage which could be really helpful not only to maintain its position in the market but to outstand other competitors. Therefore, the study recommends that efforts should be put in place to ensure that they are well adapted to the importance of consumers wants and needs and competitors. Training in market study will enhance this course.

The study recommends corporates should be more aware of their financial status and its effects on reputation. This would ensure that the corporate does not lose its market share and will be more attentive on when to approach influencers and when to save it for later.

Finally, the study recommends corporates should be more transparent and involved in social responsibility activities to maintain the trust and confidence it has already developed with the internal and external public.

Suggestions for Further Research

The study was not conclusive but opened for more need for future research to conduct studies on a number of related issues to social media influencer marketing use in corporates in Palestine. Further research should be carried out on different areas of influencers, through interviewing the influencers themselves, to get their point of view and analyze their content. In addition to further analysis on the publics to get external perspective.

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Appendix I: Questionnaire



Arab American University

Graduate Studies

Contemporary Public Relations Program

Master thesis with the title “Corporates in Palestine use of social media influencer marketing to manage its reputation” is in progress to be submitted in contemporary public relations program - Arab American University. Kindly fill the following questions with full transparency; the information will be kept confidential and will be used only for research purposes.

Thank you

Taleen Joudeh

Part I: General information

1) Corporate's name:

2) Location:

1. Hebron
2. Bethlehem
3. Jerusalem
4. Jericho
5. Ramallah
6. Salfit
7. Nablus
8. Tulkarem
9. Qalqilya
10. Jenin
11. Tubas

3) Year of establishment

4) What is your job title?

1. Brand manager
2. Public relation practitioner
3. Communication officer
4. Marketing officer
5. Other (please specify).

5) Does your corporate target your audience through?

1. Online advertising? (continue to Q6).
2. Offline advertising? (skip to Q8).
3. Or Both? (continue to Q6).

6) How frequent does your corporate advertise offline?

1. On a daily basis
 2. On a weekly basis
 3. On a monthly basis
 4. Quarterly
 5. Yearly
- 4. In general, what platforms do you use when you advertise offline? (Multiple answers are allowed).**
1. Newspapers
 2. TV
 3. Radios
 4. LED screens
 5. Billboards or street signs
 6. None
- 5. Which of the following sentences best describe the significance of your corporate's presence on social media?**
1. It is very essential for my corporate to be present on social media
 2. It is somewhat important for my corporate to be present on social media
 3. It is not that essential for my corporate to be present on social media
- 6. Is there a page/ an account/ channel for your corporate on social media?**
1. Yes
 2. No
- 7. Which social media platforms does your corporate use? (Multiple answers are allowed).**
1. Facebook
 2. Instagram
 3. YouTube

4. Tiktok
5. Twitter
6. Other (please specify).

8. What are the main three reasons you choose to use the above chosen platform/s?

1. Other corporates use them
2. These platforms are the most popular in Palestine
3. Our target audience are on these platforms
4. For marketing purposes
5. For content creation
6. To interact with our audiences
7. To target our audiences
8. To analyze our audiences' preferences
9. Cheaper than offline advertising
10. Immediacy
11. Other (please specify). -----

9. What is the main goal of using social media in your corporate?

1. It is being used as interactive platform to engage with your audience
2. It is being used as informative platform to inform your audience

10. What age groups your targeted audience are? (Multiple answers are allowed).

1. 0-16 years' (Children).
2. 17-24 years' (Youth).
3. 25-45 years' (Middle-aged adults).
4. 46+ years' (Old aged-adults).
5. All

11. What are the major factors that affects your market share (arrange from 1 to 7 where 1 is the most important factor and 7 is the least important factor).?

- Corporate’s reputation
- Corporate’s financial status
- Product/ service quality
- Brand image
- Competitive advantage
- Customer relationships
- Public relations effectiveness

Part II: Reputation Management

On a scale from 1to 5 with “1” meaning “strongly disagree” and 5 meaning “strongly agree”, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Statement	(1) Strongly disagree				(5) Strongly agree	Don't know
Your corporate’s reputation serves the corporate’s goals, strategies and directions.						
In your corporate, reputation management is moving						

more into social media than traditional media						
Your corporate's profitability is highly dependent on its reputation.						

On a scale from 1 to 5, with “1” meaning “not important at all” and “5” meaning “very important”, to what extent do you find the following procedures important or not important to maintain your corporate's reputation?

12

Statement	(1) Not important at all				(5) Very important	Don't know
Considering customers' expectations through market analysis, feedback, polls and more...						
Transparency through publishing your corporate's financial regulation and rules.						
Involving in social responsibility activities.						
Maintaining high visibility online.						
Maintaining high visibility offline.						

Building trust with publics through continuous communication on social media platforms.						
Consistency by using the same theme and elements.						
Responding effectively to publics' feedback.						
Creativity by coming up with new interesting ideas and campaigns						

Part III: Managing corporate reputation through influencer marketing

1) How frequent do you approach influencers for marketing purposes?

1. On a daily basis
2. On a weekly basis
3. On a monthly basis
4. Quarterly
5. Yearly
6. Don't know

2) In your corporate, what are the main characteristics you consider when working with influencers? (Multiple answers are allowed).

1. Reach
2. Number of followers
3. Relevance
4. Engagement
5. Frequency
6. Authenticity & originality
7. Other (please specify).

3) Why do you include influencers in your public relations strategy? (Multiple answers are allowed).

1. They are popular
2. Consumers want conversations not advertisements
3. Influencers improve customer experience
4. Cost effective marketing tool
5. Trackable and measurable
6. Other (Please specify).

4) On average, how many influencers do you work with per campaign?

1. 1-5 influencers per campaign
2. 5-10 influencers per campaign
3. 10-25 influencers per campaign
4. 25+ influencers per campaign
5. Depending on the nature and need of the campaign

5) What are the type of influencer your corporate works with?

1. Mega influencers (over one million subscribers).
2. Macro-influencer (100K-1 million subscribers).
3. Micro-influencer (1K-100K subscribers).
4. Nano-influencer (less than 1K subscribers).
5. Don't know

6) What is the main goal for approaching influencers?

1. Maintain current consumers
2. Reach larger audience by boosting traffic and engagement
3. Engage with consumers by creating fresh content
4. Build brand loyalty
5. Build brand credibility
6. Generate sales
7. Other (please specify).

7) What are the three main influencers qualities that your corporate considers when choosing an influencer?

1. Influencer confidence
2. Influencer interactivity
3. Number of followers
4. Loyalty to the product
5. Expertise in the area
6. Right target audience for the corporate
7. Understands marketing
8. Cost of hiring an influencer

9. Social platform/s he or she is using
10. Past performance

8) In general, when does your corporate approach influencers?

1. Launching a new product/ service
2. Increasing awareness and visibility of the product/ service
3. Reminding customers of the product/ service
4. Repositioning the corporate in the market among competitors
5. Managing a crisis
6. Other, please specify.....

9) What are the top benefits of influencer marketing, to your corporate?

1. Drives online and in-store product sales
2. Drives traffic to my website
3. Drives engagement around my product/brand/ service
4. Reaches younger generations who don't trust our product
5. Generates content cost-effectively
6. Generates authentic and easily discoverable product

10) To what extent do you care for the level of engagement of followers?

1. It does not matter at all
2. It does not matter that much
3. It matters a bit
4. It matters a lot

11) What type of content does your corporate usually prefer? (Multiple answers are allowed).

1. Images
2. Infographic
3. Videos
4. Text
5. Other (please specify....).

12) What strategies do you use when approaching influencers? (Multiple answers are allowed).

1. Discount codes
2. Contests and giveaways
3. Providing gift packages
4. Arranging free activities or trips

- 5. Conducting training workshops
 - 6. Other (please specify...).
- effective

13) From 1 to 5, how would you rate your experience with influencer marketing?

On a scale from 1-5 (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree)., how strongly do you agree or disagree with the below statements:

Statement	(1) Strongly disagree			(5) Strongly agree	Don't know
Influencer marketing helps your corporate maintain its reputation.					
Influencer marketing raises brand awareness, promotes your products/ services and achieve tangible results					
Engagement rate such as likes, comments, shares and reach is a standard component of success.					
One of the many benefits you can get from influencers is reaching a wider target audience base.					
You can measure and track performance when working with influencers					

Part VI: Relationship management with influencers

1) Is having a good relationship with influencers the reason for a successful collaboration?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Maybe

2) What makes a collaboration successful from your business point of view? (Multiple answers are allowed).

- 1. Listening to the publics’ wants and needs
- 2. Fulfilling the publics wants and needs
- 3. Getting closer to the public by being present and personalization
- 4. Other (please specify).

On a scale from 1-5 (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree)., how strongly do you agree or disagree with the below points:

Statement	(1) Strongly disagree				(5) Strongly agree	(8) Don't know
Your corporate personally interact with influencers, meaning sharing, liking and commenting on their posts.						
Your corporate values and respects your influencers						
Your corporate gives space and freedom to your influencers to do their thing creatively.						

Your corporate respects the time needed by influencers to create authentic and engaging content						
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Thank you!

APPENDIX II

Relationship management		
Q33_1	Pearson Correlation	.784**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q33_2	Pearson Correlation	.923**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q33_3	Pearson Correlation	.893**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q33_4	Pearson Correlation	.920**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Influencer marketing		
Q30_1	Pearson Correlation	.837**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q30_2	Pearson Correlation	.886**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q30_3	Pearson Correlation	.811**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q30_4	Pearson Correlation	.868**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q30_5	Pearson Correlation	.833**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Reputation management		
Q15_1	Pearson Correlation	.657**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q15_2	Pearson Correlation	.687**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q15_3	Pearson Correlation	.656**

	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q16_1	Pearson Correlation	.715**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q16_2	Pearson Correlation	.539**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q16_3	Pearson Correlation	.645**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q16_4	Pearson Correlation	.746**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q16_5	Pearson Correlation	.410**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102
Q16_6	Pearson Correlation	.802**
	Sig (2-tailed).	.000
	N	102

ملخص الدراسة

الغرض الأساسي من الدراسة هو استكشاف كيفية إدارة الشركات في فلسطين لسمعتها من مؤثري وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. ولتحقيق ذلك كانت أهداف الدراسة: (1) قياس مدى استخدام الشركات مؤثري وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لإدارة سمعتها ؛ (2) قياس مدى إدارة الشركات لعلاقتها مع المؤثرين؛ (3) نمذجة تصور التسويق عبر المؤثرين من قبل الشركات في فلسطين. (4) معرفة الدرجة التي تتوقع بها إدارة السمعة من خلال المؤثرين وإدارة العلاقات مع المؤثرين التباين في الرغبات والاحتياجات العامة من وجهة نظر الشركات. يركز البحث على نظريتين؛ نظرية إدارة السمعة ونظرية إدارة العلاقات. تصميم البحث عبارة عن مسح يستخدم نهجًا كميًا. تم جمع البيانات باستخدام الاستبيان. الجمهور المستهدف هم ممارسي العلاقات العامة وموظفي التسويق ومديري العلامات التجارية في الشركات الواقعة في الضفة الغربية الفلسطينية. تم استخدام العينة الهادفة لاختيار 120 شركة تقدم منتجًا أو خدمة في فلسطين بنسبة استجابة مقابلة (85%). أشارت النتائج إلى أن: (1) التسويق عبر المؤثرين على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي يتم استخدامه بشكل كبير من قبل الشركات في فلسطين لإدارة سمعتها وفعاليتها ، حيث أنها تسعى لخدمة أهداف الشركة وتوجهاتها. (2) يمكن أن يساعد العمل مع المؤثرين الواثقين من أنفسهم والمناسبين ولديهم الجمهور المستهدف المناسب، في إدارة سمعة الشركة. (3) تواجد علاقة جيدة مع المؤثرين من خلال احترامهم وتقديرهم ، يؤدي لتعاون ناجح. (4) علاقة أفضل مع المؤثرين تؤدي إلى زيادة ميل الشركات إلى استخدامهم والعكس صحيح. (5) عندما تكون احتياجات الجمهور في الصورة، تصبح إدارة العلاقات مع المؤثرين غير مهمة بينما يكون التسويق عبرهم مهمًا. توصي الدراسة بما يلي: نشر الوعي بأهمية دور العلاقات العامة في الشركات، وتقديم دورات تدريبية للموظفين حول دراسة السوق لفهم المنافسين والعملاء، وعلى الشركات أن تكون أكثر شفافية وتشارك في المسؤوليات الاجتماعية.