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SOCIAL MEDIA AS A PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOL: A STUDY OF MTN GHANA AND VODAFONE GHANA

BY

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THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES.

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AGNES DJABANOR

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

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DECLARATION

I, Agnes Djabanor, do hereby declare that the work presented in this dissertation is my own work produced from research undertaken under the supervision of Dr. Margaret Ivy Amoakohene and that to the best of my knowledge has not been submitted in this university for the award of a Master of Arts degree. All cited works which are not mine have been duly acknowledged.

…… ……..

Dr. Margaret Ivy Amoakohene Agnes Djabanor

(Supervisor) (Student)

Date …… Date ……

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ABSTRACT

The increased use of social media in the corporate world has led public relations practitioners as well as academics to seek to understand how to better use them to communicate. Many studies have explored how social media is used by practitioners in other industries in the corporate domain but few have focused on the telecom industry.

This study explores how telecommunications network operators in Ghana make use of social media as a public relations tool. Through a content analysis of selected tweets from the Twitter pages of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana, the study sought to find out the level of interaction between the companies and their respective clients on Twitter. It also sought to determine the types of communication that exist between the two telecom companies and their clients and to find out if they also take advantage of the platform to meet the informational needs of their publics.

Results from the analysis indicated that there was an ongoing interaction between the telecom companies and their customers through replies to questions, enquiries and complaints. The companies also made efforts to provide their customers with information prior to them asking which showed proactiveness on their part to meet customers' informational needs. A comparison of the two companies showed that MTN Ghana had more interaction on their page and was therefore more responsive to their customers than Vodafone Ghana.

The study concluded that although MTN Ghana had more interaction, both companies were working towards building lasting relationships with their customers through the Twitter platform.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the Almighty God for His faithfulness, guidance, goodness and mercies throughout this period of study. I could not have completed this thesis without His help and grace.

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First of all, I would like to thank God for the grace to complete this study. I also want to say thank you to my dear husband Kenneth Annoh and my parents Mr. and Mrs Djabanor for their love, encouragement and support. To my friends Richmond, Michael, Mrs Boakye and Charlene – thank you for all the support and the encouragement.

To my supervisor, Dr. Margaret Ivy Amoakohene, I am grateful to you for your directions and input during this study. This work would not have been possible without your contributions and suggestions.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves as the introductory chapter of the entire study. It contains the background of the study, the problem statement, the objectives, research questions underpinning the study and the significance of the study. It also gives a brief overview of public relations and social media as well as a brief background of Twitter.

1.1 BACKGROUND

With the emergence of the internet and the rapid increase and use of new forms of technology in our day to day communication, the use of new media, especially social media, has become an important part of our lives; personal and professional. The internet has transformed the way people go about a lot of activities including shopping, paying bills and communicating with family and friends. With the advent of the internet, "almost anything people want to know or do is virtually at their fingertips" (Edman, 2010, p.1).

Social media has now made the internet more interpersonal and a means for instant communication. Many people now rely on social media as an avenue of getting news and information concerning different issues and different products. Businesses and organisations use social media as a platform to practice customer service. This is because many clients now take to social media to voice out concerns about a product or particular services from a company as well as look up reviews of products and services before making purchase decisions (Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt and Füller, 2013).

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The increase in the use of social media around the world, has caused many professionals in public relations to adopt it in their work (Gordon, 2010) and it is "increasingly changing the way public relations practitioners communicate and do their jobs" (Wigley & Zhang, 2011 p.1). New media has changed how organisations communicate with their publics and has led to a change in how many businesses manage their relationships with clients (Argenti and Barnes, 2009). According to Wright and Hinson (2009), social media has become the leading platform for the creation and sharing of content and it is because more than half of internet users are members of one or more social media platforms.

Social media has brought and is still bringing about a lot of changes in the public relations industry because of the unique opportunity that it affords public relations practitioners to communicate with their publics through dialogue. Dialogue is considered as an important feature in public relations because it is in line with the two-way symmetrical model proposed by Grunig and Hunt (1984), which contributes to an excellent public relations practice.

Over the years, public relations has moved from its one-way communication style to a "constant dialogue between an organization and its audience and therefore the importance of interactive social media in public relations is an area that should be looked at carefully" (Ofori Kwafo, 2015, p. 1).

Public relations practitioners aim at establishing relationships with their publics through communication and social media gives them that platform at less cost. Social media involves using different applications which make it possible for users to interact, connect and share ideas (Chan-Olmsted, Cho, & Lee, 2013). Social media sites like Twitter and Facebook have provided platforms for internet users to interact, express opinions, share ideas and create

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content about many things. This has led to some companies taking advantage of these platforms by setting up social media accounts in order to be in constant communication with their publics.

1.2 PUBLIC RELATIONS, THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Public relations, according to Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006), is the management function that establishes and sustains mutually favourable relationships between an organization and its stakeholders, both external and internal.

The First World Assembly of Public Relations Associations, 1978 defined public relations as "the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organizational leaders, and implementing planned programs of action, which will serve both the organization and the public interest" (Newsom et al., 2000, p.2). The aspect of analysing trends as part of public relations includes the practitioner finding out and making use of new innovations like social media to serve the interest of both the organisation and its publics.

"Social media offers numerous opportunities for public relations practitioners to interact with the public while adopting new forms of technology and integrating them into their everyday lives" (Curtis et al., 2010, p. 90). This has made it an important thing for public relations practitioners to establish a social media presence on most of the social media sites in order to interact with their publics.

"Social media allows organizations to marry the dissemination of information to a mass public with the interpersonal interaction with those publics" (Edman, 2010, p. 2). The interactive nature of social media platforms such as Twitter has afforded public relations

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practitioners the opportunity to engage stakeholders in real time, one-to-one conversations (Wright and Hinson, 2008), leading to the strengthening of their relationships with them.

1.3 THE GHANAIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

The telecommunications (telecom) industry is one of the most competitive and successful industries in Ghana. The industry has greatly evolved over the past two decades. There has been a move from having just a few people owning private telephones to having about 19 million mobile subscribers (GSMA, 2017). The industry has also transitioned from edge to 2G to 3G and then to 4G which has tremendously improved the quality of service across the country (Amadu, 2017, p. 13).

The major players in the industry are MTN Ghana, Vodafone Ghana, Millicom Ghana Limited known as Tigo, Airtel, Glo and Expresso. Statistics from a telecom industry report by the National Communications Authority (NCA) indicate that MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana are considered as the largest telecom companies in Ghana. According to the report, MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana have the highest market share in the telecommunications industry.

Below is a graphical representation of the market share for both voice and data services in the telecommunication industry by National Communications Authority (NCA).

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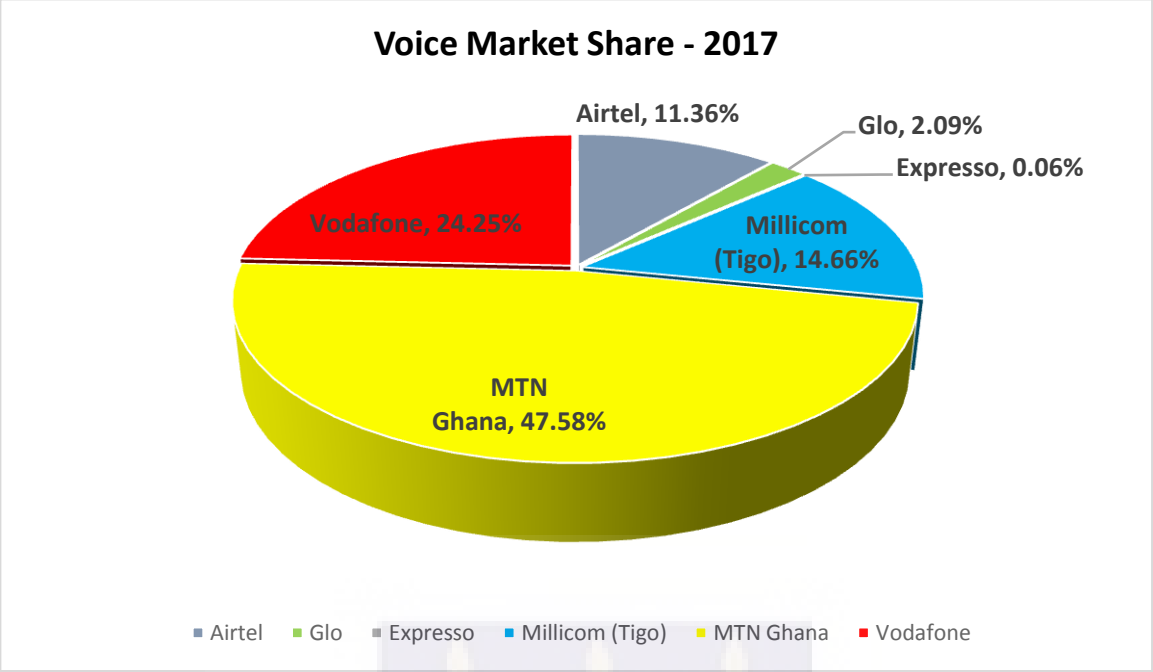

Figure 1: Mobile Voice Market Share for September 2017
Adapted from 'Telecom Statistics' by National Communication Authority, 2017

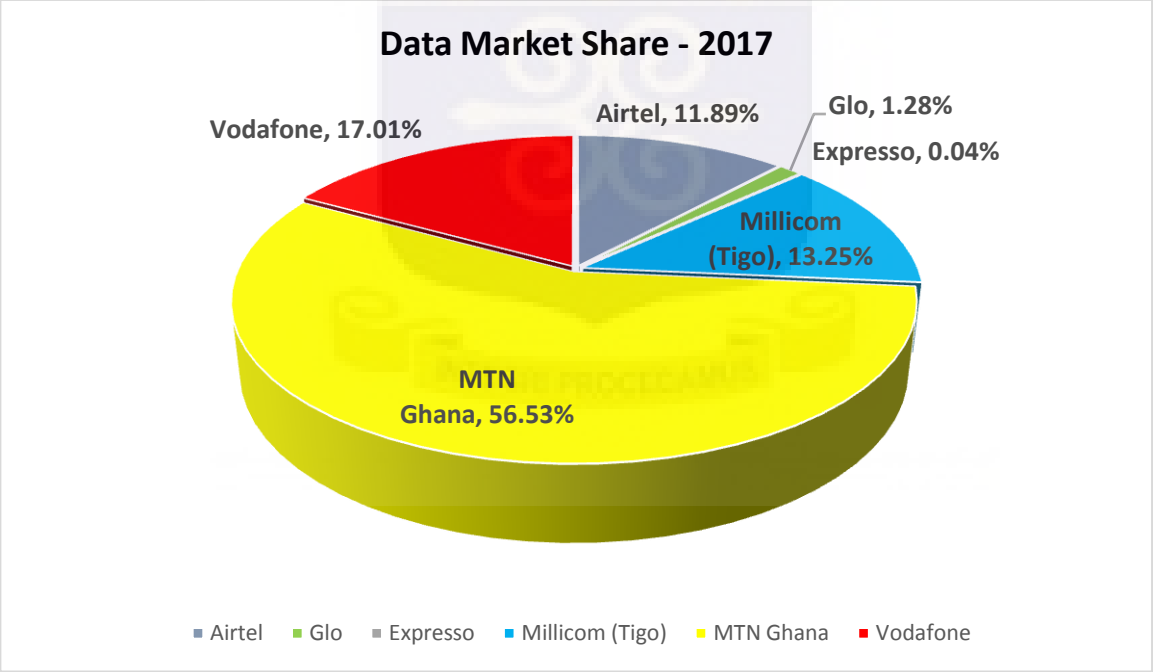

Figure 2: Mobile Data Market Share for September 2017
Adapted from 'Telecom Statistics' by National Communication Authority, 2017

As part of the strategies of these telecom companies to enhance their public relations activities, they have established a presence on social media to help build lasting relationships

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with their publics. Among all the Ghanaian telecom companies, MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana have the largest number of followers on Twitter. Vodafone Ghana leads with a total of 133, 020 followers and MTN Ghana follows with a total number of 128, 248 followers (Socialbakers, 2017).

1.4 TWITTER AND PR PRACTICE

Twitter is a social media platform that was founded by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams and Biz Stone. It was launched in March 2006 with the very first tweet sent by Jack Dorsey (Picard, 2011). It was originally intended to be an SMS-based communication platform where a group of friends could keep in touch and know what each of them were doing from their status updates. This is why it is popularly known for its brevity in characters. Twitter allowed only a 140- character limit similar to the SMS standard character limit until recently when the limit was doubled to 280.

Twitter has about 255 million users worldwide (Statista Research Department, 2019) with about 100 million active users daily ("Twitter by the numbers", 2019). The estimated number of Twitter users in Ghana is about 400,000. (Kuuire, 2018). Today Twitter is not just used by individuals but by organisations, groups and businesses to interact with their publics to help build long lasting relationships with them. This is because every tweet "is an attempt to interact with the purpose of building goodwill that solidifies corporate reputation" (North, 2015, p. 2). With many people adapting to and using social media, it is no wonder that practitioners have turned to Twitter to take advantage of the interactivity opportunities to help foster relationships with their publics which is why according to Stelzner (2009, p.19), the most used social media application in official public relations, advertising and marketing campaigns is Twitter.

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The interactive nature of Twitter gives users the chance to seek answers and solutions to their questions and complaints via the platform at their convenience and also affords organisations the opportunity to meet the information needs of their publics as well as engage them to foster good relationships.

To better understand how Ghanaian telecom companies use their social media pages as tools to interact with their publics and to build relationships with their customers, this study sought to examine how MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana use Twitter, to meet the information needs of their publics and the extent to which it is used to interact with their publics to foster dialogue and build relationships with customers.

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In recent times, social media has moved from just a social networking site to become a very popular and common place for many businesses in terms of gaining customers and communicating with these customers. This confirms Dwyer, Hiltz and Passerini's (2007) observation that social networking websites are exceptional ways to manage several relationships at once and communicate with the public. A review of the Twitter space showed that in recent times, Twitter has become a hub for customers to voice out their concerns and make enquiries among others about products and services been offered them by various companies including the telecom companies. This shows a heavy reliance on social media by most people as a means to get information and generally interact with these companies.

This observation leads one to wonder whether public relations practitioners in Ghana especially in the telecom sector have been making good use of social media, in this case Twitter, to effectively interact with their publics. This study, therefore, attempts to find out if

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public relations practitioners in two Ghanaian telecom companies are maximizing the benefits of Twitter by using it as a communication channel to interact with their target audience. The study also attempts to find out if the Twitter pages of the telecom companies are interactive enough for feedback that will help in serving customers and to help build lasting relationships with their publics.

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study will be underpinned by the following research objectives:

1. To find out the level of interaction between the telecom companies and their clients on their twitter pages.
2. To find out if the telecom companies take advantage of twitter to meet the information needs of their publics.
3. To identify the types of communication that exist between the telecom companies and their publics.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: What is the level of interactivity between the telecom companies and their clients on their twitter pages?

RQ2: How are the telecom companies using Twitter to meet the informational needs of their publics?

RQ3: Which types of communication exist between the telecom companies and their publics on Twitter?

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1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Much of the literature available on the use of social media sites in public relations in Ghana mostly focus on Facebook leaving out the many other social media networking sites particularly Twitter which the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) ranks as one of the sites that dominate the digital scene (Men and Tsai, 2013).

This study aims to be a source of information to public relations practitioners on how to actively develop their Twitter pages to be interactive, if they already are not interactive, for the benefit of their organizations and their publics. It also aims to add to existing literature on the use of social media in public relations in Ghana. This study will contribute to existing literature and also be a basis for comparison of past and future studies on the use of social media specifically Twitter as a tool for public relations practitioners in Ghana particularly the telecommunications industry.

1.9 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms were operationalised for the purposes of this study

- **Interaction/Interactivity:** It includes but not limited to dialogue. It is the extent to which users engage in conversation on Twitter. It typically requires some form of feedback.
- **New Media:** It refers to a medium for mass communication that makes use of technology such as the internet.
- **Social media**: Generally, refers to online platforms which include Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. For the purposes of this study however, the mention of social media in the topic for instance refers to Twitter only. Twitter shall be used as subsequent references to social media in this study.

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- **Twitter ID**: It refers to the user name of the company on Twitter
- **Tweet:** A Twitter post that consists of up to 140 characters in length
- **Retweet (RT):** A tweet that repeats another twitter user's original post.
- **@ reply:** A tweet directed at a particular user. It could be a reply to a previous tweet by the user or tagging a user in a tweet you want him/her to see.
- **#hashtag:** This sign #, that prefixes a word or phrase. It helps to track or filter topics for easy identification. Hashtags are often used on Twitter on trending topics either in response to them or to start them.
- **Follower:** A Twitter user that chooses to follow or see a certain user's updates or posts
- **Link:** A tool that allows a user to access a page on another website outside of twitter.
- **Publics:** It refers to followers of the company's twitter page. It includes clients, non-clients, potential clients and stakeholders.

1.10 SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the study. It included a background to the study and a general overview of the telecom industry, Twitter and the use of social media in public relations. The chapter also defined the problem being studied and gave an outline of the research questions, the objectives and the significance of this study. The chapter ended with brief explanations on key words which were operationalised for the purposes of this research.

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CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section highlights the theoretical framework underpinning this study. The second section reviews literature on social media in general, Twitter and other studies related to this research.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is situated within the theoretical framework of the four models of public relations which was first propounded by Grunig and Hunt (1984). The four models are the press agentry model also known as the publicity model, the public information model, the two-way asymmetrical model and the two-way symmetrical model. All the four models of public relations are discussed in this section. However, for the purposes of this study, much emphasis was placed on the two-way symmetrical model of the four models of public relations since it has been established as the best model for the practice of excellent public relations in organizations (Grunig, 1992). Excellent public relations occurs in organizations that seek to build relationships between the organization and their publics for both their benefit (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2006).

PRESS AGENTRY/PUBLICITY MODEL

The press agentry model is also known as the publicity model or the P.T. Barnum model. It was named after an American politician, circus showman and businessman whose aim was to attract public attention irrespective of whether the information being disseminated was true or false.

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The press agentry or publicity model uses one-way communication, which refers to communication that is directly from the organization to the public. This means that the model emphasises the process of sending information to a receiver with no emphasis on getting feedback from its publics. The press agentry model is characterized by persuasive communication used to influence publics to behave as the organization desires. Under this model no time is invested into research and there are no considerations for ethical issues. Guth and Marsh (2000) describe the model as one where accuracy and truth are the least essential but rather that the public relations effort is focused on attaining favourable coverage or publicity from the media. It is therefore considered as the least effective and ethical model.

PUBLIC INFORMATION MODEL

The public information model was patterned after public relations practices in the early 20th century. It aims at disseminating truthful information. According to McQuail and Windahl (1993) in the public information model, the assumption is that an organization is required to communicate truthful information to its public(s) in a one-way process, but not necessarily with a persuasive aim. This model also prioritises the one-way mode of communication just like the publicity model but the public information model is considered a more ethical model as information dissemination is more objective and accurate even though it seeks to enhance the place of the organization in the public eye (Guth and Marsh, 2000; Grunig and Grunig, 1992).

The main aim of the public information model is to inform publics by releasing relevant and useful information without necessarily seeking feedback. The public information model is not based on formal research and is often used by government agencies in press releases, presentations and brochures.

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TWO-WAY ASYMMETRICAL MODEL

The two-way asymmetrical model is the first two-way model of public relations (Grunig, 1992). Although in this model communication is two-way, it is imbalanced. According to Guth and Marsh (2000), research in the two-way asymmetrical model is used to influence important publics toward a particular point of view and is a more sophisticated approach. In essence, the model makes use of research findings to understand the motivations of the public in order to craft messages that will get the public to behave in a way an organisation desires that they behave.

Under this model, feedback from the publics is aimed at improving the organisation rather than attending to the needs of the public. The organisation is therefore interested in getting the public to adjust to its (organisation) ways than the organisation adjusting to meet the publics' needs.

TWO –WAY SYMMETRICAL MODEL

The two – way symmetrical model emphasizes a balanced two-way communication that represents the interests of both the organization and its publics. It is relevant in solving problems, avoiding conflict as well as fostering mutual understanding between all parties involved in order to build long lasting relationships. The two-way symmetrical model encourages interaction through dialogue and mutual discussion and therefore the public relations practitioner employs it as a way to resolve conflicts and promote mutual understanding between an organization and its important publics. (Guth and Marsh, 2000). Public relations arbitrates between the organization and the publics by paying attention to the concerns of both parties to help them adapt to each other. In the two-way symmetrical model, feedback is very crucial in the effective management of mutually beneficial relationships.

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According to Grunig (1992) the model was developed to make the purpose and direction of communication clear. The model was based on an adaptation of the concept of diachronic communication by Thayer (1968), which suggests the discussion of state of affairs that benefit both the organization and the public.

McQuail and Windahl (1993) describe the two-way symmetrical model as a communication relationship where the initiative and power are shared equally between the organization and its publics. In this vein, Grunig (1992) says that the symmetrical model debunks the predominant worldview that public relations manipulates the publics of an organization for the benefit of the organization.

The model makes use of research to facilitate understanding in order to reach a satisfactory conclusion between an organization and its publics that will favour both of them. The main objective of public relations in the two-way symmetrical model is understanding rather than persuasion (Grunig, 1992).

Much emphasis was placed on this model because it is considered the best for excellent practice of public relations. The use of the two-way symmetrical model in organisations shows a level of commitment on the part of the organisation to engage stakeholders to build quality relationships. In this research, the Twitter pages of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana were studied to determine whether the organisations made full use of the two way interactive nature of the platform to attempt building relationships with their stakeholders that benefit both parties

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Table 1: Summary of Grunig and Hunt's Four Models of Public Relations

Description	**Press agentry/publicity model**	**Public information model**	**Two-way asymmetrical model**	**Two-way symmetrical model**
Flow of communication	One-way communication Source (organisation) ⟹ receiver (public)	One-way communication Source(organisation) ⟹ receiver (public)	Two-way communication Source(organisation) ⟺ receiver (public)	Two-way communication Source (organisation) ⟺ receiver (public)
Research	No research	No research	Research benefits only the organisation and not the public	Research mutually benefits both organisation and public
Type of communication	Persuasive Propaganda	More or less objective Truthful	Imbalanced	Balanced
Goal/aim	Persuasive communication to influence publics to behave as the organization desires No feedback	Sending information out to the public No room for feedback	Communicate with publics. Feedback from publics used for the benefit of organisation and not the publics	Communicate with publics. Feedback from publics used for the benefit of both organisation and publics

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2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW/RELATED WORKS

Many public relations practitioners have adopted social media as tools in their line of work because of the increase in the use of social media around the world. Out of the many social media sites available, most practitioners find it more convenient to stick to just a few like Facebook and Twitter (Kharvi, 2017).

Edman (2010) carried out research to examine how companies use Twitter as a tool for communicating and building relationships with their stakeholders. The study, "Twittering to the top: a content analysis of corporate tweets to measure organization-public relationships" also sought to examine how these companies work to put in place guidelines for practitioners on their use and evaluation of communication efforts on Twitter (Edman, 2010). The study used Grunig and Hunt's four models of public relations to analyse how companies communicate via Twitter and to examine the interactive nature of Twitter and tweets by each company.

Edman (2010) employed a quantitative and qualitative content analysis to examine how companies use Twitter. To carry out the study, Edman (2010) conveniently sampled 37 companies using Twitter from a list published in the article "40 of the Best Twitter Brands and the People Behind Them" on the internet site Mashable.com. In addition to the 37 companies, 10 other companies were randomly sampled from the Fortune 500 companies.

A one-week time frame was considered for the study because it was the week before Thanksgiving and the Christmas season and therefore there would be no interference from holiday messages. The tweets from these companies during this period were those that were analysed for the study.

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The findings of the study showed that some companies used Twitter as a means to "publicize and direct users to articles on their websites" (Edman, 2010, p. 95). Results also indicated that the companies used Twitter as an avenue of customer service. They used it to reach out to their publics by answering questions, helping to fix complaints from consumers and to lead customers to access further information and resources on other sites outside of Twitter. The findings indicated that many companies used a mixed strategy on Twitter to engage with their publics. Twitter was used "to announce news, promote products, answer questions, converse with users, gather customer feedback, and engage in the conversation around their company" (Edman, 2010, p. 95).

Additionally, Edman (2010) found that most of the companies attempted to form some dialogue around their companies with their users on Twitter. Tweets showed a desire to engage the publics instead of public information, that is, merely pushing out information. With regard to interactivity, results showed that there was a high level of interactivity in the posts of the companies. This meant that there were lots of replies to other users as well as interactions through comments and retweets to and of posts from other users present on their Twitter pages. This however differed from industry to industry. There was also an indication that most of the tweets were in line with the two-way symmetrical model of public relations as they sought to interact with their publics by creating dialogue to help build beneficial relationships. Similar to Edman's study, this research was directed at finding out what was the dominant level of interactivity present on the Twitter pages of telecom companies in Ghana and to ascertain if the model of public relations used by the companies Edman (2010) studied is similar or different from what telecom companies use in Ghana.

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In a study by Wigley and Zhang (2011) on the use of social media by public relations practitioners in crisis management and in their ordinary lives, the researchers conducted an online survey of public relations practitioners identified from a list of members of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Possible respondents were sent e-mail invitations with the survey link attached to them. The study showed that less than 25% of the respondents worked in organisations that had one or more people who were solely responsible for managing the organisations' social media. The findings also indicated that although most of these organisations dedicated resources to social media, it served as an additional job function for most of the practitioners rather than a full-time job function.

Wigley and Zhang (2011) ranked Twitter and Facebook as the most preferred social media sites that most of the survey respondents used especially in crisis planning and management. Practitioners prefer to use these sites because it affords them the opportunity to interact with both existing and potential clients. Interaction with publics has moved from just the traditional means to a more technological one which opens the way for dialogue and more interaction. For this reason, this research aimed at determining whether Ghanaian companies especially telecom companies have taken advantage of this technological move to effectively interact with their publics. With the above in mind, Wigley and Zhang (2011) recommend that as more than just an organizational tool, practitioners need to "think about social media as a way to develop relationships with stakeholders, by using dialogue, etc. and think of this as a way to prepare for a crisis"(p. 10).

Saffer, Sommerfeldt, and Taylor (2013) conducted a study to test the levels of organizational Twitter interactivity and whether it affected the quality of organization–public relationships. They conveniently sampled 127 students of two large western United States universities who

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agreed to partake in the study. Out of the 127 students, the authors selected a final sample of 93 participants for the study. These participants were assigned to different companies to receive twitter feeds from them. Thirty participants were assigned to companies with high interactivity accounts and the remaining 63 were assigned to two other companies with low interactivity accounts. Companies with high interactivity accounts were those that communicated more with their followers with the aim of building a strong organization–public relationship as opposed to companies with low interactivity accounts who did not have much ongoing communication with their followers.

The results suggested that organization-public relationships were seen to be of better quality by participants who were assigned to a more interactive company. The study recommended that organizations who want to show commitment to a relationship with their publics, must use a more interactive Twitter strategy which may be of value to some members of their public. The study also indicates that the use of Twitter as a two-way communication tool by organizations can result in the establishment of quality organization–public relationships. As a result of this, Saffer, Sommerfeldt, and Taylor (2013) suggest that organizations should work towards dedicating more time and resources to help maintain a two-way communication via their social media.

North (2015) conducted a study titled "How Does the Fortune 500 use Twitter to Engage Stakeholders- An Examination of Interactivity, Message Valence and Company Type." He conducted the study using content analysis and field experiment. The field experiment was used by the researcher to collect data by observing how the Fortune 500 companies tweeted and interacted with stakeholders in their "natural environment", "without the pressure of feeling observed by researchers" (North, 2015, p. 51). This was done by allowing the social

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media team for each company use its normal procedures for tweeting to their publics without any form of interference. For the content analysis, tweets were selected over a five-year period, 2009-2013. One tweet per month was retrieved for each company during the specified timeframe, making a total of 9,550 tweets. To select the tweet, a random number was selected that represented the date for that specific month. Multiple tweets that appeared on the specific date were assigned numbers and one was randomly selected. For dates that had no tweets, the tweet posted on the next closest date was selected and used to represent that month. One of the things the study concentrated on was the content of the tweets and the replies it generated to check for interactivity. The findings of the study showed that the Fortune 500 companies did not exhibit much interaction in their tweets as the tweets were not posted in a way that will generate replies and responses to them to generate interaction. Some of the companies were hesitant in responding to the tweets of users as only few tweets from followers received responses. North (2015) recommends that for companies to have more interaction with their stakeholders via Twitter, they need to incorporate hashtags in their tweets. He however suggests that the use of the hashtags should be managed properly since too many hashtags in a tweet is likely to create a cluster which will decrease engagement.

Bortree and Seltzer (2009) in a study on dialogic strategies and outcomes analysed the Facebook profiles of some environmental advocacy groups. The study sought to investigate the degree to which environmental advocacy organizations were applying dialogic strategies on their social media profiles. They also sought to determine whether the application of the dialogic strategies would lead to better interaction between organizations and visitors of their pages. They purposively sampled 50 Facebook profiles created by environmental advocacy groups. Posts on these profiles were content analysed using Kent and Taylor's dialogic theory

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to analyse the dialogic strategies present on the Facebook pages. They also identified and used six dialogic outcomes in addition to the dialogic strategies to content analyse the posts. The findings showed that there was a correlation between the dialogic outcomes and the dialogic strategies. It indicated that the dialogic outcomes correlated with three of the dialogic strategies—conservation of members, generation of return visits, and organization engagement. They also found that these advocacy groups assumed that it was enough to simply create social networking profiles to interact or engage in dialogic communication. They had a social media presence but were not making use of the interactive opportunities that the site offered. As a result of this, these organizations were missing an important opportunity to build mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders (Bortree and Seltzer, 2009). This may not be limited to just environmental advocacy groups since there is the possibility of some other organisations having a social media presence but not "creating the dialogue and ongoing interaction that have become hallmarks of social media." (Waters et al, 2011, p.222).

Waters, et al (2011) conducted a study on the application of the dialogic theory on social networking sites to examine how university health centres conveyed health messages on Facebook. The study sought to investigate how the health centres were using social media to convey messages to meet the health information needs of their publics. The universities that were examined were chosen from a list of doctoral/research universities listed on the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The researchers checked to see whether those listed had health centres that were present on Facebook. The search showed that 51% of the institutions, that is 80 institutions, had health centres that maintained a presence on Facebook.

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The Facebook profiles of these health centres were content analysed and examined using Kent and Taylor's dialogic principles of communication. Of the 80 health centres, the results indicated that 65 of the health centres maintained an actual profile on Facebook while 15 managed a group page. With regard to the application of the dialogic strategies, there was an indication that the university health centres incorporated the dialogic principles into their Facebook profiles. Results from the study showed that the more the online following, the greater the use of the sites as dialogic tools. However, Waters et al. (2011) realized that although the centres had a presence on Facebook, they were not using it to its full potential to engage stakeholders. This makes it necessary to investigate whether the two telecom companies were using twitter to at its full capacity to interact with stakeholders. Health centres used Facebook as a supplementary tool to disseminate information already available on their websites and this caused them not to make full use of the dialogic potential of the site to interact with stakeholders. This may explain why some organizations have less interaction with their publics because they "assume that visitors have been to their website or know the basic information they have presented through other channels." (Waters et al, 2011, p.221).

Kang and Norton (2006) conducted a study on the websites of universities and colleges in the United States of America to investigate the extent to which they used the world-wide web as a public relations tool to interact with their stakeholders. They sampled 129 best national universities based on a list of annual school rankings compiled by the US News and World Report. The study which was underpinned by Grunig and Hunt's two –way symmetrical model of communication and the dialogic loop, content analysed the websites of these universities to test the functionality of the universities' websites. The findings from the study showed that the universities made use of the website to meet the informational needs of students and potential students. They did this through press releases, regular updates on news

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and events about the school as well as information concerning admissions and scholarships. Half of the schools sampled also included links to other colleges and universities. Although this study was based on websites, it informed the interest of the current study in finding out whether MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana make use of social media particularly twitter to meet the informational needs of existing and potential clients. Like websites, Twitter also gives practitioners the opportunity to use the platform to put out information to their publics, interact and establish relationships with them. With the surge in the use of social media platforms like Twitter in businesses to relate with clients, it gave an interesting opportunity to investigate the telecommunication sector in Ghana and how much they use Twitter as a public relations tool to interact with their clients. In doing this, the content analysis method as well as the two-way symmetrical model of communication was adopted for this study.

The study also found that the universities used the websites to create interaction between users and the university (Kang and Norton, 2006). Although they used the websites to meet some informational needs of their students through the interaction, the results of the findings also indicated that the universities were not fully employing the relationship building capabilities of their websites. These findings buttress the need for organisations such as MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana to fully utilize the interactive potential of the internet as well as social media to interact with target audiences in order to provide them with the necessary information to foster good organisation-public relationships.

Waters, Burnett, Lamm and Lucas (2009) also conducted a study on how non-profit organizations in the United States of America were using Facebook to engage stakeholders through social networking. They conducted a content analysis of the Facebook profiles of 275 randomly selected legally incorporated non- profit organizations. They assessed the profiles

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looking out for the presence of items that represented organizational disclosure like a description of the organization's programmes, information dissemination such as the presence of links to news items and involvement by providing information on how to contact, donate, and volunteer for the organization (Waters at al., 2009).

The study found that the non-profit organizations acknowledged the quick expansion of social networking and wanted to be on Facebook but they were not taking advantage of all the possibilities the site had to offer their relationship building efforts (Waters et al., 2009). The findings also indicated that although the non-profit organisations were open and transparent concerning who was responsible for the maintenance of their site, they did not take advantage of the interactive opportunities available on the social networking sites to interact with and engage stakeholders. According to Waters et al. (2009, p. 4), the organisations "rarely provide information in forms other than external links to news stories, photographs, and discussion board posts" and the only way they tried to get interested parties involved was "by providing them with a contact e-mail address to obtain more information."

The study also showed that most non-profit organisations lack the time and resources needed to pay constant attention to their profiles. According to the researchers, "creating a profile and then abandoning it will create only minimal exposure for the organization, and it could turn off potential supporters if they witness inactivity on the site." (Waters et al., 2009, p. 4)

Waters et al. (2009) advise that it is important that organisations take advantage of social media and try to understand how their publics use it since it is an effective way to reach their publics. This is necessary to help the organisations meet "the growing needs and expectations of their stakeholders" (p. 5).

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In another study, "Tweet, tweet, tweet: A content analysis of non-profit organizations' Twitter updates," conducted by Waters and Jamal (2011), the authors sought to examine how non-profit organizations communicate on Twitter. The study conducted a content analysis of the tweets of selected non-profit organisations. Waters and Jamal (2011) reviewed the *Philanthropy 200*, a list of non-profit organisations published by the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*. The review showed that out of the top 200 fund raising non-profit organisations in the United States of America, 81 run active Twitter accounts. Out of the 81 organisations, 27 were randomly selected and their tweets for March 2010 were analysed for the study. The non-profit organisations sampled represented organisations from different sectors such as public/ society benefit, health, human services, religion, arts and culture, and education. The results showed that "non-profit organizations provided a variety of unidirectional updates and announcements, including sharing upcoming dates and deadlines and providing information and reports from outside organizations" (Waters and Jamal, 2011 p. 323). This indicated that the public information model was the most widely used model of all the four models. The findings also showed that it was more likely for non-profit organizations to engage in asymmetrical communication than symmetrical dialogue on Twitter since they often used Twitter to ask users to take part in surveys more than using it to get specific feedback from users. The non-profit organizations primarily used Twitter to convey one-way messages. They did not make use of the interactive and dialogic capabilities of social media but rather used Twitter to share information instead of building relationships (Waters and Jamal, 2011). For this reason, it is important to investigate the reason behind the use of twitter by MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana to determine whether they are using twitter solely to convey one-way messages or push information rather than build relationships through interaction. Similar to the study conducted by Waters et al. (2011), Waters and Jamal (2011), in their research, showed that the tweets from the non-profit organisations directed

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their followers to a host of other information on their websites. According to Waters and Jamal (2011), the provision of information could help the followers of these organisations develop trust for the organisations, however, this would result in a lopsided relationship due to the one-sided approach of the tweets.

Following the earthquake that hit Port-Au-Prince, the capital of Haiti, in January 2010, Smith (2010) conducted a study titled "Socially distributing public relations: Twitter, Haiti, and interactivity in social media." The study was conducted to explore how Twitter was used as a public relations tool by users to support Haiti during the disaster. Smith (2010) used the qualitative approach to content analyse tweets on Twitter regarding relief efforts following the earthquake. He collected the tweets used for study using the keyword "Haiti" six different times for two to three hours per session between January 22 and February 11, 2010. These tweets were categorized into different topics of discussion surrounding Haiti and the earthquake at the time.

The findings showed that users used Twitter "to connect to the community of Haiti supporters" (Smith, 2010, p. 331) using hashtags such as #Haiti, #HopeforHaiti, and #Igave. These hashtags "automatically connected posts, and the retweet function promoted contribution to community dialogue" (Smith, 2010, p. 331). According to the study, Twitter is more than a message engine but rather a platform for social connection and promotion with interactivity as a driving force. This leads one to wonder how MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana take advantage of the interactivity on the platform to engage their stakeholders

It also states that there is the possibility of tweets fulfilling or impeding public relations efforts "as messaging activities are distributed to publics with little or no stake in organizational success" (Smith, 2010, p. 332). Smith (2010) describes this as a socially

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distributed model of public relations where individuals with little or no recognized stake in an organisation become initiators of public relations responsibilities, fulfilling them through online interactivity. Public relations practitioners are to help their publics on social media to sort out the clutter of information available to them (the publics). Information sharing and interaction help to foster and build relationships therefore "practitioners should be well-versed in the online discussions to provide useful insights that fulfil user needs and lead to further interaction" (Smith, 2010, p.334).

Gordon (2010) conducted a study on the use, value and impact of social media on public relations practitioners in the Fox cities in United States of America. The study was to determine how practitioners were using social media and what impact social media had on the practice of public relations. The study was conducted quantitatively using survey as a method of data collection. Questionnaires were sent via mail to 77 public relations professionals in the Fox Cities using the NEW (North-eastern Wisconsin) PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) chapter directory.

Results from the study indicated that respondents agreed that social media has changed the way their organisations communicate with their publics especially the external ones. Gordon (2010) also found that social media was seen as a less accurate, credible, trusted and truthful medium as compared to traditional media. She also found that social media and traditional media influenced each other more than they were against each other. This was because social media served as an effective tool for disseminating and communicating news from traditional media sources. Also, the study found that although public relations practitioners believed it was necessary to measure the communication going on about their organisations and to analyse the content of what was being communicated, they were not doing so. It was

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therefore suggested that public relations practitioners should measure the impact that their communication has on influential people such as opinion leaders and the impact it has on the behaviours of their customers.

Lovejoy, Waters and Saxton (2012) conducted the study "Engaging Stakeholders through Twitter: How Non-profit Organisations are Getting More Out of 140 Characters or Less." The study focused on examining how these organisations use various communication and interactivity tools available on Twitter.

To determine whether the non-profit organisations were actively using the communication and interactive tools available to them, the study was carried out using the content analysis method to analyse tweets from the organisations. The sample for the study was drawn from the "Non-profit Times 100" which consists of a list of the 100 largest non-educational non-profit organisations in the United States. A check was conducted to find out the organisations that had Twitter accounts among the 100. The checks showed that 73 organisations out of the 100 had Twitter accounts and therefore were relevant to the study. The 73 organisations consisted of organisations from international and foreign affairs, health, arts, culture, humanities and youth development. The tweets studied were retrieved from Twitter within a month-long period – November 8 to December 7 2009. The total number of tweets collected was 4,655.

The results of the study showed that out of the Twitter-specific tools available to the non-profit organisations, sharing hyperlinks (links to other websites or pages) and retweeting messages were the two dominant communication tools used by the sampled organisations. The findings also showed that the non-profit organisations were predominantly using Twitter to disseminate information using one-way mode of communication. Lovejoy et al. (2012)

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explain that perhaps the reason why this happens is because of the lack of time and resources that the organisations put in their social media accounts which may also be as a result of a lack of research on the long and short term benefits of social media for the organisation.

Although the findings from this study and other scholars show that organisations fail to take advantage of the engagement and interactive elements on Twitter and other social media sites, this current study aims to look at engagement and interaction on Twitter in the Ghanaian telecom sector to determine whether these findings are similar in the Ghanaian context.

According to Lovejoy et al. (2012), Twitter can be used as an effective tool for stakeholder engagement if public relations practitioners take the initiative "to use it reactively for customer service as suggested by consultants" (p.8). They conclude by stating that organisations are limited in their use of Twitter by the imaginations of their public relations practitioners which is why there is a significant variation in how each organisation uses Twitter and the type and number of communication and interactive tools that they capitalize on.

Results and findings from the studies above commonly show that with the advancement of technology has come social media and the many advantages that it provides to the practice of public relations. One of the things that stand out from all these research is that most public relations practitioners have failed to maximize the use of Twitter and other social media platforms to communicate with their publics to effectively build strong mutually beneficial relationships between their organizations and their stakeholders. These reasons are why this

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research was conducted to test the Ghanaian market to determine their use of Twitter in practicing effective public relations in the telecommunications industry.

2.3 SUMMARY

This chapter looked at the four models of public relations propounded by Grunig and Hunt (1984). It also included a review of related literature relevant to this research on the use of social media -Twitter- in the practice of public relations.

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methodology of this study. It includes the research design, the target population of the study, the sample size, the sampling procedure, the data gathering process and the instrument of data collection.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design has been explained by scholars such as Babbie (2010) as a blueprint or process by which a research is conducted. There are several reasons for which a research is conducted and one of them is for the purpose of description. The descriptive research design aims at providing accurate and valid representations of the factors that are relevant to the research being undertaken (Babbie, 2010). It seeks to describe phenomena by asking questions such as what is happening with a particular phenomenon. This study was carried out using the descriptive research design because it sought to describe how telecommunication companies in Ghana were using Twitter to interact with their publics and to relay information that met the needs of their publics.

The study was conducted using the quantitative methodology. This methodology was chosen because it allows the researcher to generalize findings from the study to include other companies in describing the ongoing relationship between them and their stakeholders on Twitter. The study adopted the content analysis method to examine tweets on the official Twitter pages of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana. These two telecommunication companies were selected because they are considered as the largest telecom companies in

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Ghana with the largest market share, according to reports from the National Communications Authority in 2017.An analysis of the social media domain also revealed that MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana have the most active social media pages amongst all the telecom companies in Ghana. A quick survey of the Twitter pages of Vodafone Ghana and MTN Ghana showed that about 65% of these followers take to Twitter to report their issues to the telecom companies and to seek information among others.

3.2CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is the method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables (Wimmer& Dominick, 2011). It is used to analyse content either in written form or in the form of images. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), studies that are conducted using content analysis are usually done for one of five purposes. These are to

- describe communication content
- test hypotheses of message characteristics
- compare media content to the "real world"
- assess the image of particular groups in society and
- to establish a starting point for studies of media effects.

Content analysis was used in this study to analyse the content of tweets, both textual and non-textual, on the twitter pages of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana to describe and explain how they use these pages to meet the informational needs of their publics.

3.3POPULATION

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), one goal of scientific research is to describe the nature of a population. Population here refers to a group or class of subjects, variables,

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concepts, or phenomena. The population for this study were all tweets posted in 2016 on the MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana twitter pages.

3.4SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND SAMPLE

The multistage sampling technique was used in selecting the months for this study. Multistage sampling is a sampling method which contains two or more stages when selecting a sample for a study. It involves dividing a population into smaller groups in different stages to help draw an appropriate sample.

The first stage involved the selection of months from the year 2016. Each year is made up of 12 months and is divided into four quarters made up of three months each. Four months were chosen in this first stage using the simple random sampling method. The simple random sampling method is the process of selection in which each member of a population has an equal chance of being selected. In this case, the name of each month was written down on separate sheets of paper grouped according to quarters and shuffled. Four months were selected with each month representing one quarter. For instance, February was randomly picked out of the first quarter which comprises January, February and March. The following months were the months selected out of the first stage:

a. February -1st Quarter
b. April -2nd Quarter
c. August- 3rd Quarter
d. October- 4th Quarter

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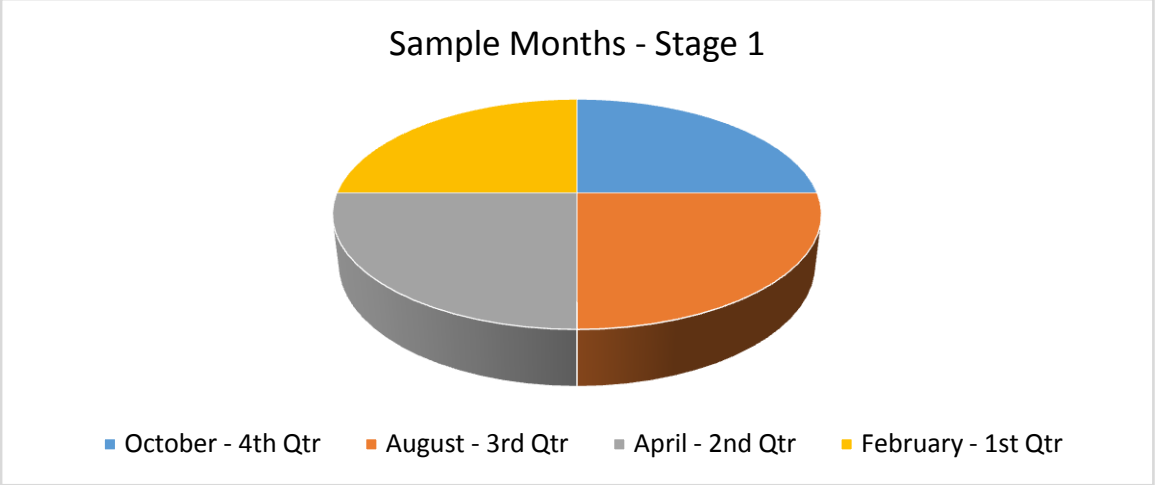

Figure 3: Sampled Months

The simple random sampling method was used again in the second stage to select two months out of the four sampled months. The months drawn as samples from this stage were February representing the 1st quarter and October representing the 4th and last quarter of the year.

The third stage was the stratified sampling. According to Babbie (2011), stratified sampling ensures the proper representation of the stratification variables to enhance representation of other variables related to them. The researcher constructed a composite week for each of the two selected months from the previous sampling stage of the study. All the days in the month were written down and seven days were selected from them. Each day randomly selected was used to represent all the days in that month. For example, a sample of one Monday, randomly selected from the four or five possible Mondays in February was used to represent all Mondays in the month. This was done for both months until all weekdays were included in the study.

The stratified sampling technique was used to ensure proper representation of all the days of the month to ensure data reliability as well as generalization of the outcome of the study. Tweets from the composite weeks for the two months were those that were analysed for the

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study. A total number of 684 tweets were analysed for this study. This was made up of 283 tweets from MTN Ghana and 401 tweets from Vodafone Ghana.

Table 2: Breakdown of Total Number of Tweets

Telecom Company	**Sample size of tweets**
MTN Ghana	283 tweets
Vodafone Ghana	401 tweets
Total	**684 tweets**

3.5 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The unit of analysis for this study was all textual and non-textual tweets on the twitter pages of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana. The non-textual tweets were added as units of analysis to help with the description of the level on interactivity on the twitter pages of the telecom companies. The main focus was however on the textual tweets.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

To collect data for the study, tweets on the official pages of the two telecom companies, MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana, were retrieved. The dates that were selected to represent the months in the composite week were used as key words in the Twitter search engine in order to retrieve the tweets. The tweets were then coded using a coding guide adopted from Edman (2010) and modified to suit this study.

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3.7CODING GUIDE

Coding, according to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), refers to placing or classifying a unit of analysis into a content category. Coding is normally done using a coding sheet and coding guide. The coding sheet contains the categories that are to be coded and the coding guide contains instructions or further details concerning the categories in the coding sheet.

The categories used to classify the content of the tweets in this study were

Type of Tweet: The study used this coding category to distinguish between the different types of tweet on the twitter space. The category included

a. **Original tweet**: This was used to identify a tweet originated by the company's author or the user/follower

b. **Retweet**: This was used to identify a shared tweet in which the company's author or follower did not originate

c. **Reply (@reply)**: This was to identify when the company replied a user/follower's tweet

Level of Interactivity: This category was to enable the researcher measure the level of interactivity using the tweets. The tweets were categorised into the following levels of interaction as developed by Edman (2010).

a. **Low level interaction**: Refers to tweets with no links, @replies, RT's, or any extra features other than the original posting.

b. **Medium level interaction**: Refers to tweets with links to pictures, videos, websites, or any other further information accompanying the original message.

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c. **High level interaction**: Refers to tweets that @ reply to other users and vice versa. This means tweets that serve as responses to the company's as well as other users' tweets.

Type of Communication in Tweet: The categorisation of the type of communication in the tweet was to identify the kind of interaction within the tweets. The kinds of interaction were categorised into

a. **Commendation**: This type of communication refers to when a tweet contains words that applaud the works or services of either of the telecom companies

b. **Information seeking**: This type of communication refers to when a tweet contains questions or enquiries. It is most likely to come from followers of the telecom company.

c. **Complaint**: This refers to when the post involves the author or user complaining about problems or issues with the telecom company

d. **Solution**: This refers to when a tweet from the telecom companies is aimed at providing answers to complaints and enquiries from users.

e. **Information sharing**: This type of communication refers to when the content of a tweet posted by the telecom companies aims at providing users with information that they have not requested or information that the companies want to make known to their publics

f. **Other**: This referred to tweets that do not fall under any of the above categories

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3.8INTER-CODER RELIABILITY

Inter- coder reliability is when different coders agree in the great majority of instances about the proper category for each unit of analysis (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). It is very important when conducting content analysis because it helps to measure the reliability and validity of the research. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), for a content analysis study to be objective, it must have reliable measures and procedures.

Coding was carried out by the researcher and two other coders. The coders were trained to assist in the coding process. They were taken through the coding guidelines and the coding sheet. This was to ensure that the coders understood carefully the coding process in order to get more reliable data for the study. This training helped to review and improve upon the coding guidelines until both coders fully grasped the coding process.

The inter-coder reliability test was used to ensure data reliability of the study. Inter-coder reliability refers to the levels of agreement among independent coders who code the same content using the same coding instrument (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011).

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), one of the methods used in calculating inter-coder reliability in terms of percentage agreement is the Holsti (1969) formula. The Holsti formula calculates inter-coder reliability as follows:

$$\textbf{Reliability} = 2M/N1+N2$$

In this formula, M represents the number of coding decisions on which two coders agree and N1 and N2 represent the total number of coding decisions by coder one and coder two respectively. Holsti's formula was applied to 10% of randomly selected tweets out of the total of 684 sampled tweets. This was to determine the level of agreement between the coders on the elements in the coding guide. The range of percentage agreement that is generally an

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acceptable level of reliability is ≥ .80 (Lombard, Snyder-Duch and Bracken, 2002). The results of the test using Holsti's Formula showed a 95% (0.95) level of agreement between both coders as presented below

Table 3: Intercoder Reliability

Variable	Holsti's Formula	Percentage Agreement
Sampled Tweets	2(65)/ (68+68)	0.95 (95%)

3.9DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data was analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, mean, mode, and median have been described by scholars such as Wimmer and Dominick (2011) as an appropriate statistical tool for content analysis.

The descriptive statistics helped to summarize the data collected. After completing all coding activities and data analysis the results for the study were presented in frequency distribution tables, bar charts, pie charts and percentages for easy interpretation.

The statistical analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) software. Interpretations were made based on the link between theory, objectives, research questions and the results obtained.

3.10 SUMMARY

This chapter described the methodology used for this study. It consisted of explanations of the research design and the method used for the study, the population, sampling and sampling technique, the instrument used in collecting the data and how the data was analysed.

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CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected and the findings of the study. Data analyses as well as the discussion of findings were based on the research questions and objectives set at the beginning of the study. The results of the data analyses were presented with the aid of tables and graphs. To make meaning out of the findings, there is a discussion of the findings in relation to existing literature and theories. This chapter also presents a comparison of the interactivity levels between MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana as well as a comparison of the existing types of communication on the Twitter pages of the two telecom companies.

4.1PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

These are the findings gathered from the content analysis of the tweets on the official twitter pages of the two telecom network operators, MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana. The presentation of the findings include a cross – tabulation of two variables to help compare the variables as has occurred on the individual pages of the two telecom companies.

4.1.1 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF DATA/TWEETS

The study analysed a total number of 684 tweets. Out of 684 tweets, 283 tweets were retrieved from @MTNGhana, the official twitter page of MTN Ghana representing, 41% of the total number of tweets analysed for the study and 401 tweets from @Vodafoneghana, the official twitter page for Vodafone Ghana representing 59% of the total number of tweets.

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4.1.2 LEVEL OF INTERACTIVITY

This study sought to test the level of interactivity on the twitter pages of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana. Interactivity was classified into three levels: low, medium and high. Tweets were classified as low when the tweets contained only the original posting and had no links, pictures, retweets (RT) or any other extra feature attached to it. Medium interactivity tweets were those that had extra features like links to pictures, videos and websites attached to the original tweet. Tweets under this category also included tweets that mention a user or retweets of other tweets without additional information. Tweets that were replies to other tweets, retweets with additional information like a comment were classified as tweets with a high level of interactivity.

Table 4:Frequency Table for Level Of Interactivity Within The Tweets

Level of Interactivity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	**24**	**3.5**
Medium	**372**	**54.4**
High	**288**	**42.1**
Total	**684**	**100**

Out of all the tweets studied for this research, 24 tweets representing 3.5% were of low interactivity, 372 tweets representing 54.4% were of medium interactivity and 288 tweets representing 42.1% were of high interactivity. The results of the analysis showed that most of the tweets were in the medium interactivity category. This means that on the twitter pages of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana there is an indication of some ongoing interaction between the telecom companies and their publics through the sharing of pictures and links and replying to questions, enquiries and general complaints from consumers. Although there is

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some record of responses from the two companies to questions or posts, a low occurrence of such these responses as per the findings puts the high interactivity in a less dominant position. Table 4 illustrates a breakdown of the tweets in the various interactivity categories.

Table 5:Cross Tabulation for Level of Interactivity between MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana

		Name of Telco		
		MTN GHANA	VODAFONE GHANA	Total
Level of Interactivity	Low	13	11	24
		4.6%	2.7%	3.5%
	Medium	112	260	372
		39.6%	64.8%	54.4%
	High	158	130	288
		55.8%	32.4%	42.1%
Total		283	401	684
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Tweets on MTN Ghana's page indicated that the level of interactivity was high. Out of the total number of tweets retrieved from their page, 55.8% (158) were high level interactivity tweets, 39.6% (112) were medium level interactivity tweets and 4.6% (13) were low level interactivity tweets. This finding shows that there is an ongoing interaction on the MTN page and that MTN Ghana is currently engaging their publics on twitter in an attempt to build good relationships and satisfy the informational needs of their publics. For instance, MTN Ghana (@MTNGhana) had tweets like *"@bigjeffaliY'ello, sorry for the inconvenience. Kindly DM your number to @AskMTNGhana to enable us assist you. Thank you"* and *"@spyling1Y'ello, thank you for contacting us. Kindly clarify your issue to enable us assist you. Thank you"* while Vodafone Ghana (@VodafoneGhana) had tweets like *"@Ras_atow_froko Dial *5888# to subscribe"* and*"@MarkMctonto At Poku Trading,*

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*Adum#InternetHelpKumasi."*These tweets were responses to questions and enquiries from followers of the individual accounts of the telecom companies.

On the contrary, from the tweets gathered from Vodafone Ghana's twitter page, the results indicated that there was a medium level of interactivity. Medium level interactivity tweets were 64.8% (260), 32.4% (130) were of high level interactivity and 2.7% (11) were low in interactivity. This reveals an interaction to some extent although quite low as compared to MTN Ghana. Even though Vodafone Ghana is reaching out to their publics, the interaction is less engaging.

MTN Ghana's Twitter page(@MTNGhana) recorded 13 low level of interactivity tweets which represents 4.6% as compared to Vodafone Ghana's (@VodafoneGhana) which recorded 11 (2.7%). For instance, MTN Ghana (@MTNGhana) had tweets like: *"Join us @ Opoku Trading car park in Kumasi, Tamale Regional Library, Aggrey Memorial SHS in Cape Coast, our Head Office in Accra #SaveALife"; "Salome Francois, Isaac Adjaottor#MTNHeroesOfChange" and "Nominees for the health category are : Dr. Emmanuel Bidzaikin , Paulina Opei, Mr. Nayina Karim... #MTNHeroesOfChange"*whileVodafone Ghana (@VodafoneGhana) had tweets like: *"We are currently experiencing challenges with our recharge platform, as a result of which customers are unable to recharge their airtime";"Win the chance of a lifetime to watch the Champions League Final. Text UEFA to 1745 to participate in the quiz. SMS costs 50p" and "Customers can however recharge via Vodafone Cash or by dialing *505# to access our SOS airtime. We deeply regret any inconvenience caused."* These posts constitute tweets that did not trigger engagements on their respective platforms. It is important to note that even though MTN Ghana leads Vodafone Ghana on the high interactivity category, on the low level

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interactivity category it lags behind Vodafone Ghana. This however does not affect the dominant level of interactivity ongoing on their page. MTN Ghana records a greater number of tweets that show some high percentage of ongoing interaction while with Vodafone Ghana, although it had a low record of low level interactivity, it records a lesser percentage of high interactivity tweets that indicate a good level of engagement on their page

For medium level of interactivity, MTN Ghana (@MTNGhana) recorded 112 tweets which represents 39.6% while Vodafone Ghana (@VodafoneGhana) had 260 tweets which represents 64.8%. MTN Ghana (@MTNGhana) had tweets like *"What was your first phone? #TBT"*with a picture of some old models of phone brands.

Figure 4: Example of Medium Level Interactivity for MTN Ghana (1)

*"Donation of blood means a few minutes to you but for someone else, it's a lifetime. #SaveALife*with a picture of an advertisement for blood donation.

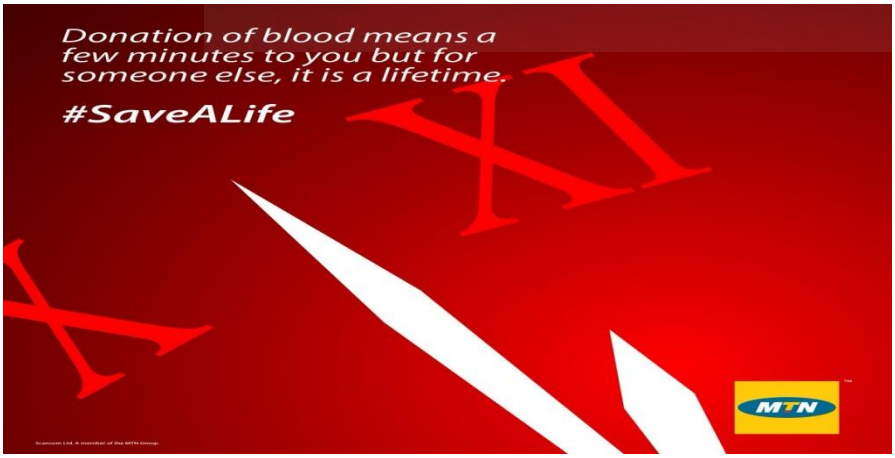

Figure 5: Example of Medium Level Interactivity for MTN Ghana (2*)*

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while Vodafone Ghana (@VodafoneGhana) had tweets like *"Today we bring you the Vodafone Cash Buffet. Just pay GHc 5 via Vodafone Cash and eat all you can. Find us at Jubilee Hall Car Park, UG"* with an image showing students in a buffet queue attached to it

Figure 6: Example of Medium Level Interactivity for Vodafone Ghana (1)

and a picture of a museum in Ghana with the tweet

"#InsideGhana*The purpose of a museum is to collect, preserve & display items of significance. Which museum is this?"*

Figure 7: Example of Medium Level Interactivity for Vodafone Ghana (2)

Unlike the low level interactivity tweets, these tweets had pictures or videos attached to the tweets and were more likely to trigger engagement from followers.

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4.1.3 TYPE OF POST

Table 6:Frequency Table for Type of Post Occurring in all Tweets

Type of Post	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Original Post	387	56.6
Retweet (RT)	12	1.8
Reply (@ reply)	285	41.7
Total	684	100

Twitter categorises tweets into three types namely original tweets, retweets and tweets that served as a reply to others' tweets or @replies. The results of the data analysis showed that most of the tweets (56.6%) on the twitter pages of both telecom companies were original tweets. This means that most of the tweets on the twitter pages of the two telecom companies were authored by the telecom companies. The type of tweet that emerged last from the analysis was the retweets (RT). The retweets represented only 1.8% of the total number of tweets for both telecom companies. Reply tweets were 285 (41.7%) of the total number of tweets. While the telecom companies are more likely than not to initiate conversations, this result indicates that there is generally an ongoing interaction between the individual telecom companies and their respective publics. Table 6 gives a breakdown of the tweets into the respective types and their percentages.

The Twitter page of MTNGhana recorded 122 original post (43.1%), 3 retweets (1.1%) and 158 @reply tweets (55.8%) and all these constitute 283 posts (100%). As seen in Figure 8, MTN Ghana had more interaction with its followers. They engaged with their followers through replies to their questions, complaints and enquiries as seen in this tweet *"@bigjeffaliY'ello, sorry for the inconvenience. Kindly DM your number to @AskMTNGhana*

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to enable us assist you. Thank you". Next to their replies to tweets, MTN Ghana initiated some of the interaction through original posts, some of which were directed at giving out information on products and promotions to their followers. An example of such tweets is "*Hiya Peeps! One of you will be winning a Huawei Y3C today as part of our Season of Sharing activities today!"* which the telecom company tweeted to inform followers of a promotion that was ongoing. The type of post that was the least occurring on MTN Ghana's twitter page was the retweet. Retweets are tweets from a user that is shared by another user to make emphasis or to draw the attention of other users to it. It is usually done when the post contains content that projects something good or bad about another's product, company or personality.

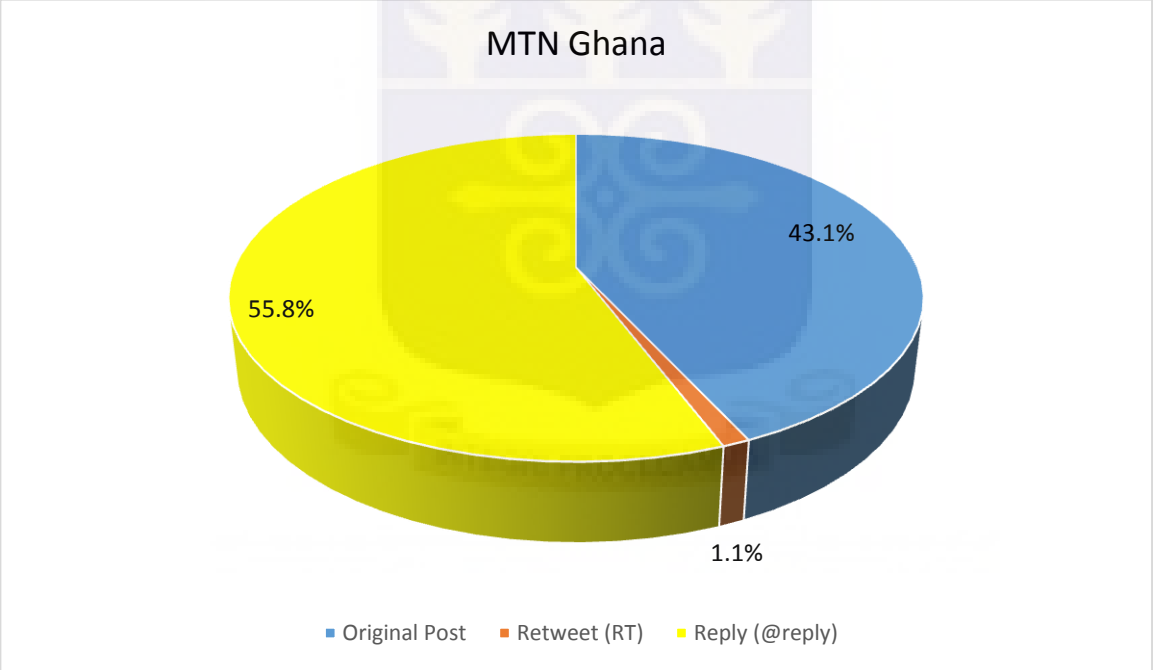

Figure 8: Breakdown of the Type of Post on MTN Ghana's Page

Vodafone Ghana recorded a total of 401 tweets on their twitter page. Out of these tweets, they recorded 265 original tweets which constitutes 66.1% of the total tweets. Nine of the tweets were retweets and 127 were @replies which constitutes 2.2% and 31.7% respectively of the total number of tweets. As seen in figure 9 below, most of the posts from Vodafone

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Ghana are original tweets which indicate that there was mostly information coming from Vodafone Ghana to their followers more than sharing of tweets from other users and engaging their followers to meet their informational needs. The original tweets on the page include posts such as *"Reserve your number before you travel out of the country to avoid losing it. Dial *565# to subscribe"*. The type of post that had the next highest number of occurrence is the @replies post. Vodafone Ghana had tweets like *"@Ras_atow_froko Dial *5888# to subscribe"*which was in response to enquiries and complaints made by their followers. Retweets like "RT MR Wednesday 🐰Nice" were the least recorded type of post from Vodafone Ghana.

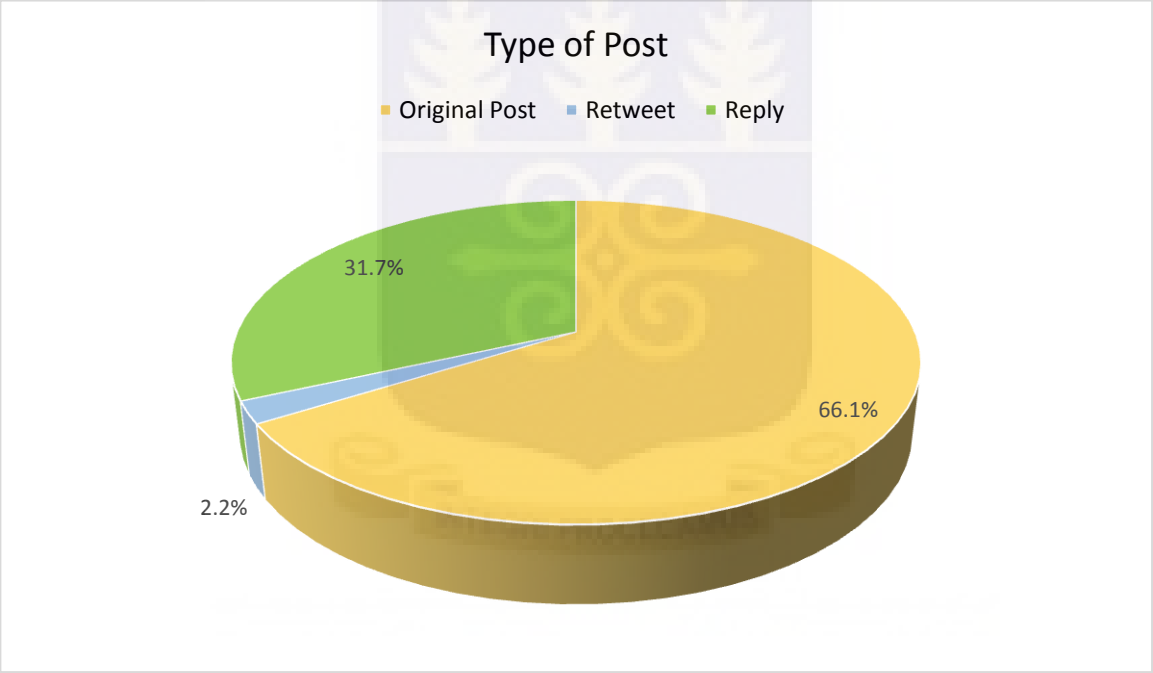

Figure 9: Breakdown of the Type of Post on Vodafone Ghana's Page

Juxtaposing the two telecom companies in terms of the types of post that were recorded on their pages, there is an indication that when it comes to posting original content which more often contains information about the company or products and promotions that the company is running, Vodafone Ghana tends to post more of such tweets unlike MTN Ghana. This explains why posts like *"Stock your wallet & buy airtime for you & your friends on Vodafone*

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*Cash anytime. Simply dial *110# to get started"*dominate the timeline of Vodafone Ghana. In terms of replies to tweets from followers, MTN Ghana records 55.8% as compared to Vodafone Ghana which records 31.7%. This shows that unlike Vodafone Ghana, MTNGhana is making strides in using Twitter as a strategy to resolve complaints as well as provide clarification on issues in order to meet the informational needs of their followers.

4.1.4 TYPE OF COMMUNICATION IN POST

The study also explored the content in the tweets on the official twitter pages of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana. The coded categories were commendation, which consisted of tweets that praised the services of the company, information seeking, which was made up of tweets that contained questions or enquiries, complaints, which were tweets that showed displeasure with services from the company, solution, which contained answers to complaints from customers of the company and information sharing, which consisted of tweets that were aimed at providing users with information that the company wanted customers to know. The last category set was named other. It consisted of tweets that did not fall under any of the above mentioned categories.

From the results of the analysis, generally, 38.6% of the 684 tweets studied were complaints making it the most dominant type of communication existing on the twitter pages of the telecom companies. Information sharing was the next highest type of communication among the tweets. A total of 27.9% of the tweets contained information that followers had not requested for but that the companies wanted to make known to their publics. A sum of 107 tweets representing 15.6% of the total number of tweets was in the information seeking category. These tweets were directed at making enquiries and seeking clarity on products and services offered by the telecom companies. Apart from complaints, enquiries and sharing of

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information, the telecom companies also had tweets that commended them for their products and services to their clients. These commendations made 7.2% (n=49) of the total tweets analysed. Out of all the tweets, 2.9% did not fall under the set categories and were therefore coded as others.

The type of communication tweets can be classified into two categories; supply and demand. The supply category consists of solution and information sharing. Tweets in this category were most likely to come from the two telecom companies. The demand category consists of complaints, commendation and information seeking. Tweets that fall under this category were most likely to come from clients rather than the MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana. However, there were instances where some information seeking tweets were authored by the telecom companies. These tweets from the companies were in a bid to try to initiate conversation between them and their publics.

Table 7 shows a cross tabulation of the type of communication within the tweets

Table 7:Cross Tabulation of Type of Communication

Type Of Communication In Post*Name Of Telco Crosstabulation						
	MTN Ghana		**Vodafone Ghana**		**Total**	
Type of Communication in Post	Count	% within Name of Telco	Count	% within Name of Telco	Count	% within Name of Telco
Commendation	35	12.4%	14	3.5%	49	7.2%
Information Seeking	50	17.7%	57	14.2%	107	15.6%
Complaint	83	29.3%	181	45.1%	264	38.6%
Solution	52	18.4%	1	0.2%	53	7.7%
Information Sharing	44	15.5%	147	36.7%	191	27.9%
Others	19	6.7%	1	0.2%	20	2.9%
Total	283	100%	401	100%	684	100%

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4.2 DISCUSSION

For the purposes of clarity, the findings will be discussed based on the research questions in Chapter 1.

Research Question 1: What is the level of interactivity on the twitter pages of the telecom companies?

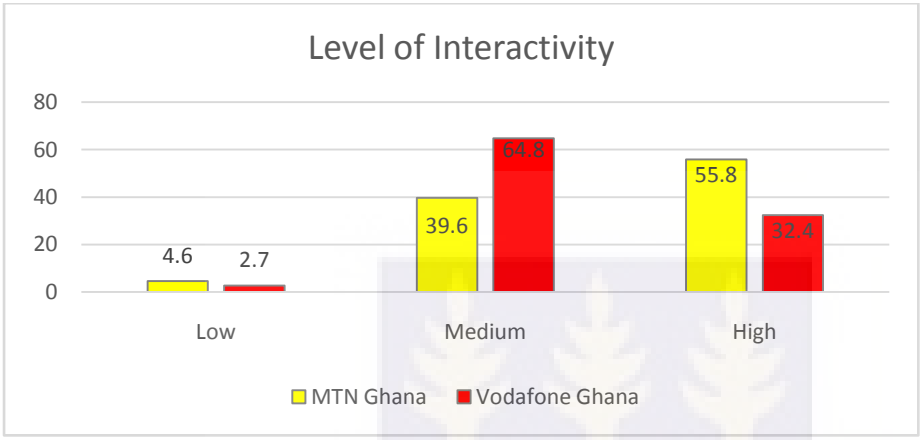

Figure 10: Graph Showing the Cross Tabulation of the Level of Interactivity on MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana's Twitter pages

The level of interactivity gives a sense of how the telecom companies are engaging their customers using Twitter. Scholars like Edman (2010) have emphasised the importance of having high levels of interactivity on Twitter because it reflects positively on companies as it shows how the companies engage their followers in responsive discourse which can help build the companies' credibility. In Figure 10 above, a comparison of the individual categories of interaction between the two telecom companies indicates that although the percentage of low interactivity tweets on MTN Ghana's page was high, as compared to Vodafone Ghana, MTN Ghana records an even higher percentage of high interactivity tweets that includes replying to their followers and addressing their needs. This shows, to a large extent, an ongoing interaction between them and their followers. This shows a balanced two-way communication which allows a flow of communication between the source (MTN Ghana) and the receiver (its followers). This is a reflection of the Grunig and Hunt (1984)

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two-way symmetrical model as it portrays interaction with stakeholders through the use of dialogue and feedback to attend to their needs which would in turn help to effectively manage the relationship between both parties.

Saffer, Sommerfeldt, and Taylor (2013) note that using Twitter as two-way communication tool can result in the formation of quality relationships between an organisation and its publics. Thus, the ongoing interaction between MTN Ghana and their followers could lead to establishing and maintaining quality relationships. On the contrary, there is lacking on the part of Vodafone Ghana as it records a much lower percentage of highly interactive tweets. The results show that Vodafone Ghana is not engaging their followers as needed to establish stronger relationships making them less responsive as compared to MTN Ghana.

Research Question 2: How are the telecom companies meeting the informational needs of their publics through their tweets?

Original tweets from the telecom companies mostly give out information on products and promotions to their followers. The results of the analysis show that more than half of the tweets were original posts from MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana. This confirms that generally the telecom companies aim at being proactive in meeting the informational needs of their customers on Twitter. However, comparing both telecom companies reveal that Vodafone Ghana puts out more information that is directed at meeting the informational needs of their customers on the twitter platform. While this tells of how proactive Vodafone Ghana is in relating to their customers in terms of providing information pertaining to their brand and their services, on the other hand, it is an indication that Vodafone Ghana leans more toward the practice of the two-way asymmetrical model which although is two-way, has

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an imbalanced communication according to Grunig and Hunt (1984) and Guth and Marsh (2000). Based on Waters and Jamal (2011) study, using Twitter to mostly share information and have less interaction would result in building lopsided relationships because most of the tweets are one-sided. This suggests that Vodafone Ghana's relationship with its customers can be described as being one-sided with less engagement from the former with regard to its fewer replies to customers. Consequently, it is likely that the information provided by Vodafone Ghana may not be what is required by their customers and followers on Twitter.

In contrast, MTN Ghana records 43.1% of original posts providing information and 55.8% of replies to customers. This is indicative that although MTN Ghana may be putting out less original posts than Vodafone Ghana, their consistency in giving more replies to customer tweets lead to more interactions with its customer base on Twitter. Based on this consistency, MTN Ghana's relationship with their customers can be described as two-way and balanced. Scholars like Waters et al (2009) stress the importance for companies to take advantage of social media, in this case Twitter, to understand their publics as it is an effective way to reach them. This they say would help the companies to meet the budding needs and expectations of their customers. Thus, it can be said that MTN Ghana is more likely to be meeting the informational needs of their customers through feedback from the interaction they have ongoing with them (customers).

Research Question 3: Which types of communication exist between the telecom companies and their publics on Twitter?

For the purpose of this study and in answer to this question, five categories were set to serve as a guide to determine the types of communication that exist on Twitter between the telecom companies and their publics. The categories were complaints, information sharing,

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information seeking, solution and commendation. The most occurring type of communication for both MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana was complaints. The results of the analysis revealed that 38.6% of the tweets on both pages were complaints about the services of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana from their followers. This indicates that customers of the two telecom companies on Twitter use it as a platform to report and complain about issues that they have with the services provided to them by MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana. However, MTN had the least number of complaints with 29.3% of the tweets whiles Vodafone had the highest with 45.1%. This confirms data that showed that a significant number of Twitter users take to the platform to report their issues to the telecom companies and to register their displeasure and difficulties with their products and services.

The next type of communication that was found to occur most was information sharing. This consists of tweets posted by the telecom companies with the aim of informing their customers about their products and services as well as promotions being run on the network. The existence of this type of communication on MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana's Twitter pages tells of a proactive approach to communication with their customers. This shows that MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana work towards readily making information available to their existing customers and by extension potential customers. On the other hand, the frequent occurrence of information sharing could also mean that MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana tend to push out information rather than focus more on engaging their publics. This reflects the public information model which is characterised by a one way form of communication. One other evidence that emerged from this study was in relation to information seeking. This type of communication is characterised by the presence of questions and enquires in a tweet. From the indicative results that 15.6% of the tweets were directed at seeking information from the telecom companies, there is a possibility that both

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existing and likely customers of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana resort to using Twitter as a platform to make enquiries about the telecom companies and or their products and services. Another type of communication found to exist was solution. These were tweets from the telecom companies that sought to provide answers to complaints and enquiries from followers. The solution category revealed that there is an inverse relationship between the complaints Vodafone Ghana receives and the solutions it provides. Vodafone recorded a total of 181 tweets representing 45.1% of complaints received. They did little to resolve the complaint since they had only 1 tweet representing 0.2% of solutions provided. On the other hand, MTN Ghana recorded a total of 83 complaints representing 29.3% and 52 solutions representing 18.4%. This indicates that it made more attempts at responding to customer complaints as compared to Vodafone Ghana. The next type of communication found to exist was commendation. Tweets that contained words that applauded the services or products of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana were considered as commendation posts. These types of post constituted 7.2% of the total number of tweets. Out of this MTN Ghana received 35 commendation tweets whiles Vodafone Ghana received 14. This is a reflection of the complaints and solution ratio as discussed earlier. It is unlikely that customers who received little or no solution to their complaints will commend their telecom service provider.

The type of communication tweets occurring on the Twitter pages of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana can be linked to the models propounded by Grunig and Hunt (1984). The complaints and solution ration occurring on the pages indicate the presence of feedback. Feedback is a key feature of the two-way symmetrical model which is considered the best in the practice of public relations. Information sharing tweets and some commendation tweets lean more towards the public information model since their aim is to release relevant information to the public without a primary interest in receiving feedback. This on its own does not lead to a healthy development of relationships between the companies and their

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stakeholders. Information seeking tweets can also be situated under the two-way symmetrical model as they seek to generate interaction through making enquiries mostly about products and services. In all these, a greater part of the communication occurring on the Twitter pages of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana show an attempt to practice excellent public relations through the two-way symmetrical model of public relations.

4.3 SUMMARY

This chapter contained the presentation and discussion of findings gathered on the use of Twitter as a public relations tool by MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana. The findings were organised based on the type of post, level of interactivity and type of communication. Based on the findings, discussions were made on how MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana makes use of Twitter as a platform to interact with and meet the informational needs of clients.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This study sought to explore the use of Twitter as a public relations tool by MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana. This chapter summarizes the key findings from the analysis of the data and proposes some recommendations for the telecom companies as well as future research.

5.1 SUMMARY

This study analysed the contents of tweets on the official Twitter pages of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana. It focused on finding out if these telecom companies were taking advantage of Twitter as a social media platform to interact with and engage their customers. It also sought to determine the types of communication that were present on their Twitter pages.

The analysis of the data revealed a 54.4% level of interaction between MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana and their respective publics. This indicated that generally there was an ongoing interaction between the telecom companies and their publics on Twitter. A comparison of both telecom companies showed that MTN Ghana practiced a balanced two-way communication which was likely to lead to the formation of a quality organisation-public relationship. On the contrary, Vodafone Ghana seemed to lack the needed interaction and engagement on their page to help build strong relationships with their publics.

MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana mostly relied on the use of original tweets and replies to meet the informational needs of their publics on twitter. A total of 56.6% of their tweets were original whiles 41.7% represented @replies. It displayed pro-activeness on the part of the telecom companies in a bid to provide needful information to their users. However, between

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the two companies MTN Ghana leaned towards the use of @replies rather than original tweets whiles Vodafone Ghana tendered to use more original tweets than @replies.

The result of the analysis confirmed the existence of the five pre-set categories of types of communication namely complaints, information sharing, information seeking, solution and commendation. Out of these, complaints were the highest for both telecom companies whiles commendation was the least for MTN Ghana and solution the least for Vodafone Ghana. The existence of these types of communication demonstrates a reliance on Twitter as an avenue for interacting with service providers by customers of both MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana.

5.2 LIMITATIONS

Similar to all other academic projects, some difficulties were faced in carrying out this study. First of these limitations was the time factor. The time frame in which this study was to be completed was quite short and could only allow for two of the telecom companies to be studied. A longer time frame however would have helped the researcher to generate more insights on the entire telecom sector and possibly other sectors to allow for generalization.

Also, though content analysis was adequate for this research, an addition of interviews of public relations practitioners and social media managers at both MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana would have contributed additional information that could have enriched the study. These interviews were absent due to time constraints.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was centred on the companies in the telecom sector only. It therefore recommends that future research should focus on a comparison between companies from different sectors

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or geographical locations to test if there will be any variance in how Twitter is used as a public relation tool by public relations practitioners.

Another recommendation from this study is the use of online surveys to find out the views of Twitter users who are clients of the different companies being studied. Since there are few studies that focus on the publics of a company when it comes to public relations, this would provide a different angle of research where the focus would be on the clients and how they view interactions with and from the companies.

It is also recommended that future research should include or focus on a qualitative approach for further studies. Interviews should be conducted with public relations practitioners in the different companies to investigate their approach to using social media as a whole to interact and engage with their customers.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that Vodafone Ghana should:

- invest more effort in how they handle their various publics on Twitter.
- work towards being responsive to customer complaints and enquiries on Twitter.

It is also recommended that MTN Ghana should

- work towards being proactive in providing relevant information pertaining to their brand as well as their services to the public
- put in more effort in engaging and interacting with their clients on Twitter

A better look at these areas will help in interaction with customers as well as help to build quality, effective and long lasting relationships between the company and their publics.

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5.4 CONCLUSION

Twitter and other social media platforms are tools that assist public relations practitioners in customer engagement, feedback and client prospecting. Telecom companies in this study used Twitter as a tool to reach out to their client base and interact with them. The findings reveal the importance of engaging clients on Twitter using the avenues available on the platform to strengthen existing relationships and build new ones. It confirms that the efficient use of Twitter can help to build and sustain quality two-way relationships between companies and their clients.

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APPENDIX A

CODING SHEET

1. **Name of Telecom Company**

   1= MTN Ghana

   2= Vodafone Ghana

2. **Twitter ID**

   1= @MTNGHANA

   2= @VodafoneGhana

3. **Date: __/__/__**

4. **Exact text of tweet**

5. **Type of post**

   1= Original post

   2= Retweet (RT)

   3= Reply (@ reply)

6. **Level of Interactivity**

   1= Low

   2= Medium

   3= High

7. **Type of Communication in Post**

   1= Commendation

   2= Information seeking

   3= Complaint

   4= Solution

   5= Information Sharing

   6= Other

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APPENDIX B

CODING GUIDE

1. **Name of Telecom Company:** Choose the number beside the name of the telecom company that is being coded –MTN Ghana as "1" and Vodafone Ghana as "2"
2. **Twitter ID** – Choose the number beside the name of the Twitter ID of the telecom company that is being coded –@MTNGHANA = 1 and @VodafoneGhana = 2
3. **Date -** This indicates the date of the tweet. The dates should be coded as DD/MM/YY. The day followed by the month and then the year. For example: 10/01/16
4. **Exact text of tweet** – Type the content of the tweet
5. **Type of Post** – Choose the number beside the type of post. For example, Original = 1
   - Original post

     This identifies a post originated by the company's author. It is neither a retweet (RT) nor a reply to other users.
   - Retweet "RT"

     This identifies a post in which the company's author did not originate. A retweet is identified by "RT" followed by @user and the user's original post. Retweets can also be identified as "…message… (via @user)." Sometimes a short message will precede the RT. Still identify this post as a RT.
   - At (@) reply

     This identifies the company's reply to another user
6. **Level of Interactivity –**Choose the number beside the level of interactivity. For example, Low = 1.
   - Low – Tweets with no links, at replies, RT's, or any extra features other than the original posting.

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- Medium – Tweets with links to pictures, videos, websites, or any other further information accompanying the original message. Retweets of other messages that do not include any response to the other user's original message also fall under medium interactivity. When a user is mentioned (not an actual reply) using the at symbol ("@") will also fall under medium interactivity.
- High – Tweets that @ reply to other users are considered as high interactivity. These tweets should be a response to other users' responses. When the telecom company retweets other posts with comments before the RT, the tweet will fall under high interactivity.

7. **Type of Communication in Post:** Indicate the type of communication by choosing the number that corresponds to each category. For example, Commendation = 1

- Commendation

  When the post contains words that applaud the works or services of the telecom company

- Information seeking

  When the post contains questions or enquiries.

- Complaint

  When the post involves complaints about problems or issues with the telecom company

- Solution: This refers to when a tweet from the telecom companies is aimed at providing answers to complaints from users.

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- Information sharing: This type of communication refers to when the content of a tweet posted by the telecom companies aims at providing users with information that they have not requested or information that the companies want to make known to their publics.

- Other: Code as other if the tweet does not come under any of the above categories

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ABSTRACT

The increased use of social media in the corporate world has led public relations practitioners as well as academics to seek to understand how to better use them to communicate. Many studies have explored how social media is used by practitioners in other industries in the corporate domain but few have focused on the telecom industry.

This study explores how telecommunications network operators in Ghana make use of social media as a public relations tool. Through a content analysis of selected tweets from the Twitter pages of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana, the study sought to find out the level of interaction between the companies and their respective clients on Twitter. It also sought to determine the types of communication that exist between the two telecom companies and their clients and to find out if they also take advantage of the platform to meet the informational needs of their publics.

Results from the analysis indicated that there was an ongoing interaction between the telecom companies and their customers through replies to questions, enquiries and complaints. The companies also made efforts to provide their customers with information prior to them asking which showed proactiveness on their part to meet customers' informational needs. A comparison of the two companies showed that MTN Ghana had more interaction on their page and was therefore more responsive to their customers than Vodafone Ghana.

The study concluded that although MTN Ghana had more interaction, both companies were working towards building lasting relationships with their customers through the Twitter platform.