

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION
- A CASE STUDY OF STARBUCKS

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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CRISIS COMMUNICATION
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I. INTRODUCTION

Starbucks, the world's biggest coffee retail company, actively operates social media such as Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/Starbucks>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/starbucks>), a blog (<http://starbucksgossip.com/>), and an online community (<http://mystarbucksidea.force.com/>) to communicate with its customers. Today, Facebook and micro-blogs like Twitter are influential media. Various mobile devices, especially smartphones, have enabled people to designate "Facebook friends" and "tweet" items of interest anywhere and anytime. According to the LYRIS Marketing Guide, one of every nine people in the world is a Facebook user, and 190 million tweets are posted each day (2012). Not only do individuals and organizations post and publish their thoughts and opinions using social media, but organizations also advertise and promote their products on social media sites. With 34 million "likes," Starbucks uses a Facebook page to offer corporate promotions and special deals and to receive feedback from "friends." In addition, Starbucks' Twitter account being followed by 3.6 million people is consistent with its popularity in other social media.

The emergence of social media in the public relations arena means that practitioners have new communication tools, adding to traditional mass media and Internet media. While traditional mass media management plays an important part in the public relations arena, many public relations experts are now paying attention to social media to supplement traditional media because social media have unique advantages. For

example, public relations practitioners can distribute their message through social media and receive reaction from the public almost simultaneously. In contrast, with traditional mass media, it is possible to mass distribute organizational messages, but not to obtain immediate reaction from consumers. In addition, the new atmosphere surrounding social media is compelling public relations practitioners to communicate by sending their messages directly to their key audience instead of relying on mass media outlets.

Public relations practitioners have sought ways to obtain reaction directly from the public; however, the various measurements used in public relations research have not been satisfactory. Research to examine public reaction has been conducted before and after the implementation of public relations strategies and has demonstrated that public relations practitioners can receive feedback from the public even in the middle of executing their activities using social media. Practitioners can not only obtain measured feedback, but they can also reply through Facebook pages and Twitter posts. On social media, receiving positive or negative reactions from the public regarding public relations tactics helps public relations practitioners quickly adjust or supplement their actions.

Many researchers have pointed out that public relations practitioners in organizations frequently perceive social media as useful communication tools (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008; Avery et al., 2010; Curtis et al., 2010; Liu, 2010; Waters, Tindall, & Morton, 2010; Xifra & Grau, 2010; Alikilic & Atabek, 2012; Verhoeven, et al., 2012). Researchers have examined whether social media, which are acknowledged as two-way symmetric models, have useful communication effects as two-way communication tools to foster the mutual understanding between organizations and the public in the public relations arena (Choi & Kim, 2011). In addition, the relationships

between organizations and publics using social media are becoming stronger because of the characteristics of social media. Researchers have suggested that public relations practitioners must consider the characteristics of social media and use those characteristics effectively.

As the number of organizational crises increases, crisis communication and crisis management are essential in the practice of public relations. Just as organizations vary in type and size, the crises they face vary in nature. Media management is one of the most important public relations strategies in crisis management plans. Social media have changed the way practitioners respond and prepare in crises. Public relations practitioners now execute crisis plans that include social media. For example, Starbucks has a manual for crisis communication plans that addresses different media channels, including social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs) and mass media (Starbucks Corporation's website, e-mail, newspapers, and television) (2011).

Many theories of public relations have been applied to the role of social media in crisis communication. First, the organization-public relations model focuses on the role of social media in building relationships between organizations and their key publics to maintain a positive organizational reputation with the public. After Ledingham and Bruning (1998) clarified the dimensions of this model as trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment differentiation, many researchers tried to identify additional dimensions to measure the relationships between organizations and publics. Researchers have studied how dimensions of the relationships between organizations and key publics using social media to communicate with those organizations are composed. Second, in situational crisis communication theory, studied by Coombs and his colleagues,

researchers have focused on the role of social media in response processes after crises (2012). Social media such as Twitter and Facebook are used to offer fast apologies and explanations.

This thesis provides enhanced understanding of the role of social media in general public relations practices and crisis communication based on the example of Starbucks, which is a representative business organization using social media to communicate with its customers and potential consumers. A case study is an appropriate method for presenting specific phenomena through concrete examples. Adding to the many studies showing how social media have been involved in crisis communication, this study describes detailed and applied crisis communication plans that include social media.

As a single case study, this research used the Starbucks organization. As mentioned, Starbucks is the biggest coffee retail shop in the world, with 20,891 shops in 62 countries. In addition, Starbucks has been regarded as a significant company aggressively using social media to promote products and maintain positive relationships with its customers since its 2008 launch of MyStarbucksIdea.com. Starbucks had difficulty in early 2008, and its executives determined to use social media as part of a turnaround plan. York (2010) cited the comment of Chris Bruzzo, Starbucks vice president, brand content and online, that MyStarbucksIdea.com “was not built as a marketing channel, but as a consumer relationship-building environment.” Starbucks organically operates MyStarbucksIdea.com and other social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs not only for standard communication, but also for well-prepared crisis management plans including social media. For example, when vegetarians complained that Starbucks used cochineal, a scale insect, to achieve the crimson color on frappuccino

menus, in April 2012, Starbucks explained and announced its decision to no longer use cochineal on blogs, Twitter, and Facebook.

The assumption of this study was that communication plans have transitioned to include social media as well as traditional tools in crisis communication. The addition of social media gives the advantage of constant two-way communication with critical publics. Based on the Starbucks case study, this study was conducted with the following research questions in mind:

RQ1. How does Starbucks incorporate social media in its crisis communication plan?

RQ2. How effective is Starbucks' use of social media in its crisis communication plan?

This research illustrates the role of social media in the public relations practices of Starbucks. Based on Starbucks' crisis communication plan, the study provides details of strategies and tactics with various media including social media. After that, the research examines how those communication plans are effectively executed in a crisis.

To examine these questions, this research was conducted with a case study. Previous research focused on social media in crisis communication has not explained the specifics of how strategies and tactics operate in the transition of communication tools. This study seeks to connect public relations practices using social media and the public's reaction to those practices with the specific case of Starbucks. The study details the actual role of social media in the practice of crisis communication through the experience of practitioners and the reaction of the public. The paper thus provides a current description of the use of social media in public relations.

The researcher conducted interviews with Starbucks officers to examine Starbucks' history of social media management and crisis communication plans. The researcher also analyzed materials to demonstrate Starbucks' crisis communication plans. After that, the researcher chose a case to observe the actual execution of crisis communication including social media, in this case the cochineal controversy in 2012. The researcher tracked Twitter and Facebook accounts to observe specific execution of Starbucks' posting messages and the reactions from the public. In addition, the research compared the time line of news releases on traditional mass media and postings on social media.

The research describes how Starbucks' crisis communication plans are effectively operated through media management including social media. In conclusion, the research illustrates a representative example of how to handle social media in crisis communication for public relations practitioners.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media

Media Management in Public Relations

According to Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, Toth, and Leuven (2004), the definition of public relations is as follows:

Public relations is a leadership and management function that helps achieve organizational objectives, define philosophy, and facilitate organizational change. Public relations practitioners communicate with all relevant internal and external publics to develop positive relationships and to create consistency between organizational goals and societal expectations. Public relations practitioners develop, execute, and evaluate organizational programs that promote the exchange of influence and understanding among an organization's constituent parts and publics (p.5).

As mentioned, public relations practitioners seek ways to build and manage relationships using media channels so as to communicate with the public. Traditional mass media, such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines, are effective methods for communicating with various publics. Also, traditional mass media perform a role as gatekeepers or filters, which facilitates organizations' messages in reaching the public (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, Toth, & Leuven, 2004). Adding to traditional media, the

development of digital technologies has led to new media based on the Internet and Web, which provides more optional media for practitioners. Since the late 2000s, social media developed from new media have also played an essential role in public relations. With this transition of media channels, media management skills have changed. Public relations practitioners now have more options to execute their plan with media. For example, they can post messages whenever they want in social media, in contrast to traditional mass media where they had to worry about space in media outlets and publication deadlines.

Definition and Types of Social Media

Today, *social media* is a social term rather than a communicational term. The general public use the term as frequently as communication experts and public relations practitioners. Liu, Austin, and Jin (2011) defined social media using a quotation from Pew Internet and American Life (The Pew Internet Research Center, 2010) as “an umbrella term that is used to refer to a new era of Web-enabled applications that are built around user-generated or user-manipulated content, such as Wikis, blogs, podcasts, and social networking sites” (p. 346). The authors pointed out that social media encompass various digital tools and applications to communicate and exchange content among individuals, publics and organizations (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Classification of social media*

Type	Examples	Description
Social Networking	Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Google Plus, Ning, Bebo	Allows users to add friends, send messages, and share content. People on social networking sites group in communities of like-minded persons.
Social Bookmarking	Digg, Delicious, Yahoo! Buzz, StumbleUpon, Reddit	Allows users to share their favorite online content with one another while also creating online bookmarks.
Blogs	Wordpress, TypePad, Blogger, Livejournal, Tumblr	Online journals where the author can write (blog) about any topic of interest. The blogger can also use the blog to share content picked up from other social media sites (e.g., YouTube, Issue) by taking advantage of the simple embedded codes offered by those content hosts.
Micro-Blogs	Twitter	Allows users to send short 140 character messages in real time to large audiences.
Collaborative Projects/Wikis	Wikipedia, Google Docs	Online content created as a result of multiple users working on the same content, but at different times, from different places.
Photo/Video/Music Sharing	Flickr, Photobucket, Picasa, YouTube, Spotify	Allows users to upload photos, video content, and music to share either privately with only selected other users or publicly.

Table 1 Continued

Presentation Sharing	Slideshare.net, Scribd, Issuu	Allows users to upload files as PDFs and convert them to work with online presentation applications. The presentation tools include embedded codes and email options to share the content online.
Intellectual Property Sharing	Creative Commons	Licensing rights and permissions for others to use photos by simply embedding the codes in their blogs.
Meetups/Events	Evite, Facebook Events, Foursquare	Allows users to promote and display their current location.
Questions and Answers	Yahoo Questions, Facebook Q & A, Formspring	Allows users to ask random questions, and anyone can answer and start a conversation.

From Laad and Lewis (2012)

As evidenced in Table 1, various social media applications have been developed with specific functions. In addition, those applications offer functions synchronized with other social media tools. Among the many social media, Starbucks mainly uses three: blogs, Twitter, and Facebook.

Blogs

A blog is an informational site on which single or multiple authors publish on the Web and permit people or publics to share commentaries on posts. WordPress, Tumblr, and Blogger are representative blog services. Starbucks operates *Starbucks Gossip* (starbucksgossip.typepad.com), *My Starbucks Idea* (mystarbucksidea.force.com), and Starbucks blog (www.starbucks.com/blog). *Starbucks Gossip* has the typical format of

blogs, which is reverse chronological arrangement of posts and space for commentaries. In contrast, in *My Starbucks Idea*, customers and employees share their ideas about products, experiences, and involvement, and the blog provides a voting tool for those ideas. In addition, Starbucks has actually applied some of the ideas to its products and services. However, on its blogs sites, Starbucks does not offer spaces to share opinions (www.starbucks.com). Instead of offering a space for sharing a bulletin board system, Starbucks provides links to the addresses of blogs on its website.

In the transition of media, websites have been effective tools for public relations practitioners in determining when and how to make announcements without interference of traditional media outlets. Many organizations use designated spaces, such as bulletin board systems (BBSs) and message boards, on their websites to announce and offer promotions and products, in addition to a news release for traditional media. However, to date, the position of websites has gradually shifted toward social media because of faster feedback and more active two-way communication characteristics, as in the Starbucks example. Among social media, blogs provide comparatively free sharing of opinions by customers.

Not only do blogs operated by organizations themselves provide information space for their publics, but blogs operated by customers of those organizations also provide such space. Therefore, blogs might display representative opinions of the public to researchers. To be more specific, in political crises, blogs are the representative place for sharing public opinions (Liu, 2012). As blogs are rising as a useful communication tool in crisis communication, some researchers have proposed a blog-mediated crisis communication model, which is helpful in monitoring responses of key audiences.

Researchers have pointed out that blogs containing user-generated content rather than organizational blogs gain credibility (Jin & Liu, 2010). In addition, Yang and Lim (2009) discussed blog-mediated public relations as salience of narrative structure, dialogical self, blogger credibility, and interactivity, and they revealed that blogger credibility was correlated with “a positive role in relational trust” (p. 341).

Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging service that allows users to create individual statements of 140 characters or less, called “tweets.” “Users can “follow” a person or organization, and they can be alerted via their mobile device when a new tweet is posted, creating nearly instantaneous information distribution. Twitter was first created in 2006 and entered the social consciousness at the annual South by Southwest festival/conference in Austin, Texas, where the average daily tweets reached over 60,000” (Miller & Vega, 2010, p. 313). According to the official blog of Twitter, more than 140 million people are active users and 340 million tweets are posted every day (2013). Starbucks has a Twitter account (@Starbucks) that is followed by 3.6 million followers as of April 2013 (Starbucks, 2013). Practitioners post news about new products and stories about their employees and link the content to other social media.

In some ways, the dramatic popularity of Twitter has led to its importance as a communicational tool in public relations. Choi and Kim (2011) explained that people can satisfy their desire to communicate and be connected with someone else with a real-time communication tool. They suggested that Twitter is a distinct social network service that helps to build organization-public relationships through convenience of producing

messages, simplicity of building relationships, following, and the ripple effect of re-tweets. First, messages on Twitter are restricted to 140 characters, so Twitter users can express their opinions and interests more easily than in other blogs. In addition, on Twitter, users can readily extend their relationships by using “following” without complicated cumbersome processes. Finally, re-tweet is the function to connect from tweets that users are following to the followers. Re-tweets (RTs) mean that messages are distributed in the blink of an eye. However, researchers have pointed out that this function might result in uncontrolled media as a tool of public relations (Choi & Kim, 2011, pp.11-12). Meanwhile, Choi (2012) advanced “user-disseminated messages as the advantage of Twitter, which gives Twitter users, including businesses and individuals, the ability to build relationships by communicating quickly and efficiently with publics” (p. 313). In addition, Twitter users express their own interests on Twitter and progressively communicate about them with other Twitter users throughout the world. Therefore, not only small businesses, but also global businesses, can easily communicate with Twitter users everywhere. Twitter is also considered an efficient communication tool in political public relations. Specifically, research into young voters’ use of social media, including Twitter, is an emerging topic of study. Park and Kim (2012) pointed out that Twitter’s technological characteristics, such as speed, brevity, and interactivity, are related to its becoming an important medium in political communication.

Facebook

Facebook, which is a social networking service, “had reached 500 million active users in July 2010, making Facebook one of the fastest-growing sites in history” (Wall

Street Journal, October 4, 2012). Using Facebook, people expand relationships from the real world into the cyber world. These relationships, based on the concept of “friendship,” also apply to relationships between potential key publics, including consumers, users and audiences, and the non/profit organizations in which they are interested, as well as relationships between individuals. Many organizations operate Facebook pages to communicate with their customers and potential customers. For example, Starbucks has a Facebook account (www.facebook.com/Starbucks) that has been ‘liked’ 34 million times as of April 2013. Like Twitter, Starbucks’ Facebook page provides promotions for products, coupons, and casual announcements of employee activities.

One characteristic of Facebook is that users are inclined to expand their relationships in reality to the online cyber world. In particular, distinctive terms such as “like” and “friend” influence of the expandability of friendly relationships of users in comparison to Twitter, through which users can communicate with strangers. In addition, Twitter has the limitation of 140 characteristics, but Facebook allows users to post more content than Twitter.

Many researchers have pointed out that Facebook users consider it an emotional and familiar tool to use to communicate with organizations in which they are interested, and it influences the relationships among the publics and organizations. Like other social media, nonprofit organizations’ public relations practitioners also use Facebook to share information with their stakeholders (Waters & Lo, 2012). Meanwhile, through an online survey, Vesnic-Alujevic (2012) suggested that highly educated participants were active in using social media, including Facebook, to communicate and share information with others.

Social Media in Public Relations

Researchers are focusing on how social media are currently gaining importance in public relations. For example, Xifra and Grau (2010) showed how Twitter contributes to public relations by analyzing 653 tweets including the term “public relations” or “PR.” They categorized the role of tweets in the practice of public relations as labor introspective, academic introspective, practice, press release references, general information on the public relations sector, senders of tweets and their dialogues with the community, research (open-ended questions/surveys), and announcements, reviews, events agendas, follow people, and re-tweets. Second, using diffusion of innovations theory, Avery et al. (2010) argued that adoption of social media within public health agencies and moderators varies based on the size of communities. They pointed out that urban communities showed the highest adoption rates, and suburban communities, large towns, and rural communities followed. Also, social networking sites are useful for disseminating health information, along with the new media releases, blogs, and discussion boards.

Meanwhile, the adoption of social media is a global issue in the public relations arena. First, Aliklic and Atabek (2012) examined the distribution of social media in public relations in Turkey. Even though public relations practitioners continue to develop skills using social media as the prime communication tool in their jobs, they admitted that the proportion of social media usage is growing. In addition, Eyrich, Padman, and Sweetser (2008) revealed similar findings. Two hundred and thirty-one public relations practitioners in the United States who participated in an online survey perceived social media as strategic tools. Practitioners preferred email and the Internet for industrial use,

but felt comfortable using blogs and podcasts individually. On the other hand, Curtis et al. (2010) studied adoption of social media for public relations by nonprofit organizations by applying the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT). In addition, Verhoeven et al. (2012) pointed out that digital communication and social media affected public relations in the organization through the European Communication Monitor (ECM) in 2010.

Several reasons can explain social media gaining popularity in the public relations arena. Lee, Seo, Nam, Hwang, and Seong (2012) said that social media have been gaining popularity as organizational communication tools because of their share, participation, and openness characteristics. The authors demonstrated that these characteristics break a wall between exterior and interior media in public relations. In addition, other characteristics such as distribution of information and two-way communication also dismantle ambiguous barriers between interior and exterior media. In addition, Alikilic and Atabek (2012) pointed out that public relations practitioners “are not only excited about utilizing these tools together with conventional media, but also excited about speaking directly to their publics and stakeholders without the involvement of any intermediaries” (2012, p. 56).

Two-Way Communication of Social Media

Social media have distinct characteristics to lead usage by public relations practitioners: two-way communication tool, active users as the public, and real-time communication. The two-way asymmetric model of public relations was developed by Grunig and his colleagues (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The researchers categorized media

management in public relations into four models – press agency/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetric, and two-way symmetric – and considered two-way symmetric the ideal public relations model. In addition, researchers have explained that asymmetric models can be developed into symmetric models, and one-way models can be developed into two-way models. As seen in Table 2, the two-way symmetric model aims for mutual understanding unlike the one-way communication model. Therefore, based on the two-way symmetric model, practitioners can expect long-lasting relationships with the public. Grunig’s two-way communication principles are useful in explaining the ability of new media to communicate with their key audiences in public relations, and current development of new technologies including social media is more appropriate to explain the efficiency of the four models. In the 1980s, the four models were considered just an ideal concept, but today many researchers are applying the model to their current studies, especially studies of social media (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, Toth, & Leuven, 2004).

Table 2. *Four models of public relations*

Characteristic	Press Agency / Publicity	Public Information	Two-Way Asymmetric	Two-Way Symmetric
Purpose	Propaganda	Dissemination of information	Scientific persuasion	Mutual understanding
Nature of communication	One-way; complete truth not essential	One-way; truth important	Two-way; imbalanced effects	Two-way; balanced effects

Table 2 Continued

Nature of research	Little; 'counting house'	Little; readability, readership	Formative; evaluative of attitudes	Formative; evaluative of understanding
Where practiced today	Sports, theater, product promotion	Government, nonprofit, associations, business	Competitive business, agencies	Regulated business, agencies

From Grunig and Hunt (1984).

Active Publics in Social Media

In the past, public relations practitioners have managed mass media because their messages were mainly distributed to the public via mass media such as television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. With development of communication technologies, a transition has occurred from media management to management of the public. As discussed, the new environment of social media in public relations has led to increased attention to the relationships between organizations and publics that use social media because the meaning of *public* has transitioned along with the development of media channels. Who are the publics? According to the Public Relations Society of America, “‘publics’ [is] preferable to ‘stakeholders,’ as the former related to the very ‘public’ nature of public relations, whereas ‘stakeholders’ has connotations of publicly-traded companies” (www.prsa.org, 2013). Stakeholders include investors, customers, community members, employees, and the general public. In addition, for many researchers the term “the public” has various dimensions. For example, some researchers have simply categorized the public into internal and external publics. In contrast, Hendrix (2001) categorized the public into specific types: media publics, employee publics,

organizational members publics, community publics, government publics, investors publics, consumers publics, international publics, and special publics. Researchers have also departmentalized the public. To be more specific, Cha (2002) suggested that Grunig's model classifies publics into four types—latent, aware, active, and non-publics—based on problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement in an issue. On the other hand, Hallahan's model added an inactive public to Grunig's model.

Meanwhile, Bae (2003) introduced the concept of online publics as individuals or groups who participate in construction of discussion to reveal their identities in cyber spaces as related to their interests. She also referred to online publics as constructors of discussion in online media because online publics create multiple discourses about their interests. Online publics have the following characteristics: (a) they express their identity to participate in the construction of online discourses, (b) they are located in multiple positions as information providers and users, (c) they simultaneously have the possibility for reasonable and illogical behaviors, (d) they are stimulated by experiences offline to build issues online, (e) they can change individual issues into collective power, and (f) they have characteristics of variability and multiplicity (Bae, 2003, p. 227). Bae's explanation of online publics can be applied to publics using social media. Publics using social media not only can ignore commentary from organizations, but they can also distribute such messages in real time. Organizations' messages distributed through social media are delivered to people in unexpected ways and can carry unintended meanings. In addition to social media, news releases, including print and video, photographs, and photo opportunities, news conferences, and media interviews are considered uncontrolled media and content prepared by public relations practitioners is considered controlled

media (Hendrix, 2000). However, in terms of social media, separation between controlled and uncontrolled media is becoming difficult because practitioners can decide when, how, and to whom their messages distribute before sending the message to social media, unlike in traditional mass media, but they cannot control what happens after the public distributes their messages.

Crisis Communication

Definition and Types of Crisis

Characteristics of social media and the public using them are developed an important role in crisis communication. According to Coombs (2012), a crisis is “the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes” (pp. 2-3). Possible crises in organizations are gradually increasing with the development of media technologies. Researchers have tried to categorize various dimensions of crises. Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) divided crises into technical, economic, human, and social crises. Meanwhile, Fearn-Banks introduced types of crises as external economic attacks, mega-damage, external information attacks, breaks, and psychological and internal crises (2012). In addition, using situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), Coombs categorized crises as victim crises (minimal responsibility), natural disasters, rumors, workplace violence, product tampering/malevolence, accident crises (low responsibility), challenges, technical-error accidents, technical-error product harm, preventable crises (strong responsibility), human-error accidents, human-error product

harm, and organizational misdeeds according to organizational responsibility (Coombs, 2009). For business organizations, types of crises might be more specific to their business products or services. For example, as shown in Table 3, Starbucks indicates the types of crises as personnel, competitor/consumer, event, supply chain, and reputation (Clampitt et al., 2009).

Table 3. *Potential crisis areas in Starbucks' crises management plan*

Potential Crisis Area	Potential Risk/Vulnerability	
Personnel	Discrimination Workplace Violence Health & Safety Employee Fraud	Partner Relations Hiring Practices Labor Dispute Sexual Harassment
Competitor/Consumer	Bias/Favoritism Customer Satisfaction Regulatory	Ethics Facilities Management Pricing of Product
Event	Acts of God/Natural Disasters Vandalism Violence/Terrorism Hostile Takeover	Whistleblower Market/Financial Crisis Employee Fraud SEC Inquiries/Violations/Audits
Supply Chain	Environmental Defects & Recalls Government Intervention	Outsourcing Supplier Relations Boycott
Reputation	Brand Management Leadership Decision/Indecision Intellectual Property/Product Shareholder Relations Class Action Suits	Communications Executive Dismissal Outsourcing Rumors

Crisis Communication/Management

Based on the type of crises, crisis communication plans and management can be properly prepared and practiced. Before looking at crisis communication and management, it is necessary to examine the specific stages of crises. Generally,

researchers have enumerated five stages of a crisis. Fearn-Banks explained five stages of a crisis as detection, prevention/preparation, containment, recovery, and learning (2011).

The general definition of crisis communication or crisis management is “a process designed to prevent or lessen the damage a crisis can inflict on an organization and its stakeholders” (Coombs, 2007). According to Coombs (2007), crisis management has three phases: pre-crisis (prevention and preparation), crisis response (actual response to a crisis), and post-crisis (preparation for the next and commitments during the crisis with follow-up information). Many organizations, including Starbucks, have crisis management teams in the public relations department. As a coffee retail company, Starbucks operates crisis management teams and practices for possible types of crises (Starbucks Crisis Communication Manual, 2011). The Starbucks manual addresses internal and external key publics, a crisis team with a media spokesperson, crisis experts, crisis emergency personnel, crisis control room, equipment and supplies, key messages, dissemination of key messages, crisis pre-information, news releases, and evaluation techniques.

Crisis and Social Media

As discussed, social media in public relations have been gaining in importance. In addition, public relations practitioners have progressively used social media with traditional mass media in crisis communication when crises occur. For example, as Choi (2012) pointed out, public relations practitioners have used social media for information dissemination in the initial stage of a crisis. He demonstrated how BP communicated through Twitter in the Gulf oil spill crisis and revealed that BP used five frames –

information, update, social responsibility, attribution of responsibility, and what can be done – and 11 keywords – response, update, latest, effort, claims, information, operation, BP CEO, picture/photo, volunteer, and shoreline – in tweets.

Fearn-Banks introduced several examples of using social media in crisis cases. First, people can use social media in cases of crises to escape and manage those situations. For example, residents used Facebook, Twitter, and Google Maps to communicate with each other and with family members and relatives far away in the California wildfires in the fall of 2009. In addition, the shooting incident at Virginia Tech University in 2007 is the representative case that Facebook is considered an effective communication tool. Second, many cases show that practitioners effectively use social media in their practice. For instance, after the emergency onboard Southwest Airlines in 2009, the airline officers scanned Twitter, Facebook, blogs, and websites to “ascertain passenger reactions.” With mostly positive commentary, practitioners used those reactions in their public relations practices. In addition, government agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Department of Health and Human Services, have used Twitter, podcasts, blogs, widgets, mobile alerts, and online videos to warn and inform about emergencies (2011).

In crisis management, social media are used in the middle of a crisis to provide stakeholders, citizens, and crisis managers and communicators with information about the crisis, especially integral, time-sensitive information, quickly (Holmes, 2011). At the same time, social media can help the practitioner remedy the distribution of misinformation quickly. In addition, Schultz, Utz, and Göritz (2011) examined the effects on reputation of different crisis communication strategies via different media. Their study

revealed that blogs showed higher effects on apology, information delivery, and sympathy, in that order. Analogous to blogs, Twitter reflected the same order in effects on tactic. The researchers pointed out that social media have risen as an important tool in communicating with the public and journalists in the practice of crisis communication strategy, and individual effects of social media on tactics are conducted differently. On the other hand, Smith (2009) claimed that media through which organizations send their messages can be categorized into controlled media, in which organizations can control the quantity and quality of messages, and uncontrolled media, which are represented by publicity and media releases. However, social media might be a cause of crisis. To be more specific, wrong or mistaken messages sent through social media such as Twitter and Facebook might be distributed immediately. For example, in June 2012, Starbucks, referring to Argentina, posted content on Twitter meaning “we apologize, as due to a temporary supply shortage, some shops are using national cups and sleeves. Salutations.” (Heim, 2012) in Spanish. Even though practitioners in Starbucks did not mean to hurt Argentina’s customers, those customers were upset with the message. Finally, Starbucks apologized on Twitter and Facebook.

Crisis Management Theories with Social Media

Researchers have employed public relations theories as well as other communication theories in crisis communication (see Table 4). Ham, Hwang, and Cameron clarified which theories have been used to research crisis communication for the 11 years from 1999 through 2009 (2011). Two major academic journals, *Public*

Relations Review and *Journal of Public Relations Research*, were researched to determine how crisis communication was studied.

Table 4. *Crisis management theories*

Theory	Frequency
1. Contingency theory	17 (13.6%)
1. Image restoration theory	17 (13.6%)
3. Excellence theory	11 (8.8%)
4. OPR (organization-public relationship)	10 (8.0%)
5. Framing	6 (4.8%)
6. CRS (crisis response strategies)	5 (4.0%)
6. SCCT (situational crisis communication theory)	5 (4.0%)
8. Stakeholder theory	4 (3.2%)
8. Legitimacy	4 (3.2%)
10. Rhetorical theory	3 (2.4%)
10. Situational theory of publics	3 (2.4%)
12. Agenda building theory	2 (1.6%)
12. Attribution theory	2 (1.6%)
12. Stealing thunder	2 (1.6%)
12. Communication response strategy	2 (1.6%)
12. Agenda setting theory	2 (1.6%)
17. Other	30 (24%)
Total	125 (100%)

These theories help researchers study how public relations practitioners establish strategies in crises and how they manage crises. In addition to the theories described in Table 4, researchers have applied many other communication theories, including framing theory (Park & Reber, 2010; Schultz et al., 2011; Barbett, 2008; Liu, 2010) and diffusion

of innovation theory (Taylor & Perri, 2005; Hong, 2007). Otherwise, research on crisis communication involved with social media has used organization-public relationships theory and SCCT.

Organization – Public Relationships Theory

The organization-public relationships theory is used to explain not only aspects of continuous relationships between organizations and their publics, but also to study public relations in crises. Organization-public relationships were developed by many researchers in the public relations arena after Ferguson argued that relationships between organizations and publics are important in 1984 (Park & Reber, 2011).

The organization-public relationships theory explains that organizations maintain more intimate relationships with their key publics, and these relationships reduce financial, emotional, and perceptual damage to the organization, as well as criticism of the organization. In addition, the relationship between organizations and key publics leads to mutual understanding and benefits (Marra, 1992; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; Kim & Lee, 2005; Park & Reber, 2011). Specifically, Kim and Lee (2005) explained that positively constructed relationships between organizations and their key publics help to rebuild organizations' reputations after crises and avoid the worst consequences.

To evaluate how relationships are described, the organization-public relationships theory seeks dimensions. Previous researchers have determined various dimensions: trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998) and anthropomorphism, professional benefits/expectations, personal

commitment, community improvement, and comparison of alternatives (Bruning & Galloway, 2003).

Recently, researchers have focused on how organization-public relations model has been followed to crisis communication. Brown and White (2011) focused on the effects on attribution of crisis responsibility, pointing out the importance of maintaining positive relationships with stakeholders. On the other hand, Park and Reber (2011) showed that “regardless of the level of relationship, the perception of the crisis cause had a significant effect on attribution of responsibility” (p. 240). These two studies reached opposite results. In addition, Park, Soh, Park, and Han (2007), after conducting a survey, suggested that the factors associated with the public’s attachment-relationship are possession, friendship, love, and kinship. Also, they argued that the friendship factor is negatively correlated with the responsibility for the crisis factor. On the other hand, Choi and Kim (2011) pointed out that publics using Twitter consider it to be a two-way communication tool, and this two-way communication facilitates the building of positive relationships between publics and organizations. On top of that, the result of their study showed that strong organization-publics relationships are positively correlated with “publics’ conflict resolution will in a conflict situation” (p. 40).

Situational Crisis Communication Theory

SCCT is “a systematic method for evaluating the reputational threat of a crisis and selecting crisis response and post-crisis response strategies designed to maximize the reputational protection of the response” (Coombs, 2009, p. 171). SCCT was developed from attribution theory in its methodology and suggests that publics perceive crisis

situations along with initial crisis responsibility, crisis history, and prior relational reputation (Coombs, 2009). He explained that the initial crisis assessment is based on responsibility level in the following crisis types: victim crises, natural disasters, rumors, workplace violence, product tampering/malevolence, accident crises, challenges, technical-error accidents, technical-error product harm, preventable crises, human-error accidents, human-error product harm, and organizational misdeeds (Coombs, 2009). Also, stakeholders assess a crisis by two factors – crisis history, which refers to whether an organization has experienced a similar crisis before, and prior relational reputation, which is how stakeholders have perceived the organization in other cases. An unfavorable prior relational reputation will have an effect on other cases in the future. Both factors demonstrate a direct and indirect effect on the reputational threat posed by the crisis (Coombs, 2004). Coombs (1995) explained that when stakeholders assess the reputation threat, they use two steps. First, they evaluate the initial crisis responsibility followed by the crisis type and, second, they evaluate the crisis history and prior relationship reputation (pp. 246-248).

Recently, many studies on social media and crisis communication have applied SCCT. Schwarz (2012) revealed that postings by publics on relevant bulletin boards showed a response of mainly complaints and blame after the Love Parade tragedy in Duisburg, Germany, in 2010. After analyzing the posts, the author pointed out that among the organizational strategies available, publics considered blaming and denying responsibility as negative in evaluating the organizational reputation. In addition, the types of media influence the effectiveness of crisis communication strategies (Lee, Seo, Nam, Hwang, & Sung, 2012). For example, a corporate blog is more useful in an

accommodative strategy than Internet news. On the other hand, Internet news is more useful in a defensive strategy than the corporate blog (p. 77). In addition, the form of crisis information, such as traditional media, social media, and word-of-mouth, and the source, including third parties and the organization, are positively related to the publics' perceptions of crisis response and emotions. Liu, Austin, and Jin (2011) developed the social-mediated crisis communication model (SMCC) through their study.

The number of studies on the use of social media in crisis communication has increased dramatically, as discussed. Some studies have shown how much and deeply public relations practitioners use social media in their practice at global and regional levels. This study seeks to describe the use of social media in crisis communication with a case study approach.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The assumption of this study is that transition in communication plans and execution including social media along with traditional media during a crisis carries the advantage of constant two-way communication with critical publics. As various social media have been used in more diverse ways in crisis management, multidirectional studies have been conducted based on various communication theories. This study describes the use of social media in crisis communication. For a specific portrayal of the phenomena, this study was conducted as a case study with the following research questions:

RQ1: What is Starbucks' crisis communication plan including social media?

RQ2: How effective is Starbucks' crisis communication plan including social media?

Even though public relations practitioners actively use social media in various practices, including crisis communication, they also use traditional mass media with social media. This research illustrates the role of social media in the public relations practices of Starbucks. Starbucks has been through many crises, which have been related to its products and not related to them. Also, as a global company, Starbucks prepares to handle specific crisis situations with a crisis communication plan. Based on this crisis communication plan, the researcher examined the details of strategies and tactics with

various media, including social media. As Starbucks is acknowledged as a representative company applying social media in its public relations and advertisement strategies, the study examined a distinct characteristic related to social media. Then, the study looked at how those communication plans were effectively executed in reality in 2012 with the specific case of cochineal.

Through various documents, including secondary interviews and Starbucks' crisis communication manual, this research details Starbucks' crisis communication plan, and then examines actual practices through social media content.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The researcher connected public relation practice using social media and the reaction from the public with a specific case of Starbucks. A case study approach is a good way to collect specific information and analyze it to reveal a specific phenomenon (Tuten, 2009). The study shows the narrative of social media's actual role in the practice of crisis communication through the experience of practitioners and reaction of the public. The paper illustrates the present stage of social media use in public relations.

Case Studies in Public Relations

A case study approach is “valuable for using several forms of data to investigate behavior, processes, and outcomes of individuals, groups, events, and organizations (Tuten, 2009). Additionally, Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 220) introduced the definition of case study from the *Dictionary of Sociology*:

Case Study. The detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena, a case study cannot provide reliable information about the broader class, but it may be useful in the preliminary stages of an investigation since it provides hypotheses, which may be tested systematically with a larger number of cases (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1984, p. 34).

In terms of the criticism that a case study cannot demonstrate evidence and measure research results as social research methodology can, Yin (2009)

explained that “the case study [is] for examining contemporary events when the relevant behaviors cannot be reasonably manipulated for scientific research.” In addition, Tuten (2009) pointed out that “a key benefit of the case study approach is the degree of context that is provided by a thorough review of relevant history and current events and people shaping the phenomenon of interest” (p. 269). Merriam (1988) “identified the four characteristics that represent the essence of case study research as the following: (1) particularistic, (2) descriptive, (3), heuristic, and (4) inductive” (Zhou & Sloan, 2009 p. 269).

General Designs and Steps of a Case Study

Yin (2008) described five components of a case study research design: (a) a study’s questions, (b) its propositions, if any, (c) its unit(s) of analysis, (d) the logic linking the data to the propositions, and (e) the criteria for interpreting findings. At first, Yin (2012) described only three steps: (a) defining a “case,” (b) selecting one of four types of case study designs, and (c) using theory in design work. When researchers select cases, they employ specific principles (Flyvbjerg, 2006). First, random selection can be used to avoid systematic biases. Both random samples and stratified samples are included in random selection. Second, in information-oriented selection, extreme/deviant cases, maximum variation cases, critical cases, and paradigmatic cases are included. After determining cases and samples, researchers gather data through observation, document analysis, historical materials, and even interviews and surveys (Tuten, 2009). The final step is analysis of collected data with credibility.

Meanwhile, Tuten (2009) more specifically explained the steps as (a) design and case selection, (b) protocol, (c) data collection, and (d) data and report based on the Yin's (1989) description. To be more specific about collecting data, researchers establish protocols. Researchers can apply a flexible approach based on the protocol (Tuten, 2009). Also researchers collect data including documents, observations, physical evidence, and interviews, and they take field notes with their perceptions and interpretations. Collected data will be reviewed to seek patterns, trends, events, comments, and so on.

Meanwhile, Zucker (2009) suggested more specific steps as “a common case study protocol that guides the researcher’s methodology” as (a) purpose and rationale for the case study, (b) design based on the unit of analysis and research purpose, (c) data collection and management techniques, (d) description of the full case, (e) focus on the analysis built on themes linked to purpose and unit of analysis, (f) analysis of findings based on the purpose, rationale, and research questions (case perspective, disciplinary perspective, cross-case comparison, write-up of the case from an emic perspective, and biography, autobiography, narratives), and (g) establishment of rigor (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability).

When researchers apply a case study approach, they select their cases based on one of these types of designs for case study. Yin introduced the figure shown in Figure 1 to describe content in his studies. As seen in Figure 1, researchers can choose their design for the case study according to single/multiple cases and single/multiple units of analysis.

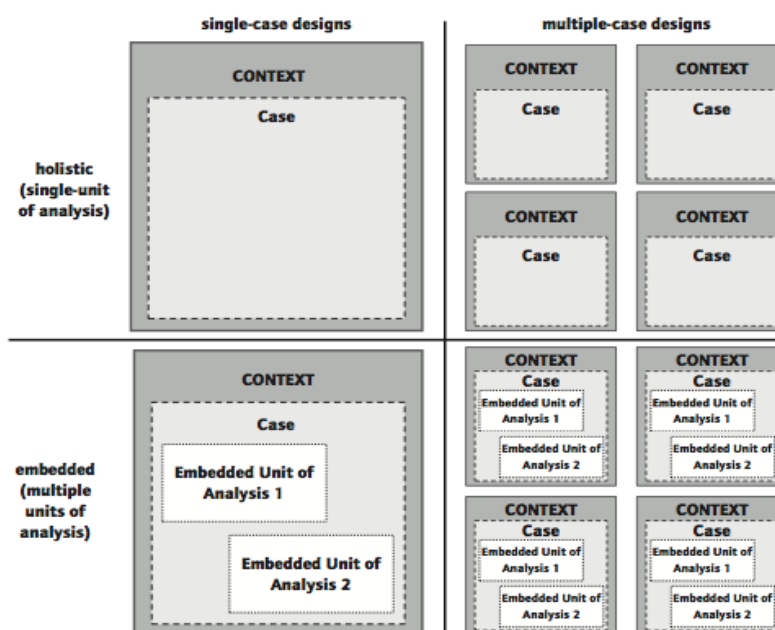


Figure 2.4 Basic Types of Designs for Case Studies
SOURCE: COSMOS Corporation.

Figure 1. Four types of designs for case study research (Yin, 2012)

Previous Research Using a Case Study in Public Relations

A case study approach has been used in many public relations studies. For example, to examine the assertion that “the propagation of the new media led to an extension of the public sphere,” Constantinescu (2012) studied news articles and international politicians’ reactions to WikiLeaks disclosures in the public sphere. A qualitative methodology for analyzing a discourse of Hillary Clinton has been used, and a frame analysis, which is “the research method used to analyze how people understand situations and activities,” has also been employed. In addition, Leeper and Leeper (2006) studied local news articles and the college newspaper of a specific university, University

of Missouri – Kansas City, which conflicted with the community about its social responsibilities, with the concept of two-way communication. Also, Len-Rios (2010) focused on Duke University’s strategy to face a scandal involving its men’s lacrosse team using image repair theory. She employed a single case study method in gathering and analyzing 54 public statements, news releases, and documents. Moreover, Moody (2011) examined the divorce case of Jon and Kate Gosselin in 2009 with image repair theory. They analyzed “personal statements, interviews and social media in row phases, the year before and the year after their divorce.” Even though both media outlets and social media followed image repair stages, social media “allow celebrities to publish information fast and efficiently without a gatekeeper.”

Starbucks and Social Media

Since Jerry Baldwin, Gordon Bowker, and Zev Siegl founded a local coffee bean roaster and retailer in 1971 in Seattle, Starbucks has been succeeding as a global business. According to Loxcel.com (www.loxcel.com, 2013), there were 20,891 Starbucks stores throughout the world as of March 2013, including 13,279 in the United States, 1,324 in Canada, 989 in Japan, 851 in China, 806 in the United Kingdom, 556 in South Korea, 337 in Mexico, 291 in Taiwan, 206 in the Philippines, and 179 in Thailand. Starbucks is well known as a global mind in corporate philosophy. For example, Starbucks locations in other countries play the same music in their locations at the same time. However, flexible promotion management and strategies have been used to launch the company’s new venues in Asian countries, including China and South Korea. For example, instead

of signs in English at all locations, it uses Korean signs in Korea. The first reason to choose Starbucks as a case in this study is that it is the organization that most actively uses social media to communicate to its current and potential customers and promote new products to them. Starbucks systematically operates various social media channels. The history of social media in Starbucks traces back to 2008. At that time, Starbucks had been struggling because of economic problems. As a turnaround plan, Starbucks announced its social media plan, which started with its blog, My Starbucks Idea.

Starbucks operates *Starbucks Gossip* (starbucks-gossip.typepad.com), *My Starbucks Idea* (mystarbucks-idea.force.com), and Starbucks blog (www.starbucks.com/blog). *Starbucks Gossip* has a typical format for blogs, which is a reverse chronological arrangement of posts and spaces for commentaries. On the other hand, in *My Starbucks Idea*, customers and employees share their ideas about products, experiences, and involvement, and the blog provides a voting tool for those ideas (see Figures 2 and 3). Based on those votes, Starbucks has actually applied some of the ideas to its products and services. Although Starbucks does not offer spaces to share opinions on its website (www.starbucks.com), it does offer links to the addresses of blogs. My Starbucks Idea is a space not only for sharing ideas with customers, but also for making official announcements. Practitioners synchronize information on blogs with social networking accounts such as Facebook and Twitter.



Figure 2. Starbucks blog, Starbucks Gossip

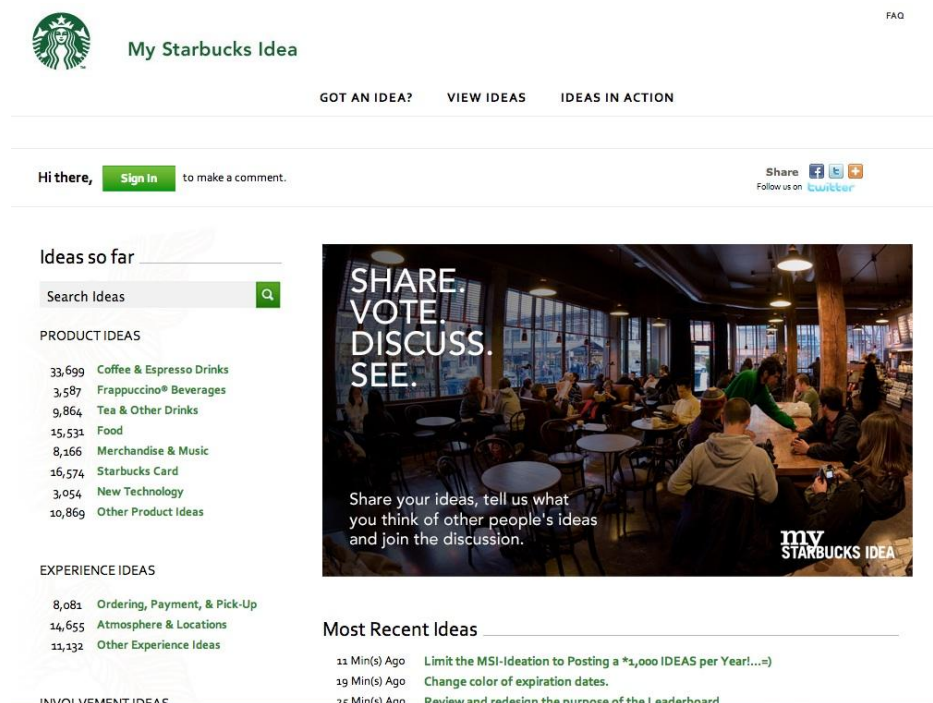


Figure 3. Starbucks blog, My Starbucks Idea

The number of fans of Starbucks' Facebook pages and followers of Starbucks' Twitter account is increasing. According to the social media statistics site, www.socialbakers.com, the number of Facebook fans of Starbucks page is 33,558,673 and the number of Twitter followers is 3,306,901. According to experts, while other companies try to manage accounts and post information many times a day, Starbucks does not care about frequency.

Starbucks runs a Twitter account (@Starbucks), which is followed by 3.6 million followers as of April 2013 (see Figure 4). Practitioners post news about new products and stories of their employees and link the content of Starbucks to other social media. As seen in Table 5, Starbucks is in fifth position in worldwide Twitter accounts. Samsung Mobile, Claro Ronaldo, iTunes Music, and NASA are ahead of Starbucks, and Whole Foods Market, Zappos.com CEO-Tony, Samsung Mobile, Disney Pixar, and Shurairi follow Starbucks.



Figure 4. Starbucks' Twitter account

Table 5. Twitter statistics

Twitter Statistics (Jan. 31, 2012, www.socialbakers.com)	
1. Samsung Mobile US (@SamsungMobileUS - 4,300,663 followers)	6. Whole Foods Market (@WholeFoods - 3,132,425 followers)
2. Claro Ronaldo (@ClaroRonaldo - 3,571,931 followers)	7. Zappos.com CEO - Tony (@zappos - 2,672,055 followers)
3. iTunes Music (@iTunesMusic - 3,523,273 followers)	8. Samsung Mobile (@SamsungMobile - 2,630,602 followers)
4. NASA (@NASA - 3,406,590 followers)	9. Disney Pixar (@DisneyPixar - 2,472,085 followers)
5. Starbucks Coffee (@Starbucks - 3,306,951 followers)	10. (@shugairi - 2,358,548 followers)

Starbucks has a Facebook account (www.facebook.com/Starbucks), which has been 'liked' 34 million times as of April 2013. Like Twitter, Starbucks' Facebook page provides promotions for products, coupons, and casual announcements of activities of

employees (see Figure 5). Starbucks is ranked fifth in the world among Facebook pages by brand, and fourth in the United States (see Tables 6 and 7).



Figure 5. Starbucks' Facebook account

Table 6. Facebook statistics - Brand

Facebook Statistics – brand (Jan.31, 2012, www.socialbakers.com) http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-pages/brands/	
1. Coca-Cola (58,493,197 fans)	6. Oreo (31,505,421 fans)
2. Disney (41,605,844 fans)	7. PlayStation (29,421,123 fans)
3. Red Bull (35,614,481 fans)	8. McDonald's (27,106,557 fans)
4. Converse (34,833,824 fans)	9. Walmart (26,265,765 fans)
5. Starbucks (33,558,673 fans)	10. iTunes (24,965,322 fans)

Table 7. Facebook statistics - Brands in the United States

Facebook Statistics – Brand in the United States (Jan.31,2012, www.socialbakers.com)
1. Walmart (24,652,852 fans)
2. Target (20,654,930 fans)
3. Samsung Mobile USA (16,225,491 fans)
4. Starbucks (15,729,569 fans)
5. Amazon.com (15,504,497 fans)

Crisis Management Plan for Starbucks

The second reason for choosing Starbucks as the subject of the case study is that the company has experienced several crises, such as those surrounding tax avoidance and gun control. Among those controversies, this paper focuses on the controversy surrounding an additive, cochineal, in 2012. Starbucks sells mainly various coffee drinks and food so controversy over ingredients presents a more serious and sensitive problem than other controversies. There were many opinions about the cochineal controversy.

Although Starbucks is well known as a representative corporation using social media, social media are not always good for communication. Sometimes, social media can cause small or big crises for organizations and Starbucks is no exception. For example, in Argentina in 2012, Starbucks apologized for a temporary supply shortage to Argentina's customers. Starbucks' tweet said that it would use a non-branded supply made in Argentina. The tweet generated anger in Argentina's customers, so Starbucks had to apologize. This kind of small crisis created through social media has occurred in all organizations.

Meanwhile, Starbucks, as the representative organization, is not afraid to face sensitive social issues. It has been involved on social issues such as same-sex marriage and gun control using social media, while other corporations have avoided expressing clear opinions on sensitive issues that are not directly related to their business. Starbucks not only vocalizes its own opinions but also opens up space to hear voices from its publics through social media. The controversy around same-sex marriage in 2012 and gun policy in 2010 are examples of Starbucks' attitude when facing controversy.

Cochineal Case

Even though the crises discussed above were not directly handled or managed with social media, the cochineal situation from March 2012 provides a good example. With the general crisis management plan of Starbucks, the study employs a specific example of crisis cases around Starbucks. Among various external and internal crises surrounding Starbucks, the study examines the cochineal case of 2012 because the case occurred recently and shows the use of social media better than other cases. To be more specific, in late March 2012, a vegan barista working for Starbucks offered a vegetarian blog, called www.ThisDishIsVegetarian.com information that in some Starbucks beverages including strawberry frappuccinos contain cochineal extract, which is made from the bodies of ground-up insects in Latin America. This information brought criticism from a vegetarian group through Twitter and blogs (Chicago Sun-Times, 2012). Therefore, on March 29, Starbucks posted an announcement to explain that cochineal is a natural ingredient with no health risk and is approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), as seen in Figure 6.

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Follow us on [Twitter](#)

- Under Review
- Reviewed
- Coming Soon
- Launched

Ideas so far

PRODUCT IDEAS

- 190 Coffee & Espresso Drinks
- 39 Tea & Other Drinks
- 84 Food
- 81 Merchandise & Music
- 86 Starbucks Card
- 22 Other Product Ideas

EXPERIENCE IDEAS

- 49 Ordering or Payment & Pick-Up
- 51 Atmosphere & Locations
- 14 Our Partners (Employees)
- 104 Other Experience Ideas

INVOLVEMENT IDEAS

Update Regarding Cochineal Extract

Mar 29, 2012
by Cliff Burrows

Dear Customers,

As a company, we always strive to exceed your expectations, and we take your feedback very seriously. Based on recent feedback, we learned that we fell short of these expectations by using cochineal extract. This commonly used ingredient is a natural, FDA-approved colorant found in a wide variety of food and beverage products in the U.S.

We use the extract in the strawberry base for our Strawberries and Crème Frappuccino, Strawberry Smoothies and three food items – the Birthday Cake Pop, Mini Donut with pink icing, and Red Velvet Whoopie Pie. While it is a safe product that poses no health risk, we are reviewing alternative natural ingredients.

Your feedback is very important to us and we encourage you to share your thoughts with us here.

Cliff Burrows
president, Starbucks U.S.

UPDATE: Thank you for all of your feedback and points of view on this topic. As I mentioned last week, we are looking at alternative natural ingredients and looking at how we will reformulate. Please continue the dialog, as we greatly value your feedback. We will keep you posted on our progress.

26 comments [Other Experience Ideas](#)

Figure 6. Update regarding cochineal extract

Even though Cliff Burrows explained that Starbucks would change its ingredients with others, signatures from more than 6,500 people galvanized by vegetarians were collected and mass media encouraged this progress. In addition, tweets about this case continued buzzing. Finally, an announcement posted on its blog, My Starbucks Idea, on April 19 said that Starbucks would replace the cochineal extract with a tomato extract, as shown in Figure 7.

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Ideas so far

search

PRODUCT IDEAS

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- 104 [Other Experience Ideas](#)

INVOLVEMENT IDEAS

Cochineal Extract Update

Apr 19, 2012
by [Cliff Burrows](#)

 RSS

As I first shared on [March 29](#), we've learned that we fell short of your expectations by using natural cochineal extract as a colorant in four food and two beverage offerings in the United States. Our commitment to you, our customers, is to serve the highest quality products available. As our customers you expect and deserve better – and we promise to do better.

After a thorough, yet fastidious, evaluation, I am pleased to report that we are reformulating the affected products to assure the highest quality possible. Our expectation is to be fully transitioned to lycopene, a natural, tomato-based extract, in the strawberry sauce (base) used in our Strawberries & Crème Frappuccino® blended beverage and Strawberry Banana Smoothie. Likewise, we are transitioning away from the use of cochineal extract in our food offerings which currently contain it (Raspberry Swirl Cake, Birthday Cake Pop, Mini Donut with pink icing, and Red Velvet Whoopie Pie).

This transition will occur over time as we finalize revisions and manage production. Our intention is to be fully transitioned from existing product inventories to revised food and beverage offerings near the end of June across the U.S.

We thank you for your continued feedback, support and comments, and we encourage you to continue to share your thoughts here as well.

Best regards,

Cliff Burrows
president, Starbucks U.S.

45 comments Other Product Ideas

Figure 7. Cochineal extract update

Gathering Information and Analyzing

As a case analysis, this study is qualitative in nature. This research collected all available materials from various channels, including Nexis-Lexis, Google search engine, and official statements made by Starbucks (see Table x). Generally, six categories of sources are used in gathering information (Yin, 2012): (a) direct observations (e.g., human actions or a physical environment), (b) interviews (e.g., open-ended conversations with key participants), (c) archival records (e.g., student records), (d) documents (e.g., newspaper articles, letters and emails, reports), (e) participant-observation (e.g., being identified as a researcher but also filling a real-life role in the scene being studied), and (f) physical artifacts (e.g., computer downloads of employees' work).

This study was conducted with secondary interviews with public relations practitioners from Starbucks to describe the crisis communication plan. Also, news articles and social media posts were used to support the interviews and examine whether crisis communication was well executed or not.

Table 8. *Sources for the study*

Sources	Description
Secondary Interviews	Interviews with PR practitioners from Starbucks about social media and crisis communication.
News Articles	Television news and newspaper articles form Nexis-Lexis.
Social Media Posts by Starbucks	Tracking of tweets and Facebook posts by Starbucks practitioners with web posting on blogs. Examination of relationship between social media posts and news releases for traditional media.
Reactions from the Public on Social Media	- Tracking of tweet and Facebook post feedback by the public during the case using keywords related to the case and Starbucks. - www.backtweets.com , www.twitter.com/search-advanced , www.topsy.com

Secondary Interviews and Manual for Crisis Communication Plan

To examine the crisis communication plan including how social media added to traditional mass media, the study collected and analyzed secondary interviews by public relations practitioners from Starbucks and the manual for crisis communication. The interviews analyzed in this study include the following:

- 1) Alexandra Wheeler, Digital Director, Starbucks – Social Media Influence 2010, London, UK, from `<iframe src="http://blip.tv/play/AYHtkzMC.html?p=1" width="550"`

height="443" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe><embed type="application/x-shockwave-flash" src="http://a.blip.tv/api.swf#AYHtkzMC" style="display:none"></embed>

2) Deb Trevino, Director of Corporate Communication at Starbucks from

<http://buprssa.com/tag/crisis-communication/>

3) Chris Bruzzo, Starbucks Vice President – Brand Content and Online, Starbucks gets its business brewing again with social media, from

<http://vandymkting.typepad.com/files/2010-2-22-advertising-age-starbuks-gets-its-business-brewing-again-with-social-media.pdf>

Based on these interviews, the researcher developed several questions to connect to research question 1 and 2: First, what were the target audiences and publics of Starbucks' social media strategies fit together? Second, how were the strategies using social media established in Starbucks? Third, what are the specific strategies using social media in crisis communication?

Tracking of Twitter, Facebook, and Blogs

To support examination of the crisis communication plan including social media in Starbucks, the study collected related tweets and Facebook postings. The researcher used the following search terms based on frequency in tweets: (a) Starbucks and cochineal, (b) Starbucks and bug, and (c) Starbucks and beetle. As a result, 143 related tweets were collected. For Facebook, the researcher analyzed the comments on the Facebook posting on Starbucks Facebook accounts because Facebook has a closed

characteristic, so only people who “like” the Starbucks page can observe and leave comments.

News Release

This study collected news articles about Starbucks’ cochineal case to examine the public relations new release of Starbucks and news articles by journalists. The study used LexisNexis Academic’s new archive to collect and analyze news articles about the cochineal extract used by Starbucks. The duration of searching was from March 26, 2012, through April 23, 2013, and the search used the following key terms: (a) Starbucks and cochineal, (b) Starbucks and bug, and (c) Starbucks and beetle, the same as with the social media search. As a result of searching, the media articles totaled 98, including newspapers (41), blogs (27), newswires and press releases (12), web-based publications (11), newsletters (4), news transcripts (3), legal news (1), and magazines and journals (1).

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Crisis Communication Plan of Starbucks

Starbucks has a crisis communication plan and has simulated expected situations based on that plan. In general, it appears that the use of Starbucks' crisis communication in social media is higher than in other organizations. To be more specific, in its crisis communication manual, Starbucks indicates two categories of media channels (see Table 9). Social media include popular social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs. The interesting thing is that the Starbucks crisis communication team categorized the Starbucks corporate website and e-mail into mass media. Emails and websites have generally been categorized as new media in other research, but the central position of social media in Starbucks's communication implies a new atmosphere in the public relations arena.

Table 9. *Two categories of media channels of Starbucks (Manual)*

Social Media	Mass Media
Facebook	Starbucks Corporation's Website
Twitter	Email
YouTube	Newspaper
Blogs	Television

Also, Starbucks' crisis communication manual provides a list of key publics. According to the manual, Starbucks employs two categories: internal key publics and external key publics (see Table 10). Internal key publics indicate executives and employees, including corporate suppliers to Starbucks, and external key publics indicate news media outlets, competing companies, and government agencies. As implied, public relations practitioners directly treat and manage social media, unlike traditional mass media.

Table 10. *Key publics of Starbucks (Manual)*

Internal Key Publics	External Key Publics
Starbucks Corporation CEO and CFO	Major National News Stations
Corporate Starbucks Employees	- ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox News, CNN, MSNBC
-Human Resources	Major National Newspapers
-Public Relations	- New York Times, USA Today, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post
Store Managers	Customers
-Store Employees	Competing Coffee Chains
Starbucks Corporate Suppliers	-Dunkin Donuts, Caribou Coffee
	Major Food, Health, and Safety Organizations
	-World Health Organization, Food and Agricultural Organization, United States Department of Agriculture

The crisis communication manual recommends five interview tips for spokespersons:

1. Do not attempt to cover up anything; cover-ups just make the crisis persist.
2. If you have the information that the public needs to know, share that information with them. It is better that they hear this information from you first rather than from someone else.
3. If you do not necessarily have all of the information at the given time, let the media know that. Then, tell them that you are working to get the rest of the information regarding the situation.
4. Avoid use of the phrase “no comment.” This can backfire, as it makes it look as if you are hiding something negative.
5. Ultimately, remember that *nothing* is off the record. Even if the interview is technically over, anything that you say can be used in the media and some tricky questions can be expected (Starbucks’s crisis communication manual, 2011).

Statistics of News Articles

Before the analysis of news articles and social media reactions, the data were coded by two coders. The coders achieved 95% reliability, so the study obtained validity in analysis. The study shows simple statistics about news articles, Twitter, and Facebook, and it describes the relationships and roles of social media through the statistics. First, the researcher analyzed how many news articles used social media for their content. As discussed in the methodology chapter, Starbucks announced its official position on its blog, My Starbucks Idea, twice, on March 29 and April 19. Even though there was no significant finding about the announcement on March 29, the second one on April 19 had

significant meaning. Table x shows that traditional news articles considered the announcement on the blog as an official attitude of Starbucks and cited it in their articles.

Table 11. *Analysis of news articles (N=98)*

	Articles	Number of Articles Citing the Blog Posting	Number of Articles Citing Spokespersons
Before Update on April 19	27 (27.55 %)	4 (8.89%)	11 (91.67%)
After Update on April 19	71 (72.45 %)	41 (91.11%)	1 (8.33%)
Total	98 (100 %)	45 (100%)	12 (100%)

Out of total 98 articles, 45 of news articles (45.91%) cited announcements by Starbucks on its blogs. This indicates that public relations practitioners used social media as an official announcement tool instead of a news release for traditional mass media. Although media management including traditional mass media is still important for organizations, organizations now have more options to publicize their opinions and news, especially in time-sensitive cases.

Statements on blogs were used as official Starbucks statements along with the statement by chief executive officer (CEO) Howard Schuliz in traditional mass media (CBS This Morning) on April 3. News articles considered updates on the blog as official statements from Starbucks and cited them in their articles. In other words, Starbucks had options other than traditional media for releasing its statement based on its use of social media (a blog).

Statistics and Description of Twitter

To observe reactions on Twitter, the study analyzed tweets for the same duration as the analysis of news articles, using the same search terms. As a result, the researcher collected 143 tweets related to the cochineal case. The number of positive tweets was 13 (xx.xx%) and the number of neutral tweets was 70 (48.95%). On the other hand, the number of negative tweets was 60 (41.96%). This suggests that the reaction of publics using tweets is more objective than Facebook. While reactions on Facebook postings about the cochineal were more supportive to Starbucks' decision and attitude, Twitter users post negative and neutral observations various news articles. It means public relations practitioners need to approach in using social media, which have different characteristics, in different ways. Twitter showed that general publics express more negative reactions comparing to the comments on Facebook postings by Starbucks. Specific reactions on Twitter are detailed in Table 12 and Figures 8 through 13.

Table 12. *Attitudes on tweets (N=143)*

	Number of Tweets	Percentage
Positive	13	9.09%
Neutral	70	48.95%
Negative	60	41.96%
Total	143	100%

Almost half of tweets delivered the news about the cochineal case with only neutral expressions and no additional comments on the news. Even on positive tweets, general publics did not show progressive supports on the position of Starbucks. Rather than, they showed the reactions to welcome the decision not to use cochineal any more.

In addition, Starbucks' public relations practitioners did not tweet additional mentions or reactions to the general publics' tweets. The practitioners only linked the announcements on the blog twice on March 29 and April 19.



Figure 8. Neutral attitude by media



Figure 9. Neutral attitude by publics




<p>CBS2ThisMorning @CBS2ThisMorning 28 Mar 12 Ewww! Starbucks Strawberry Frappuccinos dyed with crushed up cochineal bugs, report says: cbsn.ws/GU0tHW Expand Reply Retweet Favorite More</p> <p>Starbucks using crushed up bugs to dye pink drinks By HealthPop @HealthPopCBS</p> <p>Starbucks reportedly told vegetarian website that cochineal extract is used instead of artificial dyes</p> <p>CBS News @CBSNews · Follow</p> 	<p>Los Angeles Times @latimes 19 Apr 12 "Venti frappe -- hold the bug extract, please." Starbucks abandons crushed-bug dye in frappes and pastries lat.ms/ISCsac Followed by Tina McCorkindale and 1 other Expand</p> <p>Starbucks nixes crushed-bug dye in frappes and pastries</p> <p>Your Strawberries & Creme frappuccino will no longer feature a splash of bug -- enough customers didn't want to slurp crushed cochineal insects that Starbucks Corp. is ditching the red dye used in...</p> <p>Los Angeles Times @latimes · Follow</p> 
<p>TIME.com @TIME 28 Mar 12 Starbucks puts bugs in your frappuccino t.me/GZa6Kv (via @TIMENewsFeed) Retweeted 270 times Expand</p> <p>Bugging Out: Vegetarians Upset With Starbucks' Use of Beetle Extract</p> <p>In an effort to avoid artificial additives in its drinks, Starbucks got vegetarians peeved by using a new ingredient in its strawberry products, ABC News reports. That ingredient? Extract from drier...</p> <p>TIME.com @TIME · Follow</p> 	<p>NPR News @nprnews 30 Mar 12 Is That A Crushed Bug In Your Frothy Starbucks Drink? n.pr/HA2ZV1 Followed by Waly Cardona and 2 others Expand</p> <p>Is That A Crushed Bug In Your Frothy Starbucks Drink? : NPR</p> <p>Cochineal is a red dye made from a crushed insect native to Latin America. Some vegetarians are distressed that Starbucks uses the dye in some of its pink-colored food and beverages.</p> <p>NPR News @nprnews · Follow</p>

Figure 10. Negative attitude by media

<p>Alan Eyzewide @AlanEyzewide 27 Mar 12 Ewww RT @CBSNews: Starbucks Strawberry Frappuccinos dyed with crushed up cochineal bugs, report says: cbsn.ws/GU0tHW View summary</p>	<p>Sharia Wiser @sfwiser 28 Mar 12 Whaaaaat???? Starbucks Beetle Extract: Chain Under Fire Over Insect Ingredient In Frappuccinos huff.to/HhnOHS via @HuffingtonPost View summary</p>
<p>Elizabeth Harding @ehardingnyc 27 Mar 12 Regular coffee for me, pls! Starbucks Strawberry Frappuccinos dyed with crushed up cochineal bugs cbsnews.com/8301-504763_16... via @CBSNews View summary</p>	<p>Lori Geishecker @lorigeishecker 27 Mar 12 Yick. RT @patriciasmiley: Yuck! RT @ChiBarb: Starbucks Strawberry Frappuccinos dyed w/crushed up cochineal bugs tinyurl.com/bt5545f #tbrs View summary</p>

Figure 11. Negative attitude by publics




<p>L.A. Times Health @latimeshealth 20 Apr 12 Cochineal and Starbucks: Actually, this dye is everywhere lat.ms/HOYqGN Expand</p> <p>Cochineal and Starbucks: Actually, this dye is everywhere</p> <p>Starbucks has declared that it will no longer use cochineal extract, an insect-derived red coloring, in its wares. If anyone is imagining that the use of this dye is rare or new, they're wrong...</p> <p>Los Angeles Times @latimes · Follow</p>	<p>CNNMoney.com @CNNMoney 19 Apr 12 Good news if you drink strawberry frappuccinos - Starbucks to phase out bug extract as food dye: cnnmon.ie/lXsF17 \$SBX Expand</p> <p>Starbucks to phase out bug extract as food dye</p> <p>Want some crushed bugs with your Starbucks frappuccino? Well, you'd better get on it, because soon it will be too late. The coffee franchise announced that it's phasing out the use of insects as food...</p> <p>CNNMoney.com @CNNMoney · Follow</p> 
<p>New York Daily News @nydailynews 19 Apr 12 Good news! Starbucks will stop using 'crushed bug' dye in drinks, pastries nydn.us/HWZIZI Expand</p> <p>Starbucks to stop using 'crushed bug' dye in strawberry drinks, red...</p> <p>Starbucks Corp. says it will stop using a red dye in its drinks that is derived from crushed bugs. The Seattle-based coffee chain said in a blog post on its website Thursday that it made the decision...</p> <p>New York Daily News @nydailynews · Follow</p> 	<p>Super Vancouver @supervancouver 18 Apr 12 Thankfully Starbucks is ditching bug dye from its Strawberry Frappuccinos. Yes, bugs ow.ly/am0YC Expand</p> <p>Is Starbucks ditching bug dye from its Strawberry Frappuccinos? By HealthPop @HealthPopCBS</p> <p>Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz told CBS This Morning the company is seeking alternatives for controversial cochineal extract</p> <p>CBS News @CBSNews · Follow</p> 

Figure 12. Positive attitude by media



Figure 13. Positive attitude by publics

Description of Facebook Postings



Figure 14. Facebook posting about the update

As discussed in the literature review, unlike Twitter, Facebook tends to display friendlier characteristics as a social networking medium. “Friends” of Starbucks revealed mainly supportive attitudes on this site. Starbucks used its blog to announce the decision on Facebook, and 5,370 people welcomed this decision by “liking” it. With the large number of 5,370 “likes,” users left 836 comments. Mostly comments reflected a positive

attitude about the cochineal extract and Starbucks' decision not to use cochineal anymore even though it is not harmful to health. Facebook friends of Starbucks commented as follows:

1) By Liana McMaugh

I don't get the big deal about using cochineal extract. It's not poisonous or unsanitary. Would you rather have some synthetic chemical in your body or something that came from nature? I'd prefer something natural, even if it's from bugs.

2) By Marlowe Anker

Cochineal is used in meat, sausages, processed poultry products (meat products cannot be coloured in the United States unless they are labeled as such), surimi, marinades, alcoholic drinks, bakery products and toppings, coolies, desserts, icings, pie fillings, jams, preserves, gelatin desserts, juice beverages, varieties of cheddar cheese and other dairy products, sauces, and sweets. So people quit complaining.

3) By Melissa Nicole Marchetti

How pathetic these overly dramatic people who waste so much time and energy whining and protesting about things they do not understand when there is war, genocide, disease, starvation all over the world. This is why other countries point and laugh at America's stupidity while you sit around complaining there is an insignificant amount of bug extract

in your \$7 beverage. Find something a little more substantial to be passionate about, you pathetic whiny brats.

4) By Meghan Ulrich

I think the bug idea was great! Thanks for not using artificial coloring, I still order it knowing about the bugs!!!

5) By Bryan Foster

Cochineal extract comes from bugs, in other words it is natural and not artificial. So, why are some of you complaining about it being artificial?

As seen, people who commented on the Facebook posting by Starbucks were a kind of “Fans” of Starbucks’ Facebook page, so they showed more supports on the decision that Starbucks would not use cochineal any more. Further, some people showed more progressive reactions that were on the side of Starbucks and against people who complained on using cochineal.

In addition, like the Starbucks Twitter account, the Starbucks Facebook account synchronized with other social media content of Starbucks (see Figures 15 and 16). To be more specific, Starbucks posted on Facebook only two times regarding the cochineal case; both linked to its statement on the blog. Also Starbucks’ public relations practitioners did not show any reactions on Facebook page about the cochineal case. They just provide the space to sharing opinions for people who “like” Starbucks page.



Figure 15. Synchronizing of content on Twitter and the blog 1



Figure 16. Synchronizing of content on Twitter and the blog 2

Examination of Research Questions

The first research question of this study is that Starbucks public relations practitioners understand the importance of social media in their crisis communication plan, and social media in the crisis communication of Starbucks play specific roles different from those of traditional mass media. Based on the findings described in the previous chapter, the two research questions are examined. First, in many interviews, public relations practitioners of Starbucks have expressed that Starbucks focused its media management on social media after 2008. Actually, the Starbucks' public relations practitioners considered social media as equivalent as traditional mass media in their crisis communication manual book. Social media in public relations of Starbucks including crisis communication are essential communication tools. Although the study examined different roles of different social media tools, practitioners recognized various social media help maintain the relationships with publics. Specifically, in the cochineal case, practitioners quickly make their announcement on the blog after gaining negative reactions on Twitter, and distributed the announcement linking various social media tools

including Twitter, Facebook, and blogs at the same time. Second, social media management of Starbucks is successful with specific roles in crisis situations. When the researcher observed the cochineal case, the role of social media was that of an analytic tool for public relations practitioners, an official statement tool of Starbucks after updating of blog postings, and a supportive tool of Starbucks' attitude. To be more specific, Starbucks reacted on tweets, which dealt with the cochineal case, and announced further decision to shrink the negative atmosphere around social media quickly. Even though Starbucks' public relations practitioners did not posted additional statements and comments on those postings on Facebook and blogs, they communicate observed direct reactions by general and key publics about the case through social media.

VI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to describe the current role of social media in crisis communication through the actual case of Starbucks. Based on the assumption that using social media in public relations, especially in crisis communication, is important, the research questions were these: (RQ1) How does Starbucks' crisis communication plan include social media and (RQ2) How effective is Starbucks' crisis communication plan using social media? The researcher asked why social media have emerged in the limelight in public relations, and what strength social media have in the execution of public relations and crisis communication. The study was conducted to formulate a specific description of the role of social media in crisis communication using the specific case of Starbucks. First, even though the role of social media is important in general public relations practices, the study established an academic approach to the role of social media in the execution of crisis communication. In the literature review, various theoretical approaches and qualitative studies on usage of social media in the public relations arena were reviewed. In addition, the study chose Starbucks from among many organizations as a case study for the use of social media. The reason is that Starbucks is a pacesetter organization that has actively used social media to attract not only existing customers but also potential customers since 2008. The researcher formulated hypotheses suggesting that use of social media by Starbucks public relations practitioners will help in the execution of crisis communication strategies by employing an analytic tool to assess

reactions by publics in addition to an official statement tool instead of news releases for traditional news media. The study was conducted to examine the specific crisis cochineal case in March-April 2012.

In addition, social media can be used as a tool for publics using social media to communicate with the organization. Specifically, Facebook users called “friends” expressed more supportive reactions to Starbucks’ decision about the cochineal extract. They expressed a belief that Starbucks had been making acceptable decisions, and they blamed vegetarians for the attacks against Starbucks. This reflects the strong and positive relationships between Starbucks and publics, as public relations practitioners from Starbucks insisted was the case in many interviews.

The second role of social media in Starbucks’ crisis communication is as an analytical tool to search the reactions of publics during the crisis. As many researchers have suggested, immediate reactions from publics using social media such as Twitter help public relations practitioners assess the general publics’ reaction.

The final role of social media in crisis communication is as an alternative tool for official announcements, instead of the appearance of spokespersons on traditional mass media. As seen in the analysis of news articles, traditional news outlets cited the update on Starbucks’ blog as an alternative official news release. This suggests that social media are playing a central role in the crisis communication practices of Starbucks.

Starbucks is the one of most successful organization to use social media in maintaining its reputation. Starbucks not only promotes its brand-new products, but also Starbucks utilize various social media in crisis communication as well as general public relations practices. As many other cases showed, utilization of social media sometimes

might a cause of crisis. For example, the cochineal case, which this study analyzed, is also started in one of social media, the blog running by vegetarians. The news about usage of cochineal was distributed in online through social media, specially Twitter. Starbucks could respond on the buzz around Twitter to announce the update on its blog faster than mass media. In terms of Facebook, this study revealed that the continuous positive relationships between Starbucks and its key public, who already involved Starbucks' public relations through Facebook activities, are helpful to gaining supports in decisions and practices of Starbucks more positively.

In conclusion, the study revealed the role of social media in crisis communication of Starbucks through the specific case. The public relations practitioners considered social media as fundamental communication tools as well as mass media. Especially, the practitioners analyzed the reactions from general public on tweets, and they used the blog to announce the official decision instead of news release. In addition, building positive and friendly relationships using various social media help for public relations practitioners to executive crisis communication leading supportive reactions.

VII. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

To conduct this study, there are several limitations. First of all, in gathering various materials to analyze the case, the researcher faced some technical problems. To be more specific, the study used only Starbucks' Facebook page, and did not consider searching other Facebook postings dealing with the cochineal case of Starbucks. Even though, the researcher revealed the supportive reactions by key publics of Starbucks, the study remain the limitation that it did not show the reactions from general publics using Facebook. Second, the study searched on tweets used key terms like Starbucks, cochineal, bug, and beetle, and it gained 143 tweets containing those key terms and involved in the cochineal case. However, there was limitation related with time issue that the case was more than one year before the study so some of tweets were deleted and some tweets used hash tag were not be searched in the time of study. In addition, there was a limitation to gaining materials involved in crisis communication plans of Starbucks. There are several interviews contained the content about public relations practices of Starbucks using social media, but a few materials about crisis communication plan.

Finally, the researcher expects there would be further and advanced researchers on social media in crisis communication. There are many other organizations to utilize various social media in different ways. As developing various social media tools lately, organizations find out proper social media on their purpose, and actively utilize them. Therefore, specific organizations to utilize various social media tools will be another

good subject to observe. This research used blogs, Facebook, and Twitter to observe the crisis communication of Starbucks as a global brand. Various sizes of organizations running in nationwide and small communities might be valuable to observe their usage of social media to communication with publics. This study used a case study to show specific execution of Starbucks, and quantitative methods also might give different sights to public relations practitioners.

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