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Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications

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The current issue is the second of the eighth volume of the *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications (AJMMC)*, published by the [Mass Media & Communication Unit](#) of ATINER.

Gregory T. Papanikos
President
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Predatory Publications in the Era of the Internet and Technology: Open Access Publications are at Risk

By Akhilesh Kumar^{}, Ravi Gupta⁺, Krishna Kant Tripathi⁺ & Rajani Ranjan Singh[‡]*

This article is intended to highlight the issue of predatory journals and how they have been used to degrade the open-access journals to be perceived as predatory ones. Since many of the predatory journals are available for readers free of cost over the internet (which is among one of the many features of open-access journals/publications), the international wave of the scientific community against predatory journals stigmatized and victimized the entire open-access model of scientific publication to be perceived as substandard quality. This article critically analyzes the definitions of predatory journals and identified key characteristics of predatory journals. It is observed that lack of peer-review and charging high Article Processing Charges (APC) from authors are the two most common features of predatory journals, whereas open-access journals strictly adhere to peer-review criteria and have a clear guideline and information about the article processing fee. Knowingly or unknowingly, several authors mentioned that predatory journals are mostly open access, an overgeneralization of the author pay model upon which open access lies. Peer-review is an essential component of open access journals but not predatory journals; thus, considering predatory journals under the broad notion of open-access model of publication is unfair, stigmatizing and victimizing the open-access journals and keeping them at risk of degradation. Associating open-access journals with predatory ones is a nuisance as both have different aims, modus-operandi, and quality concerns. Therefore, there is a dire need to make policies to discourage predatory practices without victimizing the noble idea of open-access journals/publications.

Keywords: open access, predatory journals, article processing charges, peer-review

Introduction

Nowadays, the fascinating, relatively uncommon term “predatory publication” or “predatory journal” has become very popular among researchers across the globe. It seems it has been a big concern in research for researchers from each and every corner of the world, and surprisingly, has no universally accepted definition as yet. Predatory publications or predatory journals is an eerie term with no clear

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defining and identifying features. It is also not clear what are the core features of a predatory journal so that it could be distinguished from a so-called legitimate journal. Discussions are ongoing on the issue of predatory journals, and as a result, the open access initiative is under question as many researchers equated these predatory journals with open-access journals just because so-called predatory journals are available over the internet free of cost for viewers and readers, like open-access journals. The objective of the present paper is to analyze the defining features of predatory journals critically and to critically examine the issue of predatory journals in the context of the open access movement. The article sheds light on how the misinterpretation of the term predatory journals has defamed open-access journals by giving prominence to so-called non-open access or the pay & access, model of the traditional journal publishing industry.

The Internet and the development of tools of information and communication technology has made it easy to share, publish, archive, and preserve the science and scientific knowledge in an easy, cost-effective way, and further, it has made scientific communication faster and easier than earlier when publications were based mainly in print media. The emergence of digitization and the internet increased the possibility of making information available to anyone, anywhere, anytime, and in any format (Swan, 2012), and as a result, the online version of a journal gradually became very popular. The open-access publication initiative is relatively young which is based on the fundamental criteria of 3F: Freedom, Flexibility & Fairness (Swan, 2012). Its formal roots can be traced back to the beginning of the twenty-first century, which officially started in 2002 with Budapest joining in the open access initiative (Pamukcu Gunaydin and Dogan, 2015). Before moving forward to predatory journals, an overview of open access is of great worth. As noted in the policy document of UNESCO, open access is the provision of free access to peer-reviewed, scholarly, and research information to all (Swan, 2012). The policy definition of an open access publication must be freely available to all and the published content must be peer-reviewed, only then it could be considered as an open-access journal. Open accessibility and peer-review are two defining features of an open-access journal, and failing any one of which excludes an article/journal/publication to be considered as an open-access journal.

The definition of open access given by the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) is the central idea behind open access which explains:

“The public good they make possible is the worldwide electronic distribution of the peer-reviewed journal literature and completely free and unrestricted access to it by all scientists, scholars, teachers, students, and other curious minds. Removing access barriers to this literature will accelerate research, enrich education, share the learning of the rich with the poor and the poor with the rich, make this literature as useful as it can be, and lay the foundation for uniting humanity in a common intellectual conversation and quest for knowledge” (BOAI, 2002).

It is vital here to note that mere accessibility to everyone free of cost does not confirm an article/journal/publication to be called open access, rather, additionally it needs to be peer-reviewed too. Further, the open access agenda has widened its

scope by generalizing it as Open Educational Resources (OER), Open Science, Open Innovation, and Open Data (Swan, 2012).

The open-access initiative was based on the noble idea of lifelong learning and making available scientific information to all without any restrictions (Swan, 2012) and without compromising the most important criteria of a scientific publication peer review. But, since last decade, it has been widely stigmatized and victimized by over-generalizing the concept of predatory journals to most of the open access content. As noted by Bartholomew (2014),

“While the dream of open access journals is a noble concept that was supposed to herald a revolution in scholarly publishing by making research freely accessible to anyone online, it has quickly turned into a quagmire” (Bartholomew, 2014).

Here the question arises how, when and why stigmatization and victimization of open-access articles/journals/publications took place. This stigmatization could be traced back to the very first incident found in the writings of Beall in 2010 when he prepared a list of several journals which were not following the said criteria of ‘peer-review’ and as felt by him, publishing sub-standard content. The librarian Jeffrey Beall at the University of Colorado-Denver first used the term predatory journals and published a list of so-called predatory journals (Beall, 2017b; Cartwright, 2016; Clark and Smith, 2015; Clemons et al., 2017; Manca et al., 2018; Masten and Ashcraft, 2016; Narimani and Dadkhah, 2017; Shamseer et al., 2017; Shyam, 2015; Xia, 2015). Beall outlined the mystery associated with open-access journals and the derailment of the peer-review process due to profit-driven publishers (Cook, 2017). After Beall’s list of predatory journals, a big debate started in the scientific community on definition, features and the drawbacks of predatory journals and a wave started against journals publishing substandard or low-quality content, termed as predatory journals, which stigmatized entire groups of open-access journals. Most of the so-called predatory journals, as discussed in many contemporary scientific publications, were available for readers and viewers free of cost that were considered as open access by misinterpreting the single common feature of free availability as open access, ignoring the second most important feature of open-access articles/journals/publications which is peer-review. As a measure of quality and standard, internationally, a wave against predatory journals began based on an unclear and poorly defined term, predatory journals, which in turn made much maltreatment to the open-access articles/journals/publications due to misconception about the term open access, and many a time, was used synonymously to the predatory one. Few researchers supporting Beall presented that the open access is the root cause of development of predatory publications. For example, predatory journals were termed by Duc et al. (2020) as:

“A corrupt form of the open access model has also emerged in the form of predatory journals, which encourage authors to pay APCs for articles but do not engage in a robust review process” (Duc et al., 2020).

Literature Review

Krawczyk and Kulczycki (2021) conducted a study titled *How is Open Access Accused of Being Predatory? The Impact of Beall's Lists of Predatory Journals on Academic Publishing*. The objective of this study was to explore the way by which predatory journals are characterized by researchers and academia keen about so-called predatory journals. Authors made efforts to differentiate between open-access journals and predatory journals so that both could not be conflated with each other. Researchers collected publications on predatory journals from four databases like Web of Science, Scopus, Dimensions, and Microsoft Academic. The sample included 280 research articles on predatory publications published mainly in English. Authors reviewed each publication and used qualitative evaluation and analysis of selected articles. Researchers concluded that in all discussions on predatory journals there was a great impact of Beall, who coined the term predatory first. Researchers concluded that the characteristics of so-called predatory journals as noticed by Beall, were present in other such legitimate journals also. Finally, authors concluded that the predatory journals term is nothing but the overgeneralization of the shortcomings of some of the open-access journals to the entire open access movement has led to unjustified prejudices among the academic community towards open access. This is the first large-scale study that systematically examined how predatory publishing is defined in the literature.

Methodology

The study used qualitative method of observation and analysis of definitions of predatory journals. Ten such studies on predatory journals published between 2012 to 2021 in reputed journals served as a sample. An in-depth analysis of these articles was made to identify the characterizing features of predatory journals.

Results and Discussion

In order to understand these developments, one has to go several years back, when print media was dominant and during that time only selected publishers had the expertise of starting a journal. This monopoly was broken by online publishers who could now start journals independently (Shyam, 2015). Until 2002, prior to the open-access initiative, the scientific knowledge was available for those researchers only who could pay, or more explicitly, who can afford science and scientific knowledge; it was a costly affair and not available for those not in a position to pay for it. Further, the cost of scientific knowledge was increasing every year, making it difficult for the researchers to have cost-effective access to it. As noted by Swan, the rising cost of journal subscriptions is a major force behind the emergence of the open access movement (Swan, 2012). The idea of open access of knowledge, and subsequently open access publications, opened up avenues for researchers to get access of the scientific knowledge free of cost, bridging the gap of rich and poor in science. However, as the burning of a candle leaves some

smoke, the idea of open access and the policies related to it was exploited by few ill-meaning publishers. Open access allowed publishers to get the publication cost from the authors in order to meet expenses associated with publication and maintenance of records so that it could be made freely available to readers and researchers and this author-pay model was exploited by several ill-meaning publishers. They started publishing low-quality content without peer-review for their own interest and income from authors, but it was not the only cause behind the emergence of poor-quality journals.

The mushrooming of several low-quality publications, especially journals, was the consequence of the system of the performance appraisal for a teacher involved in higher education. This keeps them under very high pressure to carry out a sufficient number of research projects to attract research grants and funding along with their teaching and academic activities. Teachers of higher education institutions were forced to publish their reports of research in scientific journals as evidence of research, sufficient in quantity in scientific journals. Publication in journals is directly linked to the appointment, promotion, and research grants of teachers. A teacher who is honest in his academic and teaching activities and doing his/her job honestly has no or limited opportunity to get a promotion and benefits of career advancement until there is strong evidence of research and a sufficient number of publications in journals in his/her name. In such a situation, teachers started finding out ways to get published. Traditional, so-called legitimate journals were taking longer than usual in making a decision of whether to publish or not, and publishing a research article sometimes were taking six months to 2 years, many a time, in the open-access model, they can charge a very high article processing fee proportionate with the impact factor and the H-Index of the journal. This pressure is compounded by high rejection rates at many so-called non-predatory scientific journals (Moher and Srivastava, 2015), and as a result, several new publishers emerged providing a platform for early-career research scholars and teachers who could not afford publication in so-called renowned quality journals. Few big publication houses, controlling specifically the journal publication industry, made the scientific publication a number game like H-Index, Impact Factor, Cite Score, and so on. Responding to their number game, several new agencies also came up determining the impact factor of a journal in their own way and started providing very high impact factors to low-standard fake journals keeping authors and readers confused about which impact factor and indexing to rely upon.

Much debate took place on the issue of predatory journals (Beall, 2015), but it is equally true that predatory journals/publications have no universally accepted definition (Berger and Cirasella, 2015; Manca et al., 2018; Masten and Ashcraft, 2016) and different scientists have attached different meanings to it, largely, based on their individual judgment having a low or substandard quality. It is another issue beyond the scope of the present paper that how such substandard quality, fake journals have been assigned the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) by the concerned agency without any quality check, and if such compromise with quality has been observed then why not have their ISSN number withdrawn? For a better understanding of the issue of predatory journals/publications, one needs to

look at how the term predatory journals/publications has been defined and used in contemporary scientific literature. Table 1 summarizes some such definitions of predatory journals/publications used in scientific literature and the key ideas involved in identifying a predatory journal.

Table 1. Notion of Predatory Journals/Publications in the Contemporary Scientific Literature

Researchers/Scholars	Characterizing Predatory Journals	Key Features Identified
Pamukcu Gunaydin and Dogan (2015)	They exploit the idea of the author-paid gold model open access publishing by charging a fee but not providing the promised publishing services in return. They do not follow accepted scholarly publishing industry standards and seek only to profit from author fees (Pamukcu Gunaydin and Dogan, 2015).	Article processing fee Low standard Not providing promised services
Clemons et al. (2017)	So-called predatory journals are defined as those that display an intention to deceive authors and readers. The main purpose of these journals is to profit from article processing charges, and they may therefore have little regard for the scientific quality or integrity of the work they accept (Clemons et al., 2017).	Intention to deceive authors. Profit-making from APC No quality concerns
Eriksson and Helgesson (2018)	Browsing a few of the many recent articles on the topic shows that the main emphasis often has been on the motives of journal owners: Pay- to-publish journals—often known as predatory journals. The other often mentioned and defining characteristic is a lack of proper peer review despite promises to the contrary (Eriksson and Helgesson, 2018)	Lack of proper peer review Pay & publish
Shamseer et al. (2017)	A fundamental problem of predatory journals seems to be that they collect APC from authors without offering concomitant scholarly peer-review. Additionally, they do not appear to provide typical publishing services such as quality control, licensing, indexing, and perpetual content preservation and may not even be fully open access. online journals characterized as predatory, which actively solicit manuscripts and charge publications fees without providing robust peer review and editorial services (Shamseer et al., 2017)	Article processing fee No peer reviews No quality controls Poor editorial services
Shyam (2015)	These journals will claim to be indexed, will have an ISSN number, and will also claim to have an impact factor (not a Thomas Reuter impact). The letter would state rapid review and promise to publish fast. The problem with these journals is that they lack any organized editorial	No organized editorial process Rapid review Focus on Article Processing Fee Inferior scientific material No indexing in reputed

	process and are mainly focused on the article processing fees. This allows much inferior scientific material to be published. Also, these journals are rarely indexed with standard indexing bodies and thus do not show up in an online search, making the article as good as non-existent (Shyam, 2015)	indexes
Manca et al. (2018)	There is no clear consensus definition for predatory publishers and journals. Such journals have been referred to as low quality, amateurish, and often unethical academic publishing that is usually open access (Manca et al., 2018).	Low quality Unethical academic publication Usually open access
Ferris and Winker (2017)	Predatory journals, or journals that charge APC to authors, yet do not have the hallmarks of legitimate scholarly journals such as peer review and editing, Editorial Boards, editorial offices, and other editorial standards, pose a number of new ethical issues in journal publishing (Ferris and Winker, 2017).	Charging an article processing fee Lack of peer review Lack of editorial board
Ferris and Winker (2017)	Predatory journals misrepresent who they are and what services they offer, including not providing peer review, editing, and indexing services. Their websites often lack an editorial office address or even contact information. They lack information about the academic appointments and locations of the editor and Editorial Board (Ferris and Winker, 2017)	Misrepresentation of identity & services Lack of peer review, editing, and indexing Lack of editorial office Lack of information about the location of office and editorial board
Xia et al. (2015)	Many open access journals have a reputation for being of low quality and being dishonest with regard to peer review and publishing costs. Such journals are labeled predatory journals (Xia et al., 2015)	Low quality Dishonesty regarding peer review Dishonesty regarding Publication costs
Cook (2017)	A predatory journal is a journal that bypasses the traditional peer-review process and, for an article-processing charge publishes any paper, often one with questionable scientific value (Cook, 2017).	Bypassing peer review Imposing APC

The critical analysis of the above ten scholarly publications provided inputs for identifying features of predatory journals. It was observed that a predatory journal imposes APC from authors, does not carry out a peer-review, and thus has faster acceptance and faster publication times with a wider reach to the audience. Some other features which were identified while analyzing the definitions of predatory journals were providing misleading information related to publisher, unreasonably high processing fees, poor indexing, and poor editorial services. Additionally, most of the authors quoted two main defining features for predatory journals: one

of which is a provision of publication fee, and the other is lack of peer-review; but no common consensus definition was found. Let us examine both the criteria of predatory journals in the context of open access publications.

The Issue of Pay & Publish and Open Access

The definition of predatory journals or publications is still an issue of great debate and scholars have started to question the validity of the term predatory (Eriksson and Helgesson, 2018). To date, it is not clear what is in fact meant by a predatory journal or publisher (Eriksson and Helgesson, 2018), and it is also quite fuzzy what is contained (i.e., published) within potential predatory journals (Shamseer et al., 2017). Beall (2015) mentioned that:

“By definition, predatory journals are open-access, so at first, one might conclude that they perform the awareness function well because anyone with internet access can read the articles they publish.” (Beall, 2015)

Beall's statement about feature of predatory journals as open access was reinforced by the global journal publishing industry for their own interest, creating a wave against so-called predatory journals in particular, but open access journals in general, by ignoring the fact that several times many characteristics used to identify predatory journals can be seen in the practices of established journals as well (Eriksson and Helgesson, 2018). In many of his publications, Beall has criticized the open-access model as a root cause of the spread of predatory journals which is not the case. For example, Beall mentioned that many around the world are promoting scholarly open-access publishing but turning a blind eye to the corruption the open-access publishing model has fostered (Beall, 2015). It is pertinent to mention that corruption is equally involved in the traditional model of publications of journals too, but an obsession that only traditional models of journal publication could provide quality scientific knowledge, the open-access has been labelled as the pay & publish model and is stigmatized and perceived as a predatory one. It is beyond our understanding that promoting open access may lead to corruption in publication, but promoting subscription-based traditional publication might not lead to any corruption in publication, as if the subscription model is the only model of and guarantee of quality scientific publication. It may be noted here that quality is a very subjective term and the term is so fuzzy that quantitative obsessed researchers do not see quality even in qualitative research. Beall (2017a) further mentions,

“The open-access publishers are interested in soliciting authors' monies for publication, specifically those who have grant funding to spend on author fees.” (Beall, 2017a)

Such inclination of researchers towards a subscription-based journal publication model contributed to marginalizing open-access journals from the mainstream publishing business and keeping the profit of few international publishers

unaltered. In this context, one may note that the traditional journal publication houses are also gradually turning to the hybrid and transformative model from the subscription model and encouraging authors to get published under the open-access model. Advocates of the subscription-based journal publication model ignored the corruption and finances involved in traditional publishing. Most of the traditional publishing houses have their own author services which provide a researcher the language editing service, formatting services, data analysis services, and so on based on the plan and payment the researcher has chosen. The higher the payment, the higher the publication support. It is the issue of another debate that getting published in a reputed journal by efforts of an agency providing such author services is how much more ethical is it, and whether it is a form of corruption. As noted by Eriksson and Helgesson (2017),

“Although predatory practices, such as spamming researchers incessantly, charging elaborate fees, or publishing anything against a fee regardless of the quality of the work, are all worthy of criticism, they do not necessarily make the journal applying them predatory.” (Eriksson and Helgesson, 2017)

All traditional reputed journals also convince researchers why to publish with them as so-called predatory journals do. Further, a similar observation has been made by Pamukcu Gunaydin and Dogan (2015),

“Many open-access publishers are trustworthy and many are making amateurish mistakes, particularly when they are at the start of entering the publishing market. These are not predatory or fake journals.” (Pamukcu Gunaydin and Dogan, 2015)

Masten and Ashcraft (2016) also expressed similar views and equated open access journals with so-called traditional scientific journals and wrote,

“Characteristics of scholarly open access journals are compatible with many characteristics of traditional journals, including the four key criteria of archiving/preservation, reputable board members, indexing, and peer review.” (Masten and Ashcraft, 2016)

When considering predatory journals, it is important to clarify one common misperception that while predatory journals are almost always open access, most open-access journals are far from predatory (Roberts, 2016). Similar observation has been made by other researchers too. Krawczyk and Kulczycki (2021) mention that:

“...the overgeneralization of the flaws of some open access journals to the entire open access movement has led to unjustified prejudices among the academic community toward open access.” (Krawczyk and Kulczycki, 2021)

Many researchers have ignored many aspects of scientific publications and indirectly (and maybe unintentionally?) stigmatized journals that have an open-access policy to be suspected as predatory one. Beall (2017b) mentions,

“Predatory publishers are essentially counterfeit publishers. They pretend to be genuine scholarly publishers, but they aim really to generate as much revenue as possible from researchers.” (Beall, 2017b)

The quality of a journal could not be judged based on the model it has adopted as either pay & publish or pay & access. If pay & publish is enough to suspect a journal for being predatory, then most of the scientific publishers are predatory up to a certain extent. There should be degrees of predation as almost all traditional journals ask some amount from authors to make their articles open for all free of cost and even encourage authors to opt for publication of their article under open access for wider reach. Most of the definitions of predatory journals included the criteria of payment for publication, upon which they have criticized open-access publishers as predatory, and labeled such practice as profit-making for publishers. If the same criteria are applied to traditional journals, the profit is much higher in the pay & access model than the pay & publish model. Moreover, a journal asking for one-time fee from the author for a publication, and remaining otherwise free for readers is considered a profit-making journal, then what about those charging readers every time they access that article, either through individual subscription or through an institutional subscription? If the former could be termed as predatory, then why not later could be termed as the Wolfish model? Not asking for APC does not guarantee the quality of the publication. Also, the pay & access model of scientific articles is not based on universal access; rather these are based on the philosophy that scientific knowledge is only for those who can pay, making science a luxury affair.

The reality behind the wave against so-called predatory journals could be seen from the different perspectives of the market. Usually, the journal publication market is under the control of a few international publishing houses which can be counted on a few fingers. These publishing houses might never wish to allow either open access journals or small-scale local scientific publishers to grow in order to continue their monopoly in publication, maximizing their profit, and they will not wish to lose their potential market in developing countries. Fear of loss of business for them comes from the open-access movement and open-educational resources movement which is trying to break the monopoly of traditional journal publication. Developing an open-access culture strikes the interest of traditional publishers and thus will not be supported at all by them. Beall (2015) mentions that:

“authors are now seen as a source of revenue for publishers, and other companies and services are being formed to exploit the author-fee market.” (Beall, 2015)

Here the question is, when is the author not seen as a source of revenue for publishers? In fact, the supporters of open access community is a result of consistent exploitation of author-fees as well as an access-fee market. The traditional publishing industry is also tailored around exploiting access-fee as well as author-fee markets, otherwise, what is the necessity of author services which are being provided by most of the traditional journal publishers anyway?

The Issue of Peer-Review and Open Access

The second issue which characterizes an open-access journal to be called predatory is the diluted process of peer review. It is beyond critique that peer-review is an essential component of a scientific publication. As peer-review is the basis for reliable scholarly dissemination of research, it is, for many, the chief problem presented by predatory journals (Eriksson and Helgesson, 2017). Further, because they (predatory publishers) want to earn money quickly and easily, most predatory journals fail to perform on the single most important element of scholarly communication: peer review (Beall, 2017b). Unfortunately, there is no such tool or device or mechanism available for authors or end-users, other than their own subjective judgments, to cross-check the peer-review claim of a journal being either predatory or non-predatory. If it is true that manuscripts in predatory journals receive only superficial review, then one should find that they are given a stamp of approval even if they contain significant weaknesses (McCutcheon et al., 2016); but the similar is true for those non-predatory scientific journals too. There is a more general problem with false peer reviews. The reputed indexing agency BioMed Central (BMC) discovered in November 2014 that about fifty articles were carrying false reviews (Eriksson and Helgesson, 2017). The issue of peer-review indicates that if the journal (predatory or traditional) says it is peer-reviewed, one has to accept that it is. If a journal mentions it is international and it meets the criteria of internationality as per the International Standard Serial Number assigning agency, it is. If merely delayed acceptance, delayed response, and delayed publication confirms that the journal is peer-reviewed, so-called predatory journals will make a delay in publication. It is a criterion that is not objective and can not be assessed and is based upon individual subjective judgment of authors and readers and mostly based upon their intuition. Eriksson and Helgesson (2018) seem right when they suggest that we should stop talking about predatory publishing and start distinguishing between deceptive and low-quality journals (Eriksson and Helgesson, 2018).

Another question that is pertinent here is what role the ISSN agency plays? Asking and assessing the publication policy, publication ethics, and the peer-review process along with a list of members of the editorial board, reviewers, etc., supported by acceptance of editorial board members as well as reviewers might be helpful in controlling such low-quality journals meant only for business. In fact, the information available over the website of the ISSN agency clearly mentioned that the agency can grant, as well as withdraw or decline, the request of an ISSN if the journal does not fulfill the standard as required by the ISSN Agency. As a last comment, Eriksson and Helgesson (2018) mention,

“gathering a wide variety of problems under the broad notion of predatory publishing might cause us to overreact and too easily look at fairly low-cost, open-access journals as all evil: Might the label predatory publishing harm the cause of open access? Or inhibit publishing in developing countries?” (Eriksson and Helgesson, 2018)

The scientific community must take note of it while discouraging open access initiatives in the name of predatory ones, stigmatizing and victimizing it, either unintentionally or deliberately, labeling it mostly predatory in nature.

Conclusion

In brief, after critical analysis of the ongoing debate of predatory and non-predatory journals, it was learned that there is no such standard or universal definition communicating the clear meaning of predatory journals. Also, it is not clear how these journals emerged despite the rigorous process of getting an ISSN prior to starting a new journal. Just because most such predatory journals are freely available over the internet, these could not be termed as an open-access journal because such journals lack the criteria of peer-review which is essential for a publication to be termed as an open-access article/journal or publication. Further, making such comments that predatory journals are freely available and are thus are open-access journals is a way of victimizing and stigmatizing the open-access model. A journal having no proper peer-review and collecting a huge amount as APC is something else, but is not an open-access journal. Thus, one should not equate or label open access journals as predatory journals. Measures need to be taken and policies need to be in place to fight predatory journals, but open-access journals should not be marginalized from the business of publication and should not be victimized by generalizing the predatory word, rather the international scientific community needs to think of distinguishing features and establishing a universally accepted definition of predatory journals and making policies to discourage them.

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Multimodality of the TV Format

*By Francesco Buscemi**

This article analyses the multimodal construction of various global TV formats and the modes through which the format negotiates reinforcement of its ideological bases, innovation, change and unlimited semiosis. Theoretically, this work draws on social semiotics, multimodality and political economy. Methodologically, it applies semiotic analysis to really popular global formats. The results show that the format is an extraordinary and powerful example of multimodality which speaks the global language of signs. On the one hand, different languages and forms of communication reinforce its ideologies, such as competition, primacy of money, objectification of human bodies and consumerism; but the format also puts forward a kind of self-propaganda; in many cases, in fact, its communication aims to support and promote itself, even when this contradicts other messages of the system; it is by being successful that producers make more money, become more successful, may further influence the audience, and so on. On the other hand, the languages and the forms adopted continually renew the format, change the relationships between signifier and signified, and create new symbols. This unlimited semiosis allows the format to refresh or adapt its image, get more audience and remain competitive in the market.

Keywords: TV format, who wants to be a millionaire, wheel of fortune, multimodality, social semiotics

Introduction

This article analyses the multimodal character of four global TV formats: *Wheel of Fortune*, *The Price Is Right*, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* and *MasterChef*. The first two titles were created before the 1990s and in this article they are thus considered as belonging to the first generation of the global format; the other two products, conversely, were conceived and commercialised from the end of the 1990s onwards, the era that here is called the second generation of the format. The three aims of this study are firstly, to explain how writing TV formats has changed from the first to the second period; secondly, how the new narrative of the digital media have contributed to this change; and, thirdly and more in general, how telling stories has changed over these years. Finally, a final section also adds a critical view to this TV genre.

The format is in a state of flux, as it renews its modes by continuously producing new meanings, activating what in semiotic terms is called “unlimited semiosis.” Conceived by Umberto Eco, who worked Peirce’s (1931) previous reflections, unlimited semiosis is the continuous adaptation of the sign to changing conditions, from societal to political, from aesthetic to historic. Unlimited semiosis

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continually allows the sign to change its meaning (Eco, 1976, pp. 71–72). Drawing on this theory, this article argues that the format is an extremely flexible text that adapts its various modes to different aims. Thus, in creating TV formats the writer has a series of instruments that may combine in different ways. How this combination has changed over the years thanks to the new media is the focus of this study.

Literature Review

This study is interested in the mutual exchange between multimodality and society. In fact, on the one hand “in order for something to ‘be a mode’ there needs to be a shared cultural sense within a community” (Bezemer and Jewitt, 2010, p. 184). On the other hand, cultures may be influenced by modes, which may shape new trends and habits (Kress, 2010).

The format is a sort of matrix containing all the elements forming a show. In a text called *bible*, the TV writers responsible for the project precisely explain the various parts forming the concept, including details of narrative structure, duration, settings, music, dressing codes, languages, and even non-verbal languages adopted by the hosts. Thus, we may say that the *bible* is a multimodal text. This matrix is experimented with by a couple of TV channels and, if successful, it is sold all over the world with the agreement that only a few of its elements may be changed by the acquirer and almost always with the green light of the original producer. Usually, the changes between the original and the various versions of a format are motivated by the needs and preferences of specific, national audiences. However, the first aim of the format is to sell globally (Thompson, 1990; Steemers, 2004; Chalaby, 2009). To do so, formats must be the right combination of universal narrative structures, as narrative is “international, transhistorical, transcultural” (Barthes, 1977, p. 79), and specific cultural elements, as any good narrative must be based on familiar structures (Hodge and Kress, 1988, p. 230). Thus, the format also relies on recognisable elements, cultural beliefs and ideologies (Brennan, 2012, p. 86).

The format has an interesting history, really illuminating in understanding the intrinsic nature of its multimodality. Until the 1980s, in fact, TV was among the most important media and the format was one of its powerful weapons. However, after the rise of the internet and of the new media, television has been included on the list of the “traditional” media along with radio, newspapers, magazines and others (Doyle, 2013). Here, “traditional” is an elegant way of saying “old,” as these traditional media adopt a *unidirectional* form of communication, also called top-down, which implies that there is a unique and powerful source that sends the message to a passive receiver. Since the 1990s, the new media have turned this form of communication into something old. In fact, the internet, social media and all the new ways of communicating rely on a *multidirectional* form of communication, also called bottom-up, in which there is not a unique sender, but all the users are in turn senders and receivers, the audience is active and may react to the message, and the system allows almost every person to become a producer

of messages (Buscemi, 2017). Writing for these media is relevantly different from writing for the old TV, as in the new media the author and the members of the audience continually exchange their roles.

Importantly, the new media have taken communication closer to the human brain. In fact, the new, bottom-up communication is based on multiple connections (the links of the websites, for example). In this new scenario, the completeness of communication is proportional to the number of connections given to the user. A website is richer when it offers many links and more interaction to the users, and a social medium is more powerful when it connects the user to a higher number of other users, sources, and media. This multiplicity of connections is exactly the way in which our brain works (Carr, 2010). This means that, with the new media, we communicate with the same way as we think.

TV is the newest medium among the “traditional” one, but its metaphorical DNA does not permit it to become multidirectional. While the new media are able to communicate as we think, TV still functions as a low-developed brain or an ill mind. Also the format suddenly became redundant. What to do, then? This article argues that multimodality has been the desperate attempt of television to keep up with the new media. As a result, since the late 1990s writing formats has become something more similar to writing for the new media.

Finally, this article also draws on critical approaches to the media. Modes may also have political value, either supporting or challenging dominant political views (Fleitz, 2009). In his late studies, Bourdieu (2003; 2005) has demonstrated that neoliberal policies have concentrated the power in a few hands and that technology and the media are fundamental weapons that guarantee the consolidation of power. Moreover, Bourdieu (2003; 2005) sees globalisation as the expansion of the economic field to the entire world. This must be linked to the concept of new television, developed by Eco (1983) and Casetti and Odin (1990). Since the 1980s, a new kind of TV has taken its place in Europe, the so called *neo-televisione* (new television). It is characterised by neoliberal approaches to commerce and business, a positive representation of consumerism, and an abundance of advertising and globalisation.

Methodology

Multimodal analysis is an immense and multifaceted method. It may include any form of investigation and link to any cultural, aesthetic, social, political or historical discipline. The specific form of analysis that this study adopts relates to social semiotics, and is called social semiotic multimodality, which “aims to shed light on how people use modal resources in a certain social context” (Fortanet-Gómez and Crawford Camiciottoli, 2015, p. 1). In this study, it is adopted to analyse the various modes of the analysed formats.

However, this research also draws on the opposition between the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic dimension of signification. To put it simply, syntagm is “the combination of ‘this-and-this-and-this’ ... while the plane of the paradigm is that of the selection of ‘this-or-this-or-this’” (Chandler, emphasis in the original, 2002,

p. 80). Syntagmatic analysis investigates sequences. Instead, paradigmatic analysis “refers intertextually to signifiers which are *absent* from the text” (Chandler, 2002, p. 80). Clearly, formats, as any narrative structure, can be studied through the sequence of their constitutional elements, and thus syntagmatically; and paradigmatically, as the various versions, especially in the first generation, choose one of the various options given in the paradigm to adapt the universal structure of the matrix to specific, national audiences. For example, if a version of a format chooses to represent the public as silent and in the shade, and another version of the same format depicts the public as encouraging the contestant loudly, we may say that the two shows have chosen different options from those offered by the paradigm of the format. In this article, “paradigmatic analysis involves comparing and contrasting each of the signifiers present in the text with absent signifiers which in similar circumstances might have been chosen, and considering the significance of the choices made” (Chandler, 2002, p. 99).

Finally, this study has selected a purposive sampling of formats belonging to both the first and the second generation, comparing works created and commercialised before the 1990s, to those developed after. Even though the old formats are not the focus of this study, they constitute a necessary background for this research, as it is in the comparison between the two generations that we may catch relevant aspects of the multimodality of the format. Specifically, “purposive sampling is a non-random sampling technique in which the researcher selects elements supporting a particular theory or presenting specific characteristics” (Buscemi, 2015, p. 127). The formats selected in this study do not support a specific theory, but have been selected because they offer interesting elements in terms of multimodality. A random sampling (based on time or specific media production companies) would have resulted in only a few items to investigate, and the study would have been seriously limited. As stated above, the two formats of the first generation are *Wheel of Fortune* and *The Price is Right*, while the two titles of the second generation are *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* and *MasterChef*.

The TV Format and Multimodality

The First Generation of Formats and “Bland” Multimodality

To fully understand the multimodality of the format, it is necessary to look at how old formats were written when TV was not so globalised yet and when unidirectional communication was still “cool.” If, as theorised above, multimodality has strong links to the political and social scenario, what about the format from the 1970s and the 1980s, when the political and social situation was different from today; and in many countries TV also had the mission of educating people by also representing diversity and the plurality of points of view?

This section focuses on two global formats of those years, *Wheel of Fortune* and *The Price Is Right*. *Wheel of Fortune* was created in 1959 by the Australian producer Reg Grundy, and in the 1980s became one of the most widespread global formats (Chalaby, 2016). *The Price is Right* was, instead, created in 1956 by Bob

Stewart for the American producers Mark Goodson and Bill Todman, who produced many other global formats (Newcomb, 2013). Interestingly from a political economy perspective, in 1978 Goodson and Todman reached an agreement with Grundy and a global TV production, Freemantle, and since these deals producing and commercialising formats has meant a multiplication of income and the concentration of ownership and power (Chalaby, 2016). Freemantlemedia is today the second producer of formats after Endemol (Moran and Malbon, 2006). As is also demonstrated in the next section, concentration is one of the main characteristics of both the format market (Moran, 2010) and the neoliberal society (Bourdieu, 2003; 2005).

This analysis clearly shows that the two formats build their representations on various modes, as any TV show. In fact, written and spoken language, music, clothes, architecture and many other modes were indubitably parts of the show (Wheel of Fortune, 2016; The Price is Right, 2016). In an episode of *Wheel of Fortune* in 1976 (Curry, 2016), for example, we can see all these modes in the first minutes of the show. To sum up, what the viewer watches in the first sequences of the show is: a first setting with many commercial products; a second setting with the big, unrealistic scenography of the game, and the contestants and the hosts talking to each other; the spoken language of the hosts explaining the rules of the game; the entertaining music without any connotation or connection to the rhythm of the images; and the ironical language of the hosts and the contestants. The format is clearly multimodal, but each of the modes adopted refers to specific meanings. Among the others, the first setting clearly refers to the happiness of consumerism; the second setting links to the game as a break from everyday life; the music does not underline anything specific but mostly fills the void of silence; the rules of the game force the contestants to answer the questions, but also the hosts and the guests tend to be friendly to each other, so the feeling of suspense given by the game is often lost. It is clear that the many modes employed do not go in the same direction. The problem with this kind of multimodality is that the modes adopted do not form a whole, an ensemble, as they should do to form a complete and contemporary multimodal form of communication, according to Bezemer and Kress (2016).

This form of modal disconnection is even more evident in *The Price is Right* (The Fun and Games Channel, 2016; The Price is Right, 2016). Here the setting relates to the roundness of comics and cartoons but the images of the products offered as a prize are contextualised in an exclusive and refined setting. Again, music is neutral and disconnected from the rest of the show, and the suspense of the game is watered down by the irony of the spoken words. As in the previous case, the impression is that the various modes go in different directions.

If the format is a global product that must be adapted to various audiences, how have these formats been changed in other countries? Have the various modes been saved and the original versions respected? If we look at the various versions of *Wheel of Fortune* around the world paradigmatically, for example, we can see that TV writers created different products according to the country, relating to the various options offered by the paradigm of the format. Among the various versions, in the British show, we do not see the amount of money on the wheel, as in the US

original version, but numbers corresponding to points that the contestant may accumulate. Similarly, the final prize is not cash but a valuable object. In the Spanish version, the public is more active, standing up and participating while the contestant tries to guess the final puzzle, and the questions belong to given categories. In Russia, contestants are freer and may also answer before spinning the wheel, but they also give the host gifts from the areas they come from. In Poland, the green colour of the wheel has replaced the blue one. Finally, in France, the public is seated behind the contestants, while in the US version the same place is occupied by the screen with the puzzle. This gives the French public much more visibility than the publics of other countries.

A fast overview of the various versions of *The Price Is Right*, the second format that I analyse in this article, confirms this trend. In Italy, the host is on a diet and every day, she checks her weight receiving applause if she lost weight, or criticisms if not; in France, colours are soberer and the big wheel of the original version is replaced by a traditional clock; finally, in Britain, the amount of money to be won was decreased and a new game, called *Supermarket*, aimed to reward contestants' skills, rather than simple luck. From TV writers' point of view, thus, the greatest effort was adapting a format to a specific audience. The writers of the original format only created a big box containing various tools, while 'local' writers had to adapt the box to their audience.

This demonstrates that the bland multimodality of these shows encourages changes in the representations of the modes, and that these changes link to cultural variations. In semiotic terms, it encourages paradigmatic choices, which alter the syntagmatic, narrative structure. Just to summarise the most evident reasons behind the various variations, it is clear that the British choice of writing points and not amounts of money on the wheel, decreases prizes and rewards authentic skills relating to the less commercial aim of British TV version, compared to the US show; the Spanish public participating actively in the show builds a more emotional and Mediterranean scenario; and by giving the host a present from their remote birthplaces, the contestants of the Russian version demonstrate the cultural variety of that large nation's regions. In conclusion, the bland organisation of modes favours cultural adaptations.

On the one hand, these adaptations match the needs of the various audiences, who see, in the show, something belonging to their specific traditions; on the other hand, this also weakens the idea of the format as a whole. The fact that the original format is watered down, and is thus not recognisable and permeable to extraneous elements, threatens the wholeness of its concept. This also has commercial and ideological effects. To put it simply, commercially, the format becomes less necessary, and ideologically it does not express a precise point of view, but it can be modelled, to sometimes satisfy nationalism, other times consumerism, here tradition and there change, etc.

These "loose" rules were able to work on TV before *neo televisione*. What is interesting, then, is to see how new television has changed multimodality and the way the formats were written. The next section analyses the multimodality of the format on new television, but a relevant result may be already added here. Interestingly, the formats analysed so far have not changed their bland multimodality

with the rise of new television, and the episodes broadcast in the 1970s are not very different from those broadcast in the 2000s. This means that they were conceived and produced based on this type of multimodality, and that it was impossible to change their nature when television put forward new requests and ideological needs. Instead, it was easier to write new formats, based on a different form of multimodality and guaranteeing a major fidelity to the ideological and political-economic goals of new television.

The Second Generation of Formats and Tight Multimodality

The focal shows of this section are *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* and *MasterChef*. The first format was produced by the British company Celador in 1998 (Newcomb, 2013) and also distributed by the already mentioned Endemol, for example in Italy. Endemol and Celador are the most powerful format producers today (Lange, 2006).

Already at a glance, it is clear that the multimodality of this format behaves differently. In *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, the contestants play individually, “against” the host, who asks the questions. Each right answer allows the contestant to double his/her money and go ahead. When the contestant answers wrongly, s/he is eliminated. Along the whole itinerary, each contestant has various forms of help, from a call to friends to advice from the public, to the elimination of two of the four multiple choices of the question. They can use each of these helps only one time (Who Wants to Be a Millionaire, 2016).

It is clear that writing such a format is totally different from what we have seen above. The 'new' format adopts many different modes: firstly, music is linked to the rhythm of the images, to the info-graphic and to the development of the game. When an answer is right, there is in fact a particular jingle, a specific graphic animation and a precise camera movement. The same happens when the answer is wrong. Secondly, and differently from the formats analysed above, the public is often in the dark, and the viewer cannot see it. Moreover, the members of the public are also silent, and they only clap their hands when the answer is right. Significantly, the public becomes visible when it enters the mechanism of the show, that is, when the contestant asks for help from its members. Thirdly, the info-graphics visualises the entire itinerary of each contestant as a climb, from the bottom, with the initial and lowest amount of money, to the top, where the final prize of 1 million is written in larger fonts. Fourthly, the host tells the contestant pre-fixed phrases with precise gestures, and even these details are explained in the *bible* of the format. Specifically, the host almost never laughs or jokes with the contestant. Fifthly, time is expanded and interrelates with music while the contestant reflects before answering, and even more, before the host says whether or not the answer is right. We see close-ups of the contestant and of the host, while the cliff-hanger music in the background underlines the importance of the moment. Finally, the setting of the format is simple and essential, and dark colours predominate.

It is interesting to note that the modes adopted by *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* are almost the same as those adopted by the formats of the first

generation. What is different is the way in which the various modes interrelate. In fact, it is impossible to define the multimodality of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* as “bland.” The TV writers have interlinked all of the modes employed by this format, in the attempt to function like the multidirectional communication of the new media. This also relates to the idea expressed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), who argue that, while in the past the modes of each text had a precise hierarchy, in the digital age they become equally powerful and relevant. Clearly, this “tight multimodality” is only an attempt, as TV does not permit the same interconnection of the new media. However, the narrative structure of the new media has changed the old rules of writing formats. Clearly, who works on format writing must be aware of it, however, also who writes on social media should know that interlinking the various modes is an extraordinary strategy to strengthen the message and to communicate more effectively.

Moreover, the format has been locked by the producer, Celador, and the show has been broadcast in the same way almost all over the world (Korseman and Shepherd, 2003). This global adherence to the original has been referred to as “MacDonaldization” of the format (Moran, 2010, p. 13). The only changes allowed were created by Celador (Singh and Oliver, 2015) who changed only minor mechanisms of the game. In some countries, like Germany, each episode of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* has comprised fewer questions, while in others, like Italy, various contestants have challenged each other at the beginning. However, the modes of the show have remained the same and have been adopted in the same way. Music, setting, info graphic, colours, and the other aspects listed above have been represented in the same way because this was the intention of the producer.

Thus, tight multimodality is not only a matter of multidirectional communication. It also serves the purpose of pushing the format in a precise direction. Now the greatest effort in writing a format is in the work on the original format, while 'local' writers may only change minor elements. In semiotic terms, in this second generation, by forbidding any change, the producers prevent any paradigmatic development and stress the syntagmatic narrative structure, which is their creation. In banning the paradigmatic axis, they accumulate power as the authors of the syntagma.

At a denotative level, all of the modes described above increase the sense of tension and competition, centring the attention of the audience on the fight between the host and the contestant and on the itinerary leading to the final victory. For example, the background music during the time in which the contestant reflects before giving the answer underlines the suspense before the choice; the dark colours dominating the studio increase this sense of uncertainty and wait; the almost absence of the public, hidden in the dark, focuses the attention on the contestant and the host; and the info-graphics highlighting the itinerary of the contestant underlines the narrative journey and the continuous getting closer to the final prize.

The second format belonging to the second generation which is analysed in this study is *MasterChef*, a format created by Frank Roddam for Shine (MasterChef, 2015) and distributed by the already mentioned Freemantlemedia (Bowrey, 2013).

Shine is a company owned by Elisabeth Murdoch that merged with the above cited Endemol to create the Endemol-Shine group (Chalaby, 2016). It is evident that all of the power in this case has been concentrated in the hands of only a few agents in the field, which is, as said before, a frequent characteristic of neoliberal TV.

The format is a contest among wannabe chefs, who prepare very complex dishes and are evaluated by professional chefs. A precise mechanism of elimination is developed through the episodes of each series, and in the end there is a final winner (Official MasterChef UK Channel, 2016). *MasterChef* is a talent show, as the format is based on a competitive mechanism with a winner among many contestants, and it is thus comparable to other game shows. Certainly *MasterChef* is based on a form of multimodality that is similar to that adopted by *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, but it also adds something significantly new. It is easy to see in this format the same interconnections among the different modes as in the other product of the second generation. In *MasterChef*, music, camera angles, non-verbal communication, expansion of time, close-ups of the contestants and of the professional chefs assessing them, and settings interrelate and all together contribute to the construction of competition and tension. Moreover, as in *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, among the various versions there is little difference, mostly concerning the mechanisms and the number of fights.

However, there is a novelty, as said above. In *MasterChef*, as in many other formats of the new generation, specifically talent shows, multimodality constructs power relationships, much more than on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. In fact, in each round, the chefs and the contestant enact a power relationship, which is built and supported by the orchestration of the different modes. Close-ups of the severe chefs and the sweating contestants, cliff-hanger music, impolite words of the chefs and imploring says of the contestants, details of flaccid fry-ups and curdled mayonnaises, chefs filmed from the bottom, and contestants shot from the up construct difference and power relationships. The show represents a form of examination, with the chefs as the examiner and each contestant as the examined. As in Foucault (1995, p. 153), the examination here is a technique of “disciplinary power”, a form of power descending from everyday practices and shared habits that are orchestrated and organised in order to create difference. The various modes, taken apart from the others, are considered “as extensions of existing practices ... But taken together these simple techniques add up to a qualitatively new form of control” (Hoskin, 1995, p. 4), supporting dominant ideologies (Rowse, 2013). This leads to a more critical view of these formats, which is based on connotation and is developed in the next section.

A Critical Account: TV Formats, Neoliberalism and Unlimited Semiosis

This section concerns the connotative reading of the TV format and a critical account of this genre. Ouellette and Hay (2008) have already underlined the link between the most popular reality TV and neoliberal values. For Declercq (2014, p. 110), these kinds of shows “portray a market where people compete fiercely for profit”. More specifically, many formats turn each participant into an “object that

are to be manipulated” (Declercq, 2014, p. 114). The result is that contestants are “expected to conform to the ideal of the new neoliberal worker, who is competitive and assertive, keen to learn, adaptive to shifting market demands, individualistic yet able to work in a group” (Declercq, 2014, p. 110).

The more developed and organised multimodality after the 1990s has permitted a much stronger support of these values. Due to the extraordinary popularity of television, these formats have become part of our everyday mediascape. The idea that climbing is one of the fastest ways to be successful, as in *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, or that you must put up with the insults of your chef/chief in order to be a winner, are today rooted in our collective imagery. In Barthes’s (1972) terms, they have become myths.

Barthes (1972) underlines that myths and ideologies are strongly interconnected, as they both hide their socially constructed origin and tend to appear a “natural,” organic part of our everyday lives. For Barthes, myths serve the purpose of naturalising the cultural, turning dominant values into seemingly natural elements, to render them stronger. If in the 1970s, Barthes believed that all myths are bourgeois, today we can say that all myths are neoliberal, and that multimodality has been one of the fundamental tools adopted to achieve this identification. Thus, supported by multimodality, the format has become one of the most powerful instruments of neoliberal ideology.

We have seen that the formats of the first generation have often been adapted to different countries. Various modes of the original formats, from one country to the other, have acquired new meanings, like the less or more participative public, the colours of the setting or the relationships between the host and the contestants. Tension, competition and even visualisation of money have been sacrificed to meet the needs of specific publics. Thus, unlimited semiosis has involved fundamental modes of the formats in order to adapt the original concept to the audiences of various countries. This is clearly a commercial need. Variations guarantee that the public of that specific country receives the show more favourably, securing higher ratings and consequently more money. In the end, unlimited semiosis and paradigmatic choice allow the format to refresh or adapt its image, get more audiences and remain competitive in the market.

In the formats of the second generation, unlimited semiosis only applies to peripheral elements such as the number of rounds and the mechanisms of some games. Instead, the fundamental modes of the format remain untouched, as the syntagma, its narrative structure. As seen above, this helps to support the dominant neoliberal ideologies, and the many representations of the format do not change their meaning. If the format wants to satisfy the needs of specific audiences, only minor parts of the show may be changed, while their ideological meanings remain untouchable. Importantly, there appears to be a shift in terms of priority between the first and the second generation of formats. While in the first group, the priority is commercial success and all the elements of the format may be sacrificed for it, in the second generation, the priority becomes ideology. Thus, in the case of the second generation of formats, the control of the message is of primary importance, and the show conveys the given, and wanted, meaning.

This has to do with a broader category that concerns neoliberal society, which

shifts from considering people as citizens to consumers (Bauman, 2011). While in the first generation of formats, the audiences were primarily considered as specific groups of citizens to “be fed” according to their national belonging and culture, in the second generation of formats, they are considered as a whole group of people whose primary destiny is to consume. Thus, the format may be considered as a part of the complex social shift theorised by Zygmunt Bauman.

However, even all of this has a commercial advantage, but in a different way from what happens in the first generation. In fact, in the past changing the format nation by nation gave great power to the various, local broadcasters and production companies, which worked on adapting the format. Instead, in this second stage, the format broadcast in the same way all over the world is more recognisable and more difficult to copy. It belongs to the production company that created it. The commercial business, thus, consists in giving more power to the original production company, concentrating the power in the hands of only a few agents in the field. This relates to Bourdieu (2003; 2005), who argues that concentration is one of the main tool of neoliberal policies. It may appear strange, but this also happens in social media. In another article (Buscemi, 2017) two web forums on food have been analysed, and it has been demonstrated that in one of them, owned by the BBC, the visual structure and the layout of the format influence the way in which users write in it. The titles given to the various sections of the forum, the space and the word limits, even the language adopted for warnings and suggestions may persuade the users to write in a more formal way, to adopt a 'cheffy' approach and to highlight technical elements of cooking rather than personal and 'romantic' details concerning the people who dine with the cook. As in the TV programmes of the second generation, the powerful company has created 'the format', and 'local' writers may only stick to the rules, with only little room for individual creativity.

Conclusion

As underlined at the beginning, this article aims to explain firstly, how writing TV formats has changed from the first to the second generation of formats; secondly, how the new narrative of the digital media has contributed to this change; and thirdly, how telling stories has changed over these years.

As regards the first issue, what has emerged is that the first generation's multimodality was somehow *bland*. The various modes were not much interconnected, and commercial priorities suggested that they were easily changeable and adaptable to the various audiences of the nations where the formats were sold. Semiotically, it may be said that paradigmatic developments (choosing across a range of options the most appropriate element to the specific cultural context) has right of way to the syntagmatic level, that is, the whole narrative structure of the format.

The formats of the second generation are instead based on *tight* multimodality, and this links to the second aim of this article, that is to explain the role of the new media. In fact, tight multimodality is the desperate attempt of the format to stay current and compete with the language of the new media. Actually, TV cannot

reproduce the form of communication of the internet or of smartphones, but interconnecting the modes much more than in the past helps the new formats not to be disadvantaged in comparison to new media. From TV writers' point of view, thus, while in the first generation of format 'local' writers did the most important job by adapting the original bible to specific national audiences, in the second generation the writer of the original format result much more powerful than the adaptors, who are only allowed to change minor elements. The format, in fact, is now written with the same rules of the new media, with the different modes much more interconnected.

All of this relates to the third issue, regarding telling stories on both old and new media. This article has demonstrated that there are two ways of telling stories multimodally. The first was useful until the 1990s, had to do with national audiences, and modes were blandly interconnected. The new media have revolutionised the old way of narrating stories. Since the 1990s, telling stories has meant interconnecting all the narrative ingredients. This has happened with the new media, but the old ones have tried to adapt to the new environment. Thus, if today we want to tell a story in the old or new media, we have to deal with these new rules, and interconnect all the modes as the format of the second generations do. Not only are audiences more used to this kind of narrative, but also tight multimodality, as seen above, increases the sense of suspense and tension, keeping high the attention of the public and thus resulting in a good narrative strategy.

Finally, this article has also underlined critical elements of the tight multimodality of the format, which writers and users should clearly bear in mind. The fact that big, multinational companies control the format and its meaning-production process implies that prevailing perspectives can hardly be challenged. As already underlined by Bourdieu (2003; 2005) in relation to the whole society, we may say that also in the case of the TV format neoliberalism transfers power from national institutions to global concentrations. In using new media and in writing on them, thus, we must be aware of this. Certainly the new media allow us to write globally and to address huge audiences. However, as in the case of the web forums on food, multinational concentrations are less sensitive to 'local' themes and limit the independence of 'local' users, as it has also happened in the field of the TV format.

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Measuring the Value of Public Relations: An International Investigation of how Communication Practitioners View the Challenge and Suggest Solutions

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This research is motivated to advance our understanding of measurement challenges in communication practice and coping strategies from a global perspective. To do so, we relied on data from a global online survey of communication practitioners in more than 20 countries, which result in five country clusters for final analysis and comparisons. Communication practitioners across investigated country clusters shared different strategies used to cope with measurement challenges. Our results also confirmed that certain leadership qualities (i.e., strategic decision-making, possessing communication knowledge) are particularly important in managing measurement challenges. Our findings provide solutions, leadership skills, and prioritization to improve the measurement of communication effectiveness.

Keywords: communication, public relations, measurement, coping strategies, global Survey

Introduction

Intensive discussions have taken place among communication practitioners and scholars on challenges related to how to demonstrate the value of public relations for businesses and organizations, how to measure the impact and effectiveness of communication, and how to evaluate the contribution of communication to organizations' business performance (e.g., Gregory and Watson, 2008; Macnamara, 1992, 2014; Meng and Berger, 2012; Van Ruler et al., 2008; Watson, 2012; Watson and Noble, 2014). Consequently, communication practitioners and scholars are constantly exploring effective measurement to validate the contribution of communication to improved organizational performance (e.g., Buhmann et al., 2019; Macnamara, 2015; Meng and Pan, 2012).

Although recent years have borne witness to a surge in efforts to demonstrate the value of public relations as one of the leading indicators—both financially and non-financially—for organizational performance (Meng and Berger, 2012; Stacks and Michaelson, 2014), the need to further establish professional standards for measurement and evaluation in public relations practice and enforce the application of such standards is still very much needed (Buhmann et al., 2019). And, despite 40 years of research and extensive industry discussion (Volk, 2016), practitioners are still concerned that public relations efforts lack adequate standards and the ability to demonstrate the value of public relations as a

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professional discipline that supports business excellence (Macnamara, 2014). In short, much remains to be known about how communication practitioners in the profession manage the issue of measurement and evaluation in public relations, including how the issue stacks up versus other challenges facing the profession, what strategic actions they have taken to manage this issue, and what measurement and evaluation standards they have applied to demonstrate the value of public relations practice.

Therefore, to better understand the measurement challenges facing communication practitioners, we focused our investigation on how practitioners have used different strategies to manage the measurement challenge of demonstrating the value of public relations. More importantly, this research investigated the measurement challenge from a global perspective. By surveying communication practitioners in multiple countries and different geographic locations, this research aims at identifying current trends and effective approaches in communication measurement across countries. In addition, we integrated the application of leadership skills in assessing the impact of top communication leaders' effectiveness on managing measurement challenge in public relations.

In pursuing this task, we analyzed the data collected from a global online survey of communication professionals. The contribution of this research is trifold: First, by analyzing the results from a global survey on the importance of measurement and evaluation—the latter of which has been referred to as among “the most common buzzwords in public relations” (McCoy and Hargie, 2003, p. 304)—we contribute a global view to a prominent issue in the field. Second, our research contributes to identifying applied standards and approaches in demonstrating the value of public relations through improved measurement across the globe. In grouping our international sample into five distinct geographic clusters: North America, Latin America, Europe (excluding German-speaking countries), Germanic Europe, and Asia, we identified overall high levels of concern about measurement and evaluation with a particularly high score across Latin American countries. Third, our research contributes to the broader measurement literature in communication management by applying leadership effectiveness to study top communication leaders' supporting role in demonstrating the value of public relations. The implications to practice and future research are also discussed.

Literature Review

Public Relations Measurement and Evaluation: The Challenges and the Evolution

How to effectively measure the value of public relations practice attracts increasing attention as the organization moves toward excellence and efficiency. As a crucial feature to the success of organizational sustainable development and financial performance, communication effectiveness has been a promising topic of investigation in the fields of organizational behaviors, business management, and

communication consulting in recent years (Rust et al., 2004a, b). Public relations measurement and evaluation has long been a major professional and research issue (Watson, 2012). Communication professionals have been exploring effective metrics and methodologies to evaluate the effectiveness of organizations' communication initiatives, focusing specifically on how communication practices can be effectively linked to improved financial performance at the organizational level and positive organizational reputation in other, non-monetary, areas. The discussion of communication effectiveness and its linkage to organization's financial performance can be located in the wider communication management literature since the 1980s (e.g., Broom and Dozier, 1983, 1990; Dozier, 1984, 1990; Dozier and Ehling, 1992; Grunig et al., 2002; Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Meng and Berger, 2012; Stacks and Watson, 2007; Stacks and Michaelson, 2010; Watson, 2012).

The need for measurement and evaluation standards seems especially relevant today as the industry is becoming highly competitive and turbulent. The demanded skill sets for communication professionals to demonstrate communication excellence are constantly changing and expanding. When the situations in the industry itself move from being simple to complex, from stable to dynamic, it is crucial for communication professionals to accurately respond to changing situations in such a way that both organizations and stakeholders perceive communication efforts to better fit their needs and demonstrate the value (Lindenmann, 2003; Schultz, 2002; Taylor, 2010). Organizations with greater reliance on effective communications will thus be better able to achieve higher return on their efforts and improve their performance (e.g., Hurley and Hult, 1998; Narayanan et al., 2004; Rust et al., 2004b).

Previous research on measurement and evaluation in public relations has been rooted in Grunig's excellence theory by measuring public relations excellence within an organizational context and culture (Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Thurlow et al., 2017). An evaluation of excellence reflects how to achieve public relations excellence in an ideal situation, which shall transform an organization from asymmetrical to symmetrical two-way communication (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). Public relations scholars have endeavored to develop discipline-specific theories and insightful methods of evaluation related to public relations practice and linked to an organization's key goals, objectives, publics and communications (Lindenmann, 2003). Driven by excellence theory, previous research on measurement and evaluation in public relations has provided a case-by-case discussion of various situations in public relations practice, including the adoption of standards in motivating different stakeholders (Lueg et al., 2016), public relations value assessment in cross-cultural settings (Huang, 2012), using business metrics to assess the effectiveness of communication initiatives (Meng and Berger, 2012), advocating the use of mixed-methods (i.e., both qualitative and quantitative methods) to measure the success of investor relations in corporate communications (Ragas and Laskin, 2014), and the financial and non-financial aspects of communication value as underlying cultural expectations or social norms (Stacks and Michaelson, 2014).

Although scholars have widely recognized the multidimensional effects of public relations as well as the challenges in enforcing standards when applying measurement metrics in diverse situations (e.g., Huang, 2012), previous works have confirmed that communication effectiveness is one of the leading indicators of an organization's financial performance (Ehling et al., 1992; Leug et al., 2016). An improvement in communication effectiveness is associated with a higher level of employee engagement within the organizational context, which can lead to increased market value and business performance of the organization (Morris, 2010). In addition, communication effectiveness is instrumentally important in building trust and shaping the two-way communication model as addressed by the Excellence Theory (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). Research done by Moorman et al. (1992) confirmed that timely communication fosters trust by informing key groups of stakeholders to appreciate the latest developments in the organization, assisting in resolving problems and misunderstanding, and aligning perceptions and expectations.

When analyzing measurement and evaluation standards in public relations, Stacks and Michaelson (2014) addressed the importance of understanding nonfinancial indicators (i.e., credibility, trust, reputation, relationships, and confidence) in measuring public relations value and how they relate to organizations' goals, objectives and performance. They suggested that these nonfinancial indicators, combined with the financial ones, can increase stockholders' expectations and lead to a high level of return on expectations (ROE) in communication. They further suggested organizations adopt standards to measure ROE as it can eventually affect return on investment (ROI) and other business principles. Thus, it is crucial for communication practitioners to conceptualize and formulate the relationships between the financial and nonfinancial indicators and establish how each variable relates to ROE and contributes to the final ROI (Watson, 2013).

As encouraged by the intensive discussions on public relations measurement and evaluation at numerous academic and industry conferences, the profession also witnesses a surge in efforts to develop standards for measurement and evaluation in public relations with a few benchmark initiatives being established. These initiatives include the Institute for Public Relations' Measurement Commission created in 1997, The Conclave Social Media Measurement Standards (2013) (Paine, 2012), the Barcelona Declaration of Measurement Principles in 2010 and 2015, and the most recent Barcelona Principles 3.0 released by the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC, 2020). Although such attempts at establishing standards in measurement and evaluation in public relations are particularly important, it further addresses the fact that public relations value shall be measured to validate the improved communication effectiveness in supporting organizational performance. If the majority of practitioners agree that standards for measurement and evaluation in public relations are necessary (Zerfass et al. 2017), what are the specific strategies and actions that have been undertaken by practitioners to address the measurement challenge? Therefore, to better understand the measurement challenge and some best practice principles of current practice, we propose the following questions to

guide our research when searching for effective standards and actions in public relations measurement:

- **RQ1:** What is the perception of communication practitioners concerning the importance of “improving the measurement of communication effectiveness to demonstrate value”?
- **RQ2:** Do importance ratings for “improving the measurement of communication effectiveness to demonstrate value” differ across country clusters?
- **RQ3:** What strategies are currently being employed by communication practitioners to deal with the measurement challenge? And, are the strategies the same across countries?

The Role of Excellent Leadership in Demonstrating Public Relations Value

In addition, research rooted in excellence theory in communication suggests that an organization with a culture encouraging two-way symmetrical communication will facilitate excellence in communication and enhances effective public relations practice (Thurlow et al., 2017). When being completely integrated into the organization they work for, excellent communication departments demonstrate stronger leadership in leveraging its strategic counseling function (Tench et al., 2017). Thus, effective leadership in communication is vital to communication departments and their organization’s success, image, and future.

Similar to the development of measurement and evaluation in public relations, research on leadership in public relations is embedded in excellence theory in public relations, managerial leadership research, and organizational communication studies (Berger and Meng, 2010). The concept of public relations leadership is implicit in several theoretical perspectives in the field as investigated by different groups of scholars, ranging from excellence and role theories (Grunig et al., 2002), power relations in leadership effectiveness (Berger and Reber, 2006), public relations leadership as an integrated process (Meng and Berger, 2013), ethical leadership in public relations practice (Bowen, 2008), as well as leadership styles and gender roles (Aldoory and Toth, 2004).

According to Meng and Berger (2013), public relations leadership is defined as “a dynamic process that encompasses a complex mix of individual skills and personal attributes, values and behaviors that consistently produce ethical and effective communication practice” (p. 143). Consequently, excellent public relations leadership “fuels and guides successful communication teams, helps organizations achieve their goals, and legitimizes organizations in society” (Meng and Berger, 2013, p. 143). As such, excellent leadership in public relations depicts various aspects of leadership functions and its role in supporting effective public relations practice as different sets of leadership skills and knowledge (i.e., strategic decision making, ethical counseling, role and identity development, and change management) are desired (Berger and Meng, 2010). So far, research on public relations leadership has confirmed that excellent communication leadership is crucial in supporting the communication team to leverage the strategic influence

and value of public relations within and beyond the organization (Meng and Berger, 2019).

Based on the research outlined above, we are particularly interested in testing the role of excellent leadership in public relations in supporting measurement effectiveness. Will communication leaders have a better understanding of the measurement challenge and solutions? Will certain leadership qualities be more important in helping communication practitioners adopt effective strategies and actions to solve measurement issues? How can excellent leadership in public relations be integrated into measurement efforts in searching for best practices? Thus, we believe there is a strong need for us to explore how leadership capabilities can help manage issues affiliated with measurement challenges in practice. Therefore, we proposed two more research questions to investigate such relationship:

- **RQ4:** What leadership qualities are rated as most and least important for dealing with the measurement issue? And, do different qualities emerge as more or less important across our country clusters?
- **RQ5:** What drives the importance ascribed to the different leadership qualities for dealing with the measurement issue?

Research Method

To answer the proposed research questions, we relied on data from a global online survey of public relations practitioners in more than 20 countries across the globe through the research partners in each country. A mixed sampling strategy was employed in order to achieve an overall satisfactory completion rate and the survey was administered using an online survey software program, which supported multiple languages. The original survey was created and pilot tested in English before being translated into the home language of each of the non-English speaking countries included in the project. Back translational procedures were employed for this process to ensure the meaning of terms, concepts and phrases were appropriately understood by communication practitioners in each investigated country (Brislin, 1970).

The research partners in each country were responsible for developing and recruiting their sample of participants. The global online survey was launched in different countries during a specific time frame for recruitment. On average, the online survey recruitment for all countries lasted approximately three months. The centralized online survey site was active for six months in total to support the recruitment progress in each individual country. Across all surveyed countries, the survey had a response rate of approximately 45%. Overall, we had 4,483 communication practitioners globally completed the survey. Specifically, to reflect the major focus of this research, the final sample size used for analysis in this paper is 548 as we deliberately included only those participants who indicated improving the measurement of communication effectiveness as their top priority in

practice. Detailed information about the sample's demographics are explained in the following sections.

Country Variable

In order to garner a more thorough understanding of practitioner attitudes across the globe, and to take advantage of the depth and breadth of our dataset, we wanted to include respondents from all across the globe in our analyses. However, running unique regressions for respondents in more than 20 countries proved problematic due to differences in sample size, while running a single regression on all respondents meant missing out on global differences and the nuance of our data. Therefore, we began our analysis by first organizing groups of countries based on geography and cultural similarities. First, we isolated our Germanic countries or German-speaking countries, which consisted of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Next, we grouped other European nations together, which consisted of respondents from Estonia, Latvia, Russia, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Our North American countries were Canada and the United States, while our Latin American grouping consisted of Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. Finally, our Asian country grouping consisted of respondents from China, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and India. Of course, no grouping of countries is without flaws, given the diversity across countries and populations. Nevertheless, we made our groupings based on previous global research in the field (House et al., 2004).

Independent Variables

Gender, age, and education served as the demographic variables in our analysis. *Gender* was a dichotomous variable with female coded as "1" and male coded as "0" (51.7% female). *Age* was measured as an ordinal-level variable with six categories ranging from "under 25 years of age" (coded as '1') to "66 years or older" (coded as '6'). Given the overall small number of respondents falling in our two most extreme categories, we combined several categories to create an age variable that ranged from "under 36 years of age" (coded as '1') to "55 years or older" (coded as '4'). The median age category was '2,' which indicated "36 to 45 years of age." *Education* was measured as an ordinal variable with four categories anchored at "High school degree or equivalent" (coded as '1') and "Doctoral degree" (coded as '4'). The median value for our education variable was '3,' indicative of a "Master's degree."

Outside of the sheer number of years of education, we were interested in examining the impacts of a respondent's educational major. To do so we created a series of dummy variables based on the question: "If you earned a degree from a college or university, what was your major or primary area of study?" Our *Business background* variable included all those who indicated a business degree, including those who mentioned general business, business administration, or business management (12.5%). Our *Hard sciences background* variable included all those who indicated a degree from the hard sciences, including areas like

mathematics, chemistry, or physics, among others (13.5%). Our *Communications and Journalism background* variable included all those who indicated a degree in a communications or journalism field, but importantly, not those who explicitly mentioned either advertising or public relations as their major (24.2%). Our *Humanities background* variable included all those who indicated a degree in the humanities, including those with degrees in history, linguistics, and speech, among others (17.2%). Our *Social sciences background* variable included all those who indicated a social science degree, including areas like anthropology, psychology, sociology, and political science (9.6%). Our comparison group was all those respondents with a degree in either public relations or advertising (23%).

Our next set of variables took a more nuanced look at the work environment that a respondent worked in, as well as their role within that organization. *Unit size* was measured by asking respondents to report the approximate number of professionals working in their communication unit or function. The variable consisted of four categories that ranged from “Fewer than 5 professionals” (coded as ‘1’) to “More than 25 professionals” (coded as ‘4’) and had a median value of ‘2,’ indicating “5-15 professionals.” *Reporting hierarchy* was measured by asking respondents to report the number of levels between themselves and the highest ranked communication leader in the organization. We recoded the variable into three categories (‘1’ = “I am the top leader,” ‘2’ = “one level down from top leader,” and ‘3’ = “two or more levels down from top leader”). The median value was “one level down from top leader.” *Experience* was measured by asking respondents to report the total number of years of professional experience in communication management or public relations. The variable consisted of five categories that ranged from “Less than 5 years” (coded as ‘1’) to “More than 20 years” (coded as ‘5’) and had a median value of ‘3,’ which indicated “11-15 years” of experience.

Our final set of independent variables explored the prevalence of different strategies for dealing with the measurement and evaluation of public relations. Respondents were asked to report to what extent their communication team or unit is implementing each of the following five strategies to help deal with the issue of measurement: “Using business outcome metrics to measure effectiveness at the performance level” ($M = 4.8$; $SD = 1.9$), “Monitoring and analyzing media coverage of the organization and its competitors or clients” ($M = 5.5$; $SD = 1.5$), “Hiring external experts to provide measurement skills and develop metrics” ($M = 4.0$; $SD = 1.9$), “Attending workshops on measurement to learn and adopt best practices” ($M = 4.1$; $SD = 1.9$) and “Focusing more on nonfinancial performance indicators than financial measures” ($M = 4.6$; $SD = 1.8$). Response options for the above items ranged from “1” (indicating “a little bit”) to “7” (indicating “a great deal”).

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables of interest in this study are measures of importance concerning a number of different leadership abilities for dealing with the measurement issue in public relations practice. Respondents were asked to report

to what extent they agree that each of the seven following conditions or leadership personal abilities or qualities is important in helping their communication leader deal successfully with the measurement issue: “Possessing communication knowledge to develop appropriate strategies, plans and messages” ($M = 6.1$; $SD = 1.1$), “Participating in your organization’s strategic decision-making regarding the issue” ($M = 6.3$; $SD = 1.0$), “Possessing a strong ethical orientation and set of values to guide actions” ($M = 5.6$; $SD = 1.4$), “Having the ability to build and manage professional work teams to address the issue” ($M = 5.9$; $SD = 1.1$), “Providing a compelling vision for how communication can help the organization” ($M = 6.0$; $SD = 1.1$), “Having the ability to develop coalitions in and outside the organization to deal with the issue” ($M = 5.7$; $SD = 1.3$), and “Working in an organization that supports 2-way communication and shared power” ($M = 5.6$; $SD = 1.4$). Response options for the above items ranged from “1” (indicating “a little bit”) to “7” (indicating “a great deal”).

Methodological Notes

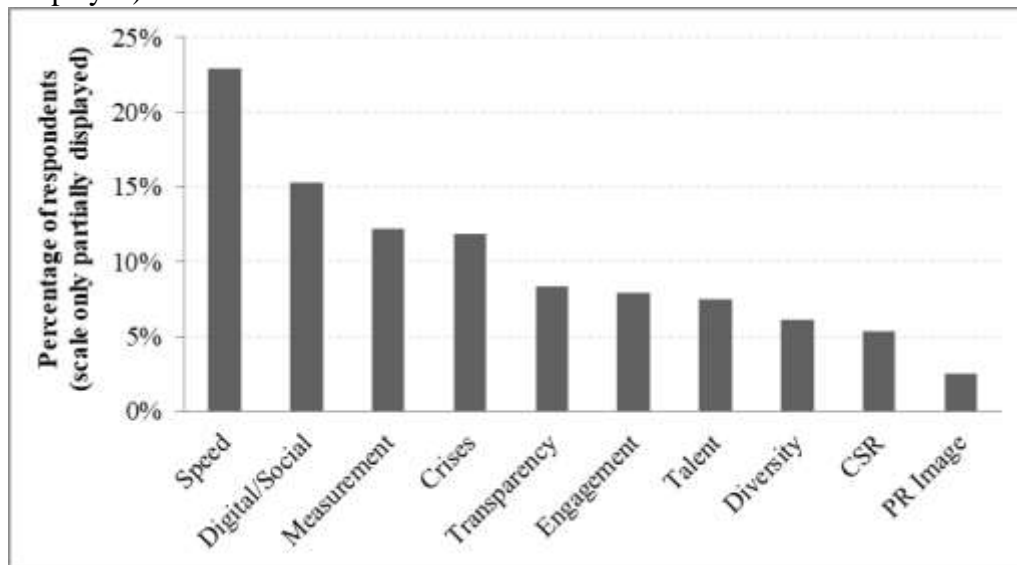
We answered our research questions using two statistical analysis techniques. First, we employed simple ANOVA to determine whether, and to what degree (a) the strategies being employed by communication leaders to deal with measurement issues in public relations and (b) perceptions of the most important leadership qualities for dealing with this same issue differed across our country clusters. Second, we ran hierarchical ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models among all those respondents who selected measurement as the most important issue facing communication practitioners to determine which variables predicted which leadership qualities as important. The OLS regression approach allowed for an investigation of how multiple independent variables—tested in a single model—influenced the dependent variables of interest (Cohen et al. 2003). Independent variables were entered into the regression models based on their assumed causal order (demographics, followed by educational background, work environment, and current coping strategies) (Cohen et al., 2003).

Results

RQ1: The Perceived Importance of Measuring Communication Effectiveness to Demonstrate Value

As Figure 1 illustrates, the most important issue believed to be facing communication practitioners is “dealing with the speed and volume of information flow,” followed by concerns about “managing the digital revolution and rise of social media.” “Improving the measurement of communication effectiveness to demonstrate value,” the primary focus of this paper, emerged as the third most important issue facing communication practitioners, followed closely by concerns about “being prepared to deal effectively with crises that may arise.”

Figure 1. The Percentage of Respondents who Report Each Area as the Most Important Issue Facing their Communication Leader (Scale only Partially Displayed)



RQ2: Different Country Clusters and their Ratings for Measurement Challenges in Communication

Figure 2 illustrates the average importance rating for “Improving the measurement of communication effectiveness to demonstrate value” across our five country clusters. As the figure shows, Latin American respondents rated measurement as especially important, followed by Asian respondents, North American respondents, European respondents, and finally, Germanic European respondents. Figure 3 illustrates this information in a slightly different manner, showing the percentage of respondents in each country cluster who report “Improving the measurement of communication effectiveness to demonstrate value” as the most important issue facing their communication leader. Latin American respondents were most likely to report the measurement issue as most important (22.0%), followed by North American respondents (13.7%), Asian respondents (12.7%), European respondents (9.5%), and finally, Germanic European respondents (8.7%).

Figure 2. Importance Ratings by Mean Scores for “Improving the Measurement of Communication Effectiveness” based on Country Clusters

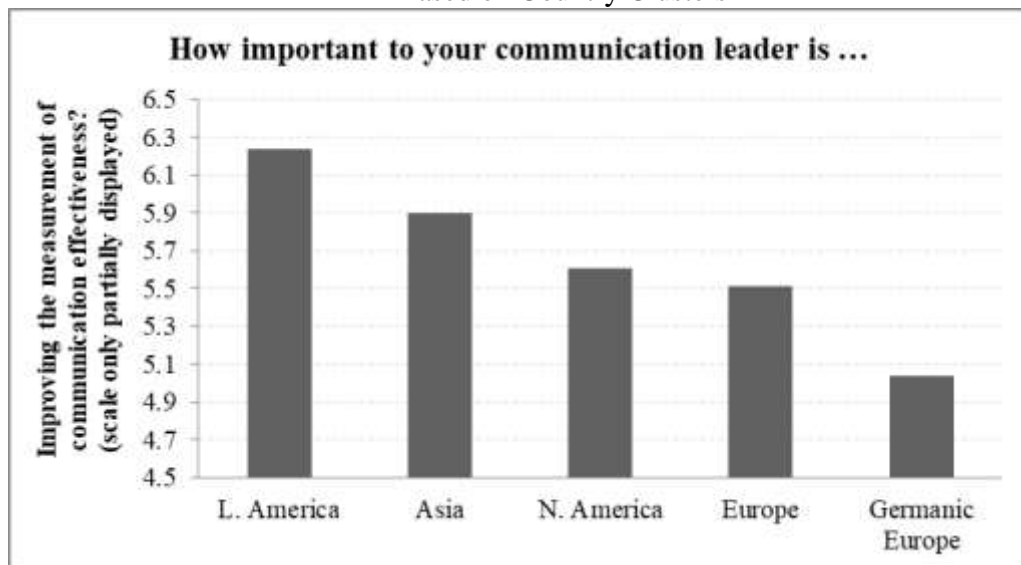
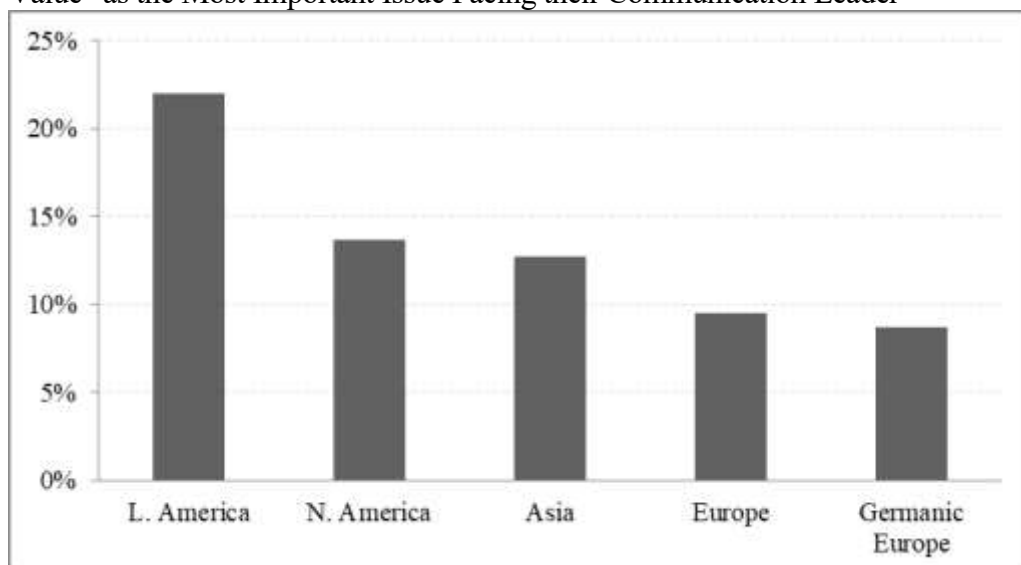


Figure 3. The Percentage of Respondents in Each Country Cluster who Report “Improving the Measurement of Communication Effectiveness to Demonstrate Value” as the Most Important Issue Facing their Communication Leader



RQ3: Country Clusters and their Strategies to Deal with Measurement Challenges in Communication

We conducted an ANOVA test across different country clusters in terms of the communication strategies being employed by communication practitioners to deal with measurement issues. The results of the ANOVA can be found in Table 1. A few clear patterns emerged from the data. First, respondents in Asia, and to a lesser extent, Latin America typically rated all strategies as more likely to be employed by their communication leaders, a point we will return to in our

Discussion section. Second, “monitoring and analyzing media coverage of the organization and its competitors or clients” emerged as the most common strategy across respondents regardless of country cluster, while “hiring external experts to provide measurement skills and develop metrics” was arguably the least common strategy being employed. In terms of the former, there were no significant differences across country clusters ($F [4, 543] = 1.750, p = 0.138$), with all of clusters showing a high propensity to rely on this tactic. There were, however, significant differences across clusters for the other strategy items.

Table 1. ANOVAs Assessing the Strategies being Employed by Communication Leaders to Deal with Measurement Issues in Public Relations based on Country Clusters

Issue	Country Clusters					p-value
	Germanic Europe	Europe	N. America	L. America	Asia	
1. Using business outcome metrics to measure effectiveness at the performance level	4.29	4.72	5.29	4.64	5.85	0.000
2. Monitoring and analyzing media coverage of the organization and its competitors or clients	5.52	5.21	5.37	5.49	5.85	0.138
3. Hiring external experts to provide measurement skills and develop metrics	3.68	3.74	3.91	4.26	4.61	0.004
4. Attending workshops on measurement to learn and adopt best practices	3.43	3.97	4.10	4.54	4.85	0.000
5. Focusing more on nonfinancial performance indicators than financial measures	4.52	4.21	4.73	4.59	5.37	0.003
<i>N</i>	155	67	115	149	62	

Notes: (1) ANOVA comparisons are made across countries with significance indicating that there are statistically significant differences in the strategies being employed by communication leaders to deal with the measurement issue across country clusters.

Table 2. ANOVAs Assessing Perceptions of the Most Important Leadership Qualities for Dealing with Measurement Issues in Public Relations based on Country Clusters

Issue	Country Clusters					p-value
	Germanic Europe	Europe	N. America	L. America	Asia	
1. Possessing comm. knowledge to develop appropriate strategies, plans & messages	6.07	6.30	6.25	6.59	6.47	0.000
2. Participating in your organization's strategic decision-making regarding the issue	6.36	6.42	6.55	6.54	6.05	0.003
3. Possessing a strong ethical orientation and set of values to guide actions	4.77	5.40	5.74	6.23	5.58	0.000
4. Having the ability to build and manage professional work teams to address the issue	5.57	5.82	5.87	6.12	5.65	0.001
5. Providing a compelling vision for how comm. can help the organization	6.01	6.15	6.32	6.61	6.23	0.000
6. Having the ability to develop coalitions in and outside the organization to deal with the issue	5.35	5.85	5.66	6.20	5.81	0.000
7. Working in an organization that supports two-way comm. and shared power	5.14	5.57	5.61	6.06	5.84	0.000
<i>N</i>	<i>155</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>149</i>	<i>62</i>	

Notes: (1) ANOVA comparisons are made across countries with significance indicating that there are statistically significant differences in the ratings ascribed to a given leadership quality across country clusters.

RQ4: Leadership Qualities and their Roles in Dealing with Measurement Challenges across Country Clusters

Having explored the current strategies being utilized to deal with measurement, we next turned attention toward how communication practitioners viewed leadership in this area. Specifically, we sought to understand the leadership qualities that practitioners viewed as particularly desirable or important for dealing with the measurement issue, and whether different attributes were more or less desirable across our country clusters. A few notable patterns emerged as listed in Table 2. First, the ANOVAs revealed significant differences in the importance

ascribed to each of the different leadership qualities across our country clusters. Part of this was driven by the responses of the Latin American respondents, who had average scores of '6' or better for each of the leadership qualities probed, indicative of a belief that all of the leadership qualities were of high importance. Second, Germanic Europeans, Europeans, and North Americans were particularly bullish on the need for participation from their communication leader concerning strategic decision-making, with that leadership quality having the highest average score among respondents from those countries. Having a strong ethical orientation to guide actions, however, was typically rated as much less important among respondents across all of the country clusters.

RQ5: The Importance Ascribed to the Different Leadership Qualities when Dealing with Measurement Challenges in Communication

Finally, we ran seven regression models to determine what predicts the importance ascribed to each of the seven leadership qualities we identified for dealing with the measurement issues. The results of the final models of the regressions can be found in Tables 3 and 4. To begin, we see that demographics played a very small role in predicting the importance of our various leadership qualities. In fact, demographics emerged as significant in only one of our regression models. Specifically, females and younger respondents were more likely to see greater value in an openness to two-way communication as a means of successfully addressing the measurement issue.

Educational background played a slightly larger predictive role in our regressions. For the regression predicting the importance of "Possessing communication knowledge to develop appropriate strategies, plans and messages," we found that those with a degree in the humanities viewed this leadership quality as less important than those who received a degree in either advertising or public relations. For the regression predicting "Possessing a strong ethical orientation and set of values to guide actions," those receiving a degree in both the humanities and the social sciences viewed this leadership quality as less important than those who received a degree in either advertising or public relations. For the regression predicting "Having the ability to develop coalitions in and outside the organization to deal with the issue," those who graduated from the social sciences were viewed this leadership quality as less important than those who received a degree in either advertising or public relations.

Unit size emerged as arguably the most important workplace environment variable impacting how respondents view the relative importance of the different leadership ability measures. Unit size was positively associated with rating "Having the ability to build and manage professional work teams to address the issue" as an important leadership attribute, meaning that those respondents who worked in larger communication units, with a greater number of communication professionals were more likely to rate this attribute as important. Conversely, unit size was negatively related to "Providing a compelling vision for how communication can help the organization" and "Working in an organization that supports 2-way communication and shared power," indicating that those in smaller

units, with fewer communication professionals were more likely to rate these leadership attributes as important.

Table 3. Final Regression Models (Part I) Predicting Most Important Leadership Qualities for Dealing with Measurement as a PR issue (N=492 for Each Regression)

	Possessing communication knowledge	Participating in strategic decision-making for org.	Possessing a strong ethical orientation	Building and managing work teams
<i>Block 1: Demographics</i>				
Gender (female coded)	0.07	-0.02	0.08	0.07
Age	-0.12	-0.04	-0.02	-0.06
Education	-0.03	0.01	-0.02	-0.02
<i>Inc. R² (%)</i>	<i>1.6*</i>	<i>0.3</i>	<i>1.3</i>	<i>0.5</i>
<i>Block 2: Educational Background</i>				
Business	-0.08	-0.00	-0.08	-0.01
Hard sciences	-0.09	-0.02	-0.05	0.01
	-0.04	-0.02	-0.05	0.08
Humanities	-0.14**	-0.01	-0.13*	0.00
Social sciences	-0.06	-0.10	-0.12*	-0.09
<i>Inc. R² (%)</i>	<i>2.5*</i>	<i>0.8</i>	<i>2.8*</i>	<i>1.7</i>
<i>Block 3: Work Environment</i>				
Unit size	-0.05	-0.06	-0.06	0.11*
Reporting hierarchy organization	-0.03	-0.10*	0.00	-0.03
Work experience	0.10	0.11	0.11	0.06
<i>Inc. R² (%)</i>	<i>0.9</i>	<i>2.6**</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>1.6</i>
<i>Block 4: Current coping strategies</i>				
Business outcomes to measure performance	0.04	0.03	0.02	0.04
Monitoring/analyzing media coverage	0.12**	0.11*	0.07	0.00
Hiring external experts	0.05	0.01	0.06	0.06
Attending workshops on measurement	0.09	0.06	0.11*	0.08
Implementing non-financial indicators	0.10*	0.10*	0.10*	0.11*
<i>Inc. R² (%)</i>	<i>2.1</i>	<i>1.8</i>	<i>1.8</i>	<i>1.5</i>
<i>Total R² (%)</i>	<i>7.1</i>	<i>5.5</i>	<i>6.6</i>	<i>5.3</i>

Notes: (1) * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; (2) Cell entries for Blocks 1-3 are standardized regression coefficients, while cell entries for Block 4 are before-entry standardized regression coefficients due to issues of multicollinearity.

Table 4. Final Regression Models (Part II) Predicting Most Important Leadership Qualities for Dealing with Measurement as a PR Issue (N = 492 for Each Regression)

	Providing a compelling vision	Developing coalitions	Openness to two-way comm. in your org.
<i>Block 1: Demographics</i>			
Gender (female coded high)	0.04	0.01	0.10*
Age	-0.07	-0.03	-0.14*
Education	-0.04	-0.03	0.08
<i>Inc. R² (%)</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>3.0**</i>
<i>Block 2: Educational Background</i>			
Business	-0.01	0.01	-0.08
Hard sciences	-0.07	-0.09	-0.07
Communication/Journalism	0.01	0.06	-0.01
Humanities	-0.06	-0.08	-0.08
Social sciences	-0.08	-0.13**	-0.08
<i>Inc. R² (%)</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>3.3**</i>	<i>1.8</i>
<i>Block 3: Work Environment</i>			
Unit size	-0.11*	-0.08	-0.10*
Reporting hierarchy organization	0.08	-0.02	-0.07
Work experience	0.16*	0.01	0.12
<i>Inc. R² (%)</i>	<i>1.6*</i>	<i>0.5</i>	<i>2.5**</i>
<i>Block 4: Coping strategies</i>			
Business outcomes to measure performance	0.07	0.06	0.06
Monitoring/analyzing media	0.09	0.03	0.09
Hiring external experts	0.04	0.06	0.10*
Attending workshops on measurement	0.09	0.05	0.11*
Implementing non-financial indicators	0.16***	0.16***	0.11*
<i>Inc. R² (%)</i>	<i>2.8*</i>	<i>2.6*</i>	<i>1.9</i>
<i>Total R² (%)</i>	<i>7.1</i>	<i>6.8</i>	<i>9.2</i>

Notes: (1) * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; (2) Cell entries for Blocks 1-3 are standardized regression coefficients, while cell entries for Block 4 are before-entry standardized regression coefficients due to issues of multicollinearity.

Reporting hierarchy was negatively related to ratings of “Participating in your organization’s strategic decision-making regarding the issue.” This indicates that the further a respondent is from the top communication leader in their organization the more likely they are to view this attribute as important. Work experience was positively related to ratings of “Providing a compelling vision for how communication can help the organization.” In other words, those with longer professional experience in the field of public relations were more likely to view this leadership quality as important in demonstrating the value of public relations by developing measurement and evaluation standards.

The final block of our regression looked at how the coping strategies currently being employed at a respondents' place of work to deal with the measurement issue impacted their perceptions of important leadership qualities for dealing with this same issue. Respondents at organizations that are relying more heavily on social media monitoring and analytics were more likely to rate "Possessing communication knowledge to develop appropriate strategies, plans and messages" and "Participating in your organization's strategic decision-making regarding the issue" as particularly important leadership qualities for dealing with the measurement issue.

Respondents who reported a greater frequency of attending workshops on measurement to learn best practices were more likely to rate "Possessing a strong ethical orientation and set of values to guide actions" and "Working in an organization that supports 2-way communication and shared power" as highly important leadership abilities for navigating the measurement issue. Those at organizations that are hiring external experts to develop measurement skills and metrics were also more likely to rate "Working in an organization that supports 2-way communication and shared power" as an important leadership quality.

Finally, working at an organization that is relying on non-financial performance indicators was associated positively with all seven of our leadership attribute items. This echoes previous research findings on measurement and evaluation in public relations that highlights the importance of integrating nonfinancial indicators when measuring the value of public relations and developing a strong linkage to organizations' goals, objectives and performance (Stacks and Michaelson, 2014). We will further elaborate on these results in the Discussion section.

Discussion

As revealed in previous research, intensive discussions have taken place among communication practitioners and scholars on how to demonstrate the value of communication for businesses and organizations and standardize the evaluation metrics to smooth measurement challenges in the field of public relations and communication management (Buhmann et al., 2019; Volk, 2016). Through more than three decades of debates and research, public relations practitioners and scholars have come together in acknowledging the critical roles of research, measurement, and evaluation as grounded evidence of successful public relations efforts (e.g., Stacks and Michaelson, 2014; Stacks and Watson, 2007; Watson, 2012). Yet, few studies have examined specific measurement challenges or the methods that have been adopted to overcome those challenges from a global perspective (e.g., Huang, 2012).

Therefore, the research presented here aimed to do just that by contributing to our understanding of how communication practitioners view measurement and evaluation problems and solutions in public relations, and by placing that understanding within an international context. Equally important, this research investigates the role of leadership skills in supporting communication practitioners

applying effective strategies to manage the measurement issue. Answers from communication practitioners in different country clusters reflect their workplace experiences in applying diverse strategies in managing measurement challenges in public relations practice. Such diversity in strategy implementation also echoes their different expectations on leadership skills that may help guide future practice and academic research.

Prior to elaborating on our findings, we first acknowledge some limitations of the present work. To begin, it is worth noting that our analysis is not based on a true probability sample of communication practitioners across the globe. This is, of course, hardly surprising as such a sample has never been convened in public relations and communication management scholarship due to the many logistic hurdles associated with building a full sampling frame or practitioners and administering a data collection across all countries with a public relations presence. Nevertheless, our sample was collected from more than 20 countries across the globe and in the home language of each country, with the solid 45% response rate providing further evidence of the validity of the data.

A second limitation concerns our focus on a single of the many important challenges facing communication practitioners—the issue of measurement. While this decision moved us away from other challenges facing communication practitioners in the space, it is undeniable that measurement is a paramount challenge facing public relations as a global industry (Almansa-Martinez and Fernandez-Souto, 2020; DiStaso et al., 2011). More importantly, we viewed garnering a more nuanced and in-depth look at that specific challenge as more valuable than having a broader, but ultimately more superficial look at a host of different challenges facing the industry.

Finally, there are a pair of measurement issues worth noting. First, our analyses relied heavily on single-item measures throughout, which of course make it impossible to identify or control for random measurement error in the regression models. Had we been able to employ multi-item dependent variables, the relationships observed here would likely have been even stronger. Second, given unbalanced sample size concerns in each individual country, we grouped respondents from different countries into broad regions based on geography and cultural similarities. Of course, even culturally similar countries are ultimately unique and likely to have their own sets of specific problems facing communication practitioners and the industry. Nevertheless, we were sure to base our groupings on previous scholarship (House et al., 2004).

Overall, based on our global results, “improving the measurement of communication effectiveness to demonstrate value” emerged as the third most important issue facing practitioners globally. Such consistency in the ratings across country clusters likely reflects the general global trend that has emerged—particularly during the last decade—to develop and implement effective metrics for assessing the value of public relations. A detailed breakdown of the ratings by investigated country clusters further indicated that practitioners in Latin America rated this issue particularly high, followed by practitioners in Asia, North America, Europe, and Germanic Europe.

Such a pattern was also reflected when we look into the actual coping strategies their communication leaders have employed to deal with measurement issues. Practitioners in Latin America, and especially Asia, rated all five coping strategies as more likely to be employed by their communication leaders. This might be indicative of a more aggressive and proactive approach to measurement problems in such countries. Across the global sample, the strategy of “monitoring and analyzing media coverage of the organization and its competitors or clients” is the most common one that has been widely adopted across all investigated country clusters. Not surprisingly, the strategy of “hiring external experts to provide measurement skills and develop metrics” is the least common one to be adopted, which further reflects the need to develop sufficient resources for metrics that can be used. The dearth of resources devoted to hiring experts to address measurement problems is thus a global problem, rather than one isolated within a handful of organizations or specific parts of the world, even within those countries that were more likely to report higher use of that coping strategy. This might reflect a reluctance to spend money on the problem or skepticism surrounding how those outside of public relations might be able to offer solutions to this specific type of communication problem.

In terms of leadership skills that have been viewed as desirable or effective in managing the measurement challenge, respondents across the investigated country clusters generally suggested that strategic decision-making and the knowledge basis for strategic decision-making were crucial for leadership facing such challenges, as was having a compelling vision for how communication can address problems. Conversely, having a strong ethical orientation to guide actions was rated the overall least important attribute for dealing with measurement challenges. This latter point is somewhat worrisome given the close ties between measurement, data, and privacy and the recent stories of data abuses by large companies in recent years (e.g., Facebook and Cambridge Analytica). Similar to the coping strategies noted earlier, respondents in Latin America believed that all seven leadership capabilities were of high importance, while Germanic European respondents tended to ascribe generally lower levels of importance across the board. The consistency of these patterns is interesting as it suggests that different countries are generally more or less pessimistic when it comes to dealing with measurement as a communication problem.

Further, our results indicated that certain demographics and workplace environment variables may play important roles in improving measurement efforts. For example, our regression models suggested that females and younger professionals believe that an open and two-way communication culture can be a great facilitator in addressing the measurement issue. The public relations profession itself is facing the challenge of increasing diversity. Even as more and more female practitioners, millennial professionals, as well as other practitioners with diverse backgrounds join the workforce, demand for an open and two-way communication culture will need to be endorsed by those in management positions as well as practitioners in different cultures and societies if it is to gain widespread adoption.

Respondents' place of work (i.e., type of organization) also reflected their expectations on the most valuable leadership qualities for dealing with the measurement issue. Those from larger organizations were more likely to view the management of professional work teams as important for addressing measurement issues in public relations and communication management, while at the same time, putting less weight on less tangible leadership qualities, such as having a compelling vision and embracing two-way communication as important for dealing with this problem. This might be reflective of their day-to-day observations that reveal the importance of carefully managed collaborations on campaign success and their lower levels of involvement with shaping things like company mission statements and policy.

Similarly, workplace experience and position, as well as the tactics already being employed to deal with measurement issues were also associated with attitudes toward desirable leadership qualities. Those who are further away from high-level decision-making viewed their involvement in such decision-making to be more rather than less important for addressing measurement issues in communication practice—perhaps because they feel they have little voice in such matters and are confident that they have other items on the agenda worthwhile to say.

Conversely, those who have been with an organization for a longer period of time believed more in the importance of having a compelling vision for dealing with such problems. It may be the case that longer time with an organization leads to more involvement with high-level factors like communicating company visions, and therefore, a greater appreciation for how these less tangible qualities shape organizational success. Respondents at organizations that are relying more heavily on social media monitoring and analytics were more likely to rate “Possessing communication knowledge to develop appropriate strategies, plans and messages” as important leadership qualities for dealing with issues of measurement. This may reflect that fact that such employees have seen the power of data in action and understand how the knowledge gleaned from such data can shape solutions to problems.

Overall, the results suggest that communication practitioners expect an effective communication leader who possesses sufficient communication knowledge to develop appropriate strategies, plans and messages will be able to adopt effective strategies, such as relying on social media monitoring and analytics, to solve measurement challenges. Our regression blocks suggest that it is possible to find a matching “leadership-measurement” continuum to deal with each specific issue while leveraging the leadership capability of the communication leader, although future research is needed to further investigate this possibility.

Conclusions and Implications

Most practitioners of PR would agree that measuring the value of public relations efforts is complex, particularly in terms of operationalization and

interpretations. Effective communication practice relies on solid leadership and team collaboration. In today's challenging economic climate, communication leaders across the globe are under increasing pressure to improve and maximize communications' returns on organizational value. As a result, communication leaders need to adjust their leadership capabilities and measurement strategies to assess different situations more accurately, which alternatively might add considerably more uncertainty about what metrics to use to gauge the effectiveness of communication programs.

Although the results of this study might indicate that each grouped country cluster may have different perceptions on the best coping strategies for dealing with measurement challenges, there are certain responsive strategies that are being universally applied (or not being applied) across different regions of the globe. Such results suggest that it is possible for communication leaders to create and develop a universal training program with tailored content to each specific market. In addition, such results also call for an urgent need to advance our knowledge of measurement globally, not just in terms of what strategies are being employed and what leadership qualities are perceived as most important, but in terms of how effective those strategies and leadership qualities actually are, including from the perspective of clients and other key stakeholders. Tapping into approach effectiveness—itself an issue of measurement—is therefore a necessary next step in addressing the measurement challenge facing the industry.

Results obtained from this global survey have valuable implications for public relations communication management practice. First, it enables communication practitioners and leaders to ascertain the valence, importance, and heterogeneity of proposed solutions to the communication measurement problem. Second, it encourages communication practitioners to monitor stakeholders' communication actions from multiple digital platforms to increase effective feedback and two-way communication. Third, the present analysis allows for a deeper understanding of how measurement demands vary over geographic locations and demographic profiles. The ratings on the responsive strategies toward the measurement issue echoed the current challenges facing the public relations profession globally: the push for rapid growth towards a data-driven market without a fully-equipped and responsive evaluation system. The results also capture current coping strategies used by practitioners across the world. Such coping strategies can be used as a basis for developing a pool of more tailored, contextualized, brand-related, and content-driven messages.

In short, the measurement and evaluation of public relations presents many promising approaches for advancing not only public relations practice as a global industry, but also supports improving communication and business performance for organizations. While acknowledging the limitations of the present study, the findings highlight how communication practitioners view a major challenge in public relations, and perhaps more importantly, the leadership qualities they view as paramount for overcoming that challenge. Given the role that leadership is likely to play in overcoming measurement challenges, the leadership angle we bring to this work is particularly important. It is our hope that this research will inspire interdisciplinary discussions of not only the measurement issues facing

communication practitioners, but the major challenges facing the industry and field.

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Students' Social Apathy in Real and Virtual Worlds: A Comparative Study

By Seyed Kamaledin Mousavi & Marzieh Ahmadi Milasi[±]*

In recent years, social apathy has been able to attract the attention of sociologists and social psychologists. Thus, the present study addresses the issue of social apathy in the real and virtual worlds. This research, which consists of a social survey, was conducted in spring 2019 in Kashan, among which 384 students of Payame Noor University, Medical Sciences University, and the State University of Kashan, were selected via a non-proportional classified sampling method. The results showed that, in general, the degree of social apathy of students in both real and virtual environments is a little more than the middle, although its amount in the real spaces is slightly higher than virtual ones. It also became clear that there is a correlation between the degree of social apathy of students in the real world and the virtual worlds, but the degree of this apathy in the real or virtual world did not differ significantly in terms of the field of study, type of university, residence and income. In other words, the degree of social apathy was relatively the same in all the mentioned groups of students.

Keywords: social apathy, virtual world, students, information-communication technology

Introduction

Apathy is a concept of neglect and carelessness toward laws, norms or social and political events, although in some sociological definitions, it is considered as an opposition to the concept of altruism, and some others contrast it with participation and "social involvement" (Kalantari et al., 2007). In another look, apathy means isolation and lack of participation as expected. Some indicators of this participation are motivation to attend elections and voting, taking on party and popular positions, joining parties, organizations, clubs and various socio-political groups. Apathy appears in many forms, among which social apathy is one of the undesirable features of modern culture, manifesting by overemphasis on personal preferences and individualistic interests in urban life. Operating as an obstacle in the way of establishing positive social relations and participation, apathy weakens or even stops the process of national development (Sanatkhan and Akbarzadeh, 2017). From this point of view, Mohseni Tabrizi and Sedaghatifard (2011) have considered apathy as an expression of numbness, pessimism, reluctance and a kind of social depression. Apathy is a state or situation in which people consciously, cognitively, emotionally and critically react to social, political, and cultural issues in their orientations (Zahirinia et al., 2014).

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It seems that over time, as societies become more complex and advanced, human beings lose their freedoms more than ever before. Society becomes stronger, but man becomes weaker i.e., human beings become more and more entangled in the bondage of modernity and its environmental coercive system. That is why, throughout history, the cry of regret and lamentation of philosophers, mystics, writers and thinkers has always been loud, and all of them consider returning to themselves and nature as the only way to release human beings from captivity and achieve true and perfect freedom (Mousavi and Haidarpour, 2011, p. 32). Social developments of the contemporary period have created a context in which only economic and livelihood concerns can keep human beings together for a while. Hence, some key sources of thought of the modern age such as secularism, individualism and humanism emerge and encourage modern man to ignore the world around him and to deal with their own self. In such a situation, there is no longer a specific justification for altruistic and committed social activities. The behavior of modern man has been affected by many social aspects, especially the development of individualism in the contemporary world, which has contributed to the problem of social apathy (Mirzapuri, 2016, pp. 61–62).

Social apathy makes people consciously become disinterested and careless to altruistic contributions, social responsibilities or other civic actions in terms of attitudes and behavior. In this regard, social apathy can be divided into two dimensions: altruistic and civic. Altruistic apathy means to be disinterested in, and disregard participatory actions and instead prefer self-interest over the interests of others; people in this situation avoid activities that bring more benefit for others and less for themselves. Civil apathy means to be disinterested in, or have disregard for social actions related to the formation of civil society; avoidance from a set of activities based on public interests in the context of civil society, whose benefits are indirect and eventually come back to the people themselves (Nawabakhsh and Mirzapouri, 2015).

Analyzing the problem, sociologists usually refer to social factors influencing social apathy, concentrating on values, norms, institutions, roles, social structure, stratification of society, socio-economic statuses, ethnicity, etc. while psychologists insist on individual factors like: motivation, personal capabilities, self-esteem, sense of confidence, sense of impact, sense of efficiency, and so on. In analyzing apathy, economists also pay attention to the conditions and capacities of society or individual (at macro and micro levels), concentrating on economic behaviors of individuals. But political thinkers usually pay attention to the form of government, the construction of power, power distribution mechanism, presence or absence of the of democracy, oppositions, parties, political groups, etc. as contributing factors (Anbari and Gholamian, 2016).

As we know, the main mission of sociology is to scientifically study social issues and problems and provide solutions to solve them. This mission is more important in the case of Iranian society, which is going through a period of transition from a traditional to a modern era. Entering various elements of modern culture has led to fundamental changes in the material and immaterial dimensions of Iranian culture. The scope and depth of these changes are so great that some Iranian sociologists are speaking about some kind of anomic and socially unhealthy

conditions in the country (Chalabi, 1996; Rafipour, 1999). That is, a situation in which, according to Durkheim, previous social norms and ethical guidelines no longer have the necessary efficiency to guide social behaviors, but they have not yet been replaced by new effective norms. Obviously, in such circumstances, social relations are damaged and thus, the social indifference is seen everywhere (Mohseni Tabrizi and Sedaghatifard, 2011, p. 2). Undoubtedly, the basic and necessary conditions for development of a society are: building warm relations, improving social cohesion, social participation and mutual trust between individual, society, government, by which social apathy decreases. Unfortunately, paying attention to this issue is ignored in societies like Iran, so we observe an excessive increase in social apathy through the country which may lead to social rupture and collapse (Anbari and Gholamian, 2016).

Returning to the past, Iran's historical experience of the last four decades shows that the participation of the people has been one of the important factors that helped to lead to the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the resistance during an eight-year imposed war against Saddam Hussein. However, a brief look at the post-revolutionary referendums to date clearly shows the growing trend of social and political apathy among a significant portion of Iranians. For example, in the 2001 election almost 30 percent of eligible voters did not participate. By the 2020 parliament election, the rate increased to almost 60 percent. Moreover, the role of the working class in the victory of the 1979 revolution was so significant that some scholars such as Abrahamian (1998) considers the entry of this class into the arena of the revolution, and especially the strikes of the workers as the key cause of its victory. However, in recent years, even in the case of workers, there has been talk of worker's apathy in socio-political activities, so far that researchers have focused on exploring the reasons for this vast apathy among workers (Habibzadeh, 2005). The same trend is seen lastly among other social groups such as women, clerks, traders etc. The results of a national survey conducted in the country shows that the majority of respondents (more than 75%) have actually little participation in organizations, institutions or civil associations. This fact indicates the existence of a kind of social apathy on a large scale (Shakoori, 2005).

Thus, apathy, as a social issue, is not only the result of various factors, but it also impacts the formation of social trends too. Occasionally, in scientific and academic settings, it seems to be of great importance and necessity because it brings various benefits and results. The results of such research can bring theoretical and practical benefits both at the middle and macro levels of society. For example, formal and responsible institutions can identify cases and examples of social apathy at the university level, and reconsider their strategies, decisions and plans. Low and weak presence of students in the elections of trade union councils and scientific associations, lack of attention and lack of compassion of some officials and professors towards students and their scientific achievements, lack of attention to research activities in the university teachers and students in the classroom, students being deprived of the minimum facilities for scholarships and dormitories, discrimination and injustice behavior of some professors in scientific evaluation of students educational activities, etc. are among the things that can lead to the growth of social apathy. Taking advantage of more accurate documentations

or statistics, investigation of various dimensions of the issue may change the view of students and professors so far that they feel the dangers of such a phenomenon. On the contrary, failure to address the problem may lead students to think that they are not valuable to their university or society, and as a result, they feel abandoned and disappointed, and may become indifferent about their duties and responsibilities in university and society. If social apathy covers the human consciousness of students who are the future builders of society, the loss of social order and cohesion will appear on the horizon, and social problems can occur in a way that cannot be compensated easily.

Therefore, universities, as the most important educational arena, which train efficient human resources for society development, have not been an exception to this phenomenon. In recent years, stagnation and socio-political apathy in universities has become so increasing that the scientific, social and political atmosphere of the past times is no longer felt. While two decades ago the role of Iranian students in social and political events was much more prominent, nowadays, some studies show that a breeze of apathy is blowing among students. According to the mentioned studies, some variables impacting this situation are: securitization of university atmosphere, offensive behaviors of security guards of universities and semi-militant groups against student's demands or critics, fear of students from consequences of expressing their critiques on socio-political issues, growth of disappointment about their future, vast individualization because of the feeling of powerlessness to impact these affairs (Mohseni Tabrizi and Sedaghatifard, 2011).

At the same time, we know that the university is the atmosphere in which the Internet and cyberspace play an important role in the lives of students because they are involved in it since entering the university. By online registration and choosing course units, getting acquainted with study conditions and regulations, communication with professors and classmates, formation of telegram or WhatsApp groups and other online activities, they are dragged into cyberspace very fast, so the Internet penetrates their daily lives and becomes very important for them (Babaei Fard and Sharghi, 2014). Today, the design of many ideas, opinions, and non-academic interactions of students has also flowed in the Internet environments and promises to shape a second virtual life for students. These days, students' lives flow simultaneously in real and virtual spaces, and, in each of the two, they find a special atmosphere and feel special demands or needs. In this regard, social media facilitates waves of similarly condensed and empowered ideas by the rapid and widespread dissemination of information on the Internet. Since the interactive platform of social media reduces barriers to the social exchange of ideas, it becomes an effective tool for the participation of countless people in the current issues of society. In this way, we can ensure that the culture of participation lies in the context of social media (Hwang and Kim, 2015). The growth and development of the Internet, especially the virtual world, which keeps millions of people connecting and interacting with each other, is rapidly developing and flourishing these days, and many real-world phenomena have eventually opened their way into the virtual world.

The question that arises here is, whether students as the most active internet users, have also fallen into a socio-political apathy in cyberspace or not. In other word, are students experiencing the same apathy in cyberspace as in the real academic environments? Or they are active in online social participations and responsibilities? Does the apathy of students in real environments penetrate to the virtual ones? The investigation of such phenomenon is the main concern of the study, so we try to explore the possible relationship between the degree of social apathy of students in real and virtual spaces.

In recent years, various studies have been conducted in Iran on social apathy. For example, Masoudnia (2001) points out that although social apathy is not a new phenomenon, it seems to have increased significantly with the social, political and economic developments of the Iranian society. Kalantari et al. (2007) have also conducted a study in which they draw some factors impacting on social apathy. The results show that the increase of empathy, acceptance of responsibility, and reduction of the cost of material rewards in relations between citizens can improve altruism and reduce social apathy. Also, Mohseni Tabrizi and Sedaghatifard (2011) pointed out that social apathy in Tehran is above average, and the five variables like: civic commitment, individualism, abnormalities, social satisfaction, and relative deprivation have affected it. Nabavi et al. (2014) have shown that socio-economic status, feelings of alienation, feelings of empathy, feelings of insecurity, and a person's capitals have affected citizens' apathy. Finally, Ghazizadeh and Kianpour (2015) concluded that the average score of social apathy among students is equal to 1.9 out of 5, which indicates that social apathy is low and does not pose a threat to society in the short term, but it does not mean neglecting the issue for the future. Obviously, up today, most of the research conducted in Iran have mainly focused on the issue of social apathy in real environments and factors impacting on it, but there has been no investigation to deal with social apathy in cyberspace or comparing of it between real and virtual worlds. These research shortages increase the importance of doing such a study in order to clarify the degree of social apathy in two parallel environments, feeling the whole of the student's life.

Theoretical Review

One of the first pioneers to address the problems of modern man in industrial society is George Simmel. In his important article, *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, Simmel describes the problem of primitive man as not overcoming nature, but the problem of modern man as contrasting with the cultural products he had created. In his view, rationalization is a feature of life in urban environments, and a metropolis is essentially a monetary economic hub that is closely related to realistic tendencies based on the calculation of phenomena. A person who resorts to reason also develops a kind of apathy to phenomena, and interferes less in personal and emotional relationships. The result of living in a situation where innumerable stimuli constantly affect the human nerves is a kind of boredom or a state of apathy that occurs when a person's nerves are so attacked by contradictory

stimuli. The nature of boredom is an indifference towards the distinction of things, in a way that one sees not the differences in phenomena, but the difference between them becomes unimportant to him. In other words, everything is seen on a gray surface of the same shape, with no priority given to any of them. This mentality is formed in the context of a monetary economy in which money enters all aspects of life and all differences are measured by money. From this perspective, the urban person deals with many people during the day, which is not comparable to the number of people a villager sees per day, where he is alone, isolated and has few acquaintances. An urban dweller is indifferent and alien to the world around him, hence the distance and separation is one of the dimensions of socialization in the city.

According to some contemporary sociologists and social psychologists, the human structure of urban life which contains large population, complexity of social relations, rationality in relationships, and so on, is considered as an important factor to increase social apathy among citizens. In this regard, results of the study of Amato (1983) in several cities showed that as the number in population increases, social structures and relations become more complex, people tend to be less altruistic, and thus their apathy increases (Olyansab Sharbiani, 2016, pp. 38–40).

In Marxist tradition, the analysis of social apathy is the same as social alienation. According to this approach, the dominance of rationality based on cost/benefit calculation in modern industrial societies encourages individuals to compete or conflict with each other in the context of production's relations, and the prevalence of such a phenomenon in any society intensifies individualism and alienation of people from each other (Mirzapouri, 2016, p. 104). Of course, when individualism and utilitarianism are preferred to collective interests in a society, both alienation and social apathy spread throughout social life. Some neo-Marxists also see new cities as tools of capitalist domination, and this kind of attitude can be seen in the views of Eric Fromm and Herbert Marcuse. They believe that the conditions of capitalism destroy the individual personality and hinder strong social and environmental ties, and it is suitable for the growth of apathy and alienation. Class consciousness in urban society disappears or weakens, so, the instrumental wisdom leaves no room for true wisdom (Olyansab Sharbiani, 2016, pp. 32–31).

Nowadays, cities have changed a lot and have become the main territory of information and communication technologies. In explaining the new situation, several theories point to the role of new media, especially the role of the Internet, and the virtual world in activating human connections, pulling people out of their locks, and placing them in the core of social interactions. For example, Wellman (2001) believes that the Internet not only provides the opportunity to contact friends and relatives with a low cost, but also creates networks containing face-to-face communication with individuals and organizational partnerships to increase inside society. Wellman emphasizes that the Internet with its facilities and equipment, helps people to find the people and groups, join them, and participate in their programs and activities (Wellman, 2001, p. 438). In this compensatory and complementary view to the virtual world, it seems that the apathy and social isolation in the real world can be reduced through the Internet and cyberspace.

Meanwhile, some theories of the Internet and the virtual world insist that what is happening in cyberspace and social networks is not separate from the realities of external society, but is a reflection of what is happening in real life. According to Nood and Attema (2006), in the virtual world exists the same things as in the real world because the real and virtual worlds are becoming more and more intertwined and are moving more towards unification. Citing numerous studies, they insist on a correlation between the situation of people in the real and virtual world; those who are more successful in the real world are mostly of the same group that is successful in the virtual world, where they act more and feel more satisfaction in both worlds. Even the number of friends a person has in the real world strongly correlates with the number of friends they have in cyberspace (Hadadi, 2011, p. 73). In the same vein, Slater's et al. (2006) research has shown that most of people's activities in cyberspace are consistent with their actions and choices in the real world. Rheingold (2002) also emphasizes that people in virtual communities usually do what they do in real life, although in real life people are more responsible for their own behaviors. In other words, in cyberspace, many things can happen by the same way as in the real world (Rheingold, 2002, p. 71).

According to the brief explanations provided here, it is possible to assume a reflection theory—mentioned by Attema, Nood, Rheingold, and others—when social apathy of a student appears at the same level in real and virtual spaces. But if the social apathy in cyberspace will be less than the real space, the compensatory and complementary theories—pointed out by Wellman—are approved here. In order to analyze the issue, some research hypotheses were determined as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Level of social apathy in real space is higher than in virtual space.

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between social apathy in real and virtual worlds.

Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between the mental apathy in the real and virtual worlds.

Hypothesis 4: There is a relationship between the practice of apathy in the real and virtual worlds.

Hypothesis 5: The degree of apathy among students varies according to gender, age, and income and other demographic informations. etc.

Methods

Social apathy is a situation in which people consciously become disinterested and careless to altruistic contributions, social responsibilities and other civic actions. In this study the concept social apathy was measured by the consideration of its two dimensions: mental (attitude) and practical (behavioral) as described in Table 1.

Table 1. Dimensions and Indicators of Social Apathy

Variable	Dimensions	Indicators
Mental Social Apathy	Attitudes & Points of view	Disappointment about effectiveness Distrust of cooperation and participation Ignoring news and events Disinterest in social activity Fear of giving comment at events
Practical Social Apathy	Behaviors & Activities	Experience the fruitlessness of efforts Poor follow-up on the situation of compatriots No participation or support of social campaigns Submit comments and critiques only among friends No reaction to government decisions Refrain from commenting on socio-political issues

Like most social studies, a survey method has been used in this study. The statistical population of the research included 13,202 students in the academic year 2018-2019 studying in three public universities in Kashan city; 8,159 from Kashan State University, 2,943 from University of Medical Sciences, and 2,100 from Payame Noor University. To determine the sample size, we used Cochran's formula by which the sample size was calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{Nt^2.pq}{Nd^2+t^2pq} \quad n = \frac{3720 \times 3/8416 \times 0/25}{13202 \times 0/0025 + 3/8416 \times 0/25} = 348$$

According to the purpose of the research and the characteristics of the statistical population, the classified sampling method has been used. Data gathering was conducted via a questionnaire consisting of 37 questions inspired by the research book *Social Apathy in Iran* written by Mirzapouri (2016), and the questionnaire, *Scales for Social Capital in an Online Era* by Williams (2006) with a slight change in order to be adjusted to the target population sample. After compiling the initial questionnaire, the final questionnaire was prepared by performing a pre-test on a number of students and eliminating possible problems and ambiguities. In order to measure the reliability of the research variables and evaluate the main subscales in the questionnaire, a preliminary test was performed among 30 persons; data of which were measured by Cronbach's alpha test to determine the internal consistency of the items in each variable. Table 2 shows the alpha coefficients of the variables.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for the Main Research Variables

Variables	Number of Items	Alpha coefficient
Social apathy (in general)	30	0.83
Mental/attitude dimension of social apathy	14	0.75
Practical/behavior dimension of social apathy	16	0.65

Results

Among the surveyed students, 46.6% were men and 53.4% were women. The minimum age of the respondents was 17 while the maximum is 47 years, and the total average age of the respondents was 21.6 years. Respondents reported that 90.6% were single and 9.4% were married. At the time of the research, 84.3% of respondents were studying in their bachelor degree, 7% in their postgraduate degree and 6.3% at the Ph.D. level. Almost 20% of students were studying in engineering fields, 22.7% in medical sciences, 28.8% study humanities, 13.0% in the arts and finally 15.6% studied in basic sciences. Regarding their university enrollment, 17.0% of the respondents were from Payame Noor University, 59.8% from Kashan State University, and 23.2% from the University of Medical Sciences. In terms of place of residence, 41.4% live in Kashan, 54.4% in other cities, and 3.9% in rural areas. In general, the degree of social apathy among the respondents is slightly above average, indicating a relative penetration of the problem among students in the city of Kashan, which is known as a religious and traditional part of the country in Iran. While the rate of the experienced apathy among students here is not yet at a crisis level, it has the potential to increase because of the unpredictable social, political and economic situations of the country; a phenomenon which imposes a vast threat of unemployment on university graduates in Iran. Nowadays, faced with so many political and ideological pressures, students are worried about their employment, marriage, the high cost of living in the cities, etc. These circumstances decrease student's self-sufficiency and make them feel more disappointed, alienated and apathetic. The experience of social empathy by students runs both in their real and virtual lives and in their attitudes and behaviors, but the rates of apathy are not the same. In order to better understand the situation, the average scores of social apathy in the real/virtual spaces, as well as in the mental/practical dimensions were tested by one-sample T-tests, the results of which are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of One-Sample T-Test about Social Apathy

Variables	Test average	Observed average	Sig.
General social apathy in real spaces	45	47.3	0.000
General social apathy in virtual spaces	45	46.8	0.000
Mental dimension of apathy in real spaces	21	25	0.000
Mental dimension of apathy in virtual spaces	21	22.2	0.000
Behavioral dimension of apathy in real spaces	21	24.4	0.006
Behavioral dimension of apathy in virtual spaces	21	22.3	0.000

Table 3 shows averages of the students' social apathy in the real and virtual spaces in general, and according to its mental or practical dimensions. Comparing the observed and test average scores shows that in all cases, the levels of social apathy in real and virtual spaces are above test average—a fact that indicates a relatively problematic amount of social apathy among students. Moreover, the comparison of the observed averages shows that both in mental and behavioral dimensions, the rate of students' apathy in the real world ($m=25$, 24) is higher than

their level of apathy in the virtual spaces ($m=22, 22$). Affirming the first of the hypotheses of the research, this result shows that students in cyberspaces experience lower level of social apathy than in real environments; this lower degree of apathy is observed both in their attitudes and behaviors. Moreover, analyzing the status-quo of the country, students are mentally more alienated and unmotivated to do anything in real life versus in virtual spaces. The level of mental apathy is obviously higher than online environments which are yet to be considered in Iran as the basic anchor of civil activities and social participations.

In order to analyze the other research hypotheses and to measure the possible relationships between students' apathy in real and virtual spaces to further give a glimpse on the factors affecting this apathy, a correlation test was used. First, the relationship between social apathy in general, and also in terms of attitudes and behavior dimensions, was measured via the Pearson correlation test; the results of which are reflected in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlation Test Results on Social Apathy in Real and Virtual Environments

Variables	N	Correlation coefficient
Degree of social apathy in real & cyber environments	351	0.456 **
Degree of mental apathy in real & cyber environments	368	0.437 **
Degree of behavioral apathy in real & cyber environments	368	0.458 **

Results in Table 4 show that there are relationships—in general, mental and behavioral dimensions—between the degree of students' apathy in real and virtual environments. The existing relationship means that any increase of students' apathy in real environments leads to an increase of apathy in cyberspaces, and vice versa. This result affirms the second, third and fourth hypotheses of the research and supports a reciprocal influence between students' apathy in their real and virtual lives. Finally, the results of T and ANOVA tests between demographic variables (gender, age, marital status, etc.) gauging the level of apathy of students in real and virtual spaces show no significant differences (P values > 0.05); a fact that indicates that all sex, age, income, specialty groups of students experience a relatively similar level of social apathy. This result does not prove the last or 5th hypothesis of the present research.

Conclusion

The main subject of this study was the comparison of students' indifference in real and virtual worlds—a phenomenon that includes mental (attitudinal) and practical (behavioral) dimensions. In this regard, the opinions of experts such as Wellman, Rheingold, Nood and Attema have been used.

Nowadays, many believe that indifference, as a social issue which is made of various variables and historical, cultural, political, social and psychological

contexts, has somehow affected all societies at different levels and fields. But since the basis of the formation and development of a society is based on the active presence of its members in the social arena, any indifference will disrupt the process of development and overall social health (Mirzapuri, 2015, pp. 192–193). In this regard, social apathy is known as a kind of social disease while social attention, participation and altruism in social life is a sign of active dynamism and social health (Zahirinia et al., 2014). In addition, apathy presents a version of protest, which shows its opposition to the current social order and becomes a response to alienation from the social system. In fact, due to the alienation from the social system, apathy causes a gap in social structures, keeping individuals away from ongoing social processes. People who do not participate in their society, apparently suffer from social apathy, and not paying enough attention to this issue will produce hazardous results in different aspects of societal life. On the other hand, today, the use of technology has become an integral part of everyday life. The Internet as a social media can play a key role in directing peoples' attitudes and social actions, but we should know that people do not treat in their interaction with this media passively. They think and interpret messages and then take action, and this action can lead to the creation of new social structures. Students are the most intelligent, active part of societies, and universities—the most important educational institution and a place for training efficient human resources, and for strengthening the culture of cooperation and participation. Thus, the signs of apathy in academic settings should be taken seriously, because it harms the positive role of students in promoting the mental health of society. Considering the importance of the concept of the virtual world as a new space for human interaction and social indifference as a special quality in social interaction between humans, this study sought to measure social indifference, especially among students, in the real world and virtual world.

The hypotheses presented in this study—except for those related to demographic variables—were all confirmed by the Pearson correlation test. According to the results of T-test, the degree of social apathy among male and female students (both in the real and in the virtual spaces) did not show a significant difference, i.e., due to the closeness of the means of these two groups, girls and boys feel a similar degree of apathy. Also, in terms of marital status of students, it became clear that the degree of social apathy between single and married students did not show a significant difference. Considering students' educational levels, fields of study, university, income and residence, the ANOVA test showed that different levels of education, fields of study, universities, different places of residence and different incomes—in real or virtual environments—have no significant difference in the degree of students' social apathy. In all mentioned groups, students are experiencing the same degree of apathy.

The results of this study illustrates that the average scores of students' social apathy in both real and the virtual spaces are above average, although in real space this apathy seems to be higher than in cyberspace. In other words, students feel indifferent about news, events and/or government decisions in Iran, but this feeling is higher in real environments than in virtual ones. According to the results, the mental/attitudinal dimension of social apathy among students is at a moderate

level, but in real spaces it is more than in cyberspace. The relative closeness of the average apathy scores in the real and virtual spaces is reminiscent of the theories of Rheingold, Nood, Attema, and researchers who view cyberspace as reflecting real-world events in a way that the pulse of both worlds hits similarly. In other words, if the severity of social apathy of students is moderate, they are showing the same degree of apathy to social issues in cyberspace. This apathy, firstly, is formed in their attitudes and mentalities for some reasons declared by them, such as: students' frustration with their effectiveness, lack of trust in cooperation and partnership with others, disregard for news and events, disinterest in social activity, and/or fear of commenting on events because of its potential consequences. Such attitudes among students affected on their practical apathy, led to behaviors such as: poor follow-up of the situation of compatriots, lack of support and active participation in social campaigns, presenting opinions and criticisms only among friends, no reactions to government decisions and refraining from expressing socio-political comments, etc. The fact that the average score of apathy in real space—both attitudes and behaviors—is higher than the average score of apathy in cyberspace, supports the role of cyberspace in compensating some shortages of virtual world, invoked by the opinions of Wellman and their co-thinkers. By more students engaging in cyberspace, the intensity of social apathy that they experience in real environments reduces and the situation slightly improves.

It is noteworthy that Kashan is a city of the Esfahan Province. It is a traditional city and much smaller than the city of Esfahan—the center of province. Comparing the results of this study with a study conducted by Ghazizadeh and Kianpour about social apathy among students of the University of Isfahan—where the average score of social apathy among students was 1.9 out of 5—shows that the situation of social apathy among students in Kashan is worse than that of students in Isfahan State University. The reasons about why, in a smaller and more traditional city like Kashan, the level of social apathy is higher than a metropolis like Esfahan belongs to some socio-cultural factors worthy of an independent study.

Finally, according to the results of this study, which shows the approximate similarity of social apathy among different groups of students, more attention to the capacity of the Internet is crucial in reducing the lack of motivation of young people. By using virtual environments, society can better benefit from the ideas and innovations of young people for its development, and accordingly, by developing associations or non-governmental organizations, and formulating social rules in accordance with civil society. Given the interdisciplinary nature of social apathy and the results it brings about, it has become deserved to examine the various branches of social sciences and humanities.

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