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**A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY: EXAMINING THE
ORGANIZATIONAL USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES**

A thesis
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of
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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the way two New Zealand-based case study organizations, a tertiary institution and a primary industry organization, use the social networking site Bebo for communication. Both organizations recruited young people aged 16-19, to work in the primary industry and to attend the tertiary institution. This interpretive, qualitative comparative case study identifies why each organization decided to use Bebo, what it intended to achieve, whether Bebo helped each organization to achieve its goals and objectives, and the challenges and opportunities for developing authentic and interactive dialogue faced by each organization with its intended public. Interviews were conducted with organizational members and spokespeople involved in each campaign. A critical discourse analysis is applied to all transcripts and the Bebo profiles. Other relevant organizational documents, including press releases and information brochures, provide contextual information for the analysis.

The findings indicate that both organizations have been misled by a taken-for-granted assumption about young people's use of the social networking site Bebo, with the research raising questions about whether the campaign reached the target audience or not. Other findings highlight that the tertiary institution reframed the social media-influenced understanding of 'engagement', from a two-way collaborative interaction between an organization and its publics, to a one-way, direct marketing effort by the organization. Questions are raised about the tertiary institutions use of Bebo as a marketing tool and harvesting users' personal information through a quiz. Findings indicate that both organizations were concerned about threats to their reputation, choosing to monitor both the comments left on the spokespeople's profiles by Bebo users, and the spokespeople's behaviour on Bebo. Evaluating success is identified as a challenge for both organizations, as well as issues associated with the production and distribution of the campaigns on Bebo.

The findings identify opportunities for future research, to help organizations navigate the uncertainty associated with using social media applications and

technologies for public relations and organizational communication. The research also highlights opportunities for other organizations to improve on the case study organizations' current use of the social networking site Bebo, to ensure future use of the application embodies dialogue, interaction and collaboration between the organizations and their target publics.

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CHAPTER ONE - Introduction

Do nothing... [and] your bright, thoughtful and energetic staff will do it for you. Trouble is they will do it outside your firewall on bulletin boards, instant message exchange, personal blogs... and you would have lost the ability to understand it, influence it, and integrate it into how you do business (Euan Semple, as cited in Dearstyne, 2007, p.28).

Today's internet technologies and applications are rapidly changing organizational communication and public relations, both in New Zealand and around the globe. Social media and Web 2.0, two terms used interchangeably to describe the same concept, are a collection of new internet technologies and applications which emphasise participation, connectivity, user-generation, information sharing and collaboration. The increased use of these technologies has shifted the emphasis from consumption-based internet services towards interactive and collaborative ones, creating new opportunities for interaction and engagement between organizations and publics.

Initial research has demonstrated that there are several different types of social media applications and technologies, including wikis, blogs, social networking sites, podcasts, vidcasts, mashups, folksonomies and online virtual worlds. These technologies all share similar characteristics, including user-generation, participation, connectivity, sharing of information and collaboration, yet each technology has impacted global communities in a different way. Academic research on social media tends to be descriptive, and there is limited research on the organizational use of these applications. This is despite avid interest in social media from public relations and organizational communication academics and practitioners around the world.

This research is solely focused on social networking sites, because of their increasing popularity in New Zealand with young people and organizations in 2007-08. It is important to note, social networking sites often incorporate a number of social media applications and technologies, including mashups, blogs and vidcasts. This provides a unique context for analysing the organizational use of multiple social media. Academic research on social networking sites has

traditionally focused on individual use, in social context, including how users present themselves and form friendships (boyd, 2006, 2007a, 2007b), and the creation of social capital (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). This study aims to address a gap in the academic research by analysing the way New Zealand-based organizations use social networking sites for communication purposes.

It is a comparative case study, involving a tertiary institution and a primary industry organization. Both organizations involved in this research used the social networking site Bebo for recruitment, by communicating with target publics on Bebo. The use of social media for recruitment purposes is becoming increasingly popular across multiple industries. Social networking sites enable recruiters to maintain constant connectivity and communication (Wandel, 2008) with potential students and industry workers. As highlighted by Noel-Levitz (2007), “Social networking sites have become strong sources of supplemental insights with images, profiles and content generated in the authentic voices of the students, campus faculty and staff and alumni” (p. 1).

Research objectives and theoretical perspective

Background research suggested the following research objectives:

- To identify why each organization decided to use Bebo, and what it intended to achieve
- To discuss the extent to which Bebo helped each organization achieve its goals and objectives
- To examine the challenges and opportunities for developing authentic and interactive dialogue faced by each organization with its intended public

The purpose of this research is to explore each case study organization’s *intentions* and *how* they used Bebo to achieve specific goals and objectives. The research is exploratory and inherently interpretive, aiming to gain an understanding of the social conditions and practices that emerge from the interviews with those involved in the campaigns. The research is also critical, and will identify inequality, tensions and taken-for-granted assumptions within the

discursive practices of each organization. This approach is important because the organizational use of social networking sites for communication is an emerging practice. Critical research aims to improve existing circumstances, with a specific focus on identifying how current practices can be changed for the best interests of all stakeholders. This research will not only identify the challenges involved in using social networking sites for communication, but also the opportunities for organizations to improve their use of this technology. Research findings will contribute to current academic research on social media and social networking sites, with an emphasis on the implications for public relations and organizational communication in New Zealand.

Organization of the thesis

Chapter Two will set the social, economic and political context for this research, discussing the popularity of social networking sites in New Zealand in 2007-08, and the challenges for tertiary and primary industries during this time. This context is crucial as it illustrates why each organization decided to run a recruitment campaign on Bebo.

Chapter Three will set the theoretical context for the study, discussing the emergence of social media, from both an academic and a practitioner perspective. Eight social media applications and technologies will be explored, with social networking sites discussed in detail. The emerging theoretical perspectives on social networking sites, including issues, concerns and implications for organizational communication and public relations, will be highlighted. The relationship management perspective of public relations and dialogic communication will also be explored, with a focus on the organization-public relationship and incorporating dialogue into public relations practice. This theoretical foundation is important, as it provides the basis for developing the methodology as discussed in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four explores the methodological design and practical implications of the research. From a critical perspective, this chapter unravels the theoretical justifications for using an interview methodology. Critical discourse analysis is

identified as the central method of analysis. Both the data collection method and analysis are explained, and limitations identified.

Chapter Five provides a combined discussion of the findings from the interview transcript analysis, and the theoretical implications of the research. In accordance with a critical discourse analysis, this chapter aims to identify and discuss any taken-for-granted assumptions, power imbalances, tensions and the discursive production of each campaign, in relation to relevant public relations and organizational communication theory. This chapter also identifies the challenges faced by the case study organizations during the implementation of their recruitment campaigns on Bebo, and the implications of these challenges for public relations and organizational communication practice.

The concluding chapter highlights the major findings from this research, and further explores the theoretical and practical implications. The limitations of the research are identified and discussed, and recommendations are made for New Zealand-based organizations that intend to use social networking sites to communicate with key publics in the future.

CHAPTER TWO – Background

Introduction

This chapter sets the context for this comparative case study analysis, by exploring the social, economic and political context of New Zealand in 2007-08. This background information will provide the context for the literature review and research design. A focus on the social context in late 2007 to 2008 will be adopted, because this is when the two case study organizations planned and implemented their recruitment campaigns on Bebo. The New Zealand-based context of social networking site use, by organizations, individuals and the New Zealand Government is outlined, to demonstrate the importance and relevance of this research. Both the tertiary and the primary sectors are explored to highlight the relevant issues for each industry. These issues, including competition and skill shortages, are critical and illustrate why each organization decided to create a recruitment-based campaign during this time.

The popularity of social networking sites in New Zealand, 2007-08

According to a study conducted by the World Internet Project and AUT University, 78% of New Zealanders are online (Bell, Crothers, Goodwin, & Kripalani, 2007). This is a significant proportion of New Zealand's population, with only 16% of respondents having never used the Internet at all (Bell et al., 2007). With a large percentage of the population using the Internet, the New Zealand Government identified the need to develop a strategy focused on internet usage. In 2005, the Government took pro-active steps towards increasing user capability and confidence in the use of digital content, such as social media, through the creation of the Digital Strategy. In 2008, the strategy was reviewed and edited by both the Government and the public, through the use of social media tools such as blogs and wikis (*The Draft Digital Strategy 2.0*, 2008). This unique approach to public consultation, demonstrated the Government's commitment to public participation and democracy through the Internet. Once finalised, the Digital Strategy aims to improve the availability of broadband, to

increase user confidence and to encourage the use of digital content to create value and sustainable development for local communities (*The Draft Digital Strategy 2.0*, 2008). Most importantly, the strategy recognises the need for ongoing collaboration between communities, business, Maori, local government and researchers (*The Draft Digital Strategy 2.0*, 2008). The development of this strategy will set a crucial context for social media use and evolution in New Zealand.

Social networking site membership has exploded over the last couple of years in New Zealand (McDonald, 2009) and, according to the World Internet Project, over 60% of New Zealanders under 30 visit social networking sites weekly (Bell et al., 2007; Young, 2008). In 2007-08, Bebo stood out as the most popular social networking site (SNS) in New Zealand, outranking sites such as Facebook and MySpace in the race for Australasian membership. In 2007, users spent an average of 43.6 minutes per day on Bebo (Bebo, 2007), and in 2008 the site was the top SNS in New Zealand (Bebo, 2007), holding 41.77% of the market share of visits to social networking sites (Hitwise, 2008). With such a high rate of user engagement, public relations and organizational communication practitioners started to recognise the potential of social networking sites as a platform for increasing brand awareness and creating dialogue, engagement and interaction with young people (Medcalf, 2008; PRiNZ, 2007). This was illustrated when the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand (PRiNZ) cited social media as one of the communication industries fastest growing areas in 2008 (PRiNZ, 2008).

During this time period, multi-national media organizations were also taking interest in social networking sites, from an ownership point of view. In March 2008, the founders of Bebo sold the social networking site to AOL, part of the worlds biggest entertainment company Time Warner, for \$850m (Hickman, 2008). Prior to the international sale of Bebo, New Zealand-based television broadcasting station, TVNZ, announced an “exclusive strategic partnership” (Bebo, 2007) with Bebo in October 2007. This partnership placed TVNZ in charge of selling display and video advertising on the site (Bebo, 2007; TVNZ, 2007). TVNZ’s involvement was pitched to marketers as an opportunity to secure targeted advertising opportunities on Bebo. Marketers could also use the

technology to collect personal information from users, as highlighted by TVNZ's Digital and Interactive Sales General Manager, Mark Coplestone, who suggested that, "Bebo provides a mine of information about users' behaviours and preferences" (Bebo, 2007). This approach creates tensions with the public relations and organizational communications understanding of social networking sites, and raises many questions about the need for authentic dialogue (Public relations) versus pure advertising (Marketing).

The tertiary and primary industries in New Zealand, 2007-08

The two case study organizations selected for this investigation include a primary industry organization and a tertiary institution. Both organizations decided to run recruitment-based campaigns, targeted at school leavers aged 16-19, in late 2007-08. Over the past 20 years, the tertiary industry has experienced a high level of competition for domestic and international students. This competitive environment stems from political reforms introduced by the Labour Government in the late 1980s. This political and social context is important, because it illustrates why the tertiary institution identified the need to run a recruitment-based campaign in 2007-08. Competition is also high in the New Zealand labour market, with a continued skill shortage contributing to low employment numbers in the primary industries of New Zealand. This social and economic context contributed to the need for a campaign designed to attract young, skilled people into the industry, by the primary industry organization.

Competition in the tertiary sector

Before the 1980s, free education was considered a right for every citizen in New Zealand and tertiary education was fully funded by the Government (Roggendorf, 2008). In 1984, the Labour Government restructured a number of economic, social and education policies, shifting to a neo-liberal paradigm that incorporated a commitment to self-regulation and free trade, and a focus on outputs, ownership and accountability (Olssen, 2002). Neo-liberalism is a market-driven perspective and, as a result, the Government expected tertiary institutions to become more commercial and to run like business entities.

Central to this commercialisation, was the introduction of student fees (Roggendorf, 2008) and a change in the traditional funding structure (Olssen, 2002). The Government reduced the amount of funding it provided for tertiary institutions, instead expecting the institutions to make additional revenue through student fees. These changes meant that funding would be based on the number of full-time students enrolled at the institution (Olssen, 2002). This created a competitive environment between providers of higher education, as they competed against each other for students and, ultimately, funding (Maringe, 2006; Olssen, 2002; Roggendorf, 2008). Olssen (2002) believes that the Government intended this outcome, suggesting that “One of the major objectives of the reforms in tertiary education was to install relations of competition as a way of increasing productivity, accountability and control” (Section 8, paragraph 1).

Over the last 20 years, these reforms have forced all providers of tertiary education, both Universities and Institutes of Technology, to *reluctantly* adopt a marketing orientation to differentiate themselves from other competitors (Ford, Joseph, & Joseph, 1999). As outlined by Ford et al (1999):

“Educational institutions must now get inside the heads of their target markets, assess their needs, modify their offerings to meet those needs, and thereby enhance the perceived quality of the service which they provide” (p. 171).

Within this competitive framework, students are re-framed as ‘customers’ and separated into specific consumer groups/target markets, which can include ‘international students’, ‘mature students’ and ‘high school leavers’ (Soutar & Turner, 2002).

There are now a number of different tertiary education choices for potential students in New Zealand. In order to attract students, tertiary institutions have started to analyse the decision making processes adopted by potential students. According to Maringe (2006) and Soutar and Turner (2002), a number of factors influence students’ decisions about attending a tertiary institution, including the type of course they want to do, the academic reputation of the institution, the

campus atmosphere, the quality of teaching staff, the type of institution (Traditional/technological), and personal factors, such as distance from home, family perspective on institution and the tertiary institution their friends wish to attend. As identified by Maringe (2006), “Students now have a wide range of options from which to choose and have to undertake complex decisions in order to make the right choices” (p. 467).

This competitive environment has highlighted the need for effective communication, and the development of public relations campaigns to position the organization and to appeal to specific target markets/consumer groups (Maringe, 2006). To achieve this, tertiary institutions often adopt five brand positioning dimensions, including the institution’s learning environment, reputation, graduate career prospects, destination image and cultural integration (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006).

Skill shortages in the primary industry labour market 2007-08

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry’s (MAF) report *Situation and outlook for New Zealand agriculture and forestry* (2007), the primary industries in New Zealand include agriculture, horticulture and forestry. Traditionally, these industries have made a significant contribution to the New Zealand economy. The industries now face four major challenges, as outlined by MAF, including sustainable development, productivity, nanotechnology and bio security (*Situation and outlook*, 2007). More significantly, in 2007-08 the primary industries were facing labour and skill shortages, creating challenges for the long-term growth and profitability of the industry. These shortages had been intensified by the gradual shift of people from rural areas to urban centres and, as a result, “Over the last couple of generations New Zealander’s ‘first hand’ experiences of, and associations with, agriculture and rural life have diminished sharply” (*Situation and outlook*, 2007, pp. p. 21-22).

Unfortunately, the skill shortages were not limited to the primary industries, and New Zealand-wide there was an increased demand for individuals with advanced skills and knowledge in the workplace (Earle, 2008, 2009). Numerous factors

contributed to this skill shortage, including a shift of employment towards service-based industries (Earle, 2008), changing technology, increased requirements for occupational registration and an aging population (Earle, 2008; *Forces for change*, 2008). The skill shortage was not projected to change and, in 2007, the Department of Labour identified that, “With demand for labour strong, economic activity predicted to pick up and unemployment set to remain low, it is likely there will be future tightening in the labour market and a further deepening of skill shortages” (*Skills in the labour market*, 2007, p. 6).

In response to the skill shortage, New Zealand experienced a shift towards tertiary education, with youth participation in tertiary education increasing by 25%, between 2000 and 2005 (*Youth in the New Zealand labour market*, 2009). This shift indirectly contributed to the immediate labour shortage, because youth did not go into the labour market, instead choosing to move into study-based options (*Labour market statistics*, 2008). By the end of 2006, 65% of school leavers were transitioning directly into tertiary education.

The rise in tertiary qualified young people contributed to an increase in knowledge-based work, including administration and management (*Forces for change*, 2008), rather than addressing skill shortages in labour intensive industries, like the primary industries. Also, the school leavers who did transition into industry-based training were more likely to work in hospitality and building and construction than any other industry, with only 1% working in the primary industries (Ussher, 2007).

These trends have created a challenging labour market for the primary industries. It is important for the industry to attract young people, to ensure the industry continues to grow and develop in New Zealand. In response, primary industry organizations started to proactively recruit young people into the industry, through the development of interactive public relations campaigns. Industry members hoped that these campaigns would address the skill shortage by reviving young peoples’ interest in a career in the primary industries.

The following chapter provides further context for this research, by exploring current academic literature on social media and social networking sites. The literature review explores the founding characteristics of social media applications and technologies, with a focus on social networking sites, demonstrating why these technologies are attractive to public relations and organizational communication practitioners. To illustrate how public relations can use social media, a relationship management perspective is explored with a focus on the organization-public relationship, dialogic communication and authenticity.

CHAPTER THREE - Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter explores current academic literature related to social media applications and technologies. Social media is identified as an emerging area of academic interest. Articles on social media tend to be descriptive and relatively few studies have yet been conducted on the impact of these technologies, from a public relations and organizational communication perspective. Social networking sites are discussed in detail, as this application of social media is the central focus of this study. There has been some academic activity in this area, with several academics attempting to theorise the purpose of social networking sites, and the dialectic between offline and online friends.

Social networking sites tend to incorporate a number of social media technologies, including blogs, vcasts and mashups. This provides a unique opportunity to analyse multiple social media within one bounded context. This review explores eight different social media applications and technologies (including social networking sites), illustrating how organizations are currently utilising the tools for organizational communication and public relations purposes, and demonstrating that these technologies do not exist in a vacuum, but instead influence the development of each other.

To bring a public relations perspective to this research, this chapter will explore the relationship management perspective of public relations. This approach is identified as a 'best practice' model for public relations professionals who intend to use social networking sites for communicating with both internal and external publics. An emphasis is placed on quality organizational-public relationships, with dialogic communication highlighted as a central element to an effective organization-public relationship, particularly in an online setting. The need for authenticity, within a dialogic framework, is explored and limitations in the dialogic theory of webbed communication identified.

Social media

Social media is a term used to describe a new collection of internet technologies and applications, including social networking sites, wikis, blogs, podcasts, videocasts (or vlogs), mashups, folksonomies and online virtual worlds. Social media display very specific characteristics, including participation, connectivity, user-generated content, sharing of information and collaboration, and the increased use of these technologies has shifted the emphasis from traditional consumption-based internet services towards interactive and collaborative ones. This section aims to define social media and their characteristics, users and technologies and applications.

Social media are a relatively new phenomenon and have an emergent status in academic literature. This has resulted in a lack of consensus around a definition for these applications and technologies, and the fact that social media and Web 2.0 are two terms used interchangeably to describe them (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008; Hirschorn, 2007; O'Reilly, 2005). Academic literature on social media tends to be quite descriptive, rather than theoretical, defining what social media applications are and how they can be used. The descriptive nature of this literature is recognised as a limitation of this literature review.

The previous internet interface, which existed before the existence of Web 2.0 or social media, is commonly called Web 1.0 (Beer & Burrows, 2007; Constantinides & Fountain, 2008; Drumgoole, 2006). Beer and Burrows (2007) demonstrate the differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 in their table of *Schematic Differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0* (see Table 1.). Web 1.0 technologies and applications were static web browsers which simply displayed information and generated little feedback (Beer & Burrows, 2007). The Internet was text-based and primarily one-way, something to read only without the opportunity to engage in long term conversations (Beer & Burrows, 2007; Harwood, 2006). In contrast, Web 2.0 technologies and applications allow users to read pages, contribute to discussions, see and hear streaming video and audio, give feedback and participate in conversations (Beer & Burrows, 2007; Dearstyne, 2007).

Table 1:

Some schematic differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 (Beer & Burrows, 2007)

| Dimensions of Difference | Web 1.0 (1993-2003) | Web 2.0 (2004 – beyond) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mode... | Read | Write and Contribute |
| Primary Unit of Content... | Page | Post/record |
| State... | Static | Dynamic |
| Viewed through... | Web Browser | Anything |
| Content created by... | Web Coder | Everyone |
| Domain of... | Web Designers and Geeks | A new culture of public research? |

Social media and Web 2.0 applications and technologies highlight a shift away from traditional one-way media towards interactive, two-way and collective media (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008; Khor & Marsh, 2006), changing the emphasis from browsing and consuming to participating and contributing (Dearstyne, 2007; Harwood, 2006; Tapscott & Williams, 2007). This suggests that anyone can contribute to these new applications, providing opportunities for democracy and freedom of speech. This discourse has been associated with the Internet since its conception, with early academics citing the Internet as a “stimulating positive change in people’s lives by creating new forms of online interaction and enhancing offline relationships” (Wellman, Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001, p. 438). It was predicted that internet applications and technologies would help restore a sense of community, provide a place for people with common interests to meet, overcome limitations of time and space, promote an open and democratic discourse and mobilise collective action (Wellman et al., 2001).

However, despite these claims, barriers to internet access still exist within a digital divide. This suggests that the Internet and social media have not created a

universal, democratic platform for participation, and “Gone is the assumption that technology in itself will eradicate poverty, democratize the media or drive the economy towards meritocracy” (Bradwell & Reeves, 2008, p. 36). Hargittai (2007) believes, “It is too simplistic to assume that merely providing an internet connection to people will obliterate all potential access differences among users” (p. 20). The author uses the term ‘digital inequality’ to highlight a holistic view on ‘barriers to access’ which includes financial access, cognitive access, content access and political access (Hargittai, 2007).

Characteristics of social media

Social media applications and technologies share a wide variety of characteristics and features. Building upon definitions and descriptions in both academic and practitioner-based literature, I define social media as collaborative online applications and technologies which enable and encourage participation, conversation, openness, creation and socialisation amongst a community of users. This definition highlights a specific set of characteristics and features of social media, including participation, connectivity, user-generated content, sharing of information and collaboration. These characteristics will be explored below.

Participation. Social media encourages all users to actively participate (Gilpin, 2009), providing a channel for them to give feedback and share information (Ashling, 2007). This results in a collaborative, participatory culture where users feel comfortable expressing themselves, creating and sharing their creations and communicating with a variety of people across the world (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, & Weigel, 2006).

Previous Web 1.0 applications have always had a participatory element. Static web pages provided users with the opportunity to communicate via email, feedback forms and public forums. However, these technologies limited participation and were often monitored by gatekeepers (Gillin, 2007a). Khor and Marsh (2006) believe that social media have extended our communication skills, providing both alternatives and additions to old media. As stated by Tapscott and Williams (2007), “Whether people are creating, sharing or socializing, the new

web [social media] is principally about participating rather than about passively receiving information” (p. 37). Participation is vital to the success of social media because “the more users [who] participate, the more advanced and valuable the service becomes” (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008, p. 236).

Connectivity. Social media have created a channel, or platform, for the global community to communicate online (McAfee, 2006). In contrast to previous static web pages, social media conversations are created in real time allowing users to “discuss, debate, and collaborate with one another as millions more watch, listen and learn” (Huba & McConnell, 2007, p. x).

Sharing information. Social media allow users to share content, creations, thoughts, views, information and personal details (Baumann, 2006; Beer & Burrows, 2007; O'Reilly, 2005). Traditionally, website content was created, selected and filtered by organizational or media gatekeepers. Users had little power over what information was shared with them, unless they created the website themselves. Social media have broken down these barriers and created a culture of sharing and openness, shifting the emphasis “away from more static toward dynamic content and toward user engagement” (Beer & Burrows, 2007, p. 4). It is an era where users have become active processors and publishers of online content (Baumann, 2006).

User-generated content. Social media have supported a move towards active and engaged users, who are both creating and controlling online content (Beer & Burrows, 2007; Tapscott & Williams, 2007). Previous internet applications and technologies were created by ‘experts’, because they were the only internet users who could navigate the technology. By simplifying and sharing web technologies and processes, social media have given all internet users the ability to create their own online applications and technologies. This shift in power has seen traditional gatekeepers lose control and influence over online content, making anyone with an internet connection a potential resource (Baumann, 2006; Harwood, 2006).

Collaboration. Collaboration is a characteristic of social media which threads throughout the above mentioned characteristics and features. Collaboration,

through social media, plays a key role in creating an “open and collectively spirited community” (Khor & Marsh, 2006, np). Without collaboration, the community function which underpins all social media would not exist. Social media creates countless opportunities for users to harness the power of collective intelligence and co-creation, and a chance to “participate, collaborate and share in social media conversation” (Murray, 2007, p. 9; Tapscott & Williams, 2007)

Users of social media

Social media is designed to be user-generated and, while social media is a new topic in academic literature, there is an entire generation of social media users who have been creating and collaborating online for some years. These users are commonly referred to as Generation C, where C stands for content, creation, consumption and connectivity (Dye, 2007). Khor and Marsh (2006) define Generation C as the “current cohort of young people in their teens and twenties who have grown up with ICT” (p.4). For this generation of internet users, social media tools are part and parcel of life (“Back to basics,” 2007). As Dye (2007) outlines, Generation C are focused upon content and identity creation and they use social media to create networks, relationships and various forms of content. Generation C want to leave their digital fingerprint on the world, and they are doing this through social media (Dye, 2007).

Social media applications and technologies

There are several different social media applications and technologies, each varying in organizational practicality, popularity and usefulness. These applications and technologies all display the defining characteristics of social media and include social networking sites, wikis, blogs, mashups, folksonomies, podcasts, videocasts (or vlogs) and online virtual worlds. Often, social media applications and technologies overlap, and are incorporated into each other. Social networking sites are an excellent example of the integrated nature of social media, with the application often including blogs, videocasts and mashups. In this section, seven applications and technologies of social media will be explored, demonstrating the similarities between them and providing a holistic discussion of

social media. Social networking sites will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Wikis. A wiki is a webpage which allows all users to contribute, edit and delete content ("Back to basics," 2007; Rubenking & Daragan, 2003; Scott, 2007). Features include sections devoted to specific topics, a discussion forum for users, history pages to track changes and hyperlinks to connect topics throughout the site (Beer & Burrows, 2007; Wagner, 2004). A wiki enables a community of users to share and combine sets of knowledge and, as outlined by Pfitzinger:

“A successful wiki relies on the collaboration of many people... for a wiki to work, it requires active participation by many people, building a resource that participants and observers view as having value and being worthwhile” (as cited in Stephens, 2006, p. 54).

Wikis can be used by an organization in many ways. Most commonly they are used for knowledge management, but other frequent uses include information recording/management, idea incubation, corporate brainstorming and the exchange and documentation of information and knowledge ("Back to basics," 2007; Hof, 2004). A wiki is a useful tool, because it can allow staff to communicate and collaborate without geographic boundaries (Gordon, 2006).

A successful wiki needs a trusting and collaborative culture, which supports the users' freedom to contribute and to express their ideas and values ("Back to basics," 2007). A lack of trust and risk are often the main barriers to an individual's decision to contribute to a wiki (Welsh, 2007). Like most social media, wikis are questioned for their reliability and authority as a source of information (Beer & Burrows, 2007). Social media are often credited for their lack of barriers and gatekeepers (Beer & Burrows, 2007), but this openness is at the forefront of concerns associated with a wiki. Anyone can post information on an external, open wiki and “anybody can claim to be an expert on any subject” (Tapscott & Williams, 2007, p. 74). Avid wiki users manage this issue by self regulating and constantly picking up on mistakes and correcting them (Tapscott & Williams, 2007).

Blogs. A blog, created in 1997 by Jorn Barger, is best described as an online journal which provides a commentary on a variety of topics, including personal events, politics, business or current affairs (Arnold, 2007; Beer & Burrows, 2007; Cass, 2007). Blog entries are presented in reverse chronological order and are dated, archived and regularly updated (Arnold, 2007; Scott, 2007), following a similar format to a wiki. Bloggers include links, or hyperlinks, in their blogs to attribute and link back to the original source of information (Cass, 2007; Weil, 2006). This process is crucial to increasing awareness about a blog and for enhancing the validity and credibility of the blog as a reliable source of information.

Blog readers can leave comments on a blog, allowing readers to critique, challenge and shape an argument around the blog content (Arnold, 2007). As stated by Scott (2007), “Comments from readers offering different viewpoints than original posts are actually a good thing on a blog, because they add credibility to your viewpoint by showing two sides of an issue” (p. 47). An RSS feed is a free online application which allows users to subscribe to a source, such as a blog, website or news headline, and receive automatic content updates (Khor & Marsh, 2006; Wright, 2006). This type of subscription is critical for blogs, as it makes it easy for readers to remain ‘tuned in’ to the blogosphere (Gillin, 2007a).

Organizations have been using blogs as a corporate communication tool for several years. As a result, there is an extensive amount of literature available on the topic of corporate blogs. According to Wright (2006), blogs are used to fulfil a number of corporate objectives, including facilitating and responding to feedback; building relationships through dialogue and conversation; crisis communication; and internal relations, assisting knowledge management and sharing, internal document review, idea generation and archiving and goal setting.

As corporate blogging grows in popularity, academics and practitioners are calling for organizations to create blogging guidelines and policies for their employees (Flynn, 2006). The disclosure of private and confidential organizational information is a major issue for organizations, because once

information is posted on a blog it is potentially accessible to millions of readers forever (Cass, 2007; Flynn, N., 2006). There are many issues for organizations to consider including confidentiality breaches, corporate reputation management and legal issues such as copyright, defamation and sexual harassment (Flynn, N., 2006). Written policies and guidelines could identify banned or off limit topics, state whether employees can blog in company time and highlight the need for company disclaimers on personal blogs (Cass, 2007; Weil, 2006). Flynn, N. (2006) also recommends the active moderation of comments made on a corporate blog, to “avoid publishing content that is defamatory or inaccurate” (p. 33). It is important to note that these issues around moderation and privacy are not limited to blogging, and are becoming relevant for all social media applications and technologies.

Podcasts. A podcast is a downloadable audio file, which holds a recorded conversation or show (Cass, 2007). Shows are scheduled and regular (daily, weekly, month or random) and are similar to radio and television talk shows, focusing on both general and specific topics (Bennigton, 2007; Weil, 2006). A podcast provides speakers with an outlet for creating real conversations with their listeners (January, 2006), and often a website may include a blog and a podcast to cater for different audiences (reading/listening). As suggested by Gillin (2007b), “It’s a cheap, flexible form of self expression, a way to share one’s thoughts and opinions with a like-minded audience (p. 150).

As with most social media, feedback is central to the success of a podcast. Feedback is encouraged through several mediums, including email, comments and audio files (Cass, 2007), allowing the podcaster to interact with listeners and encouraging knowledge sharing between experts and enthusiasts (Bennigton, 2007). Similar to blogs, listeners can subscribe to a podcast using an RSS feed (Spring, 2005). Free show updates can be automatically downloaded onto audio devices, such as an iPod, through a subscription service, such as iTunes (Bennigton, 2007; Gillin, 2007a; Huba & McConnell, 2007; Spring, 2005). Once downloaded, users can listen to the show at anytime, in any location (Huba & McConnell, 2007).

Organizations use podcasts to create conversations and discussions with the online community (Cass, 2007). Organizational podcast shows are targeted at specific audiences and demonstrate either a passion or expert knowledge surrounding a topical subject (Scott, 2007). It is important that the podcast provides relevant and useful information; otherwise listeners will quickly lose interest. The distribution of audio press releases, via an RSS feed, is a new organizational use of podcasts and, unfortunately, limited information is available about its potential success (Cass, 2007).

Currently, there is no reliable way to estimate a podcast's audience size and characteristics and this is a significant limitation of the technology (Gillin, 2007b). Since RSS feeds are designed to be anonymous, podcast subscribers and listeners are virtually impossible to track (Gillin, 2007b). Also, since podcasters are often amateur and freelance, there is no way to track down all the podcasts in existence today (Gillin, 2007b). These are key issues for organizations to consider, particularly from a measurement perspective.

Vidcasts (or vlogs). Vidcasts (or vlogs) are downloadable video files that can be watched on a computer or hand-held video device (Huba & McConnell, 2007). Vidcasts are a close cousin of both podcasts and blogs, allowing viewers to subscribe to an RSS feed and to leave comments (Huba & McConnell, 2007). As suggested by Searcey (2005), "Vlogs are essentially publicly accessible web logs, known as blogs, where authors can post video as well as text entries, and viewers can give feedback (p. B1). Vidcasts are often amateur, focusing on personal moments in people's lives, giving content creators a new tool to express themselves creatively (Benjamin, 2006; Searcey, 2007).

Vidcasts are still being explored as a potential organizational tool. They can help organizations to connect with the online community, by posting videos that encourage feedback, ideas and contributions from the community (Cass, 2007). Vidcasts can also be used as video press releases, or to recruit new employees ("Managing risk, maximising results," 2007). Internally, organizations can produce videos focused upon employee-specific topics, such as training and news updates ("Managing risk, maximising results," 2007). While visually appealing,

vidcasts are very expensive to make compared to podcasts or blogs. This is a significant limitation of the technology.

Folksonomies. A folksonomy, first created by Thomas VanderWal in 2005, is a user-generated system for categorising and labelling online digital content, such as video, photos and website links (Allen, 2005; West, 2007). The system organises digital content by using a vocabulary that is determined by its users (Khor & Marsh, 2006; West, 2007). This contrasts significantly to a taxonomy which is a controlled and uniform classification, with a vocabulary clearly determined by those in authority (Dye, 2006; Kroski, 2005; West, 2007). A folksonomy is user-created and reflects the community's needs without cultural, social or political bias (Gordon-Murnane, 2006; Kroski, 2005; West, 2007).

Users create folksonomies by attaching their own searchable 'tags', or keywords, to content (Gordon-Murnane, 2006; Kroski, 2005), as explained by Dye (2006), "Users assign a name, or tag, to any image, article, blog, bookmark or URL" (p. 38). Multiple tags can be attached to one piece of content (Gordon-Murnane, 2006) and, as highlighted by Kroski (2005), the tagging process is "not about the right or the wrong way to categorise something and it's not about accuracy or authority, it's about remembering" (Section two, paragraph seven). Tags are often used on social networking sites, such as Facebook, to 'tag' users in photos. This has created a process for linking the individual user to the photo. On a website, a 'tag cloud' visually represents a folksonomy vocabulary. It is a paragraph of key words, or tags, listed alphabetically and differentiated by font size, which increase in proportion with the tag's popularity (Dye, 2006; West, 2007).

According to the literature, folksonomies are not yet used by organizations. However, organizations could use folksonomies for research-based projects, to help find un-tapped sources of information. Also, an organization could establish an internal folksonomy by allowing staff to tag their own work, creating an organization-unique folksonomy classification. The main concern associated with the use of folksonomies is the flat, unstructured nature of the classification system (Fichter, 2006). Users can associate multiple tags to a piece of content, creating overlaps with synonyms and plurals vs. singular terms (Gordon-Murnane, 2006;

Kroski, 2005). As a result, there is no way of measuring, or searching for, multiple terms on a singular topic (Fichter, 2006; Kroski, 2005).

Mashups. A mashup is an application that combines two or more web sources/technologies, such as software or websites, and creates an integrated web experience or a new application (Khor & Marsh, 2006; Miller, 2005; Ozer & Kerwin, 2005). The term ‘mashup’ originates from the music industry, where producers would remix and blend music tracks together to create a ‘music mashup’ (Gerber, 2006; Huba & McConnell, 2007). Internet mashups are unique to social media, because they can be purely user-generated. Users take information from the public domain (i.e. a website) and use free web-based tools to create a new application or service (Chafkin, 2006). As suggested by Jeffrey Bezo, CEO of Amazon, “People are seizing far more control of what they do online... they’re taking bits and pieces from a number of companies and stitching them together in some clever ways (as cited in Hof, 2005, section two, paragraph two).

Nike 6.0 are using mashup technology on their website www.nike6.loopd.com. The site is a community for action sport athletes and enthusiasts. Members can build their own mashup by mixing and mashing their favourite videos and photos and combining them with original content supplied by Nike 6.0 ("Loop'd network," 2008). One of the biggest concerns associated with the use of mashup technology is copyright infringement. Since mashups combine two sets of data, which are not necessarily owned by either the individual or the company mashing them, Gerber (2006) suggests there will be legal issues and implications surrounding the future use of mashup technology.

Online Virtual World - Second Life. Second Life is a three-dimensional virtual world created by San Francisco-based company Linden Lab (Abram, 2007; Cass, 2007). It is built entirely by its players, who are given the tools to shape the world around them (Abram, 2007). With the slogan “Your world, your imagination” (Zheng, 2007), Second Life follows an open-ended game design where, as outlined by Calypso (2007), users are encouraged to “design and construct the world as they want to see it within their own respective imaginations” (p. 60).

Users, or ‘residents’ as they are called in Second Life, create a digital representation of themselves called an avatar, which is a “graphical representation of a real person in cyberspace” (Abram, 2007, p. 34; Calypso, 2007). An avatar can walk, fly or teleport around Second Life (Zheng, 2007).

To encourage user-creation, users have full intellectual property protection for the digital content they create in Second Life, such as clothing, characters, scripts, objects and designs (Enright, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2007). The official currency is Linden Dollars which exchanges into U.S dollars (Cass, 2007; Enright, 2007; Meall, 2007). Meall (2007) suggests that out of the five million or so registered Second Life members, 456 people make over \$500 (US) and 29 people make over \$5000 (US) in revenue each month from the game.

Many organizations are still navigating their way around Second Life, however, a handful of well-known brands have already broken into the Second Life market. Los Angeles-based company American Apparel was the first real-world clothing retailer established in Second Life in 2006 (Enright, 2007). The company makes little profit from its virtual sales, but uses Second Life as a way to actively engage with an entire community of users (Cass, 2007; Enright, 2007). Second Life can also be used as a forum for testing products and gaining realistic feedback from users (Libert & Spector, 2008) and as a platform for hosting virtual conferences and meetings (Libert & Spector, 2008).

The biggest issue facing Second Life is its future. Until recently, Second Life has been a world without taxes or heavy regulations placed upon its users. This freedom has slowly been taken away from users, with rising international concerns about gambling, alleged pornographic trading and sexual encounters between adult and childlike avatars (Dell, 2007). This highlights the need for organizations to thoroughly research Second Life before using it as a communication tool.

Social networking sites

This research investigation will focus primarily on social networking sites. Social networking sites encourage participation, connectivity, sharing of information, user-generation and collaboration, and they are no different to any other social media application. As mentioned earlier, social networking sites often incorporate a number of social media technologies and applications. This provides an opportunity to research how organizations are using multiple social media for public relations and organizational communication, within one context. As identified earlier, during 2007-08 social networking sites were starting to figure prominently in public relations and organizational communication in New Zealand. To reflect this trend, in this research I decided to explore how organizations were using social networking sites. This section will define social networking sites and discuss current organizational uses and issues or concerns associated with their use.

Defining social networking sites

As with most social media applications, social networking sites (SNS) have created a new space for communication. They allow users to make their existing social network visible and to create an online profile of themselves (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Through the creation of their online profile, SNS users type themselves into being, uploading a profile picture and providing descriptive information including their name, age, location, favourite movies/tastes/books/music and hobbies (boyd, 2007a; boyd & Ellison, 2007). Other features of SNS include the capacity to share photos and videos (vidcasts), create a personal blog, connect with groups and bands, create mashups and add comments and private message other users (boyd, 2007a; boyd & Ellison, 2007; Dwyer, Passerini, & Hiltz, 2007)

The terms and definitions of SNS are contested. boyd and Ellison (2007) broadly define social *network* sites as:

Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (p.2).

boyd and Ellison (2007) emphasise the term network in their definition of SNS, to define a bounded system of online users that *already* share a connection. This definition privileges the social nature of the relationships developed, identifying friendships as the main outcome. The premise that individuals use SNS to strengthen existing social relationships is supported by research conducted by Johnstone, Chua and Todd (2008) and by Ellison et al. (2007). This suggests, “Online interactions do not necessarily remove people from their offline world but may indeed be used to support relationships and keep people in contact” (Ellison et al., 2007, n/p).

Beer (2008) critiques this definition of SNS, suggesting it is too broad and it allows SNS to stand for too many things. He prefers the term social networking, to refer to a set of applications where *networking* (the process) is the main preoccupation (Beer, 2008). This includes the possibility of connections between strangers as well as those who already have a relationship. This revised definition recognises that terms such as social media or Web 2.0 already serve as an umbrella definition for SNS, and allows SNS to be defined specifically as sites for networking and connecting with people (Beer, 2008).

Friends are the currency of SNS and often include offline friends, old high school friends, workmates, organizations or brands, family and people met at parties, to name a few (boyd, 2006). The main difference between the above definitions is the notion of *friendship* in a social networking context, with some academics believing SNS are an extension of offline relationships (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison et al., 2007; Johnstone et al., 2008), and others believing SNS can be used to develop networks between strangers (Beer, 2008). Identifying whether online and offline friendships are similar or different is another tension associated with the definition of friendships in a SNS context. Supporting her definition of SNS, boyd (2006) believes there is a clear difference between online and offline friends,

with offline friendships involving more emotional and practical support and trust. Her research suggests that a variety of different types of friendships exist online, since online relationships only require, at minimum, a public performance of the relationship (boyd, 2006; Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell, & Walther, 2008). Beer (2008) critiques this notion of friendship, suggesting that any attempt to separate online and offline relationships detracts from the understanding that social media technologies are a defining and integral part of how people live:

Technologies are so mundane and integrated in how we live, why try to understand them by separating them out of our routines, how we live, how we connect with people and from relationships and so on... [However] It is possible that social networking sites, as they become mainstream, might well have an influence on what friendship means, how it is understood, and, ultimately, how it is played out (p. 521).

This research recognises that these different perspectives exist, particularly around the notion of friendships, and the networking function of a SNS. Both definitions and perspectives will be incorporated into this investigation, which explores how organizations are using SNS to create *networking* opportunities with target publics, hoping the outcome will be *genuine friendships* online.

Facebook, Bebo and MySpace are the three dominant SNS in New Zealand. Facebook, founded by Mark Zuckerberg and Peter Theiel in 2004, was initially created as a space for Harvard university students to connect online (boyd & Ellison, 2007). It is now an open SNS with over 59 million active users and two million new users each year (Hodgkinson, 2008). Bebo, created in 2005 by Michael and Xochi Birch, operates in the United Kingdom, Canada, United States, New Zealand and Australia, with over 34 million registered users (*Bebo unbound*, 2007). Compared to MySpace and Facebook, Bebo has the tightest privacy control settings for users (Hempel, 2007). MySpace, established in 2003, was initially created as a space for bands and musicians from around the world to gain free airtime and publicity (boyd, 2007a). Today, MySpace maintains its strong focus on musicians and bands (boyd, 2007a). The SNS has virtually no limitations, allowing users to mashup applications and to completely customise

their individual profile pages. This feature is similar to Bebo's use of 'skins' for customising user profiles, yet it contrasts significantly to Facebook which has a standardised format for user profiles.

Current organizational uses of social networking sites

As Bradwell and Reeves (2008) suggest, "Online social networks have made it easier than ever to create, maintain and develop links with people and organizations" (p. 19). Organizations are starting to embrace social networking technologies, to take advantage of the connections these technologies facilitate (Bradwell & Reeves, 2008). Since late 2007, New Zealand-based organizations have been using social networking sites (SNS) as an innovative public relations and marketing medium, and several successful campaigns have been created on Bebo, targeted at New Zealand audiences.

Frucor Beverages Ltd launched 'The V Republic', an online community on Bebo, in 2007. Through Bebo, the organization hoped to engage and entertain V's core target audience, 18-24 year olds (Gavin, 2008). This was considered a highly successful campaign and, after three months, the V Republic had 11, 340 registered members (Gavin, 2008). Chris Riley, Director of OMD Digital, the advertising agency who created the campaign, states, "The V Republic has allowed us to leverage the immense reach of Bebo in New Zealand, whilst providing a fantastic end user experience with the V brand through associated events" (as cited in Gavin, 2008, p. 1)

Beer (2008) is critical of the organizational use of SNS, labelling the trend 'knowing capitalism'. Knowing capitalism describes the way information is routinely harvested from SNS and used to inform organizations or other SNS users (Beer, 2008). Within this framework, SNS profiles are 'commodities', used by users to draw in more friends and used by organizations to gain information about certain populations. This perspective is supported by Johnstone et al. (2008), who highlight that owners of SNS see the sites as revenue-making ventures, by placing high value on the sites' ability to collect data about users and sell it to advertisers. Beer (2008) suggests:

When we ask about who are using social networking sites and for what purpose, we should not just think about those with profiles, we should also be thinking about capital interests of third parties using the data, of the organising power of algorithms, of the welfare issues of privacy made public, of the motives and agendas of those that construct those technologies in the common rhetoric of the day, and, finally, of the way that information is taken out of the system to inform about the users, or, in short, how social networking sites can be understood as archives of the everyday that represent vast and rich source of transactional data about a vast population of users (p. 526).

Beer's (2008) conceptualisation of 'knowing capitalism' highlights one of the most significant concerns associated with the use of social networking sites (SNS), by both individuals and organizations: privacy and confidentiality breaches. As highlighted earlier, this is a common concern associated with social media applications and technologies, including wikis and blogs. Barnes (2006) believes that SNS have created an illusion of privacy, and users do not realise how accessible their personal information really is. As Melber (2008) suggests, "Social networking sites are rupturing the traditional conception of privacy and priming a new generation for complacency in a surveillance society" (Paragraph two). Johnstone et al. (2008) support this, suggesting that users do not view SNS as "a commercial space for marketing paraphernalia" (p. 5), and therefore do not realise that the disclosure of personal information on SNS can have undesirable consequences, with third parties collecting their information (Beer, 2008). This vulnerability may also extend into social realms, and anything said on SNS can also directly influence users' education, employment and financial future (Barnes, 2006).

It is important to note that SNS users can control access to their personal information, through the use of privacy settings. However, a recent survey by Dwyer et al. (2007) demonstrates that users are not exercising their right to privacy, with 100% of Facebook users revealing their real name online. While this apathy towards privacy can be seen as a positive trend for those organizations 'harvesting' information from SNS, it could have dire organizational

consequences if corporate information is shared or leaked by organizational members.

The second section of this literature review will explore public relations and organizational communication theory, from a relationship management perspective.

Public Relations and Relationship Management Perspective

“Today’s organization can not operate simply to adapt the environment to the needs of the organization; it also must act to adopt the organization to the environment”
(Ledingham & Bruning, 2001, p. 530)

In the late 1990s public relations research recognised the need for organizations to build mutually beneficial relationships with their publics (Jahansoozi, 2006). Following this trend, the relationship between an organization and its publics has become a central concept to the practice of public relations. This section seeks to define the relationship management perspective of public relations, highlighting best practice for communication between an organization and its publics.

According to Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006), public relations can be defined as, “The management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends” (p. 6). The relationship management perspective provides a way of conceptualising and measuring the effectiveness and impacts of these relationships. Rooted in interpersonal communication theory, relationship management recognises the need for “building, nurturing and maintaining the organization-public relationship” (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000; Bruning & Ledingham, 1999, p. 158). It also recognises that both organizations and publics can influence one another and that:

In order for an organization to practice public relations from a relational perspective, the organization must first recognise that it can affect the lives of the

members of its key publics, and also recognise that members of the key publics can affect the organization (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999, p. 159).

Relationship Management: Theoretical roots and origins

The relationship management perspective is closely aligned with the systems theory of public relations, recognising the need for interdependence, mutual adaptation and the exchange of information, energy or resources (Broom et al., 2000). As outlined by Broom et al (2000):

Organization-public relationships are represented by the patterns of interaction, transaction, exchange and linkage between an organization and its publics. These relationships share properties that are distinct from the identities, attributes and perceptions of the individuals and social collectivities of the relationships. Though dynamic in nature, organization-public relationship can be described at a single point in time and tracked over time (p. 18).

The systems theory of public relations defines organizations and publics as interdependent, interacting units, whose actions affect one another (Cutlip et al., 2006; Grunig, 1992; Moncur, 2006). Within this system, public relations serves a boundary scanning role, responding to changes in the environment and adjusting organization-public relationships accordingly (Cutlip et al., 2006). In this sense, public relations is a relationship management function, ensuring the “development, maintenance, growth and nurturing of mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their significant publics” (Thomlison, as cited in Jo, Hon, & Brunner, 2005, p. 14).

Grunig and Grunig’s ‘excellence’ model of public relations can be closely linked to the evolution of the relationship management perspective. The model highlights four practices of public relations, including press agency/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetrical communication and two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). The four practices are characterised by two dimensions, the direction of communication (one-way or

two-way) and the intended effect of the communication (asymmetric or symmetric) (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997).

The two-way symmetrical model is presented as the 'ideal' and most ethical form of communication for public relations practice (Grunig, 1992; Moncur, 2006). Similar to the relationship management perspective, the two-way symmetrical model highlights communication as a process for reaching consensus and emphasising mutual understanding (Stoker & Tusinski, 2006). As Grunig (2001) states, the two-way symmetrical model encourages, "Arguments, debate, and persuasion [to] take place. But dialogue, listening, understanding and relationship building also occur[s] because they are more effective in resolving conflict than are one-way attempts at compliance gaining" (p. 18).

Grunig's two-way symmetrical model of public relations has drawn significant criticism from public relations academics and practitioners. Most commonly, critics believe the two-way symmetrical model is, "naïve, overly-idealistic and has no place in the real world of public relations" (Lane, 2005, p. 14). As suggested by Cancel et al. (1997), "The practice of public relations is too complex, too fluid and impinged by far too many variables... to force it into the four boxes known as the four models of public relations" (p. 32). Academics believe the model not only fails to address the practicalities of implementing the two-way symmetrical approach, but it may also create unrealistic expectations for communication between an organization and its publics (Lane, 2005; Stoker & Tusinski, 2006).

Choi (2005) and Lane (2005) suggest the two-way symmetrical model assumes an active and informed relationship between an organization and its publics, without recognising that all publics cannot have the same opportunities when communicating with an organization. This imbalance may result in selective symmetrical communication, with organizations selecting to communicate with those publics who will agree with the organization (Stoker & Tusinski, 2006). As highlighted by Van der Meiden (1993), "The demands of dialogue [may] force the organization to become more strategic and selective in its communication and more reliant on homogenous publics to achieve mutual understanding" (as cited in

Stoker & Tusinski, 2006, p. 163). As outlined by Stoker and Tusinski (2006), this type of communication is significantly less ethical than Grunig proposes:

The irony of ethical communication based upon systems theory and dialogue [symmetry] is that its very emphasis on equality, consensus and agreement could promote inequality in the selection of publics (even those considered most vulnerable), a false consensus arising from the selection criteria, and disparate treatment of publics based on their instrumental or even non-instrumental value to the organization (p. 165).

Responding to such criticisms, Grunig has since stated that the symmetrical model is not ideal, suggesting that the model should be a benchmark for organizations to strive towards in their organization-public relations (Grunig, 2001; Moncur, 2006). He has also acknowledged that, dependent upon the situation, asymmetrical tactics may be used to create a win-win situation for an organization and its publics (Grunig, 2001). Cancel et al. (1997) support this context-dependent perspective, suggesting that public relations should:

Always ask what is going to be the most effective method at a given time. True excellence in public relations may result from picking the appropriate point along the continuum that best fits the current needs of the organization and its publics (p. 35).

The organization-public relationship

Focal to the relationship management perspective, is the notion of an organization-public relationship. As Jo et al. (2005) outline, relationship management places emphasis on the quality of the relationship between an organization and its publics. According to Bruning and Ledingham, (1999), six conditions must exist within the organization-public relationship, including an awareness of their influence over each other; dialogue; openness; trust; understanding; and a willingness to negotiate, collaborate and mediate solutions to issues of concern. An ideal organization-public relationship can be defined as:

The state that exists between an organization and its key publics that provides economic, social, political and/or cultural benefits to all parties involved, and is characterised by mutual positive regards (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999, p. 160).

Historically, public relations campaigns have been evaluated by quantifying communication activity, for example the number of stories placed in print media, rather than determining the effect public relations messages had on the intended publics (Bruning, DeMiglio, & Embry, 2006). Several frameworks, based on the organization-public relationship perspective, have been created to provide practitioners with a method for measuring the effectiveness of public relations activities (Bruning et al., 2006). Most commonly, frameworks recognise the need to measure the level of trust, mutual legitimacy and satisfaction, credibility and understanding in an organization-public relationship (Grunig, Grunig, & Ehling, 1992; Jo et al., 2005).

Bruning and Ledingham (1999) and Bruning and Galloway (2003) provide one of the most comprehensive frameworks for measuring the organization-public relationship. In earlier work, Bruning and Ledingham (1999) identified a three-tier framework, measuring the professional, personal and community relationship between an organization and its publics. Bruning and Galloway (2003) later expanded this framework, aiming to help an organization predict more accurately, “the ways in which organization-public relationships affect key public member opinions, evaluations and behaviours” (p. 311).

The revised framework measures five factors in the relationship, including respondent anthropomorphic attitudes—the way an organization demonstrates human qualities to satisfy personal relationships with publics; community improvement—the organization’s efforts to build and improve the community within which it operates; professional benefits and expectations—whether an organization engages in professional activities that benefit both the organization and its publics; personal commitment—the way an organization demonstrates that it is committed to its publics in the long and short term; and comparison of alternatives—whether an organization is aware of competitors and how these

competitors may fulfil the professional and emotional needs of its publics (Bruning & Galloway, 2003).

Dialogic communication

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, today's communication environment is rapidly changing and "the public spaces in which we compete and communicate have never been more complex and unpredictable" (Flynn, T., 2006, p. 193). Not only can organizations communicate with multiple publics via technology in seconds, but publics can use technology to be "more vocal and more influential in their interactions with the organizations" (Flynn, T., 2006, p. 193).

To fit within this dynamic environment, the theoretical relationship management perspective has evolved towards a theory of dialogic communication. Dialogue can be considered one of the best ways to capture the process and product of relationship building (Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001). As suggested by Taylor et al. (2001), "In light of the new emphasis on 'relationships' in public relations, 'dialogue' appears to be joining and perhaps even replacing the concept of symmetry as an organizing principle in public relations theory building" (p. 265).

Dialogue is rooted in many disciplines including philosophy, rhetoric, psychology and relational communication (Kent & Taylor, 2002). It is considered the most ethical form of communication, and is cited to provide a means for separating truth from falsehood (Day, Dong, & Robins, 2001; Kent & Taylor, 2002). In this sense, dialogue can be linked to the demand for authentic communication by organizations (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). As suggested by Day et al. (2001), "Dialogic communication will be helpful in more ethical relations between organizations and communities in letting community members communicate their concerns about practices of organizations" (p. 408).

Kent and Taylor (1998) define dialogue as the negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions. Building upon the relationship management perspective, dialogue helps an organization manage the organization-public relationship by providing publics with the opportunity to ask questions, express viewpoints and to better understand

organizational processes (Bruning, Dials, & Shirka, 2008). Kent and Taylor (2002) believe that dialogue should be conceptualised as a product, rather than a process. In this sense, communication is the tool for negotiating relationships between an organization and public, and dialogue is the product of this “ongoing communication and relationship” (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 24).

Dialogic communication has shifted the emphasis away from symmetrical two-way communication (Kent & Taylor, 1998), to “reconceptualize public relations in a multi-dimensional perspective where dialogue, collaboration and negotiation with multiple stakeholders and stakeholders occur simultaneously” (Flynn, T., 2006, p. 193). Organizations can tailor communication and organizational action based upon the relational needs of publics, identified through communication and dialogue (Bruning et al., 2008).

Dialogic communication framework

Drawing upon Habermas (1984), Burlison and Kline (1979) outline four criteria for achieving dialogic communication, including equal opportunity to initiate and maintain discourse; equal opportunity to make challenges, explanations or interpretations; interaction free of manipulation, domination or control; and equality amongst participants, with respect to power (as cited in Day et al., 2001, p. 408).

Kent and Taylor (2002) provide the most comprehensive framework of dialogic communication. There are five features of dialogue outlined, including mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk and commitment.

Mutuality. Mutuality is the acknowledgement that organizations and publics are interdependent (Kent & Taylor, 2002). To demonstrate this, organizations and publics collaborate and seek to understand each other’s positions. Reality is accepted as subjective, and all points of view are considered. All participants should be viewed equally, so that no power positions exist.

Propinquity. Propinquity is the understanding that organizations should consult publics in matters that influence them, and that publics should communicate demands or special needs to organizations. This ensures that all parties are engaged with and communicating about issues, with a focus on creating a continued and shared future for both the organization and publics. As highlighted by Kent and Taylor (2002), “When an organization is fully engaged in its community (local or global) it will have broader contexts and wider perspectives to draw upon in its decision making” (p. 26).

Empathy. Empathy encompasses the need for an atmosphere of support and truth, in order for dialogue to succeed. Kent and Taylor (2002) suggest that organizations should ensure, “meetings are open to all interested participants, conversations are held in easily accessible locations, materials are made available to all, and efforts are made to facilitate mutual understanding” (p. 27). Empathy also involves the organization actively acknowledging the voices of all publics, even if they disagree with the organization’s position.

Risk. Risk is implicit in all organizational and interpersonal relationships. Communication is not scripted, so it is difficult for organizations and publics to predict the outcome of a dialogic exchange. As a result, both parties are vulnerable to manipulation or ridicule. This risk can be managed through the recognition that all individuals are unique and valuable, with differing values, culture and opinions.

Commitment. Commitment can refer to many things. Both organizations and publics should commit to a genuine dialogue that is honest and forthright. They should also commit to working towards common understandings and achieving mutual benefits. Also, due to the intersubjectivity of dialogue, each party should commit to correctly interpreting and understanding the others’ perspective.

Incorporating dialogue into public relations practice

Dialogic communication has created a new role for public relation practitioners and, as Flynn, T. (2006) states:

Public relations managers must now be relationship builders, reputation managers and responsible advocates, for both their organizations and the stakeholders, to achieve a mutually beneficial end state – established and maintained through a collaborative and dynamic process of negotiation and facilitation with each stakeholder group (p. 197).

Effectively, dialogic communication provides public relations with a means for communicating with publics, increasing both interaction and the exchange of information between an organization and publics (Bruning et al., 2008; Kent & Taylor, 2002). However, for dialogue to be successful, an organization must commit to ‘continue the conversation’ and accept the value of relationship building within a dialogic framework (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

According to Kent and Taylor (2002), there are three ways to incorporate dialogue into public relations. First, build interpersonal relationships with publics by listening, empathising, identifying common ground and seeking out groups or individuals with opposing views. Second, build mediated dialogic relationships through multiple communication channels. Third, develop a procedural approach to dialogue. Pearson provides an example of a three-step procedural approach, (i) no topics excluded from the conversation; (ii) no communication considered inappropriate or irrational; (iii) recognising that during discourse communicators can change ‘levels of reflexivity’.

While dialogue is considered one of the most ethical forms of communication, it can be used immorally by public relations. “Dialogue is not a panacea” (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 24) and a dialogic approach, in itself, can not force an organization to behave ethically (Kent & Taylor, 2002). As highlighted in Kent and Taylor’s (1998; 2002) dialogic framework, dialogue involves trust, risk, vulnerability and participants *can* be manipulated by organizations. It is possible that public relations practitioners will be tempted to ‘stage’ dialogic encounters with publics (Day et al., 2001), to help maintain the organization’s economic and political interests (Choi, 2005). However, as outlined by Day et al (2001), “True dialogue will require interaction with those who hold points of view in opposition

to current organizational practice” (p. 409) and it is important that public relations make *authentic* and *ethical* dialogic commitments to organizational publics.

Stoker and Tusinski (2006) support this perspective, believing that public relations needs to shift away from finding agreement with publics, towards discovering differences. They suggest that, by recognising that “activist groups may disagree, employees may not feel secure in their jobs, neighbours may not want a new plant in their backyard, and customers may need reassurance that one’s products are safe” (Stoker & Tusinski, 2006, p. 171), public relations will develop stronger relationships with publics. By identifying and recognising the diversity and uniqueness of publics, public relations can strive to achieve authentic dialogue, which does not necessarily result in agreement. As stated by Stoker and Tusinski (2006), “The field will find that by giving up some control over the conversation, it will gain a greater voice in the conversation” (p. 173).

Authenticity in an organizational context

Central to dialogue is the notion of authenticity, particularly when considering the organization-public relationship. Traditionally, the concept of authenticity has been associated with concepts of self, within a social context. Kreber, Klampfleitner, McCune, Bayne and Knottenbelt’s (2007) study on authenticity and teaching, highlighted that authenticity is commonly associated with presenting a genuine, critically reflective and true self. Similarly, Sloan (2007) theorised authenticity as a commitment to expressing self freely, suggesting “Individuals feel authentic when they act in manners that are consistent with what they perceive to be their true self” (p. 306). More recently, authenticity has been applied to an organizational context, particularly in regards to brand-related advertising and organization-public relationships. This review will focus on defining authenticity within this organizational context, not in a social context as explored by academics such as Kreber et al. (2007) and Sloan (2007).

Organizational authenticity has emerged over the past few years, due to an increase in demand for organizations to provide authentic products and services (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). This is not a new concept for marketing and public

relations and, as early as 2003, Brown, Kozinet and Sherry identified that, “The search for authenticity is one of the cornerstones of contemporary marketing” (as cited in Beverland, Lindgreen, & Vink, 2008, p. 5). Authenticity, in all contexts, is personally determined and “what one person experiences as completely authentic, another may view as completely inauthentic, and a third may be somewhere in between” (Gilmore & Pine, 2007, pp. 92-93). This is important, and indicates that organizations can not assume that customers will see authenticity in the same way as the organization, or each other (Gilmore & Pine, 2007).

Gilmore and Pine (2007) identify five key drivers behind the demand for authenticity, including the creation of commercialised and staged experiences; the increase in technology-driven interactions; the shift towards post-modernism and a socially constructed reality; the rise of the Baby Boomers; the failure of institutions with corporate green washing and lying politicians; and turmoil within religious organizations. New technologies, and their associated new behaviours, have led to the creation of new entities, such as ‘virtual life’ and ‘reality television’ (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). This has led to a discursive shift, creating a new meaning for the word ‘real’. In the past, before the creation of online games and automated telephone services, terms such as ‘real life’ and ‘real person’ were considered redundant and did not exist (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). This focus on the ‘real’ is associated with the need for more person-to-person, or authentic, interactions by consumers.

Academics have identified several models of authenticity (Beverland et al., 2008; Gilmore & Pine, 2007), to give organizations the opportunity to ‘render authenticity’ (Gilmore & Pine, 2007) with their target publics. Beverland et al.’s (2008) research measured the various perspectives of authenticity, in relation to Trappist Beer in Belgium and the Netherlands. The findings identified three forms of authenticity, including pure (literal) authenticity, approximate authenticity and moral authenticity. Pure (literal) authenticity demonstrates a commitment to tradition and reinforces the continuation of historical practices. Approximate authenticity provides more flexibility, accepting that historical traditions may evolve to meet modern standards. Moral authenticity lies in the

passion and love for a craft or service, with a genuine intent rather than a focus on financial rewards.

In contrast, Gilmore and Pine (2007) identify five genres of authenticity, which are product and service specific. Commodities are considered naturally authentic, when they exist in a natural, raw and organic state. Goods can be originally authentic, when they are one of a kind and new. Services are considered exceptionally authentic, when they are unique, customised and hand-made. Experiences can be referentially authentic, if based on traditional and iconic memories. Transformations are influentially authentic, focusing on ‘better ways’, ‘greater good’, meaning and aspirations.

The connection between authenticity and new technology, such as social media, is very strong. Both of these models illustrate that organizations are trying to utilise the power of ‘real’ and authentic experiences and services, when communicating with their publics. This has become a central aspect in the organization-public relationship, and is particularly relevant to dialogic communication via social media applications such as social networking sites.

Dialogic communication and the Internet

The Internet can be viewed as a ‘dialogic medium’ which helps public relations maintain an open-ended conversation with publics (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Sallot, Porter and Acosta-Alzuru (2004) conducted a study into public relations practitioners’ perceptions of internet use. Results suggest that the Internet should be integrated into every role practiced in public relations, because the Internet “empowers practitioners by providing a means for them to communicate directly with their publics, bypassing traditional “filters” and “gatekeepers”, such as editors in the news media” (Sallot et al., 2004, p. 273). This is supported by Taylor et al. (2001) who believe the Internet “offers something unique in mediated organization-public communication; an unobstructed path between publics and organizations” (p. 281).

Kent and Taylor (1998; 2002) recognise the potential of the Internet as a space “where the public can actually engage other human beings in discussions about organizational issues” (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 31), and have developed a framework for measuring this form of dialogic communication. While this framework is useful, it is quite outdated, particularly when compared to current social media technologies and applications, as outlined earlier. Despite this limitation, the framework will be discussed to demonstrate the current state of academic literature on the Internet and dialogic communication.

As stated by Kent and Taylor (1998), “Without a dialogic loop in Webbed communication, internet public relations becomes nothing more than a new monologic communication medium or a new marketing technology” (p. 325) Their framework highlights five principles, considered crucial to public relations and dialogic communication on the Internet. The principles include a dialogic loop, which facilitates feedback and responses to feedback; useful information that is well-organized and easy to find, such as contact information; the generation of return visits and relationship building, facilitated by an attractive and interactive website; the ease of the interface; and the conservation of visitors, by including relevant links that do not steer users away from the site (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

Conclusion

This discussion illustrates the fragmented nature of social media and public relations theory and literature. Social media technologies and applications have been defined and described, with a focus on social networking sites. Two theoretical models, the relationship management perspective of public relations and dialogic communication, were outlined to help demonstrate the communications context created by social media. These models promote a ‘real’, open, two-way dialogue between an organization and its publics, aligning with the founding characteristics of social media.

This review has identified a theoretical gap in the literature. Due to the emergent status of social media, literature on the organizational use of social media is

analysed in relation to the characteristics and principles of social media, including participation, connectivity, user-generated content, sharing of information and collaboration (for example, see Beer & Burrows, 2007; Gordon, 2006; Tapscott & Williams, 2007). There are few studies focused on analysing social media applications and technologies from a public relations and organizational communication perspective. There is an opportunity for future research and theoretical development in this area.

CHAPTER THREE – Methodology

Introduction

This chapter explores the methodological design and data collection method of this research. It will identify the theoretical perspective behind the research methodology, and will justify all methodological decisions made during the research process, including the decision to choose interviews as the main method of data collection. Any methodological issues will be identified and the process of resolving these issues will be explained.

The data collection method will be described in detail, identifying key steps taken during the data collection process and the decisions behind these. The method of analysis will be discussed, and the process of analysis justified.

Qualitative case study research and a critical perspective

This is a qualitative research enquiry, conducted from a critical perspective, with the aim of understanding the participants' experience from their own perspective. Qualitative research is a flexible research method which embraces multiple fields of study, regardless of the topic or research paradigm (Willis, 2007). This research project, as suggested by Willis (2007), seeks to enter the participants' world to gain an interpretive understanding of the meanings and social conditions, or practices, which came to exist within each case study organization. It is accepted that objective truth cannot be captured, and instead the research attempts to capture rich descriptions, in the participants' own words, of the operational context of the organizations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Willis, 2007) and the way they use social networking sites.

The research design remained open, flexible and emergent, throughout the research process (Patton, 2002; Willis, 2007). This is a common trait of qualitative research. As Willis (2007) suggests, "What you are studying, the data you are collecting and how those data are to be handled, change and emerge

across the life of the study” (p. 202). It is a comparative case study, aiming to “gather comprehensive, systematic and in-depth information about each case of interest” (Patton, 2002, p. 447). The purpose of the comparative case study is to demonstrate similarities or differences between the two case study organizations. While Stake (2000) believes generalisation should not be the main aim of research, the findings will become a resource for organizations intending to use social networking sites for communication in New Zealand. Multiple data sources were used (Willis, 2007; Yin, 2003) including interview transcripts and Bebo profiles, with organizational documents providing additional background information. The triangulation of such resources, from each case study, helped to address issues of reliability and validity (Willis, 2007; Yin, 2003).

The critical perspective adopted for this research, is based on European research traditions and has its roots in Marxist theory and the Frankfurt School. It is a multi-disciplinary approach, focused upon making power relations of inequality and domination obvious, and helping oppressed groups see past current circumstances to discover new possibilities (Calhoun, 1995; Willis, 2007). A critical study attempts to link theory with practice, giving researchers the opportunity to explore alternative situations and to overcome oppression. As Kilgore (1998) explains:

Critical theory is also concerned with human action and interaction. When action takes place, the historical context changes and we must critique our assumptions again. Critical theory is a continuous process. Its goal is Utopia and its reality is that although Utopia may not be possible, our struggle to achieve it will at least create something better than our current existence. (As cited in Willis, 2007, p. 82)

By using a critical lens, this research will analyse the current situation in each case study organization, and will explore alternative communication practices which may facilitate dialogue, democracy and creativity (Calhoun, 1995; Deetz, 2005). As mentioned earlier, this research will link theory with practice by becoming a critical resource for organizations that would like to use social media tools, such as social networking sites, for communication.

Critical studies of organizational structures and practices analyse the conditions of struggle and power relations within the organization (Deetz, 2005). Commonly, in critical organizational studies, an organization is considered a political site (Deetz, 2005; Mumby, 2004). Within this political site, as explained by Mumby (2004), “Various organizational actors and groups struggle to ‘fix’ meaning in ways that will serve their particular interests” (p. 237). This research will attempt to uncover any taken-for-granted assumptions, paradoxes or unequal power relations within each case study organization, which may be serving the best interests of certain stakeholders, but not others. In this research, the historical and social context of each case study organization will help guide my understanding of these factors, and allow me to recognise ways in which organizational structure and practice could be different (Calhoun, 1995).

Interview methodology

Interviews were chosen as the main methodology, due to the interactive and interpersonal nature of the interview process. For this research, the purpose of each interview is to derive interpretations from the interviewees’ answers, with the aim to “understand the meaning of the respondents’ experiences and life worlds” (Kvale, 1996; Warren, 2001, p. 83). There is no aim towards quantification (Kvale, 1996). As suggested by Patton (2002), “The purpose of qualitative interviewing is to capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn *their* terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of *their* individual perceptions and experiences” (p. 348).

This research recognizes that interviews have become an accepted part of society, with interviews being used regularly in research, professional practice and the mass media (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). Interviews help us make sense of our social world, and allow individuals to share and describe their life experiences. As Gubrium and Holstein (2001) suggest, “The interview is part and parcel of our society and culture. It is not just a way of obtaining information about who and what we are; it is now an integral, constitutive feature of our every day lives” (p. 11).

From a critical perspective, interviews are understood as an interactional process, where the interviewer and interviewee co-construct meaning (Bryman & Cassell, 2006; Cassell, 2005; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). The interview is considered a subjective process and the interviewee has the authority to construct his or her own reality (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). Kvale (1996) and Warren (2001) describe the qualitative interview as a conversation with a structure and a purpose. Kvale (1996) suggests, “An interview is literally an ‘inter view’, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest (p. 14).

This way of understanding the interview has only occurred in the past decade. Traditionally, interviewing was viewed as asymmetrical. The interviewer was in control of the interview, while the interviewee was merely a passive, “vessel of answers” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001, p. 13). This research methodology follows a critical approach to interviewing, promoting an active role for the interviewer and empowering the interviewee to reflect upon his or her individual experience and describe it in his or her own terms (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001).

Interview design

For this research, both purposeful and snowball sampling strategies were used. Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select information-rich cases for in-depth study, based upon his or her knowledge and understanding of the phenomena being studied (Patton, 2002). In contrast, snowball sampling starts by interviewing one person and asking them who else to talk to, with the number of participants slowly growing throughout the study. The sample size is not set or limited to a certain number of people. As Patton (2002) states, “The size of the sample depends on what you want to find out, how the findings will be used, and what resources (including time) you have for the study” (p. 244).

In this research all interviews were semi-structured; neither an open conversation, nor a highly structured interview (Cassell, 2005; Kvale, 1996; Yin, 2003). Interviews followed a funnel sequence, beginning with broad open questions followed by narrow, focused ones (Wilson & Goodall, 1991), as opposed to an

inverted funnel sequence which uses narrow questions first and open ones last. Patton (2002) recommends the use of open-ended questions in a qualitative inquiry, because they allow interviewees to fully describe their feelings, thoughts and experiences. Patton (2002) also emphasises the need to ask clear, singular questions to ensure the interviewee understands the questions being asked by the interviewer.

The interview questions in this research were based upon two different question matrixes or models, Patton's (2002) and Kvale's (1993). Patton (2002) describes six different types of qualitative research questions, including experience and behaviour questions, opinion and values questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, sensory questions and background/demographic questions. Patton (2002) also emphasises the need to ask questions about the past, present and the future, suggesting that:

Questions about the present tend to be easier for respondents than questions about the past. Future-orientated questions involve considerable speculation, and responses to questions about future actions or attitudes are typically less reliable than questions about the present or past (p. 353).

Kvale (1993) highlights a number of different types of interview questions including introducing questions, follow up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, direct questions, structuring questions, silence, and interpreting questions (Patton, 2002).

Presupposition questions, or leading questions, were used regularly throughout this research. A presupposition question assumes that the interviewee has already experienced the phenomena and that they have something to say about this experience. An example of this is, "What is the most important experience you have had in the programme?" As opposed to, "Have you had any experiences in the programme that you would call really important?" When such questions are used, there is an element of power given to the interviewer, with the interviewer defining the interview context and steering the conversation (Kvale, 1996). Some researchers, mostly from a positivist paradigm, believe that presupposition

questions reduce the reliability of an interview, by shaping the interviewee's answer (Kvale, 1996). However, Kvale (1996) asserts that leading questions can sometimes be a necessary part of the qualitative interview process, helping to check the validity and reliability of an interviewee's answers.

The interview guide

For this research, an interview guide helped to structure the interview and guide the conversation. The interview guide provides the framework for an interview, indicating topics and their sequence in the interview (Patton, 2002). As Kvale (1996) suggests, "The guide will contain an outline of topics to be covered and suggested questions" (p. 129). The guide ensures that the same basic lines of enquiry are followed with each participant (Patton, 2002). By following an interview guide, "The interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined" (Patton, 2002, p. 343). The biggest limitation of an interview guide, since it allows for flexibility and unstructured conversation, is the possibility that more information will be collected from some interviewees than from others (Patton, 2002).

In-person interviewing vs. on the phone interviewing

There have been few studies comparing telephone and in-person interviewing (Fontana, 2001). Fontana (2001) highlights the difficulties in assessing the appropriateness, or effectiveness of telephone interviewing vs. in-person interviewing, because each interview will be context-dependent.

One of the main advantages of in-person interviewing is that the interaction is more natural. As outlined by Shuy (2001), "Face-to-face interaction compels more small talk, politeness, routines, joking, nonverbal communication and asides in which people can more fully express their humanity. And naturalness leads to open expression and comfort" (p. 541). An in-person interview stimulates an everyday conversation between the interviewer and interviewee, increasing the

response rate, and the effectiveness of complex or sensitive questions (Fontana, 2001). It could be argued that a telephone interview could stimulate the same conversational context, but the effectiveness of this would be dependent upon the skill of the interviewer and the rapport established with the interviewee.

Post-interview reflection and transcription

The post-interview process was particularly important for this research, and involved recording the context of the interview, and any observations about the interview process (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) presents a comprehensive post-interview review process. This includes recording details of interview setting and observations about the interview, and asking questions such as where did the interview occur; under what conditions; how did the interviewee react to the questions; how well were you asking the questions; and how was the rapport? The interviewer can also reflect upon the quality of information received by asking, “Did you find out what you really wanted to; and if not, what was the problem?”

The process of transcribing can be quite problematic and presented several challenges during this research. Poland (2001) highlights four key challenges of transcribing, including making a judgement about when to begin/end a sentence; how to indicate when people are paraphrasing, mimicking or quoting others; the omission of certain words from the transcript; and mistaking words for other similar words, that may or may not make sense in the context of what is being said. As Kvale (1996) commented, “Where does a sentence end? Where is there a pause? How long is a silence before it becomes a pause in a conversation? Does a specific pause belong to the subject or the interviewer?” (p. 164). Poland (2001) highlights the importance of giving participants the opportunity to review their interview transcripts. This process ensures the interviewee regains, and retains, ultimate control over how their experiences and life stories are reported and interpreted (Poland, 2001).

Selecting and recruiting case study organizations and interview participants

In this section I will build upon the interview methodology discussed above, and will explain the data collection process of this research. I will discuss how I selected the two case study organizations and how I recruited participants. The interview process will be explained, including the interview guide and questions, the interview itself and the post-interview reflection and transcription process.

The two case study organizations involved in this research, a tertiary institution and a primary industry organization, were purposefully selected (Patton, 2002). Prior to beginning the research, I spent several weeks telephoning public relations and marketing firms, asking if they had any clients who were currently using social media tools in any way. The two final case study organizations were chosen because they had both used Bebo as a communication-based recruitment tool, to help recruit young people into their industry/institution, in the past year.

I approached each organization individually, and requested permission from decision makers within each organization to secure their participation in this research project. Both organizations requested to remain anonymous. In respect to this request, their identities have been kept confidential throughout this research project. Instead of using the organizational names, each organization has been allocated a generic name related to its industry; ‘primary industry’ and ‘tertiary institution/Wananga’.

Once I gained permission from the organizations, I began approaching and recruiting individual organizational members and spokespeople to participate in the research. There were two different types of participants involved in the research. The first was those *organizational members* who had been involved in the planning and implementation of each organization’s Bebo campaign. This included in-house recruitment, communication and marketing staff, as well as external advertising and consultancy agencies. The second group included the *spokespeople*, or the ‘faces’ of each Bebo campaign. This was an important group of participants, because they spent a significant amount of time on Bebo, during each campaign.

All participants were approached via email and phone. To establish context, I provided all potential participants with an information sheet about the research (see Appendix I). The participants were given the opportunity to decide whether or not they wanted to participate in the research. Those who agreed signed a consent form (see Appendix II) to confirm that they understood the objectives of the research and their rights as a research participant.

Organizational members were purposefully selected from each organization (Patton, 2002). Initially, I relied on the organization to identify people, internally and externally, who were directly involved in the planning and implementation of the campaign. However, once I started interviewing people, I adopted a snowball sampling technique (Patton, 2002), encouraging the participants to identify additional people who were involved in the campaign. This allowed me to extend my sample size and to gain a broader understanding of the organizational members' collective experience throughout the Bebo campaign.

Spokespeople were purposefully selected by each organization, at the beginning of each Bebo campaign (Patton, 2002). Spokespeople for the primary industry organization were volunteers, whereas spokespeople for the tertiary institution organization were gifted money sporadically, and were on a contract.

Conducting the interviews

During data collection I interviewed a total of 23 people from the two organizations, over a time period of two months. This included 13 organizational members and 10 spokespeople.

Organizational members. I interviewed six organizational members from the primary industry, including three in-house employees, and two external advertising consultants. The in-house interviews were all conducted face-to-face, whereas the external interviews were conducted via the telephone. All interviews lasted approximately one hour. There was an even mix of males and females, with a ratio of 2:3.

I interviewed eight organizational members from the tertiary institution, including six in-house employees, one external consultant, and one advertising and public relations account manager. All of these interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted between 30 minutes and an hour, with one interview lasting two hours. There were significantly more females involved in this campaign, with a ratio of males and females 2:6.

Spokespeople. I interviewed all five of the spokespeople from the primary industry. Two of these interviews were conducted over the phone and three were face-to-face. It was quite difficult to establish a rapport with the participants over the phone, and these interviews were shorter than the face-to-face ones. This challenge will be discussed later. The interview length ranged between 20 minutes and an hour. There was an even mix of males and females involved in the campaign, with a ratio of 3:2.

I interviewed five out of the seven spokespeople from the tertiary institution. Three interviews were face-to-face and two were conducted on the phone, with the interviews lasting between 40 minutes and an hour. There was an even mix of males and females, with a ratio of 3:2. Out of those whom I did not interview, one declined my invitation to be involved in the research and one proved very difficult to get in touch with.

The interview guide

The interviews were semi-structured, and I used an interview guide as a framework for the interview questions (Cassell, 2005; Kvale, 1996; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). I developed two different interview guides, one for the organizational members and one for the spokespeople. The questions in each guide were developed from Kent and Taylor's (2002) Dialogue Framework, and followed a broad funnel sequence (Wilson & Goodall, 1991). The questions were mostly open-ended (Patton, 2002), and included introductory questions, follow up questions, probing questions, structuring questions, direct questions and interpreting questions (Kvale, 1996).

The interview guide for the organizational members (see Appendix III), was divided into three sections including strategic planning and goal setting, developing and maintaining a relationship with the organizational spokespeople, and creating dialogue with Bebo users. The flexibility of the interview guide (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 2002) allowed me to jump between the sections, and to develop a conversation around the topics, rather than follow a strict questioning format. Due to the varied nature of the organizational members' involvement in each campaign, not all of the questions were relevant to all participants. The decision to omit questions/sections was made on a case-by-case basis, through consultation with the interviewee.

The interview guide for the spokespeople (see Appendix IV), was divided into two sections including involvement in the campaign and creating dialogue with Bebo users. After the first two phone interviews that I conducted with spokespeople from the primary industry organization, I discovered that my original interview guide was not generating enough experience-based information about their role in the Bebo campaign. As a result, I altered the guide (see Appendix V) adding several experience-based questions (Patton, 2002). I used this new interview guide for the rest of my interviews with spokespeople from both organizations.

Sometimes I found it difficult to ask clear, singular questions (Patton, 2002), and I could tell I was confusing the interviewee with my questions. Also, during the interview, I sometimes found myself asking closed questions and stumbling over my sentences, as I attempted to develop new questions on the spot. These issues highlighted the fact that I had not conducted many interviews before, and I used every opportunity to learn from my mistakes. I also found it difficult to use presupposition questions during the interview (Patton, 2002); however, I discovered that when I remembered to use them, these questions produced a much more elaborated answer.

I found that it was important to let the interviewees label and describe their experience, in their own words. As Patton (2002) explains, "Using words that make sense to the interviewee, words that reflect the respondent's worldview, will

improve the quality of data obtained during the interview” (p. 363). This was particularly apparent when I used my chosen label, ‘spokespeople’, to describe the role of the second group of participants. The organizational members and the spokespeople from both organizations preferred to use their own, campaign-unique labels for the spokespeople’s role in the campaign, for example ‘talent’, ‘guinea pig’ and ‘hero’.

Post-interview review and transcription process

Once an interview was completed, I transcribed it and created a written record of the interview experience. At first, I did not recognise the importance of recording the interview word-for-word, especially not the words spoken by the interviewer. However, after several interviews, I developed a post-interview review and transcription process to ensure consistency across all interview transcripts.

Modelling Patton’s (2002) post-interview review process, after each interview I recorded specific details about the setting of the interview, and my personal observations about the interview itself. I also spent time reflecting on the quality of the interview, looking at the questions asked and the answers received. I attempted to record this information within two days after each interview, to ensure the interview was still fresh in my mind. When transcribing the interviews, I decided to record all of the ‘ums’, ‘ahs’ and ‘you knows’. By being consistent, and including all aspects of speech, this ensured I was not omitting important words and making a judgement about which ‘um’ was important, and which a speech impediment (Kvale, 1996). I also attempted to capture the interviewee’s nonverbal communication, by highlighting laughter and long pauses in brackets beside the interviewee’s sentence. I commonly included (Laughing and talking), (Pause) and (Laughing) in my transcript. I followed a similar format for highlighting the intensity of certain statements, by italicising words or phrases.

Two of my interviewees requested an opportunity to review any quotes I used in my final document from their interview transcript, to ensure that I interpreted the meaning of their statements correctly. They also encouraged me to keep in touch with them during my analysis of the interview transcripts, to clarify the intended

meaning behind any vague or ambiguous statements they may have made during the interview, as suggested by Poland (2001).

Scope, limitations and future research

The scope of this research is limited to the perspective of each case study organization, through the use of interview techniques combined with text-based analysis of the Bebo profiles. Initial plans to use an electronic survey on Bebo to survey Bebo users were not followed through. As the data collection process progressed, it became apparent that the feasibility and usefulness of this audience research approach was becoming less important and more unrealistic. This would have resulted in a separate project, but highlights an opportunity for future research to identify an appropriate research methodology for researching social networking sites.

Critical discourse analysis methodology

A critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used as the primary form of analysis in this research. This approach will help critically theorise and analyse social actions and practices within the discursive context of each case study organization's use of social networking sites for communication. Research will focus on the way each discursive context enacts, confirms, legitimates, produces or challenges relations of power, injustice and inequality and implicitly produced paradoxes and tensions (van Dijk, 1993, 2001a). This is a useful approach because, as Mumby (2004) suggests, "Critical discourse studies help to remind us that organizations are real structures that have real consequences for real people" (p. 252).

Discourse, discourse and meaning

A discourse can be defined as a set of symbolic and constitutive statements, which structure how we know, understand, speak about and conduct ourselves in society (Fairclough, 1992; Motion & Weaver, 2005). Discourse is often linked to meaning and sense making, and is viewed as a structuring principle of society which allows individuals to accomplish social acts and participate in social

interactions and dialogues (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000; van Dijk, 1997).

Fairclough (1992) defines discourse as, “A practice not just of representing the world but of signifying the world, [and] constituting the world in meaning” (p. 64).

However, Alvesson and Karreman (2000) present an alternative perspective about the link between discourse and meaning, which they term an ‘agnostic view’.

They believe that researchers have attributed too much power to discourse, and that the way individuals relate to a discourse may be “Teflon-like”, and not necessarily strong enough to frame or shape their reality (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000, p. 1132). For example, an individual may have the ability to manipulate language and symbols to tell the right stories to the right audiences, at the right moment, but may not actually identify themselves with any of those particular discourses. This perspective will be kept in mind throughout the analysis of the research findings.

Micro ‘discourse’ analysis

Discourse can be analysed from both a macro and a micro perspective and this research will incorporate both. The micro perspective, favoured by researchers such as Fairclough, is interested in a detailed study of language and the specific micro social context of the ‘discourse’, which can include the age, gender, education and ethnicity of participants; the time, place, speakers, position and level of formality of the setting; and the different props used (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000; van Dijk, 1997). Alvesson and Karreman (2000) define this form of discourse as ‘discourse’, with a small d. Fairclough focuses on this level of ‘discourse’ analysis, producing a heavily *text-based* model (see Figure 1.) focusing on the critical analysis of meanings behind the text, the process of text production, distribution and consumption and the social practices surrounding the text (Fairclough, 1992).

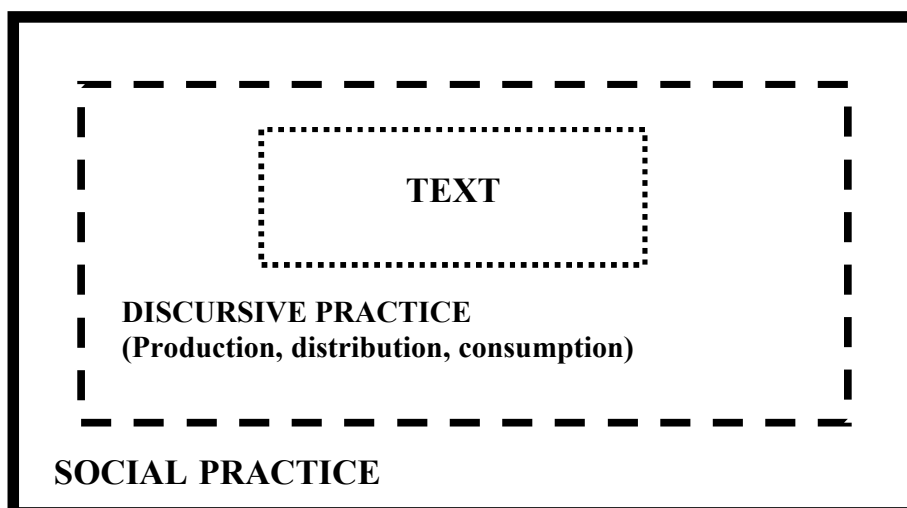


Figure 1. Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model of CDA

Text includes both spoken and written language, which can be “highly ambivalent and open to multiple interpretations” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 73). This research will explore Fairclough’s (1992) four areas of text analysis including vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure. These areas analyse many different aspects of the text including alternative wording; figurative language; syntax; repeated words; synonyms and pronouns; articulations; and ideological and political meaning.

Discursive practices will also be considered and Fairclough (1992) highlights three text-based processes, including production, distribution and consumption. Production refers to the way a text has been produced and the social factors behind its production. Once distributed, texts are consumed differently, in different social contexts (Fairclough, 1992). This consumption may be individual or collective. Some texts are recorded, transcribed, re-read and transformed into other texts. This movement between text is called intertextuality, and describes the way text can be merged or articulated into another text (Fairclough, 1992; Livesey, 2002). Text can be consumed and interpreted in multiple different ways, each depending on the context of the situation and the discourse (Fairclough, 1992).

Macro 'Discourse' analysis

Macro, or long-range, 'Discourse' looks at the overarching themes of the discourse, taking a holistic perspective on the social and historical contexts of the text (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). This can be defined as 'Discourse' with a capital D (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000) and helps researchers adopt a "historical, cultural, socio-economic, philosophical, logical or neurological approach" (van Dijk, 2001b, p. 97), giving them greater leverage to deal with complex real life problems. For this research, the social practice dimension of Fairclough's model is integrated within a macro Discourse analysis.

Context is central to a macro analysis, and the social, historical and cultural discursive context will be explored in detail during this research. van Dijk (2001b) believes that context is a 'mental model' of a communicative situation and that, within the context of one social situation, there are multiple ways that participants can interpret or define it, based on their individual mental context model. As van Dijk (2001b) suggests, "Context models are crucial because they are the interface between mental information (knowledge and so on) about an event and actual meanings being constructed in discourse" (p. 110). However, this research will also recognise that the context is never fixed or given, and that while Discourses may be fixed to specific contexts, they may also influence and construct the context (van Dijk, 1997).

van Dijk also acknowledges the micro level discourse analysis. He suggests other ways to analyse the meanings behind the text, which will be incorporated into the 'discourse' analysis of this research. These include polarization (them vs. us), implicit or explicit meanings and omission, or what is left out of the text (van Dijk, 2001b). He also recommends the analysis of less controllable structures of the text including hesitations, pauses and spontaneous talk by the speaker (van Dijk, 2001b). Most importantly, however, van Dijk (2001b) highlights that, "Just an analysis of text or talk added to some cognitive and/or social study will not do. We shall see that adequate discourse analysis at the same time requires detailed

cognitive and social analysis, and vice versa” (p. 98). This perspective will be taken into consideration during the analysis of this research.

Ideology, orders of discourse, and hegemony

An ideology is a theoretical concept that provides the link between discourse and society. Discourse provides the medium through which ideologies are persuasively communicated in society, producing factions of power and dominance amongst some groups and not others (van Dijk, 1997). An ideology helps define groups in society, structuring their knowledge and developing a shared social identity for group members (van Dijk, 1997). Group members often belong to, and participate in, several ideologies at once and their actual practice of the ideology may vary depending upon their level of identification with the group (van Dijk, 1997). This can also result in several, potentially overlapping, fields of discourse.

In a societal context, discourses are ranked according to dominance, in groupings called orders of discourse. This results in some discourses becoming dominant, or mainstream, while others remain marginal, alternative or oppositional (Fairclough, 2001; 2005). Dominant orders of discourse may become common sense, or hegemonic. But, when viewed as contradictory, an order of discourse can become a site of struggle. As an outcome of struggle, the discourse can be rearticulated and redefined, with some subject positions pushed outside of the boundaries and new ones being absorbed (Fairclough, 1992).

Individuals in society tend to accept beliefs, knowledge and opinions through a discourse that they perceive to be trustworthy, authoritative and credible (Livesey, 2002). Once accepted, these discourses may become naturalised, and considered ‘the way things are around here’. Drawing upon Gramsci, Fairclough (1992) defines these taken-for-granted truths, or dominating ideological states as hegemony. Hegemony can be defined as a naturalised, yet unstable, balance of power within a society or cultural group.

Hegemony makes people act as if the discourse were natural, normal or consensus (van Dijk, 1997). As stated by van Dijk (1993), “If the minds of the dominated can be influenced in such a way that they accept dominance, and act in the interests of the powerful out of their own free will, we use the term hegemony” (p. 255). The analysis of this research will consider all of these concepts, and will attempt to uncover hegemonic, or dominant, discourses and to investigate why they are accepted as legitimate and credible by each case study organization.

CDA as a method of analysis

The first stage of analysis involved reading through the transcripts several times, to become familiar with the material. During the first reading, I focused on identifying the main discourses within the text (Fairclough, 1992; Motion & Weaver, 2005), for example discourses around social networking and authenticity. These discourses structured the way the organizational members and the spokespeople understood and spoke about the campaign, their organization, and Bebo.

Once I was familiar with the transcripts, I conducted a text-based analysis, drawing on Fairclough’s (1992) three-dimensional model of CDA. Fairclough (1992) identifies four areas of text analysis including vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure. Within this framework, I analysed the text and identified repeated words, key words and dominant themes, metaphors and puns, hyperboles and imperatives, and technical terminology. This stage of analysis also involved identifying how each organization positioned or framed themselves, by looking at how certain words and phrases were articulated together (Fairclough, 1992). I also drew on van Dijk’s (2001b) model of critical discourse analysis, looking for evidence of polarization, or them vs. us, in the text.

It was important to identify those in powerful positions, and to look at how power was enacted in the text, across both case study organizations. Through an analysis of the power relations, I could start to uncover the taken-for-granted assumptions, or hegemonic discourses, evident in the text (Fairclough, 1992). As identified by Livesey (2002), taken-for-granted assumptions develop when individuals in

society accept beliefs, knowledge and opinions as trustworthy, authoritative and credible.

The existence of taken-for-granted assumptions within the text, helped to explain the decisions made by each organization during the course of each recruitment campaign on Bebo. Such assumptions often created tensions and challenges for the case study organizations. These tensions and challenges, and the implications created by them, were also explored.

Building on Fairclough's (1992) model of CDA, I identified the discursive practices behind the production of each case study organization's recruitment campaign on Bebo. There are three text-based processes to be considered during analysis including production, distribution and consumption (Fairclough, 1992). The decisions made, and actions taken, by each organization during the planning and implementation of each campaign impacted significantly on each of these discursive processes.

This text-based analysis was repeated twice, ensuring that each transcript had been read at least three times during analysis. Several themes emerged and most of these were common across both organizations, but there were some differences. Using these themes as a framework, I produced four different documents of *raw* analysed data: one each for the primary industry spokespeople, the tertiary institution spokespeople, the primary industry organizational members, and the tertiary institution organizational members. Next I identified the *common* themes from my raw data, across both organizations. These common themes formed the basis for my findings chapter, and included the decision to use Bebo; rationale for selecting the spokespeople; reaching the target audience; moderation and control; concepts of engagement; use of Bebo as a marketing tool; and strategic and technical challenges. I critically analysed each common theme from the perspective of both case study organizations, identifying similarities and differences and discussing the implications of these findings.

As outlined by Motion and Weaver (2005), the main limitation of CDA is the methodology's textual focus. This analysis is recognised as primarily subjective

and text-based, and an analysis and discussion of the social, historical and cultural context is crucial to contextualise this analysis. The appropriate context for this research is discussed in Chapter Two: Background. This research recognises, as identified by van Dijk (2001b), that the context is never fixed or given. However, by developing a holistic understanding of the social, historical and cultural context, at the time of each case study organization's campaign on Bebo, we can begin to understand the influencing factors behind each organization's decisions about the campaign.

CHAPTER FOUR – Findings and Discussion

Introduction

This chapter explores the findings and discusses the theoretical implications of this research. It will address why each organization decided to use Bebo, and what it intended to achieve; the extent to which Bebo helped each organization achieve its goals and objectives; and the challenges and opportunities for developing authentic and interactive dialogue faced by each organization with its intended public. The following Table provides an overview of the main attributes of each case study organization’s recruitment campaign on Bebo.

Table 2:

Main attributes of each case study organization's Bebo campaign

| | Tertiary institution | Primary industry |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Purpose/objective: | To increase the amount of domestic students enrolling at the institution in A Semester 2008 by 10% | To encourage young people to consider a career in the primary industry |
| Bebo: | Main platform for campaign | One component of overall campaign |
| Campaign duration: | October – November 2007 | April – May 2008 |
| Bebo features used: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz (Mashup) • Weekly video competition between spokespeople (Vidcasts) • Voting (Mashup) • Blogs • Photos (Personal) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wall (Comments) • Photos (Personal and work) • 1 x video of spokespeople on-the-job (Vidcast) • Blogs |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Spokespeople: | 7 x current students – hired by organization and on a contract | 5 x young people working in the industry – volunteers |
| Incentives for spokespersons: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video camera • Approximately \$400 in cash and vouchers | None |
| Incentives for Bebo users: | Opportunity to win 1 of 15 ipod nano's for completing quiz | None |

During data analysis, nine overarching themes emerged. These included the rationale for the decision to use Bebo; rationale for selecting the spokespersons; control and reputation management; concepts of engagement; evaluating the effectiveness of a social networking campaign; reaching the target audience; moderation and reputation management; and implementation challenges. These themes will be explored, and the challenges, opportunities and implications for public relations and organizational communication practice will be identified.

The decision to use Bebo

The two case study organizations involved in this research, both decided to use Bebo during their recruitment campaigns in 2007 and 2008. The tertiary institution's organizational members describe the decision to use Bebo as "innovative" and "brave". These terms can be used for both campaigns, since they were among the first organizations to use Bebo for communicating with key publics, in New Zealand.

The [Wananga]'s been built on a platform of, of being innovate, we're a young [Wananga], being brave – so it fitted in with, with the ethos of the [Wananga].
(Vicky, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

Both case study organizations aimed their campaigns at school leavers aged between 15 and 19 years old. The case study organizations both wanted to create

a campaign that would be seen in the spaces used by young people, their target audiences. By using Bebo, each organization could make the target audience's affiliation with the organization public and visible, increasing the audience's identification with the organization (Scott & Lane, 2000). The organizations both *believed* that young people frequently used social networking sites. This belief, as identified by five organizational members and three spokespeople from the tertiary institution, and four organizational members from the primary industry, was the foundation for each organization's decisions about the production and distribution (Fairclough, 1992) of their campaign.

We focused and thought we would try um something in their, I guess, in their, the space that they use or where they spend time. (Vanessa, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

The social context in New Zealand in late 2007-08 contributed to this taken-for-granted assumption about the use of Bebo by young people. As identified in Chapter Two, in February 2008 Bebo was the most highly ranked social networking site in New Zealand, holding 41.77% of the market share of visits to social networking sites (Hitwise, 2008). Also, over 60% of New Zealanders under 30 were using social networking sites weekly (Bell et al., 2007; Young, 2008).

That 17-19 year olds, that's where they hung out. Um it was kinda the highest rating amongst that age group. And that's the particular target market that the [Wananga] wanted to target for their Semester A recruitment. (Melissa, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

Each organization used Bebo differently in their campaign. The tertiary institution used Bebo as the *main medium*, whereas the primary industry used Bebo as a *component*. Both organizations used a mix of traditional media, including radio, billboards and bus shelter advertising, to drive young people to the campaign platforms. The primary industry's main focus was the campaign website. Bebo was perceived as an easy and free option for extending the campaign's web presence. Organizational members hoped that Bebo would push

the campaign messages past traditional gatekeepers, such as school career advisors, parents and geographic boundaries, and “dispel some of the myths about [industry] which work against attracting young people into the industry long-term” (Organizational magazine, 2008).

We were going to use the um website as the main vehicle and drive people to the website... All the detail was housed there, the language was housed there. And within the website we used tools like Bebo um that were, um that young people were connected with. (Susan, Primary industry, Organizational member)

Wasn't constrained by, you know, geographic location ... Online approach would, yeah would assist at getting around those gatekeepers... We were basically thinking that um Bebo was a forum that people were actually using and if they are there already, you know, it just increased the likelihood that we would be able to make contact with them somewhere along the line. (Brian, Primary industry, Organizational Member)

The primary industry also believed that Bebo was considered *cool* by the target audience, as highlighted by two organizational members and one spokesperson. As identified in Chapter Two, over the past few years, young people have not been moving into primary industry-based work. By using Bebo, the organization aimed to position the primary industry as a cool career option for young people.

I think Bebo is important because when we did the campaign Bebo was cool, like its cool and to see that [Organization name], or [Campaign name] is going with Bebo, that must make it cool. (Meg, Primary industry, Organizational Member)

We wanted to show, um, kind of a cool face to the [Primary] industry. We wanted to change perception and currently, you know, the perception, perception of [Primary industry] is not that great. (James, Primary industry, Organizational member)

In contrast, the tertiary institution focused solely on Bebo. Organizational members believed Bebo was an important source of information for the target audience, and used Bebo as an *information portal*.

Doing something in the websites that um youth were in, as opposed to trying to do some, you know, something on our own website. (Vanessa, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

The decision to use new media comes out of the analysis on, you know, the market analysis on where people spend their time... they don't read newspapers so much... they watch TV... there's that heavy use of internet for information sources... that's closely connected to well, if they're using the internet... they're right there next to the 'apply to enrol'. (Mark, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

Clearly, the social context was a significant factor in each organization's decision to use Bebo to communicate with key publics. As one of the most popular social networking sites at the time, particularly with young people, Bebo was seen as an obvious choice by both organizations. Unsurprisingly, the decision to use Bebo before the medium became mainstream created a number of challenges for the organizations. These challenges will be explored at the end of this chapter.

Rationale for selecting the spokespeople

The two case study organizations both made the strategic decision to use young people currently working in the industry or studying at the institution in their recruitment campaigns on Bebo. This allowed each organization to personify its brand and service (*Never Ending Friending*, 2007). The spokespeople were expected to share their personal experiences with the target audience. Both organizations purposefully selected spokespeople with a similar demographic profile to their target publics, by looking for people who had similar personalities and, for the primary industry, used the same language or colloquialisms as the target audience. This tactic was designed to increase identification between the organization and its target audience (Scott & Lane, 2000), and develop a sense of community on Bebo (Khor & Marsh, 2006).

It was very easy to identify with one or other of them and decide who you liked the best and to vote for them and support them and send them messages... it was that

sense of community and identification. (Vicky, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

And Bebo um was pretty effective at doing that too, because you know, they can, they can talk to them in their own language, using their own slang and all their own words and stuff and the people, you know, responded in the same, same language. And there's a comfort, there's a comfort thing that ah, you know, if I was sort of 17-18 and I talked to a 18 or 19 year old that's doing, doing that thing and they're talking back to me in a language that I can understand, its, its far more powerful than a career advisor. (James, Primary industry, Organizational member)

According to Gilmore and Pine's (2007) model of authenticity, the decision to use spokespeople drew on two genres of authenticity, exceptional authenticity and referential authenticity. The service provided by each organization on Bebo was exceptional authenticity, because it was customised and unique, with each Bebo user receiving an original response from the spokespeople. The personal experiences shared by the spokespeople were referential authenticity, because they drew on traditional expectations associated with tertiary study and working in the primary industry.

Giving the level of ah credibility if you hear it from other, you know, from other students, their experiences. (Ashley, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

The primary industry selected five young workers to be the *faces* of their campaign. These spokespeople were diverse in age, gender and occupation. Some had formal qualifications and some held management roles, while others had just started working in the industry. All of the young workers were successful, driven, enthusiastic, motivated and approachable. This helped the organization portray the industry as a cool career option.

I was just a [Primary industry] model... they just wanted young people that were in the [Primary], [Primary] industry to help other people get in the industry... we were just role models for them. (Claire, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

They had to be driven, they had to be successful. (Meg, Primary industry, Organizational Member)

Authenticity was very important for the primary industry, as identified by two organizational members. Their focus on authenticity aligns with research conducted by MySpace owners, Fox Interactive Media, which indicated that, “Social network users value authenticity and like to talk about ‘keeping it real’” (*Never Ending Friending*, 2007), with 56% of respondents using social networking sites to find authentic people. Organizational members highlighted that the spokespeople were *real* people, who had experiences in the real world. The use of this word supports Gilmore and Pine’s (2007) assertion that the shift towards automation and the creation of new technologies has created a new meaning for the word ‘real’, which is now commonly associated with the need for more authentic person-to-person interactions.

It’s authentic, um because they’re actually speaking direct to people who are working there. They’re not some actor, you know. They’re **real** people work [Primary industry]. (Susan, Primary industry, Organizational member)

It gave us the environment to show **real** people, working on **real** [Primary industry], or in [Primary industry], and their **real** experiences. (David, Primary industry, Organizational member)

Similarly, the tertiary institution selected spokespeople to represent seven of the eight faculties within the institution. They were current students and were all enrolled in different degrees and at different stages of their academic careers. The spokespeople were outspoken, popular, interesting, active, energetic and, most important, not afraid to be in front of the camera. The organizational members believed these types of people would best engage the target audience with their video content. The tertiary institution’s spokespeople recognised that they had been selected to represent their faculty, and understood they had been selected because of their outgoing personalities and various hobbies and interests. This demonstrates that the selection process was transparent and the spokespeople understood the strategy behind their recruitment.

People who were, you know, not afraid to be in front of the camera, who, you know, were quite outspoken and, you know, you could get quite a bit of content from. (Melissa, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

I had a bit of an outgoing sense of, like a personality. And I talk a lot. And I've got good grades. (Rebecca, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

Experience-based role of the spokespeople

Both organizations intended the spokespeople's role to be *experience-based*, to demonstrate to the target audience what it was like to work in the industry and to attend the institution. This decision to focus on experiences, demonstrates a strong understanding of the social nature of Bebo and the characteristics of social media, particularly sharing information, connectivity and participation. As identified by Noel-Levitz (2006), from a tertiary education perspective, "E-communications should give students a taste of campus life and encourage them to check out the campus themselves" (p.6).

Bebo provided that two-way conversation between people who are potentially are interested in, um a [Primary industry] career and kids that have actually done it....Ah it meant that the audience could relate to them.... So the audience could look at the videos and go, "Yeah I think I could do that", you know, or "that looks pretty cool I'd like to do that"... Underlying it all is this **real** world, that we called it. And people could delve into it and see what it was actually like from the mouths of people who were actually involved in it, as opposed to us, who were promoting it. (David, Primary industry, Organizational member)

We profiled and characterised our very own students, our people and actually had them demonstrating, um on camera, in these mediums, um kinda the activities of, you know, student life and what they do, their own personal life too. (Mark, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

The experience-based focus gave all of the spokespeople a degree of *expert-power* (French & Raven, 1959), because they had specialised knowledge about their

experiences in the industry, or at the institution. As highlighted by a primary industry spokesperson, each organization relied on the spokespeople to share these personal experiences on Bebo. On a production-level, the spokespeople could also control the content on their 'About me' sections, and personal blogs.

We had to comment people back because we knew what we were talking about, they didn't. Otherwise they wouldn't have got us to do it. (Claire, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

The organizations both attributed a power position to their spokespeople; interestingly, this was different for each organization. The primary industry affirmed the spokespeople's expert-position, expecting the spokespeople to play a participatory, hands-on role in the campaign, by sharing their personal opinions and insights and giving unbiased advice about working in the industry. In contrast, the tertiary institution attributed its spokespeople *social-power*, limiting the range of questions the spokespeople could address to experiences of social life at the institution. The spokespeople were not expected to discuss academic topics, and the organization intended to redirect such questions to the student recruitment team at the Wananga. The organizational members may have assumed that the spokespeople did not have the knowledge to participate in an academic discussion with the target audience.

They can give them the benefit of their experiences, you know, of things to avoid and things, you know, what not to do. As well as talk to them about what's so great about working in this industry and why they are here. (Susan, Primary industry, Organizational member)

If it had anything to do with the like courses at the [Wananga], we would, I think we directed them to the student recruitment office. Or we got, um, we talked to the student recruitment office and then replied to the thread. (Melissa, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

This social-power position surprised the tertiary institution's spokespeople, who did not expect their role to be purely socially-based. Exercising their ability to control content production on Bebo, five of the spokespeople included detailed

academic information and advice in their ‘About me’ section, and one spokesperson encouraged academic questions in his blog, regardless of the organization’s directions. The social-power position was also identified as a limitation by two organizational members, who believed the spokespeople should have discussed the academic side of student life as well.

I was expecting to be explaining stuff, like about the degree and keeping in contact with people that were keen to do a degree in stuff. I would’ve thought that quite a few people would’ve asked about stuff, about [Wananga]. (Nick, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

In a perfect world, my role should’ve been an ambassador to promote the [Wananga]. So that would, in theory. In practice though, I, I don’t know... I don’t really know if, in practice, I had much of a role at all except to be that girl from [Faculty]. (Emma, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

Myself and [Mark]... were keen for them to engage with that, that academic side of things as well as the fun side... we were quite keen for, um people on Bebo to ask about what they were studying and what degrees they were studying as well. (Vicky, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

Relationships developed with the spokespeople

The case study organizations both developed very different *relationships* with their spokespeople, during the campaign. This difference was best demonstrated by the spokespeople’s knowledge about the organization’s moderation practices on Bebo. All of the primary industry’s spokespeople were aware that the organization was accessing and moderating their Bebo profiles. This awareness indicates that the organization developed an open and transparent relationship with its spokespeople. In contrast, none of the tertiary institution’s spokespeople could identify how the organization was moderating the campaign. All of the spokespeople believed that the organizational members were monitoring their actions on Bebo, yet this belief was not validated by the organizational members during the campaign. This indicates that the tertiary institution developed a very different relationship with their spokespeople than the primary industry, creating a

climate of speculation and uncertainty around the Bebo process. This relationship served as an indirect technique for controlling the spokespeople, because the spokespeople self-monitored their behaviour on Bebo.

They had access to our sites... basically they just made sure that everything was alright and everything was um... clean. (John, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

This may be speculation, but I know that like they gave us our passwords and stuff. And so, I'm pretty sure that they could see what was on our pages from like an internal like view, as opposed to like being somebody who just visited the page. (Emma, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

The spokespeople were a central component of each campaign. The inclusion of people currently working in the industry, or studying at the institution, not only added an authentic element to each campaign, but also aimed to increase the target audience's identification with the campaign. The strategy behind the selection of these people was very important and each organization adopted a different approach to this, developing unique relationships with their spokespeople. The following section will continue to explore how each organization developed this relationship during its recruitment campaign on Bebo.

Control and reputation management

Reputation can be defined as the perceptions, or mental associations, held by external stakeholders about an organization (Brown, Dacin, Pratt, & Whetten, 2006; Helm, 2007). These perceptions are based on the *organizational identity*, which is a shared set of beliefs about the values, standards, purpose, practices and distinctiveness of an organization (Brown et al., 2006; Scott & Lane, 2000).

Organizational members communicate *organizational images* to stakeholders, via advertising and promotional activities such as the Bebo campaigns, in an attempt to build a positive reputation with stakeholders (Scott & Lane, 2000). Each case study organization had a very different organizational identity, which they communicated on Bebo during their recruitment campaign. The tertiary institution presented *one united organizational identity*, using the organization's

logo on all of the campaign material and making the link between the organization and the campaign very overt. As three organizational members identified, this ensured that the target audience connected the organization with the campaign.

Anything that happens on that Bebo page, because it's the [Wananga], anything that happens there reflects the [Wananga]. So throughout the campaign we had to be really careful that whatever's happening it's in the good faith of the [Wananga]... The [Wananga]'s logo was on the website... some people may have missed but you'd probably work out that it was part of the [Wananga]. (Melissa, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

The Academic, a fictitious character created for the purpose of the campaign, created tensions within this united organizational identity during the recruitment campaign. His character was a focal point on Bebo, and helped to explain and facilitate the competition element of the campaign. The spokespeople believed that his role was very important, and they found him funny and entertaining. However, a significant limitation of his role was that, according to the campaign 'script', the Academic was visiting New Zealand from a tertiary institution overseas. The connection between the Academic and the Wananga was not very strong, and the Academic's blog did not mention the Wananga's name until the sixth entry. This conflicted with the organization's intentions to create a strong connection between the campaign and the organization.

His video would come up before ours, introducing everything... I found his videos really good, they were entertaining and um provided information... He would make blogs... I think those were really good, I found those really interesting and I was quite keen to read what he wrote. (Jason, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

We should've made that brief that the [Academic] was representative of the [Wananga], and therefore he was the one who needed to give the [Wananga]'s messages, but instead the [Academic] ran away, you know, with his own creation. (Ashley, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

It was a little bit strange that he was from a visiting [Wananga] in the scenario, I found that strange... it is entertaining but why couldn't he be from [Wananga] and

make the connection a bit stronger between the [Campaign] and the [Wananga]. Rather than it being slightly removed. (Jason, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

Another tension, or limitation, was that the Academic's character was a separate identity from the organization, with a unique vision, culture and personality (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). The agency members intended for him to be a make-believe, caricature of academia, in an attempt to appeal to young people. However, this brand identity offended some of the academic staff at the institution, as identified by five organizational members, because it did not align with the tertiary institution's organizational identity. This tension highlights the challenges faced by organizations who try to balance the needs of all stakeholders, when creating a social media-based campaign. Academic staff and prospective students have very different value systems, and trying to create a campaign that appealed to both was very difficult for the institution.

They kept making him a comedic figure, which then really had a bad response from the [Wananga] and particularly from our lecturers and professors. (Ashley, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

We saw this [Academic] as being quite kinda outgoing... he did some crazy stuff and that's what students really liked. But, you know, we still had to think of the reputation of the [Wananga]... we had to downplay it quite a bit... that's what's quite difficult about using non-traditional type media, is that it, you know appeals to kids 17 to 19 but it doesn't really appeal to the rest of the stakeholders that are involved in the [Wananga]. (Melissa, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

In contrast, the primary industry had *two distinctive identities*; its organizational identity and the campaign's brand identity. These two identities were kept *separate* throughout the entire campaign because, as three organizational members identified, the campaign had a very different brand identity to the organization's identity. The campaign's brand was designed to be youthful, fun and targeted at younger people, contrasting significantly with the organization's identity which is serious and targeted at older generations. As a result of this decision, the target audience had to *dig* on the campaign website to find the actual organization's name. While this raises questions about the campaign's

authenticity, it is not an unusual practice and a brand will often have a distinct identity (Balmer, 2008), and “a unique set of values that are relevant to its target market” (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001, p. 443).

We've kept [Organization name] purposefully very small as part of that. Um in fact, I think they only place you see the, where we talk about [Organization name], is in the olds page, where parents can go within [Campaign name]... we haven't been overt, because our whole brand characteristics of [Organization name] are quite different and appealing to different people, than [Campaign name]. (Susan, Primary industry, Organizational member)

Another reason that these identities were kept separate was to protect the reputation of the organization's levy payers, an important and influential stakeholder group for the primary industry. The powerful position held by this group was best identified by one organizational member, who indicated that the organization took multiple steps to ensure the levy payers were comfortable with the campaign. Similar to the tertiary institution, the primary industry faced difficulties balancing the needs of the target audience, with the needs and values of the levy payers.

If I had to use my benchmark it's, I tend to think about, if I were a levy paying [Industry worker], not necessarily an 18 year old but, you know, that 55 year old, I'd need to be um comfortable with what's going on here... It's all about common sense and thinking about um, the people that stand behind us as a company, which are our [Industry workers], um and their level of comfort with what's going on. (Susan, Primary industry, Organizational member)

Techniques for controlling the spokespeople

As identified by Money and Gardiner (2005), reputations are built over time and are considered an important asset for an organization: “It's not what a company makes or does any more, but how it is perceived that matters” (Money & Gardiner, 2005, p. 43). Each case study organization identified that their recruitment campaign on Bebo was a risk to their reputation. The decision to use spokespeople meant that the organizations could not control the discursive

production of their organizational and brand identities. This was a significant risk for each organization because, as identified by the tertiary institution, the spokespeople held different values and objectives, which may not have fitted in with the overall identity of the organization and the brand. While it was a strategic decision to select spokespeople whose beliefs and values matched those of the target audience, this created tensions and placed each organization in a vulnerable and powerless position. This vulnerability was further highlighted by the fact that the target audience engaged with the spokespeople, not the organization itself. As a result, both organizations employed specific techniques to *control* the spokespeople's behaviour on Bebo, to ensure it remained positive and complimentary throughout the campaign.

The biggest challenge was there's a group of students who were doing what they wanted to be students. But the [Wananga] had different objectives. And therefore there is that balance involved, that risk involved... It was good communication, it was good engagement between students and prospective students perhaps... it wasn't a [Wananga] engagement with the students, with potential students.
(Ashley, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

Their reputation, our reputation as a company and, you know, just the whole reputation of the [Campaign name] promotion... we can't have, you know, risks, risks open to it. So we do try and minimise that. Without stifling conversations.
(Susan, Primary industry, Organizational member)

The organizational members adopted both *implicit* and *explicit* techniques for controlling the spokespeople's behaviour on Bebo. The first tactic, employed by both organizations, was to set up the spokespeople's profiles on Bebo by creating their user name and password and setting the profiles with the same, or similar, background. This was an explicit technique of control, establishing the organization as the *owner* of the profile and the overall campaign. The spokespeople were expected to edit their personal information, adding information about their current job/degree and experiences of working in the industry or attending the institution. This ensured each campaign remained credible and authentic, by giving the spokespeople the opportunity to show their creativity and unique personalities. Despite this creative freedom, the primary industry edited

one of their spokespeople's 'About me' sections, demonstrating that the organizations still had overall control of the content on Bebo.

They set it, they set everything up and they like put our passwords and stuff on... all we had to do was just go on there and edit it. (Kate, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

They had a step-by-step guide on how to set up your profile and what you were to write at the beginning and then they gave you, your password and all that, that was at the start. (Steve, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

The relationship, and associated rules and regulations, established between the organization and the spokespeople was another tactic of control. The tertiary institution's spokespeople were on a *contract* with the organization, throughout the duration of the campaign. This was a formal, transactional contract (Atkinson, 2006; Roehling, 1999) and the spokespeople were remunerated for their services, receiving a video camera, approximately \$400 cash and other vouchers. This explicit form of control also outlined several rules and regulations around the spokespeople's behaviour on Bebo. The controlling nature of these rules and regulations was characterised by the repetitive use of phrases such as, 'We had to' and 'They told us', by the spokespeople. According to the contract, the spokespeople were expected to accept all friend requests, reply to any comments and regularly update their Bebo profiles. They also had to say the Maori pronunciation of the region correctly, and were not allowed to swear, make racist comments or film any illegal behaviour. The spokespeople were not allowed to show alcohol binging or inappropriate behaviour as a result of drinking alcohol in their weekly videos. To support the formal contract, the organizational members also drew on a discourse of *social acceptance*, reminding the spokespeople that their peers and family would be following the campaign. This was an additional method of implicitly controlling their behaviour.

I would check, check maybe twice a week, to see if there were any comments that needed to be replied to. Cause that was part of the um agreement, that you would regularly check Bebo and if anyone asked a question, you'd, you know, you'd represent [Wananga] and tell them all about it and all that... They were amazing

incentives, I thought... I haven't really won anything before, and just for being chosen ah you got given this \$800 video camera... like [Organizational member] took us for coffee and lunch... and then there was the chance to win \$3000 of air travel which was huge. And yeah, a one in seven chance... so yeah, very cool incentives. (Steve, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

No drugs, no intense alcohol binging, like swearing, racism all that kind of stuff. Like have a good time, but don't go overboard, be realistic. Your family, your friends, you're representing the school, don't embarrass us all. (Rebecca, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

It is important to question the effect the formal contract may have had on the spokespeople, during their involvement in the campaign. The spokespeople may have felt bound to the organization, creating biased interactions, in favour of the organization on Bebo. This bias was evident during the interviews, when the spokespeople did not question the organization's rules and regulations. Another tactic for controlling the spokespeople's behaviour was the *competition element* of the tertiary institution's campaign. Each week the organizational members issued the spokespeople with a challenge and the spokespeople created a video in response to it. The spokesperson who won the most challenges, as voted by Bebo users, won the overall prize of \$3000 worth of Air New Zealand travel vouchers. When setting the challenges, the organizational members could highlight certain key messages or aspects of life at the institution. This was an explicit demonstration of control, re-instating the organization's ability to control the discursive production of key messages (Fairclough, 1992), a power they lost when they hired the spokespeople.

It was the students, they did engage with the students, and yes, as much as, or the [Spokespeople], as much as they were representing the [Wananga], yes. Was it the [Wananga] able to push home our messages of excellence, get a job... not so much. So we could've sort of direct, in that, these were things we wanted to cover. Which is why we... tried to um create the challenges so you know? (Ashley, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

The competition element was also an implicit technique of control, because it ensured the quality of the videos remained high, by encouraging the spokespeople to compete against each other each week. This was important because the videos were a visual representation of the organization's identity (Balmer, 2008).

It started off being, um really keen to make cool videos myself, just for the sake of it because that would be really cool. Um and then once you start seeing what other people had done and seeing that they're getting votes for, for their videos, you start thinking of ways to, you know, kind of beat them or make something better or funnier or more extreme or whatever. (Jason, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

The organizational members explicitly controlled the production of the videos, because the content of the videos had the potential to affect the organization's reputation, both positively and negatively. At the beginning, the spokespeople were all given the opportunity to edit their own videos. Three spokespeople tried to edit and two faced technical difficulties because the editing software was not compatible with their Mac computers. Only one spokesperson edited his videos throughout the competition, creating an uneven playing field, and giving him the opportunity to control the discursive framing of his videos and his personality during the campaign. The rest of the spokespeople were expected to send their raw material into an editor hired by the organization, who would edit it for them. They were encouraged to provide the editor with a script, indicating how they wanted their video to be edited. However, as four spokespeople highlighted, the editor did not always follow these instructions.

They would provide the footage um to the agency with some direction on how they thought it should be cut... then the agency cut the material. Um and condensed it. (Adam, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

It was quite annoying because twice I think, I just gave them a full a, you know, a complete list of instructions... if you had followed the steps you would have the video perfectly... he wouldn't do that, either he didn't have the time or he was just being lazy. But I thought that it was quite rude that um we would be putting all this effort only for him to play one clip for two minutes, you know, so that was annoying. (Steve, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

The organizational members used the editing process to explicitly control not only the framing of the organization's identity, but also the spokespeople's personalities, in the videos. This control was further emphasised by an organizational member who moderated the videos for inappropriate content, before they were posted onto Bebo.

I signed off everything generally... I signed off um before their video clips went up online, before material went up online. Those sorts of things... I was looking for their alignment with [Wananga's] values. So, you know, I was the one who pushed back and said that's too risqué. (Ashley, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

The spokespeople were frustrated by this demonstration of control, with two identifying that they wanted to edit the content themselves, so they could control the production of their videos. One spokesperson believed that the organizational members had identified distinct 'personalities' for the spokespeople, and were using the videos to frame the spokespeople in that way.

I think that they had kind of, like for the promo thing, they had it kinda like a stereotype for each one of us [Spokespeople]... And so I think that there was a certain kind of character they were trying to put across of each one of us. And mine became kinda like the party girl. And so everything that wasn't really associated around me and partying and stuff, wasn't really put in. Which is a bit, which I didn't really like, because I didn't really want that view to be put across. (Rebecca, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

As four spokespeople identified, these frustrations lead to a general *disengagement* from the campaign by the spokespeople, which posed a significant risk to the organization and the potential effectiveness of the overall campaign.

The editing, that was probably the worst part of the whole thing... It wasn't a waste of time, but it was just such a time sink, when you should be studying... I was quite gutted that the, like the tapes, the videos didn't come out as good as I'd hoped. And

weren't as entertaining as I'd hoped... that was a bit of a downer. (Jason, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

However, despite four organizational members identifying that the spokespeople were frustrated, the organizational members did not address the issue.

In contrast, the primary industry's spokespeople were not on a formal contract. Instead, the organization formed a psychological (Roehling, 1999), or *relational contract* (Atkinson, 2006). The spokespeople were not paid for their work during the campaign, but received a Bond and Bond voucher and book to thank them for their participation at the end. There was more emphasis placed on emotional and *intangible rewards* (Atkinson, 2006; Roehling, 1999), than tangible, monetary ones. This was best demonstrated when analysing the spokespeople's motivations for being involved in the campaign on Bebo. Two of the spokespeople were previous recipients of a scholarship from the organization, while at university. Consequently, they felt responsible for helping the organization with promotional campaigns, and drew on terms such as 'reciprocation' and 'giving back' to explain their motivations. The rest of the spokespeople drew on a *volunteering discourse*, and highlighted their personal agendas for being involved. These included increasing their personal networks, demonstrating their commitment to the industry and getting their name known in the industry. To achieve this, the spokespeople needed support from the organization, placing the organizational members in the position of being able to implicitly influence the way these spokespeople behaved on Bebo.

It was sort of like a bit of reciprocation for them, for giving me the scholarship. So it was sort of like a payback sort of thing. That was quite good, to be able to give them something back for the help that they gave me. (Kate, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

I thought it was a good cause, to try and get in and, um, try and get young people in the [Primary] industry... I think most of us just wanted to do the campaign to get our face in the magazines and get us out there almost...getting our name out there and just having a good time. (John, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

The primary industry did not formally record the rules and expectations around the spokespeople's behaviour on Bebo. Instead, the organizational members and spokespeople formed a *mutual understanding* about what was appropriate and inappropriate behaviour on Bebo. The spokespeople were expected to behave in an acceptable and mature manner, to log onto Bebo regularly, to accept any friend requests and to answer any comments or questions. The lack of formality was intentional because, as identified by four organizational members, the organization did not want to pre-empt the spokespeople's own interpretation of the culture of the organization, and their role in the campaign. Organizational members were concerned that such a process would hinder the authenticity of the campaign, by putting words in the mouths of the spokespeople.

They were like, just answer their questions properly and truthfully and try get them to go on the website... and get them involved with the [Primary industry]... and just talk to them, just talk to them like a normal person, start a conversation with them. (Claire, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

We explained what [Campaign] was, and um what they'd be getting involved with and how it was all going to work. But other than that, we didn't, we don't want to tell them what to say or anything like that. (Susan, Primary industry, Organizational member)

In an attempt to keep the spokespeople up-to-date with the campaign's progress, an organizational member regularly communicated with the spokespeople via telephone, text and email. In many ways this *on-going conversation* served as an unintentional, informal reminder of the primary industry's culture and expectations for the campaign. The organizational member also regularly logged onto the spokespeople's Bebo profiles, and reminded them to update their profile or to respond to comments. This was another implicit technique for controlling the spokespeople's behaviour on Bebo. Over time, all of the spokespeople became reliant on this constant communication, recognising that the organization would let them know if something needed updating or changing.

I just rang them... just to let them know what was going on, like I'd ring them up and tell them that the [Campaign] magazine had gone out, or we were doing this, or we were doing that. Just to keep them in the lurch... just keeping them around.
(Meg, Primary industry, Organizational Member)

[Organizational member] would ring up and, or just text us, she'd text us once a week just to make sure we're still going and changing a few things. (Scott, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

I knew that if something did come up, then they'd let me know directly. (Kate, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

This constant conversation became a limitation of the campaign, because the spokespeople stopped using their initiative and gradually became disengaged from the campaign. Participation is a central aspect of social media (Tapscott & Williams, 2007), and it was important that the spokespeople were prepared to proactively participate in the campaign. Unlike the tertiary institution's video competition, which provided their spokespeople with specific incentives to stay involved in the campaign, the primary industry did not successfully develop a campaign which nurtured the spokespeople's desire to participate. This hindered the authenticity and effectiveness of the primary industry's campaign.

Interestingly, the spokespeople from both organizations were unconcerned about the organization's access to, and control of their Bebo profiles. They recognised that the Bebo profiles were part of a larger campaign and that the discursive production (Fairclough, 1992) of the campaign was owned and managed by each organization.

It was fine... it's their thing, they can do with it what they want. As long as they weren't, you know, making it appear that I was commenting when I wasn't. But they didn't do anything like that. (Steve, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

It didn't bother me... they had our names, our user names were [Campaign name], um and that was tied into the [Campaign name] website and also the [Organization

name] website... so it was all linked back up to [Organization name]. (Scott, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

In support of this, most of the spokespeople did not use their campaign profiles for personal use, keeping their personal Bebo profile and their campaign profiles separate. This demonstrates that each organization successfully established themselves as the owner of the campaign and the spokespeople's campaign profiles, through the control tactics discussed above.

It wasn't my personal page, I was quite happy. As far as I was concerned it was all their project, that we were trying to do these things for them, um for payment. (Jason, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

I didn't put anything too personal in there... they made it so, it's their campaign, we're just helping. (Claire, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

These tactics and techniques for controlling the spokespeople's behaviour on Bebo demonstrates how an organization can manage the tension associated with using spokespeople who do not necessarily align with the organizational identity. Both case study organizations identified that it was important to use spokespeople from a similar demographic as the target audience, to increase identification and authenticity. This discussion about control and reputation management demonstrates how each organization controlled the spokespeople to ensure their behaviour fitted within the values, standards, purpose and practices of each organizational and brand identity.

Concepts of Engagement

Engagement, or participation, is a very important characteristic of social media because, as stated by Tapscott and Williams (2007), "The new web [social media] is principally about participating rather than about passively receiving information" (p. 37). Shao (2009) provides an analytical framework to describe how and why individuals use user-generated media, such as social networking sites. The framework identifies three different forms of *participation*, including:

consuming information and entertainment; participating for social interaction and community development; and producing for self expression and self actualization (Shao, 2009). Each case study organization used Bebo-based tools, including the wall, blogs and video (vidcasts), to facilitate the first two forms of participation during their recruitment campaign on Bebo. Interestingly, neither of the campaigns facilitated user-generation in its purest form, through self expression and self actualization (Shao, 2009). Also, often the *purpose* for using the Bebo-based tools conflicted with the essence of social networking and social media, and these tensions will be explored below.

The primary industry's campaign had a strong focus on participating for social interaction and community development (Shao, 2009), through user to user interaction. The organizational members wanted to create a *conversation*, and *dialogue*, between the target audience and the spokespeople. To achieve this, organizational members encouraged spokespeople to create blogs, upload photos and respond to users via the wall. As identified by boyd (2007a), the wall is one of the main features of a social networking site, where users can post public comments (boyd, 2007b), develop conversations and form relationships with one another. The primary industry encouraged its spokespeople to engage in conversations via the wall, and all of the spokespeople encouraged comments and questions from the target audience in the 'About me' section of their Bebo profiles. According to Shao (2009), public conversations via the wall help to develop an online community and a sense of belonging and communion. The process of responding to comments is also considered vital, because receiving a response increases the likelihood of a user posting again (Joyce & Kraut, 2006, as cited in Shao, 2009), aiding the development of a long-term relationship between the two users.

Bebo is there so people can start having that further conversation with people.
(Susan, Primary industry, Organizational member)

The spokespeople also kept personal blogs, recording their day-to-day experiences and activities (Beer & Burrows, 2007). Most of the blogs followed a traditional

blogging format and were written in an informal, personal voice, focused on a specific topic, and inviting conversation from the reader (Weil, 2006).

Once a week or once a fortnight, I'd write a new blog just telling people what we are up to... if they log on, they could see just what was happening without, you know, they didn't necessarily have to ask questions. (Matt, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

The spokespeople were encouraged to upload personal photos on the Bebo profiles, from outside of work, to help create a *personal identity* and to allow the spokespeople to “signal meaningful cues about themselves” (boyd, 2007a, p. 10). As identified by one organizational member, this tactic also helped to create a *personal connection*, or common ground (Kent & Taylor, 2002), between the spokespeople and the Bebo users. To further this connection, the organization used the language of the target audience, such as ‘stink’, ‘bored’, and ‘sucks’, across all campaign material including Bebo. The organization also created a *video* (vidcast) of the spokespeople ‘on-the-job’, to provide a visual account of what it was like to work in the industry. This tool catered for those Bebo users who watch, read or view content but never participate online (Shao, 2009).

We've used stink job and bored and like words that, I mean you gotta write for these guys... they want it in their language and the whole campaign has been written like that. (Meg, Primary industry, Organizational Member)

We wanted to give people a um, you know, often we are talking to kids that are in an urban setting, not necessarily, they may have never stepped into [Primary industry] before. So we wanted to give them that, you know, visual that this is actually part of what it looks like and here's what you can expect to do....And then that helps link people into the Bebo site, if they wanted to chat to those people, by actually viewing a bit of footage, it helps you to feel like you are a little bit closer to that person. (Susan, Primary industry, Organizational member)

Organizational members identified that, despite such conversations being developed on Bebo, the organization did not have a strategy to support the development of *long-term* relationships with the target audience. This indicates

that the organization's attempts at dialogue were superficial, and suggests that while the conversation was two-way, it was largely asymmetrical (Gilpin, 2009). Aside from the spokespeople responding to comments on Bebo, as one organizational member commented, the organization did not intend to address, and future-proof, the target audience's feedback or questions on Bebo in any way. This demonstrates a lack of *personal commitment* to the target audience (Bruning & Galloway, 2008), and to *propinquity*, a feature of Kent and Taylor's (2002) Dialogic Communication Framework, which suggests organizations should engage with key publics with a focus on creating a *shared future* for both the organization and publics (Kent & Taylor, 2002). It also raises questions about why the organization decided to use Bebo to facilitate dialogue with young people, if they were not going to develop this conversation in the future.

If they wanted to keep talking to the [Young worker], that was sweet, they were more than welcome to. But we didn't really do anything with it... There wasn't any plans to do anything further with it. It was just a way of people talking to the [Young workers] in an informal manner. (Meg, Primary industry, Organizational Member)

Unlike the primary industry, the tertiary institution's organizational members were not interested in engaging in dialogue with the target audience via the wall or through blogs. As one organizational member identified, comments left on the wall by Bebo users were not a priority for the organization. Rather than develop a conversation and dialogue (Wright, 2006) with the target audience, the spokespeople used these tools to encourage votes from Bebo users. This was demonstrated by five out of seven spokespeople using their Bebo profiles to encourage Bebo users to watch their videos and to vote for them, and one spokesperson including a direct link to the voting page from his blog, twice.

Ah, not well, they could post stuff on the Bebo wall but if they wanted to ask a question then they'd... we got them to ring the student recruitment office. (Melissa, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

The more votes you get for each challenge, the greater chance there is of you winning a challenge... so the best way for you to get the most votes is to be

interactive with your target audience and to keep yourself interested, like keep people interested in you and keep people voting for you. And the best way to do that is by replying and by accepting and making friends on Bebo. (Rebecca, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

For the tertiary institution, engagement was embodied by the target audience watching the spokespeople's weekly videocasts, voting for the spokespeople and completing an online quiz. Used on a greater scale than the primary industry, the organization incorporated video into the campaign to showcase the social aspects of life at the Wananaga, and to visually engage the target audience, through fun, entertaining and informative clips (Shao, 2009).

We knew that kids weren't going to go to the site if it didn't, you know, it wasn't a bit of fun... so the nature of the challenges... was about trying to create some content with a little bit of fun, um which also, in a fun way, showed people what it was like to, to, um live and study at the [Wananga]. (Adam, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

The quiz was a mashup created for the purpose of the campaign, designed to encourage user to content interaction (Shao, 2009), and to facilitate the target audience's participation in the campaign. Featured on the Academic's profile, the quiz collected personal information from the target audience, asking demographic questions, study-intention questions, and interest-based questions. Bebo users were offered incentives to fill out the quiz, with the opportunity to win one of 15 ipod nanos.

The site was about entertainment and engagement. And but the essence of the campaign was getting people to visit the site to complete the [Quiz]. So the [Quiz] was a quiz with um a bunch of questions which were designed to um illicit demographic information from um quiz participants ... basically creating a list so that you could then DM people. (Adam, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

This tool had the potential to build an online community of users (Shao, 2009) but, unfortunately, the tertiary institution's use of the quiz hindered the development of such a community. The organization adopted a traditional *marketing-approach* to the quiz design, using it as a tool to collect personal information from the target audience on Bebo and push them to apply to enrol (Noel-Levitz, 2007). This focus implied one-way communication, and created tensions with the organization's intentions for engagement. The primary industry had a similar intention for its overall campaign, which aimed to drive young people to the campaign website to register for information packs. However, the Bebo component of the campaign was not created for this purpose and, unlike the tertiary institution, the primary industry did not employ specific tactics on Bebo to push the target audience to the website or to collect personal information from them.

The directive from the client was to get traffic to the website. Um ultimately, from, from their point of view, you know, they want people to register for info packs and they want um people to make that decision and then become involved in the [Primary] industry. (James, Primary industry, Organizational member)

The tertiary institution created a quiz because the New Zealand Government's Unsolicited Electronic Messages Bill (*Unsolicited Electronic Messages Bill*, 2007) restricted the organization from mining user's personal information from Bebo *without* their permission. The quiz gave organizational members a legitimate way to collect the information instead. Personal information was viewed as a 'commodity' by the tertiary institution, and an organizational member highlighted that the organization was only interested in engaging with those who had completed the quiz. This indicates that the organization was practicing 'knowing capitalism', and purposefully harvesting users' personal information for commercial use (Beer, 2008). It is interesting to question whether the Bebo users realised that there was a hidden commercial-agenda behind the quiz. Quizzes are commonly used on social networking sites, helping to spread memes across the network (boyd, 2006), and users may not have realised that they were giving the organization permission to collect their personal details. This raises transparency issues for the organization to consider.

The only interaction we wanted to have, was with people who had completed the [Quiz]... if we weren't able to identify them as individuals, then we weren't interested in engaging with them. (Adam, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

What we were trying to do was to capture them into Jade... then they would go on an email list where emails get sent out, and then we would try and keep in touch on a regular basis. (Ashley, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

Once the target audience completed the quiz, their personal information was captured into a customer relationship management (CRM) system, and entered into the institution's existing database of prospective students. The organization used this system to send out regular campaign-themed emails to the quiz participants throughout the duration of the campaign. This was an online relationship communication approach (Jensen, 2008), which allowed the organization to personalise key messages about its courses, brand values and teaching philosophy, controlling the discursive production and distribution (Fairclough, 1992) of its key messages.

So we'd send emails out every two weeks to the database we had... anything that was topical would go into that email... that's what was important to do on Bebo, is to continue that conversation all the time. Or else it becomes kinda stagnant and nothing happens... then people forget about you. (Melissa, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

So we were able to use that information to have an ongoing conversation with the quiz participant. It was largely an email, an email conversation with them. (Adam, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

As two organizational members identified, the organization termed this a 'conversation' between the target audience and the Wananga. Yet, how can the process of harvesting personal information (Beer, 2008), putting it into a database and direct emailing the participants be called a conversation? Superficially the quiz engaged the target audience while they were answering the questions, but to

what extent did this engagement extend? The relationship management perspective of public relations suggests that organizations should nurture mutually beneficial relationships with their significant publics (Jo et al., 2005), but did the tertiary institution achieve this? Did the quiz facilitate a relationship between the organization and target audience which included dialogue, openness, trust, understanding and a willingness to collaborate and negotiate (Bruning & Ledingham, 1999)? In many ways, as one organizational member identified, the tertiary institution's campaign was designed to discretely advertise to the target audience, not to develop relationships with them.

That's another reason for Bebo. Um they don't feel like they're being advertised to, and they're not, they don't feel like they're being told what to do. So it was kinda just a general push, in maybe a right direction for them to feel like they've made their own decision. (Melissa, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

By sending out emails, the tertiary institution's organizational members removed the conversation and dialogue from Bebo to the inboxes of the quiz participants. This decision undermined the social networking power of Bebo, and shifted the conversation from an open, collaboratively generated communication channel, to a one-way, marketing-orientated channel. Social networking sites have provided organizations with an opportunity to create a genuine dialogue with Bebo users, through the negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Instead, the tertiary institution was facilitating a discursive shift, re-articulating the social media-influenced understanding of 'engagement', to a one-way mass direct mail out from the organization to the target audience. Interestingly, this reframing is occurring globally, with the development of a social media email marketing industry. As identified by StrongMail Systems Inc., 66% of email marketers surveyed were planning to integrate email and social media in 2009, and 48% had already created a strategy to do so (StrongMail, 2009). This focus on social media/email marketing indicates that the tertiary institution did not understand how to create conversation and engagement using social networking principles, and this was best indicated by its lack of interest in the wall. Not only was this a missed opportunity, but it also raises questions about why the organization decided to use Bebo as a medium in the first place.

The intention of the tertiary institution to collect personal information from users raises serious questions around the use of social networking sites for this purpose. This investigation does not include audience research, so it is impossible to know whether the target audience was aware of the organization's underlying commercially-orientated intentions. It is important to question the target audience's knowledge of such practices, because this highlights transparency concerns. In contrast, the primary industry had a stronger commitment to engage with users, but did not have strategies to enact this over the long term.

Tensions with the timeframes of each campaign

One of the biggest limitations of each organization's campaign, in terms of engagement, was the fact that Bebo was viewed as a short-term 'campaign', rather than as an ongoing aspect of their communication strategy. As Kent and Taylor (2002) identified, for dialogue to be successful an organization must commit to continuing the conversation with its publics. The primary industry's spokespeople were only active on Bebo for four to six weeks, and the tertiary institutions for three to four months. These time frames, which conflicted with the long-term nature of social networking, were chosen to overcome the tensions associated with using people currently working in the industry and studying at the institution, who had existing priorities and commitments.

At the end of the day they've got their lives to maintain and they've got their job to do. (James, Primary industry, Organizational member)

This tension was clearly demonstrated when the tertiary institution decided to run their campaign during exams, despite telling three of the spokespeople that the campaign would not be held then. This decision put added pressure on the spokespeople to balance their current studies with the campaign. Three organizational members were aware of these added pressures and this decision indicates a lack of concern for the spokespeople's commitment to their studies. The organizational members' awareness of this issue also raises questions about why the organization let the campaign run over exams in the first place.

I was pretty reluctant to join up actually... they'd made it seem as though, can't remember what it is now, but they'd said or they'd made it seem as though the, the whole thing would be done earlier. The whole [Campaign] would be done earlier and wouldn't eat into our um exam time... and it turn out it did go into exam time and I was going oh shit... and that was quite stressful in exams... it just became frustrating because it seemed like a waste of time. (Jason, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

We had to be really careful about what we asked them to do, just because their workload and what they needed to get done like around assessment time and stuff, they found it quite difficult to get work in. (Melissa, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

The timeframe, over exams, also created problems associated with filming relevant social activities on campus. During exams, classes were not run and most students were not attending the Wananga. Two spokespeople and one organizational member identified that the campaign should have been run earlier in the year, when a lot more social and academic events were being held.

I think part of what hindered my ability to maybe put in more interesting things is the fact that the campaign came some late in the year. So by the time that you're gearing up for final exams, you've had a lot of social events, like, like the balls and the [Faculty] steins... if this had been set up like at the beginning of the year, or you know, when there's more stuff that's up and coming on the social calendar, then you'd be able to get more footage and more interesting footage as well. (Emma, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

The primary industry attempted to overcome the tension associated with having inactive spokespeople after six weeks, by keeping the spokespeople's profiles active, post-campaign. As identified by two organizational members and one spokesperson, this involved an organizational member responding to any comments or questions left by Bebo users on the spokespeople's profiles. This practice was *deceptive* because the target audience believed that they were engaging with the person described in the 'About me' section and the person in

the profile photo. The target audience was not aware of the organizational member's involvement in the campaign, and this created significant tensions with the organization's aim to be authentic by using real people working in the industry (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). Ideally, the organizational members should have identified this tension during the planning stages of the campaign, and developed a strategy to address it.

It's quite time consuming for these guys, they were really good about it and then um their seasons just got busy with [Primary industry] and so, in the end I took over it... I check them every now and then and I'll comment back to the people, I'll reply... I don't know if I'm quite giving an unbiased approach. (Meg, Primary industry, Organizational Member)

Engagement is a complex concept, particularly in a social networking context. It is clear that, despite incorporating tactics such as blogs, video (vidcasts) and photos to increase the target audience's engagement with the campaign, both organizations' actions during the implementation of the campaign sometimes conflicted with these intentions. Of the two organizations, the primary industry was most committed to creating a conversation and engaging with its target audience, despite being over a shorter time frame. In contrast, the tertiary institution incorporated marketing principles in an attempt to create engagement and, ultimately, to capture personal information from the users. This raises questions about the organizational members' understanding of the word engagement, and their dedication to ensuring that an authentic conversation and dialogue occurred between the target audience and the organization during the campaign.

Evaluating the effectiveness of a social networking campaign

Evaluation, or measurement, is a central aspect of every public relations and marketing campaign. Public relations and communications professionals must be able to prove the value of their programmes and initiatives, to both business and society (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, Toth, & van Leuven, 2004). Both case study organizations faced difficulties identifying an appropriate process for evaluating

the *effectiveness* of their recruitment campaigns on Bebo. This highlights the challenges associated with evaluating social media campaigns, in contrast to traditional public relations campaigns.

Unlike the primary industry, the tertiary institution established a specific objective at the beginning of its campaign: to increase applications to enrol at the institution by 10%. This was an important step in creating a measurable campaign, as identified by Guiniven (2004) and Watson (2005). The organization also intended to increase the number of prospective students registered in the existing database, as identified by two organizational members. These decisions indicate that the tertiary institution adopted an *objectives-effectiveness* (Watson, 2005) approach to evaluation, judging the campaign's ability to effectively meet these objectives and create the desired effect: enrolments.

The tertiary institution's organizational members all shared different perspectives on the campaign's effectiveness. Organizational members from the agencies involved in the campaign believed the campaign was successful at increasing the number of students registered in the Wananga's database. Whereas the internal recruitment team believed the campaign was unsuccessful at achieving this goal, after receiving a smaller number of contact details than expected from the Bebo campaign.

The campaign identified a large number of what the [Wananga] calls, or what we called, A prospects... it also generated a pretty large list of B prospects... now the [Wananga] had the opportunity to use that prospect list and to the best of my knowledge they didn't. (Adam, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

They talked about 1369 hot leads, now when we data entered them, um we ended up with the numbers I've just quoted to you... 1369 went to 770. (Vicky, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

The recruitment team were also critical of the campaign's effectiveness in creating enrolments, since only 21 students made an application for enrolment in 2008, as a result of their interaction with the Bebo campaign. In many ways, this was an

unrealistic objective for the tertiary institution. As identified by three organizational members, young people do not make serious questions about their future career based on one factor alone (Maringe, 2006; Soutar & Turner, 2002), such as Bebo. This is supported by Hodkinson and Sparkes' (1997) model of career decision making, which identifies that young people's decisions are often highly contextualised and based on various interactions, contacts, experiences and family influences (as cited in Edith, 2005).

You don't choose [Wananga] for one reason... So I think it's a bit harsh to say that there weren't any single, or there were very few single seen Bebo, gone to [Wananga] and enrolled. (Ashley, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

Similarly, the primary industry organizational members were divided in their approach to measuring the campaign's effectiveness. The majority of organizational members adopted a *simple-effectiveness* approach to evaluation (Watson, 2005), focusing on whether the campaign worked in terms of output: conversations between the spokespeople and the target audience. As identified by two organizational members and two spokespeople, this involved evaluating the number of comments or questions received by the spokespeople, from the target audience. Two organizational members did not support this approach, believing that the campaign improved perceptions and increased brand awareness, creating *intangible results* that could not be evaluated by counting comments. This perspective was supported by post-campaign research conducted by the tertiary institution, which suggested the campaign had successfully reinforced the organization's brand and improved its reputation with the target audience. These results indicate that perhaps reputation, perception and awareness-orientated campaigns are best suited to a social networking medium.

Actually measuring, getting any measure of success in some respects is quite hard... We haven't thought terribly carefully about what measures of success for that programme are. Um but if you, obviously if you looked at numbers of emails or questions asked, you'd be pretty disappointed. Um yeah, maybe the number of friends that have joined up... but if they were all already friends, you know, that's, that's a rubbish indicator. (Brian, Primary industry, Organizational Member)

Bebo worked in such a way as, it's like a, it's like branding, like branding like um it may not have been, um it may not have worked in terms of generating numbers, it may not have worked in terms of actual, actual ah results like 'How many info packs they sent out' but it worked in, in creating a brand. (James, Primary industry, Organizational member)

In many ways, the decision to base success on the number of comments received indicates a stronger alignment with the principles of social networking, than other approaches to evaluation. As indicated by boyd (2007a), writing comments on a 'friends' profile is one of the most common practices on a social networking site. While social networking site users may have a lot of 'friends' online, as identified by Ampofo (2009), "The number of "friends" a user has says nothing about the level of engagement of those friends with the user" (p. 48). A visible comment or question is an indication that the two users have actively engaged. However, sole focus on comments received also poses some problems. Not all users of social networks are *active users*, and some may simply observe other people's behaviour on the network and consume information and entertainment (Shao, 2009), without producing any content themselves. So, as identified by two organizational members from the primary industry, this evaluation method fails to account for those Bebo users who simply browsed through the spokespeople's profiles, watching the videos (vidcasts) and reading the blogs.

I don't think we really understood as well, how some people are watchers and some people are doers... It's hard to measure that sort of stuff going on really, you know, how involved people are. (Susan, Primary industry, Organizational member)

As this discussion highlights, there are a number of challenges associated with finding an appropriate method for evaluating the effectiveness of social networking sites such as Bebo. Most commonly, there is a frustration within the public relations and marketing communities about the inability to effectively measure online campaigns (Medcalf, 2008). The search for an appropriate method for evaluating online public relations campaigns is difficult, because as suggested by Ampofo (2009), we must first identify what constitutes 'effective' in

a social networking context, before finding out what needs to be evaluated. In this sense, is ‘effectiveness’ embodied in the number of ‘friends’ or ‘comments’ a campaign profile has received? Or, is an increase in brand awareness and recognition over a long period of time a better indicator of success? Public relations professionals need to identify and clarify, with themselves and their clients, what defines success and effectiveness for a social media strategy. Once this is determined, a methodology for evaluating these indicators can be developed.

Reaching the target audience on Bebo

One way of evaluating the effectiveness of each campaign, is to analyse whether the campaign *reached* the target audience. To evaluate this, I will adopt the ‘comments-focused’ methodology discussed above, looking at whether comments received by the spokespeople were from the target audience, or whether they were from friends and family. A commonality across both campaigns was the lack of serious campaign or industry/institution-related comments received from the target audience on Bebo. This trend was identified by four spokespeople and two organizational members from the primary industry, and all of the tertiary institution’s spokespeople.

I don’t actually know if I was legitimately approached by anybody. I think sort of the only things I might have got was like random emails like ‘You’re hot’ and that was about it. I don’t think anybody actually um wrote me anything serious. (Emma, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

I didn’t really have many people even comment on mine. (Scott, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

Across all of the spokespeople’s profiles, the comments tended to be personal in nature, discussing voting, videos and general topics about life. Also, for both organizations, comments tended to be from friends or friends of friends, rather than the target audience. The lack of campaign-related comments led four of the tertiary institution’s spokespeople to question whether the campaign reached the

target audience at all, or whether it remained within the spokespeople's extended group of friends and current students at the institution. Organizational members from the recruitment team also questioned whether the quiz reached the target audience, since it was open to all Bebo users and there was no age restriction.

They hoped to, to um promote [Wananga]... through the social network... I think they thought that the word would spread through friends and eventually get down to the high schoolers... But as far as I'm concerned, that didn't really work, that didn't happen. Um things really stayed within our friendship circles um and between [Spokespeople] and their friends. (Jason, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

These results raise questions about the case study organizations' taken-for-granted assumption about young people's use of social networking sites. While Bebo may have been the most popular social networking site in 2007-08 (Bebo, 2007), these results highlight the importance of questioning *how* and *why* young people use social networking sites. Perhaps young people do not use social networking sites to create interest-related friendships or connections? This supports boyd and Ellison's (2007) definition of social network sites, which suggests that individuals use these sites to create connections with people that they have an *existing* relationship with. This could be seen when the spokespeople created strong relationships with their offline friends and family on Bebo, rather than with the target audience, who they did not know. These findings also support the results of Johnstone et al. (2009) and Ellison et al.'s (2007) research into how and why individuals use social networking sites.

As mentioned earlier, the tertiary institution's organizational members did not expect serious, academic-based questions from the target audience on Bebo. Three of the tertiary institution's spokespeople were surprised that the Bebo users did not ask academic-based questions about their degrees and lectures, however this trend supports the tertiary institution's decision and highlights that Bebo may not be an appropriate forum for engaging in serious, academic-based discussions. In contrast, the primary industry organizational members identified the lack of serious, industry-specific comments as a significant issue during their Bebo

campaign. As mentioned earlier, the organization placed a huge emphasis on creating conversations via the wall, and three organizational members were concerned that only a small number of people were interacting and leaving comments on the spokespeople's Bebo profiles.

To overcome the lack of comments, the primary industry's organizational members asked the spokespeople to get their friends and family to place *fake comments*, asking questions about working in the industry, on their Bebo profiles. This decision was identified by one organizational member and three spokespeople. The fake comments made it look as though the target audience was interacting with the spokespeople, and helped the organization *save face*, by making the campaign appear more successful than it actually was. As identified by one organizational member and one spokesperson, the strategy was designed to generate interest from the target audience, and to encourage users to ask similar questions about the primary industry. However, when analysing the spokespeople's Bebo profiles, it is impossible to separate the real comments from the fake comments, so there is no way to measure the effectiveness of this tactic.

I just said, 'Oh get your friends to do it to start with' and then we thought it would take off. And they were like 'Oh yeah, we will get our friends, so we don't look like idiots'. (Meg, Primary industry, Organizational Member)

Some of them were created just to... we were tryina create interest... we were trying to create interest so once you have a few comments, people feel more free to leave a comment...It got the ball rolling almost a little bit. (John, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

The fake comments also helped to save face for the spokespeople. Within the context of social networking sites, there is a significant amount of pressure put on users to have a large number of 'friends'. There is also expectation of a public performance, or visual affirmation, of this 'friendship' (boyd, 2006) through comments or messages. One organizational member was concerned that the spokespeople would take the lack of comments personally, believing it reflected on them as an individual not the campaign. However, only one spokesperson

appeared visibly concerned, believing that the lack of comments were due to her role in the industry, and her gender. She compared herself with the other spokespeople, and questioned why they had received comments when she had not.

If you put your face on this Bebo page and then nobody talks to you, you feel like a bit of a dork. (Meg, Primary industry, Organizational Member)

I didn't really talk to anybody because nobody would comment on me. Like I didn't get anything... I had a look at [Scott's] and he had quite a few comment on him. I dunno if they were just his friends or whatever... My Bebo didn't do much. Dunno if it was a girl, 'Oh my god, she's [Primary industry], that's just not cool. (Claire, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

The use of fake comments echoed the decision made by the primary industry to keep the spokespeople's profiles active after the campaign finished. Only one organizational member discussed the fake comments, and the spokespeople did not appear concerned about the potential consequences of this deceptive tactic, with two spokespeople finding the concept amusing. This raises questions about whether the primary industry recognised the seriousness of their decision, which in many ways *intentionally deceived* the Bebo users. Most importantly, it also identifies a tension with the organization's claim to be authentic.

I thought it [the fake comments] was funny cause like no other people knew, but we knew. (Claire, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

While it is important to take into consideration the limitations associated with focusing solely on comments received by the spokespeople, this discussion suggests that neither campaign actually reached the target audience on Bebo. This raises questions about the effectiveness of using social networking sites for public relations and organizational communication. Johnstone et al. (2008) identified this issue in their recent research, which demonstrated that, "Facebook was not necessarily viewed as a commercial space for marketing paraphernalia [by research participants]" (p. 5). They identified the need for future research, to explore how Facebook users respond to unsolicited advertising and marketing

efforts (Johnstone et al., 2008). These issues associated with ‘reach’ have serious implications for organizations that intend to use social networking sites for communicating with publics in the future, and highlight the need for organizations to research *what social media tools* their target audience currently use, and how they use them.

Moderation and reputation management

Moderation is a concept which has been thoroughly debated in social media literature, most commonly in regards to blogging. Concerns associated with social media use are linked to a loss of control (Scott, 2009), particularly since anyone can say anything about an organization (Lipski & Bunting, 2000): positive or negative. As Scott (2009) states, “Social media for marketing and communications requires that organizations lose control of their messages. When anyone can comment about what you’re up to, you no longer have power over the way you are portrayed” (p. 48).

A common response to the openness of social media, as identified by Flynn, T. (2006) is for organizations to, “Consider managing that voice – for the sake of the organization’s reputation and future – either by deactivating or modifying the comments function, editing comments pre-post, or requiring readers to register before posting comments” (p.9). This was the approach adopted by the case study organizations during their recruitment campaigns on Bebo. The organizations both explicitly moderated the content produced by Bebo users on their campaign profiles, by regularly accessing their spokespeople’s profiles from an internal perspective. This process was designed to protect each organization’s reputation, and to ensure the content on Bebo did not breach or offend any of the organization’s standards or regulations.

[Organizational member] is moderating it and making, making sure that um, that it doesn’t breach any, you know, it doesn’t offend or breach any of [Organization]’s standards. (David, Primary industry, Organizational member)

For both organizations, moderation involved checking each spokesperson's Bebo profile for any inappropriate comments or spam. The tertiary institution defined inappropriate comments as those that might challenge the reputation of the organization, whereas the primary industry considered comments with swearing, racism or negative connotations about the industry inappropriate. If inappropriate comments could not be turned into positive ones, as identified by an organizational member from each organization, the comments were deleted from the Bebo profiles.

We could screen what went up on the wall... anything that could've ruined the reputation of the [Wananga] wouldn't go up... unless it could be answered in a rectifiable way and maybe was an important point for other people to know.
(Melissa, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

No swearing or anything like that pretty much, just to keep [Organization]'s image as well. (Scott, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

This strategy was best demonstrated when the tertiary institution deleted comments which openly 'busted' the campaign as an advertising 'ploy', because they were considered too negative and potentially damaging to the organization.

People were like "this is, this is just an advertising ploy" you know, all this kinda of stuff. There were some cynical people in there that kinda could see through it um and would post stuff up like that. (Melissa, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

Each organization also encouraged their spokespeople to delete inappropriate comments, as one spokesperson from each organization identified. This indicates that organizational members believed that the spokespeople's responses may further damage the organization's reputation online. However, despite this instruction from the organization, the tertiary institution's spokespeople developed their own strategies for dealing with such comments, with tactics ranging from responding with wit and humour, to abuse. This demonstration supports the expert-power position of the spokespeople discussed earlier, and, in

many ways, justifies the tertiary institution's concerns about the misalignment of values between the spokespeople and the organization.

They basically said, yeah if you can't reply to it without, without um having a negative effect, just delete the comment... because you can just, yeah, you can just wipe it off your page and be done with it. (Steve, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

I would've probably given a little bit of abuse back... I would've checked out their profile and seen who it was and been like, "What? What are you on? Who the hell do you think you are?" Had a little conversation. (Nick, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

The decision to delete inappropriate comments from the Bebo profiles conflicts with the *mutuality* component of Kent and Taylor's (2002) Dialogic Framework, which proposes that organizations and publics should seek to understand each others positions. Kent and Taylor (2002) also suggest that no topics should be excluded from the conversation or considered inappropriate or irrational, including those which oppose current organizational practice (Day et al., 2001). The fact that each organization filtered out comments from those with opposite views about the industry or institution, suggests that they did not engage in genuine dialogue with the target audience (Stoker & Tusinski, 2006).

Instead of moderating and filtering inappropriate comments, Lipski and Bunting (2000) believe that organizations should engage in conversation with the 'opposition', and recognise their right to an alternative point of view. One organizational member from the primary industry supported this perspective, recognising that there were better ways to manage social media. He suggested that the organization should acknowledge all points of view, however, paradoxically, he wanted to acknowledge these in a private forum, illustrating the difficulty he had 'letting go' of the conversation.

You've gotta acknowledge that people have a, have a view... You wouldn't want to do this on a public forum obviously, but um, you know, it provides that opportunity

to dig a little deeper and understand why, um, why people hold that, or why this person holds that opinion. (Brian, Primary industry, Organizational Member)

As highlighted by Day et al. (2001), a dialogic approach alone can not force an organization to behave ethically, and it appears as though the case study organizations were ‘staging’ dialogic encounters with their target audiences (Day et al., 2001), rather than creating authentic conversations. This limitation was recognised by two organizational members from the primary industry, who highlighted that despite the organization’s best intentions, the campaign did not appear to develop *genuine relationships* with the target audience. The practice also raises questions about whether the target audience was aware that their comments were being moderated, at this level, by each organization. This highlights transparency issues for both case study organizations.

Bebo, mmm I don’t think it was genuine enough to even put in the, make the effort to continue relationships... There wasn’t enough genuine conversation. (Meg, Primary industry, Organizational Member)

It is understandable that organizations, who have traditionally controlled the production, distribution and consumption of their key messages, find it difficult to ‘lose control’ of their messages via social media. Moderation is a central issue for public relations and organizational communication practitioners, and further research is needed to explore new approaches within these disciplines, which embrace the openness of social media. After all, as suggested by Schipul (2009), “Any attempt to control a social media initiative is almost certain to doom the effort” (p. 12).

Implementation challenges

There were some disadvantages to being early adopters of social media, with both organizations experiencing a number of unexpected barriers and challenges during the production, distribution and consumption (Fairclough, 1992) of their campaigns on Bebo. Discussion of these implementation challenges is invaluable

and provides a blueprint for organizations in New Zealand who intend to use Bebo for communicating with key publics in the future.

There's too many barriers with Bebo, and they're barriers you can't change. (Meg, Primary industry, Organizational member)

The *production* of the Bebo profiles was a significant challenge for the tertiary institution. Bebo has a standard interface, and the tertiary institution wanted to change this interface for their campaign, so that users could view videos (vidcasts), vote for spokespeople and participate in a quiz. Changing the interface became a very time-consuming and expensive exercise for the organization. Bebo had not experienced such requests before, and organizational members had to go through corporate Bebo in the United States of America to change Bebo for the purpose of the campaign.

I don't think we realised how much work was going to have to go into just to get the basics done... The technical things weren't as easy as we thought. I think it was more expensive than we thought... bang for buck was probably less than we thought. But again, that's not anybody's fault, that's cause it was just so new. (Ashley, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

Nobody had really, nobody had done what we were doing on Bebo, so it was new to everybody. It was new to Bebo... Some things you had to go through America and somethings we could do through the Australia-New Zealand manager... when things needed to be altered that weren't the norm, then you'd have to go through like America and stuff. (Melissa, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

The voting component of the tertiary institution's Bebo campaign best demonstrates the type of production challenges the organization faced. Each week the spokespeople created a video (vidcast), and the Bebo community voted for the best video, by attributing a score out of five to each video (one was the lowest score and five was the highest). This process created two significant challenges. First, the Bebo users did not understand *how to vote*, and asked a high volume of questions on both the spokespeople's walls, and the Academic's blog, about how to vote. This indicates that the voting process was confusing for Bebo

users. Second, as identified by five spokespeople, the voting system could be *manipulated* and Bebo users could vote for a spokesperson more than once, in one week. The spokespeople were very concerned about this, believing that the best videos were not winning the challenges because competitors were encouraging their friends and family to vote for them repetitively. It also meant that, by using their personal accounts, the spokespeople could repeat vote for their own videos.

The voting system... it was done so that you could vote for yourself or you could vote as many times as you wanted... so it was just open to manipulation. So the rewards side for the [Spokespeople], I don't think was bullet proof. (Emma, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

As a result, the spokespeople became disengaged with the campaign, and became less motivated to create good video content, because they believed that their videos would not win the challenges unless they cheated.

The voting system was really bad... I didn't really understand it myself, but like I, I believed that the people, some of the people's videos that were the best weren't getting voted for at all. Because they didn't have friends sitting at, there at a computer like voting them up... It kinda made us lose a bit of motivation, because we were like well, no matter how cool we make the video, it's not, it doesn't really matter how cool the video is, it's how much time our friends want to put into standing in front of the computer and pushing refresh. (Rebecca, Tertiary institution, Spokesperson)

Interestingly, while the organizational members were informed about this systemic challenge, as identified by three spokespeople, they did little to address the issue. It was mentioned in meetings between the spokespeople and the organizational members, and emails were sent out to the spokespeople, asking them to stop cheating or face disqualification. It is surprising that the organization did not take further actions, because the competition element was central to keeping the spokespeople engaged with the campaign. As one spokesperson suggested, the organization may not have had the technical knowledge, or ability, to modify the voting system and stop the cheating. This is very important, and

further illustrates the challenges faced by organizations who wish to alter Bebo to suit their campaign-needs.

They mentioned it broadly to everyone... we got an email saying, 'If this, ah it has come to our attention that people are refresh voting and if this continues you will be disqualified from the competition'... so they definitely gave us a growl, like a slap on the hand. (Steve, Tertiary institution, Organizational member)

The two main challenges faced by the primary industry related to distribution and consumption, and included gaining *visibility* on Bebo, and *interacting* with Bebo users. The campaign was not visible on Bebo, because the organization did not pay for advertising on Bebo, whereas the tertiary institution did. Organizational members knew that advertising would increase the campaign's visibility but, unlike the tertiary institution, they did not have the budget to do so. Without advertising the spokespeople's profiles were not featured on the homepage of Bebo and, unless Bebo users searched for the profiles, they were not visible to the general Bebo public.

If you don't advertising on the front page of Bebo, it's hidden, like it is really, we've really struggled to get the attention because we didn't advertise on the front page of Bebo. (Meg, Primary industry, Organizational Member)

The only way to access the spokespeople's Bebo profiles was through the campaign website or the spokespeople's personal networks. Two spokespeople identified that the organizational members encouraged them to add their current friends and to actively add unknown users, to increase their profile's visibility on Bebo. This visibility barrier highlights the powerful position held by media corporations, such as AOL who currently owns Bebo, over social networking site users. Cammaerts (2008) highlights that, by purchasing social media applications like Bebo, dominant media conglomerates are capitalising on Web 2.0 applications and limiting the user's ability to actively participate. By creating the opportunity for advertising, but forcing users and organizations to pay to be seen on Bebo, AOL is effectively managing *who* Bebo users interact with and *how* they interact with them.

The only way that Bebo really, the only way that you know it was on there, on, on Bebo, was through the website. (John, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

I just didn't know how they were going to get people to go on the Bebo sites. Like where to find them... It was kinda hard, like you had to add friends to find people... we had to go looking for people. (Claire, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

The need for advertising was not limited to online channels, with the spokespeople from both organizations identifying that the recruitment campaigns had not been well advertised *outside* of Bebo. Two spokespeople and one organizational member from the tertiary institution, believed that the campaign should have been advertised in local high schools, suggesting the organization missed an opportunity to advertise the campaign during the recruitment advisors' visits to schools near the end of the year. Three spokespeople from the primary industry also believed offline advertising would have attracted more visitors to Bebo. This is interesting because both campaigns were designed as an *alternative* form of advertising, designed to spread the campaign's messages *faster* than traditional channels. The suggestion that both Bebo campaigns needed to be supported by traditional advertising, further illustrates that Bebo is potentially an ineffective medium for reaching the target audience. It also indicates that there is a tension between the boundaries of public relations and advertising, in a social networking setting. Perhaps public relations activities are not strong enough to spread the message on their own?

The primary industry also discovered that unless users were a member of Bebo, they could not interact with the spokespeople on Bebo. This created a barrier for young people who were not registered with Bebo. Also, if a Bebo profile was set to 'private' and the user was not friends with a spokesperson, the spokespeople could not respond to any questions asked by the user. One spokesperson attempted to overcome this interaction barrier, by writing responses in a blog entry or on his wall instead.

One I think I did find was someone would write you a comment and you couldn't actually reply back to them because they would be private or whatever. So you couldn't actually answer their question, which was a bit, bit hard... The only way you could do it was to just write about what they'd asked in a blog or something... but then you don't know if they're, they are getting it or not. Um it would be good too if, well if they sort of replied as well so that you'd answer question and actually have a few comments placed. (Scott, Primary industry, Spokesperson)

Despite these barriers, no one from the tertiary institution, and only one person from the primary industry, questioned whether Bebo was the right medium for their recruitment campaigns. This indicates that the organizational members and spokespeople had a taken-for-granted assumption about new technology, and were adopting a *technological determinism* perspective of social networking sites. Within this framework is the belief that technological development is social progress (Hurme, 2001), and will always provide the best results. As MacKay (2001) suggests, "It [technological determinism] leaves us feeling passive about technology. If technological change is going to happen anyway, then there's not much point in worrying about it" (as cited in Somerville, Wood, & Gillham, 2007, p. 209). When adopting this perspective, individuals do not question whether the technology is appropriate, and whether it will achieve the best results for their intended purpose.

Both case study organizations developed a technological determinist perspective on social networking sites, due to their taken-for-granted assumptions about young people's use of Bebo. The organizational members assumed that since Bebo was a *new* medium for reaching young people, and a lot of young people were using it, Bebo would reach young people faster and more comprehensively than traditional mediums. However, the primary industry's post-campaign research suggested that young people were still hooked into traditional media, including television and radio. This demonstrates the importance of being critical of new technologies, and conducting research to determine whether the technology will perform a task, or reach an audience, in a better way than existing technology or social processes. In this sense, the case study organizations needed to recognise that "new media technologies are not panacea, they are not in

themselves a solution to the complex communication issues in today's dynamic socio-economic environment" (Somerville et al., 2007, p. 210).

There's a myth that kids are online... there are a lot of people out there preaching, I guess, Bebo and online for that age group. And you wonder where they get their, whether, you know, where they got their information from because it's certainly, for us it doesn't look like reality... We've found, through this whole thing, that traditional advertising mediums have so far been more effective than any online mediums that we've done. (David, Primary industry, Organizational member)

The fact that the barriers defined and discussed in this section exist indicates that perhaps Bebo is poorly equipped for public relations and organizational communication purposes. The barriers also illustrate the powerless position of organizations that choose to use social networking sites, in regards to the production, distribution and consumption of their campaign. Particularly for those grass-root organizations, such as the primary industry, who do not have the big budget to accommodate the advertising and financial demands of media companies, like AOL, in the way that the tertiary institution did.

CHAPTER FIVE – Conclusion

This research has investigated the way two case study organizations, a tertiary institution and a primary industry organization, have used the social networking site Bebo for communicating with key publics, in an attempt to recruit them into studying at the institution, and working in the industry. The study gave insights into how and why each organization used Bebo, from both the perspective of those organizational members who planned and implemented the campaign, and the spokespeople who were the face of the campaign on Bebo. The exploratory nature of this research meant that the reasons behind each organizations decision to use Bebo, and the challenges and opportunities associated with that use, were discussed in the participants' own words. This gave a valuable insight into both case study organizations' experiences with Bebo, helping to identify whether each organization achieved its goals and objectives.

The research findings identified that both organizations had adopted a taken-for-granted assumption about young people's use of social networking sites, in particular Bebo. As identified in Chapter Two, Bebo was the most popular site in New Zealand in 2007-08, with a high percentage of young people using it. This led the organizations to believe that young people were avid users of Bebo, and that Bebo would be the best medium for reaching this target public. Findings highlight that both organizations developed a technological determinism perspective, and failed to critically question whether Bebo would reach the target audience faster, and more comprehensively, than traditional mediums such as television and radio.

The findings indicate that both organizations were misled by their taken-for-granted assumption about social networking sites. A comments-focused analysis of both organizations' Bebo profiles demonstrated that the campaigns failed to provoke serious, campaign-related questions from the target audience. This raises questions about whether each campaign reached the target audience, and identifies limitations in both the campaign design and the success of Bebo as a medium for reaching the target audiences. The failure to develop a network of Bebo users

(Beer, 2008), by each campaign, supports previous research which suggests that young people use social networking sites to maintain existing friendships and relationships (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison et al., 2007; Johnstone et al., 2008). Further research is needed in this area to identify how Bebo users feel about becoming 'friends' with organizations and brands on social networking sites. To counter this technological determinism approach to using social media for communication, research is needed to evaluate whether 'new' social media applications and technologies are better, or equal, to traditional mediums for reaching young people.

One of the biggest tensions associated with the tertiary institution's use of Bebo, was the organization's incorporation of marketing principles into its campaign. Unlike the primary industry which used tools on Bebo to promote active engagement between the spokespeople and the target audience, the tertiary institution used Bebo to collect personal information from the target audience. The findings highlighted that through the creation of the quiz, the tertiary institution re-articulated the social media-influenced understanding of 'engagement' from a collaborative, two-way conversation, to a one-way mass direct mail out between the organization and the target audience. The quiz had one sole, commercially-orientated purpose: to harvest personal information (Beer, 2008) from Bebo users, and to direct mail them through the use of emails. The organization coined this process a 'conversation', yet in terms of social media principles and action, it clearly marginalised users and removed their ability to actively contribute and converse with the organization.

Central to this tension are questions of transparency and whether the target audience realised that the organization was harvesting their personal information for this purpose. Users of social networking sites are potentially unaware of the commercial interests of organizations and brands who are using Bebo and becoming friends with users. As identified earlier, Johnstone et al. (2008) have already highlighted the need for more research in this area to explore social networking site users' awareness of, and response to, unsolicited advertising and marketing efforts. It is important that organizations use social media technologies and applications in a way consistent with the principles of these technologies,

instead of trying to fit them into the existing 'box' of marketing and public relation activities. Organizations need to shift away from a one-way mode of thinking, and embrace the openness and participatory nature of social media.

The findings highlight that the primary industry had a genuine intent to engage with the target audience and that the organization incorporated all of the tools available on Bebo to do so. The organization also had a strong commitment to ensuring the campaign remained authentic, by using real spokespeople and awarding them an expert power position. However, findings indicated that, despite best intentions, decisions made by the organization during the campaign conflicted with this commitment to authenticity and engagement. Overall, the campaign lacked a strategy to ensure that conversations created on Bebo between the spokespeople and the target audience would continue in the long-term. The organization also struggled to overcome the tension associated with using authentic, real spokespeople (Gilmore & Pine, 2007) in the campaign, with the organizational members deciding to 'pose' as the spokespeople on Bebo, after the spokespeople's original timeframe of four-six weeks expired. The findings highlighted that the deceptive nature of this decision was mirrored by the organizations decision to plan fake comments on the spokespeople's profiles to encourage conversation from Bebo users.

Interestingly, interviews with the primary industry's organizational members suggested that they did not plan to intentionally deceive Bebo users, and that they genuinely believed these decisions would help encourage dialogue and engagement from the target audience. From a critical perspective, however, it is difficult to present these deceptive tactics in a positive light. Did the Bebo users realise that comments on the spokespeople's profiles were 'fake'? Did Bebo users realise that the person they were talking to was an organizational representative? How would Bebo users feel if they discovered that the comments were fake and that the person was not 'real'? Future research could explore the challenge of involving authentic spokespeople in a campaign run on a long-term medium, such as social networking sites. How can organizations overcome the tension associated with including authentic spokespeople for an unlimited period of time? Organizations intending to use social networking sites for this purpose, with 'real'

people, need to be aware of this tension and to develop a strategy to address it, before launching the campaign.

Practitioners and academics have credited social media technologies and applications with the ability to ‘remove gatekeepers’ and to allow everyone to participate in the conversation (Gillin, 2007a; Jenkins et al., 2006; Tapscott & Williams, 2007). However, the findings indicated that this was not the case, with both organizations playing a ‘big brother’ role during the recruitment campaigns on Bebo. The case study organizations both actively moderated the comments made by the target audience on Bebo, deleting any comments that the organizational members considered ‘inappropriate’. This practice allowed the organizations to ‘manage’ the voice of Bebo users, and ensure that comments remained positive and complimentary of the organization.

This practice created tensions with the essence of social media, by developing a new way for organizations to continue ‘gatekeeping’ information while appearing open to all viewpoints. This again raises questions of transparency, particularly if Bebo users were not aware that the moderation was happening. Was it ethical to encourage the target audience to interact with the campaign profiles, when the organization intended to delete any comments which fell outside of its range of ‘acceptable’ comments? How could Bebo users make informed decisions about attending the Wananga or working in the industry if only positive information was presented? Were users aware that any negative comments were being filtered out? These are very important questions for organizations that intend to use social networking sites for communication. Organizations need to spend considerable time thinking about the level of moderation, and how moderation will occur, to ensure that a fair representation of all viewpoints is presented. This will help facilitate a move away from finding agreement, towards interacting with target publics who hold opposing points of views about organizational practice, in public relations (Day et al., 2001; Stoker & Tusinski, 2006).

The findings also highlighted that the organizations struggled to balance their organizational and brand identities with the values and beliefs of the spokespeople, who were the faces of both campaigns. This imbalance was

considered a threat to organizational reputation. The organizations both made the strategic decision to select spokespeople who shared values and beliefs with the target audience, to help increase identification. However, the organizations also expected the spokespeople to embody the organization's values. To overcome this tension, both organizations controlled the spokespeople's behaviour on Bebo, by implementing implicit and explicit tactics of control. Through these tactics, the organizations ensured that the spokespeople's behaviours remained 'acceptable' throughout the campaign. The use of these controlling tactic raises questions about whether the campaigns were truly authentic, and whether the spokespeople's 'voices' emerged during the campaign or whether they were suppressed. The primary industry was most authentic, in this regard, because their spokespeople were attributed an expert power position, and the organizational members did little to control the spokespeople. In contrast, the tertiary institution used an employment contract and an editing process to control its spokespeople's behaviour. Future research could explore alternative approaches, to discover a way for organizations overcome the tension associated with using spokespeople in social media campaigns, who may not share the values and beliefs of the organization.

The case study organizations faced a number of practical challenges during the implementation of their campaigns. Most significantly, the tertiary institution struggled to change the standard Bebo interface for the campaign, and the primary industry struggled to be visible on Bebo without purchasing advertising. These two challenges highlight the powerful position held by the owners of social networking sites, such as AOL, over organizations who wish to use the site for promotional purposes. This suggests that organizations who plan to use social networking sites should conduct research first, to find out the costs and time involved in creating and running the campaign on the site. Further research is needed to see whether other organizations, which have used social networking sites for communication, have faced similar challenges. It would also be interesting to compare social networks, for example Facebook and Bebo, to explore whether the challenges are similar or different across the two sites.

Another practical challenge, faced by both organizations, was measuring the effectiveness of their campaigns on Bebo. Due to the emergent status of social media in public relations and organizational communication, little research has been conducted around developing a methodology for measuring the success of such campaigns. This is a significant gap in the literature and practice, with practitioners unable to justify their social media campaigns and to demonstrate the return on investment created by these tools. This is a limitation that needs to be addressed by organizations during the planning stages of their social media campaign design. Before creating a new approach to measurement, as identified by Ampofo (2009), it is important to first identify what constitutes 'success' and how this can be measured in a social media setting. For social networking sites, it was suggested that organizations count the number of comments received from users. However, this approach fails to measure those users who simply consume information, rather than participate, as outlined by Shao's (2009) research. This indicates the need for future research to examine and identify an appropriate method for measuring the success of communication campaigns in a social networking setting.

The one-sided nature of this study is a significant limitation, as it only explores the organization's intentions and uses of Bebo for communication. Originally, this research sought to include audience-based research, to explore how Bebo users felt about organizations using Bebo to communicate with them. However, as identified in the methodology, as the research progressed it became clear that this approach was an entire research project in its own right and it was not pursued. Future research needs to explore the impact of social networking site-based public relations and organizational communication campaigns on target publics, to help determine whether social networking sites are an appropriate medium for such campaigns.

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Appendix I – Information sheet for participants

A comparative case study: Social media use in organizational communication

Overview

This research aims to investigate the way two organizations have used the social networking site Bebo to create conversations between the organizations and their target audiences.

Who's responsible?

My name is Rachel Bowley. I am a Masters student from the University of Waikato, Management School. If you would like further information about this project, please contact me at rcb7@waikato.ac.nz or by calling 027 468 2323. You can also contact my supervisor Dr Alison Henderson by calling 838 4466 (extn 6111) or by emailing alison@mngt.waikato.ac.nz

What's the research study about?

I am investigating the way two organizations have used Bebo to create conversations with Bebo users. There are three stages to my research. First, I will interview organizational members about the strategy behind each organization's Bebo campaign. Second, I will interview the organizational spokespeople, who provided a 'face' for each organization on Bebo. Finally, I will survey Bebo users, to determine their perspectives on organizations using Bebo to create conversations with them.

What will you have to do and how long will it take?

You will be asked to take part in an interview that will last from half an hour to an hour. Your participation in this interview is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study any time up until the data collection is completed.

What will happen to the information collected?

The interviews will be recorded, transcribed and field notes taken. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data collected. After the research is concluded, all written and taped information will be destroyed. No participants will be named in research reports.

Declaration to participants

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study any time up until the data collection is completed.
- Ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation.
- Be given access to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

Appendix II – Consent form for participants

A comparative case study: Social media use in organizational communication

I have read the **Information Sheet for Participants** for the interview and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study any time up until the data collection is completed, or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the **Information Sheet**. I also agree to allow the researcher to tape record my responses during the interview, under the conditions set out in the **Information Sheet** form.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the **Information Sheet** form.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name and contact information:

Rachel Bowley
rcb7@waikato.ac.nz
027 468 2323

Supervisor's Name and contact information:

Dr Alison Henderson
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(07) 838 4466 (extn 6111)

Appendix III – Interview guide for organizational members

(i) Strategic planning and goal setting

Tell me about the [Campaign] campaign?

- Target audience
- Key messages
- Methods for reaching target audience (i.e. advertising/website/Bebo)

Why did [Organization] decide to use Bebo, as a component of this campaign, to reach your target audience?

- Key objectives/goals for Bebo use
- What did [Organization] intend to achieve?

Can you describe any challenges [Organization] faced during the Bebo campaign?

- Initial challenges?
- Challenges throughout?
- How did [Organization] overcome these challenges?

Can you describe the way Bebo has improved communication between [Organization] and the target audience?

- Has it *really* improved communication?
- Do you think communication hasn't been improved?
- *Perceived benefits vs. reality of campaign*

If you could change one aspect of the Bebo campaign, what would it be? Why?

(ii) Developing and maintaining a relationship with organizational spokespeople

Tell me about the role you had with the [Campaign] spokespeople (i.e. the [Industry] etc)

- Involvement in selection/retention of spokespeople

Can you explain how these spokespeople were chosen to participate in the [Campaign] campaign?

- Did they go through an induction process – introducing them to the mission and values of [Organization]?
- How did [Organization] ensure they would be suitable spokespeople?

Can you explain what [Organization] intended to achieve by using these spokespeople as representatives on Bebo?

- How did they help [Organization] achieve the goals and objectives for the [Campaign] campaign?

What were the challenges involved in maintaining a working relationship with these spokespeople?

- How did [Organization] overcome these challenges?
- What would [Organization] do differently next time?

What were the benefits of using the spokespeople to represent [Organization] on Bebo?

Describe how [Organization] moderated/monitored the interaction the spokespeople and Bebo users.

(iii) Creating dialogue with Bebo users

Tell me about your understanding of the relationship between [Organization] and users of Bebo?

How does [Organization] ensure that Bebo users *know* that the [Campaign] spokespeople are linked to an organization (i.e. that they are not just citizen Bebo users – their presence has a purpose)?

- Being transparent and honest

Can you explain how [Organization] ensured that Bebo users felt comfortable expressing their opinions/perspectives/questions with the [Campaign] spokespeople?

- Offering incentives to encourage interaction?

Are there any topics that [Organization], or perhaps yourself, consider inappropriate for Bebo users to discuss on the [Campaign] Bebo pages?

- Does [Organization] ensure that these topics are not mentioned/discussed? How?

Can you describe how [Organization] acknowledges the ‘voice’ of Bebo users who interact with the [Campaign]spokespeople?

- Views/perspectives considered during organizational decision making?
- Replying to every users who asks a questions/makes a comment?
- Recognising and respecting viewpoints which are *different* to their own?

What measures are in place to protect Bebo users from ridicule/harm on the [Campaign] bebo pages?

How will [Organization] further develop the relationship it has formed with Bebo users?

- Future conversations?
- Future interaction with the SAME Bebo users?

Appendix IV – Original interview guide for spokespeople

(i) Involvement in the campaign

Tell me about your involvement in the [Campaign] campaign?

- Describe how you were *selected* to be involved?
- What was your *role* in the campaign? What did you add to the Bebo campaign?

What do you think were the goals of the campaign?

- What did [Organization] hope to achieve?

How did [Organization] provide you with *support* while you were a [Spokesperson] for the [Campaign] campaign?

- If you needed technical support?
- Balancing work commitments with your involvement in the campaign?

What were the *benefits* of being involved in the [Campaign] campaign?

What *challenges* did you face during your involvement in the [Campaign] Bebo campaign?

- How did you overcome those challenges?
- How did [Organization] help you to overcome these challenges?

How *successful* do you think the [Campaign] was?

(ii) Creating dialogue with Bebo users

Tell me about how conversations were created with Bebo users?

Can you describe how [Organization] encouraged you to *participate* in conversations with Bebo users?

- What, if any, incentives were offered to you?

Describe how [Organization] *monitored* the interaction between yourself and the Bebo users?

- How did [Organization] keep *up-to-date/remained engaged* with any conversations you had with Bebo users about the [Industry] careers?

How did [Organization] ensure Bebo users knew your Bebo page was linked to an organization ([Organization])?

- Who did the Bebo users think they were talking to?

Do you believe that [Organization] is *genuinely committed* to creating conversation with Bebo users?

- Why/why not?

Appendix V – Final interview guide for spokespeople

(i) Involvement in the campaign

Tell me about your involvement in the [Organization name] campaign?

- Describe how you were *selected* to be involved?
- What did you personally *add* to the Bebo campaign/What was your *point of difference*?

Describe your *role* in the campaign; what did [Organization] expect you to do?

- Length of time spent on Bebo?

What do you think were the goals of the overall campaign?

- What did [Organization] hope to achieve by using Bebo?

How did [Organization] provide you with *support* while you were a [Spokesperson] for the [Campaign] campaign?

- If you needed technical support?
- Balancing work commitments with your involvement in the campaign?

What were the *benefits* of being involved in the [Campaign] campaign?

What *challenges* did you face during your involvement in the [Campaign] Bebo campaign?

- How did you overcome those challenges?
- How did [Organization] help you to overcome these challenges?

How *successful* do you think the overall campaign was?

- How successful do you think the Bebo component was?

What do you think [Organization] could have done differently to encourage *more* interaction with Bebo users?

(ii) Creating dialogue with Bebo users

Tell me about how conversations were created/encouraged with Bebo users?

Can you describe how [Organization] encouraged you to *participate* in conversations with Bebo users?

- What, if any, incentives were offered to you?

Describe *what* you talked to Bebo users about? Topics? Common questions?

- Are there any topics you, or [Organization], considered inappropriate to discuss on Bebo?
- How did you address negative/inappropriate topics on Bebo?
- How would you recognise a viewpoint that was different your own? i.e. If someone said “The [Organization] sucks!”

Describe how [Organization] *monitored* the interaction between yourself and the Bebo users?

- How did [Organization] keep *up-to-date/remained engaged* with any conversations you had with Bebo users about the [Organization]?

How did [Organization] ensure Bebo users knew your Bebo page was linked to an organization ([Organization])?

- Who did the Bebo users think they were talking to?

Do you believe that [Organization] is *genuinely committed* to creating conversation with Bebo users?

- Why/why not?