DIALOGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND ONLINE PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE: AN ANALYSIS OF TWO WEB-BASED PLATFORMS OF GHANA'S NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY

Manfred Kofi Antwi Asuman[1]
Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

Harriet Ama Bampoe[2]
Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.

ABSTRACT

TUsing Kent and Taylor's (1998) five principles of dialogic communication, this study examined the National Comunications Authority (NCA) of Ghana's use of website and Facebook to engage stakeholders. A content analysis of the website and Facebook page of the NCA was conducted for a period of six months. The study analysed indicators of the five dialogic principles which are; dialogic loop, usefulness of information, generation of returned visits, ease of interface, and conservation of visitors. The study found that the five dialogic principles were minimally manifested on both website and Facebook page of the NCA as both platforms only employed principles ease of use and useful information adequately. Comparatively, posts made on the Facebook page and the website of the NCA were similar to an extent and the principle of useful information scored the highest points on both platforms. Finally, the study revealed that the website of the NCA did not allow two-way

1 Manfred Kofi Antwi Asuman is a Doctor of Philosophy candidate in Journalism and Media Studies at the Nelson Mandela University in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism and a Master of Philosophy in Development Studies. His research interest includes Participatory Development, Development Communications, Health Promotions, Strategic & Organisational Communications and Gender & Social Change.
2 Harriet Ama Bampoe is a graduate student at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Information Studies from the University of Ghana. Her professional and research interests are Strategic Corporate Communications, Public Relattions and Communications for Development (C4D).

communication between the organisation and its publics. These findings may suggest that the NCA website did not foster direct feedback. The findings support existing literature and affirms what communication scholars such as Nam (2014) have reported.

Keywords: Dialogic Communications, Social Media, Public Engagement,

Relationship Building, Customer Satisfaction

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technology (ICT) plays an important role in how an organisation interacts with its stakeholders. The proliferation of new media means organisations are moving towards interactive communication between themselves and their publics. Now, more than ever organisations encourage their publics to offer feedback, thereby initiating two-way communication (Ingenhoff & Koelling, 2009; Jo & Kim, 2003). Avery et. al (2010), along with Kim et. al (2014) also assert that new media, especially organisational websites as well as other social media platforms, generally provide a direct, valuable and integrated two-way means of communication between organisations and their publics. Organisations normally use new media platforms which include websites, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to provide their publics with information about themselves and their services or products. According to Bortree and Seltzer (2009), organisations are taking advantage of the opportunities new media offer to communicate with their diverse publics. However, some firms are still practicing a unidirectional form of communication on social media, thereby not maximising the potential of social media to effectively engage their publics. Key information usually identified on the websites and other social media platforms of companies includes identity, history, mission, vision, goals, promotions, news publications, as well as new products.

2.0 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Previous studies assert that the dialogic strategy of inviting conversations, feedback, and building relationships is positively related to favourable organisational image and reputation (Yang, Kang & Johnson, 2010). Regulatory bodies such as the National Communcations Authourity, are

usually in the spotlight as they license, monitor, identify future needs for regulations, formulate and enforce policies, impose sanctions, as well as inform, advice and engage the public about industry conditions. It therefore suggests that regulatory agencies need to prioritise their communication and interaction with stakeholders in order to effectively execute their mate. The question therefore arises as to how regulatory bodies could communicate effectively and engage their publics in an increasingly 'new media' world. According to Avery et al. (2010) and Kim et al. (2014), institutions can provide a direct, valuable, cohesive, and economical two-way means of communication with their publics by using websites and social media.

Previous studies have focused on single internet platforms; either websites or one social media platform, thereby not reflecting the modern organisational practice of using both websites and social media (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; McAllister, 2012, Hinson et al., 2013; Korkuvi, 2015; Ibrahim et al., 2015). It is therefore useful to undertake a study of the communication behaviour of an organisation's multiple internet platforms particularly within the relatively unexplored field of regulators (Kim et al., 2014).

Using the NCA as a case study, this study sought to find out how effectively regulatory bodies are employing the interactive features of new media platforms in performing their duties and communicating with stakeholders. This study is concerned with the communication and interaction with stakeholders by Ghana's NCA on multiple internet platforms, in other words; the study focuses on how the NCA relates with its stakeholders through its website and social media platforms.

3.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is to investigate the communication behaviour of the NCA's official website and facebook page using Kent and Taylor's (1998) principles of dialogic communication as a guide.

4.0 THEORY AND LITERATURE

The Dialogic Communications Theory and The Internet as a Relationship Building Tool

The theory of dialogic communications was propounded by Kent and Taylor (1998; 2002). Kent and Taylor (1998) emphasised that "For a dialogic relationship to exist, parties must view communicating with each other as the goal of a relationship" (p. 324). In this theory, Kent and Taylor (1998) posit that dialogic communication is a product which results from relationship-building through the internet. They define dialogic communication as "any negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions" (Kent & Taylor, 1998. p. 325). Therefore, when an organisation and its publics exchange ideas and discuss their needs, they engage in dialogic communication. The dialogic theory advocates that organisations and institutions ought to interact with their publics to be able to maintain an effective relationship (Porter and Sallot 2003).

According to Kent and Taylor (1998), dialogic communication, particularly when it happens on the internet, is guided by five principles, namely, "dialogic loop, usefulness of information, generation of returned visits, ease of Interface, and conservation of visitors" (Kent & Taylor, 1998, p. 323).

Kent and Taylor's (1998) dialogic communication theory is the best theory for this study because it gves room for the researchers to adequately explore the research problem, review adequate literature and make critical assumptions, all of which help to satisfactorily analyse data and meet the research objective. The use of the dialogic communication theory set a model and framework for the observation and understing of the research problem. The study employed the five principles of dialogic communication proposed by Kent and Taylor (1998) to assess the website and facebook page of the National Communications Authority. The indicators attained from these five principles served as pointers to the type of features available on these online platforms.

Though the purpose of the study was to examine the NCAs online communication through the prism of Kent and Taylor's dialogic principles, it did not employ the original five principles; rather, the study relied on the modifications made by Bortree and Seltzer (2009), and Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) to Kent and Taylor's (1998) five principles of dialogic communication.

These modifications were intended to make the dialogic principles more applicable to social networking apps such as Facebook. In their modifications, the authors omitted "ease of interface" from the dialogic principles as that principle seems to be inherently present on every social networking site. In this study, the modifications served as a guide in assessing the dialogic nature of only the NCA's Facebook page.

The internet provides the platform for swift and advanced interactions between organisations and their publics. The scope of the internet continues to evolve as a result of advancement in technology and has become a viable tool for public relation practitioners. The internet is a suitable channel for public relations because it has the ability to reach a mass audience irrespective of their geographical location (Hill and White, 2000). The internet as a new form of media offers numerous advantages making it superior and much more preferred to traditional media such as radio, television, and newspapers. One advantage of the internet over these traditional media forms is that it is not easily regulated by a gatekeeper thereby presenting a wide range of usage without limitations (Esrock & Leichty, 1998). This unique nature of the internet eliminates any form of interferences in communication. The two parties have the opportunity to communicate directly through their websites, Facebook, or Twitter accounts without any third-party.

Besides, the internet is the most economically viable medium of engagement between organisations and their publics. Specifically, the internet has impacted the cost of marketing and advertising by helping organisations reduce expensesandreach a multitude of people across different platforms at the same time. The internet has also consistently increased opportunities for public relations practitioners to attract, persuade, and motivate their targeted audience (Heath, 1998). In addition, "The internet has become a major venue for emerging issues because it is a communication vehicle used by persons who are issues oriented" (Heath, 1998. p. 274). Public relations practitioners now include the internet and its related platforms in their communication strategies because it is cost-effective and time-efficient in the long run (Sundar, 2000, p. 480).

In recent times, organisations such as higher education institutions, financial institutions, and government agencies have made conscious efforts to adopt Kent and Taylor's (1998; 2002) dialogic principles in designing their websites to build good relationships with their publics. Sundar (2000),

proposed that organisation-stakeholder relationships can be enhanced with the successful incorporation of the five dialogic principles proposed by Kent and Taylor (1998) in organisations' online platforms. However, studies indicate that the disposition to using the five principles vary. Kokuvi (2015), for example, found that most institutions are underutilizing the dialogic principles. On the other hand, Thelen (2018) found useful information to be the most employed principle, as posts including information stakeholders find interesting, caused an increase in engagement levels. Ibrahim, Adam, and De Heer (2013) likewise, found that universities tend to provide relevant information on their websites, such as their logos, entry requirements, and other audience-specific information that are useful to stakeholders.

Taylor et al. (2001) suggest that even when an organisation's website adopts all the dialogic principles, "it cannot be fully dialogic if it does not offer and follow through on two-way communication" (p. 271). Hence, there is a need to provide an avenue for response to queries and customer feedback in order for a website to be considered as fully dialogic. Hinson, van Zyl and Agbleze (2014) indicated that many insurance companies failed to incorporate most of the five dialogic principles in their websites. Low points were scored for usefulness of information and the return visits principle as none of these companies' websites categorically invited visitors to return to the sites again. Toledano (2017) examined the level of dialogic communication by some companies and their publics on the internet. The study showed that the dialogic level of the use of social media was higher in majority of the companies which openly respond to the comments and queries of their customers and stakeholders.

The adoption of the five dialogic principles have created an avenue for interactivity between organisations and their stakeholders, thereby facilitating the formation of long-sting mutually beneficial relationships. The incorporation of the dialogic loop in an organisation's online platforms, for example, facilitates stakeholder-relationship building through interactivity (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Various studies have revealed useful information and conversion of visitors to be the most adopted principles whereas generation of returned visits and dialogic loop are the least utilised principles on online platforms owned by organisations (Thelen, 2018; Kokuvi, 2015; Toledano, 2017; Ibrahim, Adam & De Heer, 2013; Madichie & Hinson, 2014).

5.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted content analysis as its data collection and analytical tool. Krippendorff (2004) defined content analysis as "research technique for making replicaple and valid inferences frrom text (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use" (p. 18). A quantitative content analysis method was used to analyse the NCA website and facebook page using the five dialogic principles of Kent and Taylor (1998). The choice of content analysis was informed by its practicality in the examination of mass media content (Saxton, and Waters, 2014).

The study was conducted for a period of six months. The researchers specifically monitored the NCA website and facebook page from 5th April to 5th September 2019. Due to financial contraints, the researchers found this period to be enough time to study. During the six-month period, the researchers examined how the indicators of the five dialogic principles manifested in the communication that took place on the NCA online platforms. Activities of the online platforms of the National Communications Authority were carefully tallied to reflect the quality of dialogic properties.

The population for this study was all online platforms of the National Communications Authority, namely; official website, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn. The official website and facebook page of the NCA are the most active among the online platforms of the organisation with the greatest number of posts and interactions. Both online platforms were found to be official and their authenticity was confirmed. The website and facebook page of the NCA were easily accessible with over 9000 followers and active users.

The instrument for data collection was coding guide which was developed based on the objective of the study and previous literature. A coding guide was used to code the theme of the dialogic potential of the NCA website and facebook page resulting from prescribed indicators. The coding guide was also developed with the consideration of key indicators that demonstrate the level of dialogic relationship between an organisation and its publics according to McAllister-Spooner (2009). Thirty-three indicators were generated from the five dialogic principles to serve as pointers to dialogic features on the organisation's website, while twenty-eight indicators were generated for evaluating the dialogic potential of the NCA's Facebook page. These indicators were adapted from McAllister-Spooner (2009) and designed to fit the current study

CONTENT CATEGORIES

The content categories used for analysis are made up of the five dialogic principles proposed by Kent and Taylor (1998). The five dialogic principles are: dialogic loop, usefulness of information, generation of returned visits, ease of interface and conservation of visitors. Using the coding sheet designed for the study, the website and facebook page of the NCA were examined within the study period for:

- **Dialogic Loop.** The purpose of this principle is to find out whether the NCA online platforms allow queries from publics, and also find out if the organisation responds to questions from the public and give feedback to concerns. The dialogic loop has a number of indicators, namely:
    - º Existence of opportunities for visitors to the website to send emails and requests
    - º Links to contacting staff directly
    - º Opportunity for e-mail response
    - º Presence of online survey forms for expressing opinions on issues
    - º Online feedback options
    - º Opportunities to contribute on issues
    - º Links for contacting governing body directly
    - º Speed of response to emails

- **Usefulness of Information.** This princple focuses on whether the NCA online platforms generally post valuable information to all its publics. Indicators under this principles are:
    - º The availability of the NCA's vision, mission statement, philosophy and history on the website
    - º Employment opportunities
    - º Annual reports
    - º Logo display
    - º Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) section
    - º Calendar of events
    - º Downloadable media files
    - º Public involvement

- The availability of press releases in a chronological manner
- Use of photos and videos
- Provide contact information and location of the NCA

- **Generation of Return Visits**. Online platforms should include features such as updated information, changing issues, and special forums, that visitors find attractive enough to encourage them revisit the platforms. The indicators for this principle are:
  - The availability of news items posted within last 30 days
  - Links to related websites
  - Statement of return (Explicit statements asking visitors to return)
  - The availability of discussion forums/sessions on the website.
  - Opportunity to sign up for newsletters

- **Ease of Using the Website:** This category refers to whether the website makes it convenient for visitors and patrons to underst its content and manoeuvre the site easily. It will also look out for whether the website is well organized. Indicators under this principle are:
  - The availability of site maps/major links on the home page to the rest of the website.
  - The ease of identifying major links to other sites on the NCA's home page.
  - Menu links on home page
  - Low reliance on graphics
  - The incorporation of search engines on the home page.

- **Conservation of Visitors:** This principle refers to whether the website and facebook contain essential links with clearly marked paths for visitors to return to the sites in the future. Indicators under this principle are:
  - Important information available on the home (first) page.
  - Outside links (other Platforms of the NCA)
  - Loading time (>4 secs)
  - Evidence of a clear posting of the last update date and time.

6.0 FINDINGS AND RESULTS

6.1 Ease of Use

Based on the dialogic principle ease of interface, the study examined the facility with which visitors navigated the NCA website. As clear from Kent and Taylor (1998; 2002), ease of interface is a precondition for website dialogue. The interface must give room for convenience in accessing information. Some features of websites that facilitate ease of interface include having site maps clearly identifiable on the homepage, ensuring that major links to the rest of the site are clearly identified on the home page, incorporating a search engine box on home pages and creating image maps that are self-explanatory (Taylor, Kent & White, 2001).

Table 6. 1: "Ease of Interface" rating of NCA website

INDICATORS/ITEMS: ASSESSMENT			
	0	1	2
The availability of site maps/major links on the home page to the rest of the website.		✓	
The ease of identifying major links to other sites on the NCA's home page.			✓
Menu links on home page			✓
Low reliance on graphics			✓
The incorporation of search engines on the home page.			✓
Total % (N=5)		20.0%	80.0%

Source: Author's field data, 2019

Content analysis of the NCA's website as clear from Table 6.1 indicated that the platform followed the principle of ease of use. In other words, the homepage of the NCA's website had major links to the rest of the website. At the time of study, the website was found to have over one hundred and twenty (120) pages of major links on the homepage leading to the rest of the website although there was no image map. As Kokuvi (2015, p.43) argues, "A sitemap is essential on a website because it makes it easy for visitors to know the exact location, or where they can find specific information." Thelwall (2009, p. 23) defined a site map as a "visually or textually organized template of a website's content that allows the users to surf through the site to find the information they are looking for." Thus, the absence of sitemap on the NCA website could definitely affect visitor navigation.

Additionally, the NCA website had major links that made it easy for users to navigate pages. These major links could be found on the home page of the site. There were also sections signifying what information was available on each of the menu tabs which were clearly marked on the home page. The website has a search window which make it easy to navigate to other parts of the 120-page website. The fifth item (see Table 6.1), incorporation of search engines on the home page, was found to be available as it made it easy move across the other webpages of the site. The fourth item (see Table 6.1), which is low reliance on graphics, scored high on availability as the NCA site has many graphics mainly on the homepage where there was a slide show of photos that spoke to the kind of services provided by the organisation. There was less graphic displayed on the website, although the texts coded gave useful information.

6.2 Usefulness of Information

Usefulness refers to the importance of the website to visitors. The National Communications Authority's work as a regulatory body involves various duties. To effectively perform its duty and be accountable to its publics, the NCA must cooperate with them. It must also be transparent in its communicative engagement with its stakeholders and publics. Accordingly, it is important to have a platform where publics can reach the NCA without having to go through the excessive bureaucracy that encumbers public sector agencies. The website of the NCA, a regulatory body, offers a good platform for the delivery and acquisition of useful information.

Table 6. 2: "Useful Information" rating of NCA website

INDICATORS/ITEMS: ASSESSMENT			
	0	1	2
The availability of the NCA's vision, mission statement, philosophy history on the website			✓
Employment opportunities		✓	
Annual reports			✓
Logo display			✓
Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) section			✓
Calendar of events		✓	
Downloadable media files			✓
Public involvement			✓
The availability of press releases in a chronological manner			✓
Use of photos and videos			✓
Provide contact information and location of the NCA			
Total % (N=11)		18.18%	81.81%

Source: Author's field data, 2019

A dialogic potential assessment of usefulness of information was done with 11 indicators. As Table 6.2 shows, all items were available for the website of the NCA. The website provided useful information on the NCA and its obligations to publics. Yet, two items, although present were low, that is, employment opportunities and calendar of events (see Table 6.2 above). When the employment opportunities menu was clicked on, the interface provided was empty, with the text "content coming soon." The calendar of

events, while present, did not have any information on upcoming events. There was an option also for past events, but that option had information on an event from 2016 titled "Symposium 2016." The other nine indicators recorded high availability (see Table 6.2 above). For instance, the site provided contact information of the NCA, including e-mail address 'info@nca.org.gh' and phone numbers '+233(0)30276621/771701' as well as contacts for the various regional offices.

The website also provided press releases in chronological manner. The current press release at the time of study was dated 2nd September, 2019 – "Participants of Girls-In-ICT 2019 visit NCA", followed by another publication dated 30th August, 2019, in that manner. The indicator, level of public involvement by the NCA on their website, was visible as the organisation created the opportunity for the public to get involved through audience specific links and portals. These features provided audience the avenue to make complaints and request for information from the organisation through their website. The NCA website also allowed publics to download media file. There was also available on the site a frequently asked question (FAQ) section that covered subjects such as consumer complaint, and quality of service. In the case where the questions answered were unexhausted, provision was made for the user to seek additional information through various contacts provided in each section. The logo of the National Communication Authority was displayed on the top left corner of the homepage of the site alongside the national flag with its bright colours as well as two swords. The NCA site also had available a menu that provided the organisation's mission statement, vision and history.

Table 6. 3: "Useful Information" rating of NCA Facebook page

INDICATORS/ITEMS: ASSESSMENT

	0	1	2
The availability of the NCA's vision, mission statement, philosophy history on the website			✓
Employment opportunities	✓		
Annual reports	✓		
Logo display			✓
Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) section	✓		
Calendar of events		✓	
Downloadable media files	✓		
Public involvement			✓
The availability of press releases in a chronological manner			✓
Use of photos videos			✓
Provide contact information location of the NCA			✓
Total % (N=11)	36.36%	9.09%	54.54%

Source: Author's field data, 2019

The Facebook page of the NCA also displayed the dialogic potential of usefulness of information. Similar to the website, the Facebook page had six of the 11 items in the principle of useful information available. The Facebook page had no links for employment opportunities, Frequently Asked Questions, annual reports and downloadable media files available (see Table 6.3 above). The remaining six items were found to be highly available and similar in presentation to the website. However, the Facebook page

contained more videos and photographs than the website. The contact information, logo display and press releases in a chronological manner were all present on the Facebook page just as they were on the website. The Facebook page showed the vision, mission statement and history of the NCA as well. Calendar of events although present, only had more information about past events than upcoming ones. Information coded showed that NCA encouraged public involvement. The NCA created opportunity for the public to get involved through audience specific links and portals and also provided avenues for the public to lodge complaints.

6.3 Conservation of Visitors

According to previous studies, organisations must try and keep visitors on their own website rather than give them a reason to patronize other competitive sites (Esrock & Leichty, 2000). This principle, according to Kent and Taylor (1998, 2002), refers to how organisations are able to "bond" with their site visitors, encouraging them to spend time on their sites without switching to other sites. Conservation of visitors seeks to find out whether or not websites have the tendency to keep visitors browsing the site for long. This section focused primarily on the presence of important information on the home page, the loading time of the site, presence of external links and a clear evidence of the date and time of the last update.

Table 6. 4: "Conservation of Visitors" rating of NCA website

INDICATORS/ITEMS: ASSESSMENT	0	1	2
Important information available on the home (first) page.		✓	
Outside links (other Platforms of the NCA)		✓	
Loading time (>4 secs)	✓		
Evidence of a clear posting of the last update date and time.	✓		
Total % (N=4)	50.0%	50.0%	

Source: Author's field data, 2019

As Table 6.4 shows, the indicator, "important information available on the home (first) page of the website", was assessed by checking the extent to which all thirty-three (Thirty-three) indicators of the five principles could be found, directly or indirectly (through links) on the homepage. Over 60% of the indicators were found on the homepage. Outside links were also available on the homepage of the site. These links included Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube hles all of which took the user to the other social networking sites of the NCA. That way visitors did not necessarily get distracted from the NCA website but were redirected to other sites with important information concerning the NCA. According to Kent and Taylor (1998), websites should take an average of four (4) seconds to load. However, loading time is mostly dependent on the Internet Service Providers (ISP)/mobile networks as well as the user's browsing device. At the time of study, the average time for the website content to load upon entering the URL for the website was six (6) seconds. Further assessment of the NCA website showed that, press releases and news stories had clear dates of publication, although the exact time these publications were posted or uploaded was not available. Other publications available had no time or date of publication.

Table 6. 5: "Conservation of Visitors" rating of NCA Facebook page

INDICATORS/ITEMS: ASSESSMENT			
	0	1	2
Important information available on the home (first) page.		✓	
Outside links (other Platforms of the NCA)		✓	
Loading time(>4 secs)	✓		
Evidence of a clear posting of the last update date and time.		✓	
Total % (N=4)	25%	75%	

Source: Author's field data, 2019

With reference to the Facebook page of the NCA, most of the indicators were found on the first page which allowed visitors to access all relevant important information. There were links connecting to other sites such as YouTube, LinkedIn, Twitter and the official website of the organisation. The same principle was applied here when it came to the loading time. The same ISPs were used and the average loading time realized was six (6) seconds. The item "evidence of a clear posting of the last update date and time" on Facebook was highly available as the page allowed for record of time as well as date (see Table 6.5 above).

6.4 Generation of Return Visits

The principle of generation of returned visits, focuses on a website's ability to get visitors to return to the site. According to Madichie and Hinson (2013. p. 345),"The principle establishes the conditions upon which relationship-building can take place. That is, relationships are not established in one-contact communication interactions." The online platform must encouage the visitor to return to the platform as many times as possible. Relationship-building involves time, trust, and a variety of other relational maintenance strategies that can only occur over repeated interactions (Taylor, Kent & White, 2001). The website must indirectly or/ indirectly encourage return to the site another time in order to create a relationship.

Table 6. 6: "Generation of Return Visits" rating of NCA website

INDICATORS/ITEMS: ASSESSMENT			
	0	1	2
The availability of news items posted within last 30 days		✓	
Links to related websites	✓		
Statement of return (Explicit statements asking visitors to return)	✓		
The availability of discussion forums/sessions on the website.	✓		
Opportunity to sign up for news letters			✓
Total % (N=5)	60%	20%	20%

Source: Author's field data, 2019

Five (5) indicators were used to assess this principle, as indicated in Table 6.6. The researcher found that the last news items posted within the last 30 days at the time of data gathering were just three (3); specifically, they were posted on 4th September, 2nd September and 30th August, 2019. Before these three posts, a post had been made on 28th June, but, for the whole of July, there was no news publication. The four stories available had supporting images with their respective dates of publications, as well as option to download. There were no links to other websites on the NCA website. Kent and Taylor (1998, p. 330-331) mention that organisations while providing relevant content (information) should be sure not to redirect visitors to other websites, because visitors may not return and they may be lost. The NCA website observes this principle of Kent and Taylor in order to ensure, it seemed, that visitors stayed longer on their site. There were no statements of return which explicitly asking visitors to return nor were there discussion forums/sessions available on the NCA website. Finally for this principle, the website offered the opportunity for visitors to sign up for newsletters.

Table 6. 7: "Generation of Return Visits" rating of NCA Facebook

INDICATORS/ITEMS: ASSESSMENT			
	0	1	2
The availability of news items posted within last 30 days		✓	
Links to related websites	✓		
Statement of return (Explicit statements asking visitors to return)	✓		
The availability of discussion forums/sessions on the Facebook page.		✓	
Opportunity to sign up for news letters	✓		
Total % (N=5)	60%	40%	

Source: Author's field data, 2019

Three items of this principle were unavailable for the Facebook page of the NCA: opportunity to sign up for newsletters, links to related website, and statement of return (see Table 6.7 above). The availability of news items posted within last 30 days was highly available as four articles were posted at the time of gathering data. Items were posted between 4th September and 14th August. But before those days, the last posted item was 18th July. The NCA Facebook allowed for discussion forums/sessions on the page as the public got involved in discussions concerning certain posts that were made by the NCA.

6.5 Interactivity

Taylor, Kent and White (2001) posited that, the dialogic loop is the most significant feature of a dialogic website as it promotes interactivity. According to Madichie and Hinson (2013), organisational websites must be concerned with making their stakeholders feel involved by creating room for feedback. According to the authors:

Dialogic loop refers to the two-way asymmetric nature of the website, which suggests that a good website does not only send information to the public but also gives them the opportunity to voice their comments, opinions and feedback on pertinent issues. (Madichie & Hinson, 2013. p. 343)

Table 6. 8: "Dialogic Loop" rating of NCA Website

INDICATORS/ITEMS : ASSESSMENT			
	0	1	2
Existence of opportunities for visitors to the website to send emails and requests			✓
Links to contacting staff directly	✓		
Opportunity for e-mail response			✓
Presence of online survey forms for expressing opinions on issues	✓		
Online feedback options	✓		
Opportunities to contribute on issues	✓		
Links for contacting governing body directly	✓		
Speed of response to emails		✓	
Total % (N=8)	62.5%	12.5%	25%

Source: Author's field data, 2019

Eight (8) indicators were used to assess interactivity on the NCA website and these indicators were adapted from Kent and Taylor's (1998) measures of interactivity. The NCA website provides at the bottom of the homepage various contacts to reach the organisation. As shown in Table 6.8, provision was made for visitors of the site to send emails as evidenced in the availability of two different email addresses: info@nca.org.gh, which is for general enquiries, and complaints@nca.org.gh, specifically for complaints. Emails were sent to both email addresses to measure the speed of response to emails. A complaint was sent to complaints@nca.org.gh on September 12,

2019 at 3:26 pm, for which a response was received same day at 5:29 pm, which is almost two (2) hours later. Another email was sent to info@nca.org. gh on September 12, 2019 at 3:25 pm, to request for general information, and a response was received on September 16, 2019 at 1:25 pm. In this case urgency is seemingly given to complaints than general requests. The remaining five indicators for interactivity were unavailable on the NCA website. These indicators were links to contacting staff directly, online feedback options, opportunity to contribute on issues, links for contacting governing body directly and presence of online survey forms for expressing opinions on issues.

Table 6. 9: "Dialogic Loop" rating of NCA Facebook

INDICATORS/ITEMS: ASSESSMENT			
	0	1	2
Existence of opportunities for visitors to Facebook to send emails requests			✓
Links to contacting staff directly	✓		
Opportunity for e-mail response			✓
Presence of online survey forms for expressing opinions on issues	✓		
Online feedback options			✓
Opportunities to contribute on issues			✓
Links for contacting governing body directly	✓		
Speed of response to emails		✓	
Total % (N=8)	37.5	12.5%	50%

Source: Author's field data, 2019

The Facebook page scored better with the principle of interactivity because four out of the eight indicators were highly available with only one indicator being available in low capacity (see Table 6.9 above). The NCA had displayed

the email address of the organisation on a poster of which was used as the profile photo of the account. Visitors had the option to seek information through emails, for which a response was guaranteed. The speed of response to email for Facebook was measured as low because priority is given to emails with complaints than one seeking for general information, just like that of the website. Facebook allowed visitors contribute to issues, news items and publications that have been posted as well as having discussions with other people on matters of common interest. Features such as "Like", "Comment" and "Share", made it easy for visitors to make contributions on Facebook. Online feedback options were also available as the NCA responds to comments from the public. However, no links to contacting staff and governing body directly were available. In the case of the Facebook page, no staff hles were displayed for visitors to contact them directly. There were no online survey forms for visitors to express opinions on issues, although the comment section served that purpose.

7.0 Discussion of Findings

The study set out to analyse how the NCA's website and facebook page reflect the five dialolgic principles as proposed by Kent and Taylor (1998; 2002). The findings of the study generally reveal that the National Communications Authority's website and facebook page underutilize the principles of dialogic communication. The principles of, ease of interface and usefulness of information were the highest scoring principles on both the website and facebook page of the NCA. The finding is consistent with studies done by Linvill, Hicks and McGee (2010), Muckensturm (2013), Kokuvi (2015), Ibrahim, Adam, and De Heer (2013), and Thelen (2018), who found out that most organisations were underutilizing the dialogic principles. They found that the principle of usefulness of information was the most employed principle as most organisations often provided relevant information on their inernet ad social media platforms.

The websie of the NCA incorporates the principle of ease of interface well. The Facebook page was not assessed on the principle of ease of interface because the principle, is inherently present on most social media platforms. As consistent with similar studies, (Bortree and Seltzer, 2009; Rybalko and Seltzer, 2010), many social media platforms such as Facebook are designed with ease of interface and consistency in mind. The user can change effects like profile pictures, cover photos and edit information on the homepage.

Although the NCA's website and Facebook page did not fair well in incorporating the rest of the principles, the principles of generation of returned visits and dialogic loop were the least employed on the organisation's online platforms. This finding is consistent with that of Thelen, 2018; Kokuvi, 2015 and Toledano, 2017. Their research show that organisations fail to get visitors to return to their internet platforms and interact properly with their stakeholders on these platforms. It can be concluded that the NCA does not take advantage of the interactivity features on its internet platforms especially Facebook, to interact and build relationships with the public.

8.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Findings from the study suggest that the NCA website and Facebook page despite providing useful information for its stakeholders, are still underutilizing the interactive features that enable stronger relationships with an organisation's publics. According to Kent, Taylor and White (2001), interactivity is the most important feature of dialogic website or social media, therefore, the NCA has to increase the level of interactivity on its internet platforms to promote a better relationship with it's public.

From the study, it is evident that the National Communications Authority is still trying to maximise the dialogic potential of its website, it currently serves a basic information-sharing function.

The data suggests that besides Facbook, the NCA doesn't have any other active social media pages.

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations can be made. First, The NCA must ensure that information posted on its website and facebook page complements each other in order to keep visitors of each internet platforms equally updated.

Secondly, in order to improve the dialogic potential of the website, the NCA can add a real time "in built" chat function. This will enable visitors to post queries on the website and receive response in realtime, this further improve the relationship building capacity of the website (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010).

Lastly, the NCA must provide links to all of its's social media pages on its website. This will allow it to serve a wide range of publics, across different demographics because the practice of online public relations must be tailored to the choice and comfort of the customers (Shim, 2002).

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