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New Media and Challenges of Information Control: A Study among Commercial Banks' Information Managers in Nigeria

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Introduction

Founded on digital technology, new media forms – especially social media – empower users to easily broadcast or narrowcast at low cost. Everyone with internet access can distribute information with no gatekeeper involved which makes corporations lose a degree of control over their communication channels (Conway, 2007).

As a media officer in a new generation bank in Nigeria, one of the researchers had a firsthand experience of grappling with a seemingly innocuous social media prank by an employee. The prank went viral and caused huge embarrassment and heavy financial cost in remedial action to her organization. Avoidance of such a situation seems to call for some control (gatekeeping) of organizational information flow in the social media space. On the flip side however, expressions of control which involve centralization and domination by the controlling entity are in direct conflict with the practices of social media (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012). Inherent in social media is the philosophy of openness in terms of access, participation and range of content. Diminished traditional gatekeeping makes social media more participatory (Bala, 2014). The usefulness of such openness for engagement and the aforementioned perceived need for control creates a dialectical tension in the social media space (Elsey, 2007; Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012; Humphreys & Wilken, 2015).

Despite the new media empowerment and risk dilemma, the academic literature is surprisingly silent about the challenges facing sensitive industries like banks in the control or gatekeeping of information in the new media age. We therefore carried out a study among information managers in selected commercial banks in Nigeria to find out their attitude towards the empowerment and risk dilemma posed by new media and how the latter affects their work as organization's constituted information controllers or gatekeepers.

Research objectives:

1. To investigate the perception and attitude of bank information managers towards the new media empowerment and risk dilemma.
2. To compare the perception of bank stakeholders' care for communication ethics in the new media space.
3. To study the risk mitigation measures put in place by banks.

In this work, we propose a view of organizational stakeholders as co-gatekeepers of organization information in the new media space in as much as they are all empowered by the new technologies. In this way, we set the stage for further research that could lead to more insights into how effective communication on

social media platforms can be achieved while minimizing   reputation risks due to inadequate control.

Even though our interest is centered around gatekeeping in external communication as typified by the work of information control managers in organizations we make references to news media related studies that we consider to be milestones in the development of gatekeeping theory.

Literature Review

For control purposes, information filtration or gatekeeping has long been associated with media practice. The first use of gatekeeping as a concept in communication may be traced back to Kurt Lewin (1947) who used the term gatekeeper to refer to those that make decisions about what information to let in through the communication channel gate and what to keep out. Early follow up studies (e.g. White, 1950; Gieber, 1956; McNelly, 1959; Bass, 1969) consolidated gatekeeping as a theory applicable to news media practices. However, over the years, various rationales of gatekeeping have been studied and implicated in fields like management, law, political science, public affairs, etc (Barzilai-Nahon, 2009). Although many scholars have used news media organizations in the development of gatekeeping theory, the concept applies to any organization that transmits information to many people be they mainstream media or not (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). Besides external communication, gatekeeping in organizations has also been studied in the context of internal communication flow (e.g. Yeung, 2004; Holmes, 2007; Baraldi, 2013).

The understanding of gatekeeping in communication channel has evolved over and above an initial single gatekeeper model. Alluding to differences in the gatekeeping roles played by reporters and editors, McNelly (1959) suggested the presence of multiple gatekeepers within an organization. Referring to differences between news gatherers and new processors, Bass (1969) further suggested the need to distinguish between gatekeeping roles, with each role given its due focus. For example, he concluded that more focus should be placed on news gatherers (reporters and line editors) than news processors (editors and translators).

Bass (1969) and other earlier scholars seem to have focused on gatekeeping as a decision by gatekeepers. Brown (1979) later drew attention to the need to revisit Lewin's original theory by paying attention to the factors that influence the gatekeepers. For Lewin (1947), influence seemed so relevant that "changing the social process means influencing or replacing the gatekeeper" (p. 145). In line with Lewin's outlook, Shoemaker and her colleagues later extended gatekeeping beyond micro-level decisions to the whole construction of social reality (Deluliis, 2015).

They recognized not only the presence of individual gatekeepers within the organization but also the internal processes and external forces that influence individual gatekeepers. They further defined gatekeeping as the "overall process through which social reality transmitted by the news media is constructed, and is not just a series of in and out decisions" (Shoemaker & Vos, 2001, p. 233).

Expansion to include study of external influence notwithstanding, audience or user empowerment in the new media age makes a case for the need to question the validity of traditional gatekeeping process that focuses mainly on organizational or news media professionals as actors. In the online space, the increased expectation of greater user engagement and control over content blurs traditional boundaries and roles of content producers and content consumers as well as threaten to undermine the gatekeeping function (Lewis, Kaufhold, & Lasorsa, 2010, p. 163).

Gains and Pains of User Empowerment Online

The different forms of online interactive media which have become conventionally referred to as social media enable users to easily contribute or share information in the digital space. From a content discoverability perspective, we broadly divide such social media forms into two groups: (1) Social media with public content exposed to Web search engines online. (2) Social media with content kept in the user's device and not published on publicly accessible servers e.g. Whatsapp on mobile devices. Although the latter group supports narrowcasting or group broadcast, the publicly discoverable nature of the former make them particularly important for reputation risk considerations and therefore of primary interest to us in this work. Among these are social network services like Facebook and Linkedin, microblogs like Twitter and blogs hosted as subdomains of wordpress.com, blogspot.com, etc. To put social media adequately in perspective, we have presented more examples and definitions of social media sites in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptions and Examples of Social Media Sites

Social Media Sites	Brief Description	Examples
Blogs	"A blog is simply a personal webpage in a journal format, using software that automatically puts new entries ('posts') at the top of the page, and shifts old entries to archives after a specified time, or when the number of posts becomes too large for convenient scrolling." (Quiggin, 2006, p. 482).	Subdomains of Blogspot (blogspot.com) and Wordpress (wordpress.com)
Microblogging	"Broadcast in nature and similar to text messaging, microblogging lets users share brief blasts of information (usually in less than 200 characters) to friends and followers from multiple sources including web sites, third-party applications, or mobile devices." (DeVoe, 2009, p. 212).	Twitter (www.twitter.com)
Wikis	"A wiki enables documents to be written collectively (co-authoring) in a simple markup language using a web browser. A wiki is a collection of pages, which are usually highly interconnected via hyperlinks; in effect, a very simple relational database. The name was based on the Hawaiian term wiki wiki, meaning 'quick' or 'informal" (Quiggin, 2006, p. 484).	Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.com)
Social bookmarking sites	Oh (2008, p. 1) presented a dual nature of social bookmarking, "1) as a personal bookmark management tool, where individual users collect and organize information resources for their own interests, and 2) as social software, where individual activities are accumulated for the benefit of the community as a whole.".	Delicious (delicious.com)
Social news sites	"Social news websites such as Digg.com and Newsvine offer users the chance to submit, rate, recommend and comment on news stories." (Goode, 2009, p. 1287).	Digg (digg.com)
Content communities	"The main objective of content communities is the sharing of media content between users." (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 63).	YouTube (youtube.com); Flickr (flickr.com)
Social networking sites	"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" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211)	Facebook (facebook.com); Linkedin (linkedin.com); Twitter (twitter.com)

Social Media Sites	Brief Description		Examples
Virtual worlds (two forms include virtual games world and virtual social world)	"Virtual worlds are platforms that replicate a three-dimensional environment in which users can appear in the form of personalized avatars and interact with each other as they would in real life." (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 64)	Virtual game worlds "require their users to behave according to strict rules in the context of a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG)" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010 p. 64)	World of Warcraft (http://eu.battle.net/wow/en/)
		Virtual social worlds "allow inhabitants to choose their behaviour more freely and essentially live a virtual life similar to their real life." (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010 p. 64)	Second Life (secondlife.com)

Source: Self-elaboration

Individuals and organizations alike have redefined ways of communicating or doing business in response to new media innovations (Hill & Stephens 2005). Internet connectivity and mobile phone enable individuals to perpetually connect with others, empowering them to develop and maintain relationships and to be more engaged in community (Chan, 2015). Riding on the Internet, different forms of social media offer at least two key advantages for audience engagement. First, they are cheap; and second, they have the potential for wide reach (Van Halderen & Turut, 2013). They have actually been reported to help brands increase engagement with consumers (Lee, Hosanagar & Nair, 2014) and some studies have revealed positive impact of such engagement on business performance (Stone & Woodcock, 2013) and brand loyalty (Zheng, Cheung, Lee & Liang, 2015). Social media has also been touted as tool for open innovation (Mount & Garcia Martinez, 2014). Advocates of social brand engagement go so far as encourage consumer-to-consumer creation of meaningful connection and communication around a brand on social media without directly involving the brand owner (Kozinets, 2014). Such conversations around the brand have the potential to enhance or diminish an organization's brand image and even reputation.

The benefits of social media are often more discussed than the risks they present to organizations and individuals (Pitts & Aylott, 2012). Benefits notwithstanding, the risks of reputation damage are increased in social media while the time to respond is reduced drastically due to the high level of immediacy of

publication and spread. Reputation damaging events of detrimental nature are in fact known to occur frequently (Zolkos, 2012). Social media environments thus amplify the need for distinct corporate reputation-management practices (Rokka, Karlsson, & Tienari, 2014).

Reputational risk takes many forms and is particularly damaging in financial services (Walter, 2014). Although corporate reputation has been defined as observers' collective judgements of a corporation based on assessments of the financial, social, and environmental impacts attributed to the corporation *over time* (Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty, 2006), judgement reservation may be short-lived in the case financial institutions especially where financial crisis is suspected. In order to weather the social media storm, Tynan (2015) asserts that all banks need a process in place to reduce risk of reputational damage, but that executives ought to accept that social media discourse can be influenced but not controlled. This assertion seems to make sense in the face of multiple stakeholders empowered as independent users of social media.

In order to validate the reality of the enumerated gains and pains dilemma, we seek to find out the perception and attitude of bank information managers towards the said new media empowerment and risk dilemma as reflected in the following research question (RQ1):

> *RQ1: How do the information managers perceive the dilemma and what's their attitude towards it?*

The discuss so far points in the direction of non-uniqueness of information managers as determinants of what organizational information is disseminated on social media. In order to concretize other potential players, we leverage on stakeholder theory first proposed by Edward R. Freeman (see Freeman, 1984), as construct for grouping the broader constituency that are likely to be interested in the affairs of the organization.

Stakeholders as co-Gatekeepers Online

In line with stakeholders theory, the idea that corporations have multiple stakeholders has become commonplace in management literature (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Identified by their interest in the company, stakeholders include employees, customers, communities, trade associations, suppliers, governments, investors, political groups, etc. For the purpose of this study, we focus on employees, customers and journalists. We include journalists as a specific group because of their distinctive professional inclination towards publishing. Empowered by new media, such stakeholders constitute potential sources of information online about their organization of interest. The multiple potential sources of broadcast information logically renders information control or

gatekeeping non-unique to officially constituted channels.

Rather than dismiss gatekeeping as irrelevant in the face of widespread new media empowerment, some scholars present models that introduce new gatekeeping actors and processes which we consider worthwhile exploring. For example, Shoemaker and Vos (2009) argue that gatekeeping concept is relevant *now* as it was for Lewin and they propose a model that identifies three gatekeeping channels – source, media and audience – as opposed to a singular focus on media (i.e. reporters, editors, information controllers, etc). On the one hand, source channel includes interested parties, participants, experts that may choose to let out or withhold a given piece of information. On the other hand, from an audience perspective, gatekeeping process also begins when an audience member chooses what to consume or share with others. Armed with tools for rating, recommendation, comments, sharing, the audience judges the contribution of media professionals and others, an activity which has been referred to as secondary gatekeeping (Singer, 2014). Audience thus determine popularity (Webb, 2014). This multi-channel model seems particularly relevant in the new media age because actors in all three channels – i.e. source, media and audience – are similarly empowered as users.

From an organization perspective, stakeholders (e.g. employees, customers, journalists) as interested parties may choose to broadcast or not, information about an organization, leveraging on the new media empowerment. In that way, each actor plays a gatekeeping role as source channel of information about the organization. We envisage that this new paradigm could pose an information control challenge for officially designated information managers. Multiplicity of gatekeepers is alien to a traditional single channel gatekeeping paradigm in which access to broadcast media lies in the hands of the official information managers. Banks' information managers in particular may frown at such stakeholder empowerment as their industry seem particularly vulnerable in the face of imprudent public dissemination of internal information. Besides, risk associated with imprudent dissemination of information may be further aggravated by the said audience channel gatekeepers. These have the potential to further make negative information go viral on social media which can cause grave damage to a bank's reputation and could even lead to a run on the bank. These risks suggest the need for control. Advocacy for the use of data leak prevention software to prevent confidential information leakage to social media (e.g. Lesnykh, 2012) hints at the existence of such perceived need for control.

For effective information control, the activities of the other gatekeepers cannot be ignored, in as much as they are empowered in the new media space. In the face of multiplicity of gatekeeping channels, some researchers suggest that there is a need to move from a unidirectional flow of gatekeeping to multidirectional flow by which all actors have the potential to influence one another and the flow of

information (Chin-Fook & Simmonds, 2011). This alludes to the need for information controllers to seek to exercise some influence over other stakeholders while recognizing them as fellow gatekeepers of organizational information.

In line with the foregoing arguments, we propose a vision of stakeholders as co-gatekeepers, in the face of the new media empowerment and risk dilemma. However, officially constituted information controllers seem best positioned to proactively manage or influence the co-gatekeepers, for best results. The question then arises: in what ways can the broad spectrum of stakeholders be successfully influenced? Kelman (1958) proposed three ways by which individuals accept social influences – compliance, internalization, identification. In the first place, "compliance can be said to occur when an individual accepts influence because he hopes to achieve a favorable reaction from another person or group. He adopts the induced behavior not because he believes in its content but because he expects to gain specific rewards or approval and avoid specific punishments or disapproval by conforming. Thus the satisfaction derived from compliance is due to the social effect of accepting influence" (p. 53). Compared to compliance, internalization seems to reflect a stronger resolve to accept the social influence in as much as the satisfaction derived from it is due to the content of the new behavior itself and not just the social effect of accepting the influence. In the words of Kelman (p. 53), internalization is said to occur "when an individual accepts influence because the content of the induced behavior – i.e. the ideas and actions of which it is composed – is intrinsically rewarding. He adopts the induced behavior because it is congruent with his value system. He may consider it useful for the solution of a problem or find it congenial to his needs". Similar to the case of internalization, identification implies that the individual believes in the content (i.e. the induced behavior). However, unlike internalization, the satisfaction implied in identification is not because of the induced behavior itself but because of its association with the individual's desired relationship. In other words, "identification can be said to occur when an individual accepts an influence because he wants to establish or maintain a satisfying self-defining relationship to another person or group" (p. 53).

Based on the classification by Kelman, we suggest that an approach to influencing other stakeholders is for them to share or internalize the values of the organization – the ethics of communication in this case. In order to shed light on the challenges faced by information managers across stakeholders in this respect, we formulated the following research question RQ2:

> *RQ2: Any differences among stakeholders in the care for communication ethics in the new media channels?*

Unethical stakeholder communication behavior on social media has the

potential to lead to an organization's reputation damage. The multiplicity of such stakeholders strongly suggests the need for proactive risk mitigation measures. We therefore set as a research goal to elucidate the risk mitigation measures put in place by information managers as reflected in the third research question (RQ3) below.

> *RQ3: What risk mitigating factors are put in place by information managers to facilitate control?*

Methodology

Our main goal was to study the attitude of information managers in selected commercial banks in Nigeria towards the empowerment and risk dilemma posed by new media and how the latter affects their work as organization's information controllers or gatekeepers.

We carried out face-to-face interviews with officials designated as information managers. For ease of identification and access to such managers, we leveraged on the Association of Corporate Affairs Managers of Banks (ACAMB). The members of the association are responsible for information generation, dissemination and control in their respective banks. Out of the 22 commercial banks that operate in Nigeria, 13 commercial banks were selected using lottery method. Face-to-face interviews were complemented with questionnaires in order to get concrete answers to some categories of interest. Data collection was limited to Lagos where most of the banks have their corporate head offices. The interviews were transcribed and examined with respect to the research questions 1 and 3. The questionnaire responses were subjected to descriptive statistics for further insight.

The managers' perception of stakeholder communication ethics (i.e. question 2) was studied quantitatively using questionnaire as instrument. On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest, the managers were asked to score the group of stakeholders (i.e. employee, customer, journalist) on the extent to which they undermine the ethics of communication, particularly as it relates to the publication of unofficial information of their organization using the social media. Because of the small sample size (n = 13), paired t-test was used to test for significance in the difference between means.

We also investigated the perspectives of three other subgroups of stakeholders (employees, customers and journalist) using questionnaires as instrument for data collection. We distributed three different sets of questionnaires among employees, customers and journalists respectively (See Appendices 3, 4 and 5). We compared the feedback from the various stakeholders with the information managers' responses in order to identify congruence or lack thereof in perception

and attitude towards media empowerment. We used Chi-square or Fisher's exact test to investigate relationship between stakeholders and respective attitudes under study. Cramer's V was used to test for the strength of relationship.

Findings

For clarity, we have divide this section into three parts in line with the three research questions labelled RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3.

RQ1. How do the information managers perceive the dilemma and what's their attitude towards it?

Feedback from the information managers shows that they are favorably disposed towards leveraging on social media for official communication purposes while at the same time concerned about the risks involved. Twelve of the thirteen information managers indicated that they actually use social media to disseminate organizational information even though they have not abandoned the traditional media like print, radio and television. All were however unanimous in acknowledging social media as the greatest threat to their function as information controllers. Practically all the reasons given pointed to a perceived lack of control on such media. To the question, "How difficult is it to control your organizations' information disseminated via social media or other new media platforms?", they all chose at least the option labelled, "difficult".

One of the respondents generically labelled social media as troublesome and another as fluid. Some other statements showed more specific concern about the lack of control e.g. "it is difficult to control the outcome"; "free space"; "it does not have any form of restriction. Entry and exit is free for all". Some highlighted the power of the consumer to make content – including erroneous content – go viral e.g. "it is difficult to control how the information is used or shared"; "There is instant feedback and any error can go viral". Almost all (83%) have at least sometimes faced risk associated with statements, messages or rumors on social media. All acknowledge that organizational information has been disseminated unofficially using social media or mobile devices and this has happened often in two of the banks. Despite these concerns, they all recommend further investment in the use of new media technologies for fast and efficient communication. In fact, 60% indicate that their use of social media has extended to social banking activities which reflects a strong commitment to the use of such platforms.

RQ2. Any differences among stakeholders in the care for communication ethics in the new media channels?

While recognizing possible benefits from using new media, information

managers showed concern for associated risks which they perceive as varied with stakeholders. On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest, the managers were asked to indicate which stakeholder group undermines the ethics of communication the most, particularly as it relates to the publication of unofficial information of their organization using the social media. The media (journalists) had the highest accumulated weight (53). Customer was next (34) followed by employees (31). The descriptive statistics and paired sample t-test results are as shown in Tables 2, 3 and 4. Media (M=4.08, SD=1.32) was significantly perceived to be more unethical than employees (M=2.38, SD=1.261), t(12)=-3.941, **p = 0.002. The media was also significantly perceived to be more unethical than customers (M=2.62, SD=1.387), t(12)=-2.602, *p = .023. No significant difference was found between employees and customers, t(12)=.354, p = .730.

Table 2

Outcome	Customers			Journalists			n	95% CI for Mean Difference	r	t	df
	SUM	M	SD	SUM	M	SD					
Extent[1]	34	2.62	1.39	53	4.08	1.32	13	-2.69, -0.24	-.12	-2.60*	12

Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results for Differences in Extent to which Customers and Journalists Undermine Communication Ethics * p < .05.
[1]Score indicated by Information Managers

Table 3

Outcome	Employees			Journalists			n	95% CI for Mean Difference	r	t	df
	SUM	M	SD	SUM	M	SD					
Extent[1]	31	2.38	1.26	53	4.08	1.32	13	-2.63, -0.76	0.28	-3.94**	12

Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results for Differences in Extent to which Employees and Journalists Undermine Communication Ethics ** p < .01.
[1]Score indicated by Information Managers

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results for Differences in Extent to which Employees and Customers Undermine Communication Ethics

Outcome	Employees			Customers			n	95% CI for Mean Difference	r	t	df
	SUM	M	SD	SUM	M	SD					
Extent[1]	31	2.38	1.26	34	2.62	1.39	13	-1.65, 1.19	-0.58	-3.54	12

[1]Score indicated by Information Managers

Analyses of feedback from employees, customers and journalists show both points of congruence and lack thereof with the perception by information managers. We received 72 responses from employees, 81 responses from customers and 16 responses from journalists. Majority (76%) of the journalists affirmed that they've used their news platform or social media to complain about the banks and 37% say that they've done so frequently. We compared this with responses from customers among whom only 36% affirmed that they have criticized their banks on new media. **As shown in Table 5, there** was a significant difference between the two groups, X^2 (1, N=85) = 7.776, p < .01, Cramer's V = .302.

Table 5
Results of Chi-square Test and Descriptive Statistics for Stakeholder Complain about Bank using New Media

	Complain About Bank		
Stakeholder	No	Yes	Total
Customer	44 (62%)	27 (38%)	71 (100%)
Journalist	3 (21.4%)	11 (78.6%)	14 (100%)

Note. χ^2 = 7.776**, df = 1. Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.
**p < .01, Cramer's V = .302.

Fisher's exact test was performed to examine the relationship between stakeholders (employees, customers, journalists) and awareness of bank's publication of responses. Results are as shown in Table 6. The relationship was significant, X^2 (6, N=160) = 16.188, p < .01, Cramer's V = .225. More than a quarter of the journalists (37%) indicated that their bank had published response to the issue they publicly raised about the bank. Employees were the least aware of such response to their publications (9.1%); customers were in between (20.9%).

Table 6

Results of Fisher's Exact Test and Descriptive Statistics for Stakeholder Awareness of Bank's Publication of Response

Stakeholder	Stakeholder's Awareness of Bank's Response				
	No	Yes	Maybe	Not Sure	Total
Employee	46 (59.7%)	7 (9.7%)	10 (13%)	14 (18.2%)	77 (100%)
Customer	35 (52.2%)	14 (20.9%)	2 (3%)	16 (23.9%)	67 (100%)
Journalist	9 (56.2%)	6 (37.5%)	1 (6.2%)	0 (0%)	16 (100%)

Note. Fisher's Exact Test = 16.188**. Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.
**$p < .01$, Cramer's V = .225.

We also examined the perception of ethics observance by journalists and customers when communicating issues regarding their banks. Statistical test (see Table 7) shows a significant difference between the two groups, X^2 (6, N=87) = 10.048, $p < .05$, Cramer's V = .358. As much as 80% of journalists indicated that they "very much" observe communication ethics compared to 34.7% of customers. Another 6.7% of journalists and 13.9% of customers indicated that they do so "sometimes". Another noteworthy finding is the fact that 23.6% of customers indicated that they "never" put ethics into consideration; none of the journalists gave such indication.

Table 7

Results of Fisher's Exact Test and Descriptive Statistics for Perception of Ethics Observance by Stakeholders when Communicating Issues Regarding their Banks

Stakeholder	To What Extent Stakeholder Observes Ethics					
	Never	I don't Understand	Not sure	Sometimes	Very much	Total
Customer	17 (23.6%)	7 (9.7%)	13 (18.1%)	10 (13.9%)	25 (34.7%)	72 (100%)
Journalist	0 (0%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	1 (6.7%)	12 (80%)	15 (100%)

Note. Fisher's Exact Test = 10.05*. Numbers in parentheses indicate column percentages.
**$p < .05$, Cramer's V = .358.

RQ3: What risk mitigating factors are in place to help maintain control by the information manager?

We interviewed information managers and also used questionnaire to gather information about the measures put in place by their organizations to mitigate the risks associated with stakeholders' unethical information dissemination habits. In general, all indicated that they have some sort of strategy that has worked for them at one time or the other though there are bound to be slips from time to time. One of the interviewees stated,

> "we only developed a strategy after we suffered a major crisis that almost rocked our management and reputation. We had previously glossed over this issue because we felt as an institution of repute we hard enough goodwill and we had always tried to be as ethical as we can be. But it hit us really hard when it dawned on us that the stakeholders whose actions almost wrecked such havoc on our organization where those of members of staff. It was only after that major crisis that we developed a code of conduct on information dissemination on social media and insisted that staff should affirm this alongside the institution's professional code of conduct. So far this has been working for us."

Another statement also places emphasis on employees: "Yes, for employee communication, a procedure/policy framework is in place to guide how organizational communication should be handled externally." Six of the banks indicated that they already have in place, code of ethics guiding staff. Six others indicated that it is under development.

Another interviewee mentioned that there is no clear code on the use of social media but from time to time they use brand champions to feel the pulse of their staff. He also mentioned that they are very careful when handling sensitive information; the organization ensures that those kinds of information do not get to the wrong hands or the hands of less matured members of staff who may not know how to handle such information. In other words, sensitive information is disseminated on a need to know basis. A practical measure put in place is an approval process before any information is published.

Some of the interviewees highlighted staff sensitization and awareness. They have adopted the mechanism of continually educating, informing and sensitizing staff on the use of social media as a tool of disseminating organizational information. The reason being that the same tool if care isn't taken, can bring down the organization which they work for.

Some other responses placed emphasis on the need to be proactive in

providing timely information to stakeholders, leaving no room for speculation: "the bank is proactive to provide information and leaves no room for speculation. It is when you do not provide information that any of the stakeholder[s] will begin to source for one. We try to keep them updated and timely too."; "We ensure that our stakeholders are promptly informed of developments that will affect them. This gives them a sense of belonging as well as cause them to be armed with sufficient and relevant information about the bank at all times."

All the information managers were also of the opinion that sanctions should be in place for defaulting employees. One took a hardline by recommending outright dismissal. Coincidentally, it is the same respondent that labelled control of information on social media as "very difficult" compared to "difficult" option chosen by others. Two others recommended additional options (suspension, query/official reprimand, mandatory training on ethics of organizational communication). Others excluded dismissal from the options.

Conclusions, Limitations and Suggestions for Research

We investigated the perception and attitude of bank information managers in Nigeria towards the new media empowerment and risk dilemma as well as the measures put in place to mitigate risks. We also compared bank stakeholder's care for communication ethics from the perspectives of both the information managers and the stakeholders.

In the first place we conclude that the empowerment and risk dilemma is real among information managers. Twelve of the thirteen information managers studied indicated that they use social media to disseminate organizational information. At the same time, all agree that social media is the media form that poses the greatest challenge in terms of controlling the dissemination of information about their organization. Furthermore, compared to customers and employees, journalists were perceived by the information managers as the stakeholders that most undermine the ethics of communication. This position seems corroborated by the finding that majority (76%) of the journalists surveyed affirmed that they've used their news platform or social media to complain about the banks and 37% say that they've done so frequently. The journalists were also most aware of responses from banks in reaction to their published messages.

Contrary to the perception by the information managers, the journalists (82%) claim that they do so ethically. This disparity suggests the need to harmonize ethical standards between journalists and the banks' information managers. Even though only 36% of customers say that they have used social media to criticize their banks, 23% say that they never put ethics into consideration. This lack of ethical consideration in itself could pose risk for information managers, suggesting the need to educate or sensitize the customers. Results suggest that employees are the

least problematic compared to journalists and customers. This may not be unconnected with the proactive measures put in place as indicated by the information managers, most of which have employees as target stakeholders.

The perception of challenges with information control on new media by information managers seems to suggest their recognition – at least implicit – of the other stakeholders as gatekeepers in their own right. Statements in reference to social media like "it is difficult to control the outcome"; "free space"; "it does not have any form of restriction. Entry and exit is free for all" allude to this position. Such recognition can also be deduced from the indicated internalization approach to influencing the others. Although this is more evident with employees as reflected for example in the "staff sensitization" measure, internalization is also in some sense implied for a broader range of stakeholders in statements like "we ensure that our stakeholders are promptly informed of developments that will affect them. This gives them a sense of belonging as well as cause them to be armed with sufficient and relevant information about the bank at all times."

Indicated measures aligned with compliance approach to social influence are largely centered around employees. Such measures include affirmation of the code of ethics, management approval before publication of any organizational information. All the information managers were also of the opinion that various degrees of sanctions should be in place for defaulting employees. These measures in addition to others like prevention of negative flow of information and speculation, shielding of sensitive information, procedure/policy framework in place for employee communication could be largely responsible for the perception of employees as the least problematic. However, although sanctions like dismissal may serve as deterrent, it remains to be proven that an employee that has not internalized shared values may not act anonymously on social media.

We consider this study as having opened a furrow in research about organizational information gatekeeping in the new media era. We recommend that the co-gatekeeper paradigm be further explored as an approach to influencing stakeholders for effective communication and reputational risk mitigation in the new media space. Such approach will likely inform greater resort to measures that foster internalization of ethical communication values among stakeholders. We also recognize that more work needs to be done in order to better establish what measures could be considered most effective among various stakeholders. We recommend the following additional research work: (1) Study extension to other stakeholders. (2) Longitudinal study to test the effectiveness of specific measures over a period of time while controlling for others. (3) Explore the possibility of effective positioning of Information managers as agenda setters with respect to organizational information, in the new media space.

Summary

Founded on digital technology, new media forms empower users to easily broadcast or narrowcast at low cost and without intermediary gatekeepers. Arguably, such empowerment may be frowned at by banks' information managers as their industry seem particularly vulnerable in the face of imprudent public dissemination of internal information. For example, negative information that goes viral on social media has the potential to cause grave damage to a bank's reputation and could even lead to a run on the bank.

Despite the aforementioned new media empowerment and risk dilemma, the academic literature is surprisingly silent about the challenges facing sensitive industries like banks in the control of information in the new media age. We therefore carried out a study among information managers in selected commercial banks in Nigeria to find out their attitude towards the empowerment and risk dilemma posed by new media and how the latter affects their work as organization's information controllers or gatekeepers.

Out of the 22 commercial banks that operate in Nigeria, 13 commercial banks were selected using lottery method. Survey and in-depth interviews were carried out among the banks' information managers. In addition, survey questionnaires were distributed among three other subgroups of stakeholders – bank customers, bank employees and journalists.

Twelve of the thirteen information managers studied indicated that they use social media to disseminate organizational information. However, all agree that social media is the media form that poses the greatest challenge in terms of controlling the dissemination of information about their organization. Furthermore, in comparison to customers and employees, journalists were perceived by the information managers as the stakeholders that most undermine the ethics of communication. This position seems corroborated by the finding that majority (76%) of the journalists surveyed affirmed that they've used their news platform or social media to complain about the banks and 37% say that they've done so frequently. However, contrary to the perception by the information managers, the journalists (82%) claim that they do so ethically. This disparity suggests the need to harmonize ethical standards between journalists and the banks' information managers.

Even though only 36% of customers say that they have used social media to criticize their banks, 23% say that they never put ethics into consideration. This lack of ethical consideration in itself could pose risk for information managers, suggesting the need to educate or sensitize the customers.

Results suggest that employees are the least problematic compared to journalists and customers. This may not be unconnected with the proactive

measures put in place as indicated by the information managers. These include affirmation of the code of ethics, information scanning/authorization, staff awareness and sensitization, stakeholder engagement, prevention of negative flow of information and speculation, shielding of sensitive information, management approval before publication of any organizational information, procedure/policy framework in place for employee communication. All the information managers were also of the opinion that appropriate sanctions should be in place for defaulting employees.

We consider this study as having opened a furrow in research about organizational information gatekeeping in the new media era. In recognition of the empowerment of all stakeholders in the new media space, we suggest that information managers ought to recognize other stakeholders as co-gatekeepers. We recommend that the co-gatekeeper paradigm be further explored as an approach to influencing stakeholders for effective communication and reputational risk mitigation in the new media space.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions for Information Managers in Commercial Banks in Nigeria

1. How difficult is it to control your organizations information disseminated via social media or other new media platforms?

2. How regularly do unofficially generated or stakeholder generated information made available to the media impact on your organization's reputation?

3. Are there measures put in place by your organization to mitigate the risks associated with stakeholders' unethical information dissemination habit? If yes, please specify

4. Do you sometimes feel helpless in controlling published stakeholders' unofficially generated information about your organization?

5. How often do you make official rejoinders to published negative information?

6. What media do you employ to rebut negative stakeholder generated information about your organization?

7. Does your bank have a code of ethics guiding staff participation in social media activities?

8. What sanction would you recommend to management for an employee who is unethical in passing organizational information to either the media or through personal broadcast?

9. What is the name of your Bank?

Appendix 2: Key Additional Questions in Questionnaire for Information Managers in Commercial Banks In Nigeria

1. What media channels are employed by your organization in disseminating organizational information?

    a) Print

    b) Word-of-mouth

    c) Television

    d) Radio

    e) Social Media

f) Other

2. Of all the media forms listed above, which poses the greatest challenge in terms of controlling information dissemination? Please specify and state reasons if any.

3. Does your Bank engage in social banking activities?

    a) Never

    b) No

    c) Not aware

    d) Not yet

    e) Yes

4. Would you recommend that your organization further invest in new media technologies for fast and efficient communication despite control issues?

    a) No

    b) Not sure

    c) Not yet

    d) Not really

    e) Yes

5. In your opinion, to what extent do your stakeholders [customers, employees and the media] undermine the ethics of communication particularly as it relates to the dissemination of your organizational information?

    a) Very insignificantly

    b) Insignificantly

    c) Not sure

    d) Significantly

    e) Very significantly

6. Does unofficial statements/messages/rumours relating to your organization published via social media ever pose a risk to your organization?

    a) No

    b) Not sure

    c) Not really

    d) Sometimes

e) Yes

5. On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest, which stakeholder undermines the ethics of communication the most, particularly as it relates to the publication of unofficial statements/messages/information of your organization using the social media? *

Customer

	1	2	3	4	5	
Lowest						Highest

Media

	1	2	3	4	5	
Lowest						Highest

Employees

	1	2	3	4	5	
Lowest						Highest

Appendix 3: Key Questions in Questionnaire – Customer Perspective

1. Have you ever used your device or your social media account to complain or criticize your bank(s) for poor service or other issues?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Maybe

d) Not yet

e) Never will

2. How often do you complain or criticize your bank (s) or other banks on social media?

a) Very frequently

b) Frequently

c) Not sure

d) Not very frequently

e) Never

3. To what extent do you observe ethics when you post comments or criticism about your bank(s) or other banks on the social media?

a) Very much

b) Sometimes

c) Not sure

d) I don't understand what that means.

e) Never

4. Has your bank(s) ever published a statement or message in response to an issue you posted, commented or generated via social media?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Maybe

d) Not sure

e) Other:

5. If the answer to question 4 is yes, how often?

a) Very often

b) Often

c) Somewhat often

d) Not sure

e) Not very often

Appendix 4: Key Questions in Questionnaire – Journalist Perspective

1. Have you ever complained or criticized your bank(s) or other banks for poor service or any other issue using your news platform or any social media platform?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Not sure

d) Not yet

e) Never will

2. How often do you publish or post complains, criticism or rumours about your bank(s) or other banks via your news platform and or any of the social media platforms?

a) Very frequently

b) Frequently

c) Not sure

d) Not very frequently

e) Never

3. To what extent do you observe media ethics when you post comments or criticism about your bank(s) or other banks on your news platform, social media and or any other new media platform?

a) Very much

b) Sometimes

c) Neutral

d) I don't understand what that means.

e) Never

4. Has your bank(s) ever published a statement or message in response to an issue you posted, commented or generated via your media platform or social media?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Maybe

d) Not sure

e) Other:

11. If your answer to question 4 is yes, how often does this occur?

a) Very often

b) Often

c) Somewhat often

d) Not sure

e) Not very often

Appendix 5: Key Questions in Questionnaire – Employee Perspective

1. How often do you post comments on social media sites and news communities in respect of issues relating to your bank, other banks or the banking industry in general?

a) Very frequently

b) Frequently

c) Neutral

d) Not so frequently

e) Not at all

2. Has your bank(s) ever published a statement or message in response to an issue you posted, commented or generated via social media?

a) Yes

b) Maybe

c) Not sure

d) No

e) Other:

3. If your answer to question 2 is yes, how often does this occur?

a) Very often

b) Often

c) Not sure

d) Not very often

e) Never

f) Other: