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Online Pressrooms:
Journalists' Expectations from Public Relations
Practitioners Concerning Online Media Relations

Abstract

Online pressrooms are important for public relations practitioners when improving their media relations in a rapidly developing new media ecosystem. This paper aims to provide an insight into the journalists' preferences when retrieving information from online pressrooms. In a mixed design, qualitative and quantitative data were collected from Turkish journalists. As the first step of the study, a focus group with 11 journalists was conducted to understand what the expectations of journalists of online pressrooms are, and how they verbally express these demands. These qualitative data were then used for the structuring of a survey questionnaire that was applied to a sample of 155 journalists. Results indicate that journalists were frustrated by the current state of online pressrooms. Journalists asserted that information-rich and skilfully designed pressrooms help increase the corporations' credibility. Journalists designated visuals and news archives as the most important contents for an online pressroom. It is also found that journalists trust more an organization if they receive fast answers from an authorized media relations person. Furthermore, our cluster analysis revealed that junior journalists with more new media practice have more trust in organizations with successful online media relations.

Keywords: Online media relations; online pressrooms; journalists, public relations practitioners

1. Introduction

As the online environment has become more complex, media relations have changed for both public relations practitioners and journalists. Typical media relations departments used to prepare press bulletins and backgrounders or to send media kits to the press. Today, increased web usage and exponential growth of social media platforms help reporters gather information for their news. Many journalists first navigate the organization's website or its competitor's website before calling up public relations departments for information (Howard & Mathews, 2006). Accordingly, public relations professionals are doing less traditional media relations, and they come across new types of media professionals more (Bajkiewicz, Kraus & Hong, 2011).

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As the term 'sedentary journalism' (Baisnee & Marchetti, 2006; Jarlbrink, 2015) suggests, journalists today practice more online information gathering than conventional techniques. Similar terms such as 'desk journalism' (Raviola & Hartman, 2009; Van Leuven, Deprez & Raeymaeckers, 2014), or 'desktop journalism' (Deuze & Paulussen, 2002; De Maeyer et al., 2014) also refer to such distinction between online and conventional practices of journalism. 'Desk journalism' appears to grow as a complementary path to traditional journalism. Traditional journalism is relatively more demanding and time-consuming because of the ever-expanding internet technologies. When a reporter looks for information through conventional methods, it takes him/her longer time than searching online sources. Pavlik (2001) examines the radical changes in newsrooms and news industry after the adaption of internet technologies and designates these technological changes as most fundamental since the rise of the penny press of the mid-nineteenth century. He suggests that these increasingly portable, inexpensive, and powerful news gathering tools give journalists effective techniques for finding diverse and reliable sources, checking facts, and meeting deadlines (p. 47). As Cardoso (2006) puts it, the network society technologies have brought the development of a new communicational model that connects audiences and media. This new media ecosystem changed the relationships between journalists and public relations practitioners considerably (Wilson & Supa, 2013; Wright & Hinson, 2017). Accordingly, public relations practitioners should not only manage offline media relations but also prepare updated content for online platforms. Online media rooms are one of the important corporation platforms that convey a corporation's content to the media. Traditional media relations are not dead but it should be supported by online platforms. Therefore, public relations departments should develop specific online tools for improving their relationship with the online media.

Many organizations and companies, regardless of their size, put a fairly amount of effort into creating and maintaining an online presence on the internet in order to build up a positive corporate image. These organizations make also use of online presence in order to improve their media relations. Corporate websites are considered as one of the most important tools for online media relations. Although a website is a powerful tool to create and maintain an online presence, even the most reputable corporations have difficulties in developing successful websites. Specifically, pressrooms are critically important in designing such a successful website to develop and maintain effective online media relations. Our research aims to provide an insight into online pressrooms from the journalists' perspective to offer design ideas for public relations practitioners.

2. Literature Review

Media relations is mainly about building and maintaining an organization's relationships with the media (Lattimore et al., 2009). Furthermore, media relations is considered as a vital function for public relations practitioners. Many public relations practitioners act as the interface between their organization and news producers (Philips & Young, 2009). Most definitions of public relations state that maintaining mutual relationships with the public is the core concept in public relations. Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1994) defined public relations as "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends" (p. 6). Grunig, Grunig and Ehling (1992) underlined that the concept of relationships between or-

ganizations and stakeholders is central to their theory of public relations and organizational effectiveness (p. 81). Grunig and Grunig (2008) explain how their research highlighted the importance of the relationship with the public. In this context, relations with newsmakers, specifically journalists, are important for any organization. Several studies underline the importance of relationship management in the public relations profession (e.g. Hung, 2005; Waters & Bortree, 2012; Sha, 2017). Public relations practitioners in organizations are responsible for managing a sound relationship with journalists despite the differences in their professional values. A thorough and manageable relationship with journalists will obviously facilitate the work of public relations practitioner and reduce potential media coverage problems.

Journalists can be considered as a distinct public group for the organizations. Furthermore, journalists act as the link between the organizations and their public. However, Stoker and Tusinski (2006) noted that most companies have difficulties to communicate with their various public groups, particularly reporters. Journalists as a distinct public group may require special attention. For instance, timing is very important as Pettigrew and Reber (2010) pointed out; public relations practitioners may fail to provide journalists with the information that they wanted as immediately as they desire it (p. 407). Therefore, online media relations require different and innovative techniques of relationships with journalists, who are themselves the members of a profession in swift transitions. Within this new paradigm, public relations practitioners and communication professionals are expected to use and navigate media strategically, comprehensively and cleverly (Johnston & Rowney, 2018).

Philips and Young (2009) underlined that public relations practitioners should have skills to understand journalists and respond to their inquiries "in a way that reflects positively on their organizations" (p. 209). Based on his practices, Horton (2001) noted, "users want information in ways that they understand" (p. 80). This is particularly important for journalists because they usually have limited time to gather information to process news. Yet, public relations practitioners and agencies' role must not be solely that of an information subsidizer. However, scholars point out that the editorial reliance on such information subsidies from public relations agencies has long been the *modus operandi* in media relations (Bland, Theaker & Wragg, 2005) and this trend will continue to increase (Lewis, Williams & Franklin, 2008). A recent study showed that presidential and corporate information subsidies are still paramount in shaping the salience of issues in news content in the U.S. press (Lan et al., 2020).

Today, modern online journalistic tools provide enormous possibilities for producing news with minimum limitations on space and time. Cyberspace is full of vast amounts of information that journalists can utilize professionally. Online media relations in general and online pressrooms, in particular, are among such modern information sources that gradually change journalism practices from primary to secondary source newsgathering. Journalists adapt themselves particularly easily to this type of secondary sourcing, again due to the continuous deadlines and pressures they face (Balcytiene, Raeymaeckers & Vartanova, 2011). The internet offers many immediate access opportunities to valuable information for journalism through many online platforms (Machill & Beiler, 2009; Phillips & Young, 2009). However, some scholars criticize the qualitative effect of these platforms on journalism practices (e.g. Pavlik, 2000; Örnebring, 2010; Steensen, 2011; Bakker, 2012). Furthermore, the perceived benefits of internet technologies are not the same for public relations practitioners and journalists. Callison's (2003) pointed out that public relations practitioners may tend to believe that their web pages provide the journalists with high quality content while the journalists often feel that corporate web pages fail to deliver the information they are looking for. As summed up

by Pang (2010), several scholarly works underline that public relations practitioners usually do not understand what journalists want and do not have sufficient knowledge of journalism work. Sallot and Johnson (2005) report that most journalists perceive practitioners as lacking professionalism and as being deficient in the quality of subsidies. Insufficient contents of corporate web pages and pressrooms have been identified in many studies (Esrock & Leichty, 1999; Gonzalez-Herrero & Ruiz de Valbuena, 2006; Ozturk & Ayman, 2007; Capriotti & Gonzalez-Herrero, 2013; Tarhan, 2014; Lee & Merle, 2018). Poor content, unsuitable design and inadequate update frequency are the main insufficiencies reported in these studies. These studies also suggested that an inappropriate web sites will reduce the organization's reputation and image rather than contributing to it. On the other hand, public relations practitioners are also dissatisfied with recent disruption in the journalism profession; they especially criticize bad journalism practices. In their study, Bajkiewicz, Kraus and Hong (2011) examined the changes in the media relations and found that public relations professionals blame 'siphon' employment for the influx of young, inexperienced reporters, which, they believe, is the reason for shallow stories.

Using data from the 2008 Flemish Journalist survey, Raeymaeckers, Paulussens and De Keyser (2012) have investigated what fundamental changes have taken place in journalism over a decade. They examined to what extent recent economic and technological developments in the media have influenced journalism. They concluded that "the more the journalists become office-bound, the more likely they are to use new media technologies for newsgathering and production" (p. 148). Their findings also confirmed that journalists who regularly work in the newsroom are also more likely to surf the internet, use search engines, and consult online dictionaries and encyclopaedias. An investigation on US journalists by Garrison (2003) found that a website is labelled as 'strong' if it is perceived as a reputable source, has valid and accurate information, and is searchable; otherwise it is labelled as a 'weak' website. Garrison's (2003) study also revealed that 51.1% of the journalists identified 'lack of contact information or sourcing' as an important problem (p. 69).

Online Pressrooms

Today, for a journalist looking for information about an organization/corporation, online pressrooms embedded at the official website could be a perfect starting place to retrieve data. Many other types of online data sources are also available to journalists. Traditional journalism practices, however, would involve press conferences, press bulletins, appointments for face-to-face or phone interviews, phone calls to media relation directors, direct request letters for information from the company, annual reports, complementary company print materials on historical backgrounds, product documents, and other investor relations information as news source materials. These documents usually would have to be snail mailed to the journalists, brought by hand, or read through telephone. Additionally, scheduling an interview or a press conference generally may not be achieved easily. Now, all these important documents and data materials can be found and reached on the corporation's online pressrooms. Furthermore, journalists can reach persons in charge directly with the use of chat rooms or instant messaging tools. The internet technology helps media professionals save time to gather information to prepare their news. Time constraints are vitally important for journalists; therefore, journalists inevitably tend to use readily available information for the preparation of their news.

Tench and Yeomans (2009) compare 'old' and 'new' media relations in terms of their tools, content, and scope. They suggest that new media relations as a micro-targeting practice should focus on the media rather than the press and focus on the relationships rather than one-way channels. Wilcox and Cameron (2009) admit that a good online pressroom, at minimum, should have (1) current and archived news releases (2) the contact names, phone numbers, e-mail addresses of public relations practitioners (3) photographs and (4) product information. Press releases, reports, backgrounders, company and managers' profiles and bios, breaking news, upcoming events, press clippings, video news releases, annual reports, white papers, product information, etc. also become important components of online pressrooms.

The results of a recent research showed that 97% of media reporters in the US say an online pressroom is important and 75% of them often visit online pressrooms (Tekgroup, 2018). It seems obvious that online media relations will evolve stronger and broader, and the relations between public relations and journalists will be almost fully digitalized. However, as Lloyd and Toogood (2015) put it "both PR and journalism are currently in a transition phase. Most key decision-makers at large media and PR firms are still pre-digital: they began their careers in an age of fax machines and first-generation PCs, and many find it hard to update" (p. 87). Therefore, it is very important to learn from either side of the relationship to manage sustainable online media relations.

Wilcox and Cameron (2009, p. 385) define an online pressroom as the media's front door to the company. Most of the major companies have online pressrooms as a part of their corporate website. These specific sections are usually called online 'pressrooms' or 'newsrooms'. Callison's (2003) study found that 30.8 % of *Fortune* 500 company websites use 'newsroom' and 20.5 % use 'pressroom' as a section label. A more recent study found that the most commonly used labels are "pressroom" and "newsroom" (Capriotti & González-Herrero, 2017). From these specifically designated press sections, companies can simultaneously deliver many types of content to the journalists and broadcasters. Additionally, online pressrooms can serve as a medium for information requests from the company and offer many practical advantages for the organizations. As reported by Moon and Hyun (2014), effective online pressrooms with more diverse informational and interactive components, in turn, generate more news stories about the companies. Furthermore, journalists can reach any relevant company person directly with the use of online chat rooms or instant messaging tools, which are embedded in the corporate website. The technical potential for online relations is huge. However, as Naude, Froneman and Atwood (2004) emphasized, "managing a website successfully requires more than technical knowledge" (p. 87).

The real success of online media relations comes when it contributes to a two-way symmetrical relationship. Successful online media relations require establishing and maintaining a dialogic relationship. For sustainable dialogic relationships with its stakeholders, organizations must fully adapt themselves to newly emerging web technologies, which offer powerful tools for facilitating dialogic communication (Boztepe Taskiran, 2019). In this context, Kent and Taylor (1998) propose five principles for a functioning dialogic communication: dialogic loops, usefulness of information, generation of return visits, ease of interface, and conservation of visitors. Later, they propose the term 'engagement' to the centre of dialogic theory (Taylor & Kent, 2014). A recent public relations literature survey revealed that the most frequently studied dialogical relationship principles were dialogic loops and generation of return visits, however, these principles were found not well adopted and implemented in organizations (Ao & Huang, 2020). As Pettigrew and Reber (2010) suggested, elements of dialogic theory should

be continually revisited as web technology develops. Today, it is vitally important to develop effective online media relations for organizations and current web technologies are very suitable for this. Apparently, expectations for a "dawn of a new golden age for media relations" (Zerfass, Vercic & Wiesenberg, 2016, p. 507) could be more realistic if both public relations practitioners and journalists can utilize dialogic web technologies efficiently.

Online media relations is also a significant current issue in the Turkish media industry. A report on popular Turkish companies revealed that although they do not fully utilize the dialogical potentials of new technologies, more emphasis is put on communication technologies and communication strategies in Turkey (Ertem Eray, 2016). Most scholars agree that Turkey has a fairly developed professional public relations practice both in the public and private sectors (Asna, 2004; Kazanci, 2011; Bicakci & Hurmeric, 2013). Similarly, journalism in Turkey has a strong professional tradition, dating back to the 19th Century (Topuz, 2003; Kologlu, 2018). However, today both professions are going through a difficult period. Public relations professionals are facing strict employment restrictions and are trying to replace their supposedly timeworn professional titles with new ones (Tuncel, 2009; Oksuz & Gorpe, 2019). The journalism profession in Turkey is even in a worse situation in terms of employment possibilities while facing strong pressures from a deteriorating undemocratic media ecosystem (Akser & Baybars-Hawks, 2012; Bilge, 2016). Many scholars agree that concentration in media ownership and political interventions from governments are the main threats to media pluralism in Turkey (Ozcan, 2010; Kaya & Cakmur, 2010; Christensen, 2007). Nevertheless, vibrant digital transformations in all media sectors of this semi-periphery country (Akdenizli, 2015) will hopefully open new pathways for both professions. Within last decades, Turkey has witnessed a widespread usage of internet as a medium of communication. The history of internet in Turkey goes back to 12 April 1993 when a consortium led by Middle East Technical University in Ankara established the first international link to National Science Foundation in the USA (Wolcott, 1999; Basaran, 2001; Kaya, 2019). As of 2019, 75.3 % of the population (16-74 years) actively use internet, and 88.3 % of households have internet access (TUIK, 2019). Currently, Turkey has a vivid online media ecosystem, and online media is at the top of the list of news sources (Yanatma, 2018).

Our research is designed to answer two research questions and to test one hypothesis. These are based on the discussions in the above-mentioned literature. The first research question is about the expectations of Turkish journalists from an online pressroom. With this research question, we expect to contribute to the existing literature from the journalists' perspective. This complementary perspective of the media relations ecosystem is expected to improve public relations practitioners' professional works.

RQ1: What are the expectations of journalists from an online pressroom?

The second research question is about the order of importance of the content offered in the online pressroom. The journalists are asked to assign a level of importance to each of the content types from a 5-point scale, 1 being minimum and 5 being maximum. This research question will update the literature with these new platforms that are available to the journalists.

RQ2: Which importance levels do the journalists assign for each content type?

Finally, we assumed that certain characteristics of journalists might influence their trust in organizations through online media relations. In this respect, journalists are grouped into two clusters based on their length of service, and on the new media platforms (*Twitter*, *Face-*

book, *Instagram*, and *WhatsApp*) that they use as news source. Group 1 included senior journalists with lower usage of new media platforms while Group 2 included junior journalists with more frequent usage of new media platforms as news source. Then, we hypothesized that junior journalists with higher new media adaption levels would have more trust in organizations with successful online pressrooms.

H1: Junior journalists with more frequent new media practice (Group 2) would have more trust than the senior ones in organizations with successful online pressrooms.

3. Methodology

Our study has a mixed design of qualitative and quantitative data gathering. As the first step of the study, a focus group with 11 journalists was conducted to gather qualitative data about the use of online pressrooms by the media. This is different from the method used in Pettigrew and Reber's (2011) study where they employed in-depth interviews with journalists. *RQ1* is addressed by the focus group qualitative analysis to discover the expectations of the journalists from an online pressroom. As free flow dynamic technique with the participation of 6-12 persons, focus group interviews are administered by a moderator on a certain topic in a loose format (Zikmund et al. 2009). Focus group interviews can be considered as a pilot study for further investigation of a phenomenon. We followed the technical rules of focus group design as stated in Bloor et al. (2002) and Cruger and Casey (2015). Using the purposive sampling technique, our focus group sample was developed by consulting the Turkish Economy and Business Reporters Association (Ekonomi Muhabirleri Dernegi: EMD) Izmir Branch, and the sample distribution is summarized in Table 1. As a non-probability sampling technique, purposive sampling aims to increase the variation to maximize the representativeness of the sample (Kothari 2004) and cases to be included in the sample are decided based on researchers' judgment of typicality (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2005). Our focus group sample was composed of 11 journalists from EMD Izmir branch and included journalists from both genders and all seniority ranks. Focus group session was conducted on 19 December 2017 at Yasar University campus. During the focus group session, the moderator asked the journalists about their expectations and preferences for online media pressrooms. They were freely allowed to express their online pressroom experiences and demands. Focus group discussions took approximately two hours, and the recorded session was fully transcribed. This transcribed text (qualitative data) from the focus group was analysed with *Nvivo*, a software specifically designed for qualitative data analysis. *Nvivo* is a versatile software suitable for the analysis of all kinds of qualitative data including interviews, questionnaires, focus groups or field observations, published research, images, diagrams, audio, video, web pages, and other documentary sources (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Inter-coder reliability measures were not needed since only one coder coded all the transcribed text.

Table 1. Distribution of Focus Group Participants

Gender	n	Length of service	n
Male	9	less than 10 years	2
Female	2	11-20 years	5
Total	11	21+ years	4

Focus group data has helped researchers when structuring survey questionnaire. The survey questionnaire was first applied to 10 journalists for pre-testing if the item statements were properly understood. Minor modifications were made and then, the questionnaire was applied to 155 journalists.

In order to address *RQ2*, the survey questionnaire was used to reveal the levels of importance of certain content types, as assigned by the journalists. Survey sample was developed by consulting with EMD Izmir Branch Office. The sample distribution of the survey is shown in Table 2. As can be seen from this table, 81.9 % is male and 18.1 % is female. The mean seniority value of the participants is M=18.96 years and it differs with respect to gender: M=20.28 years for men and M=13.00 years for women. Mann-Whitney U test shows that this difference is statistically significant (Z=-2.97; p=0.004). These results comply with the literature that highlight typical gender inequalities in journalism profession (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1991; Franks, 2013). Comparing the pressure that journalists face in work, female journalists face more pressure and exhaustion than male colleagues. (Reinardy, 2009). Due to gender roles assigned to women in Turkish society, marriage and parenthood issues cause shorter employment periods for women journalists. Bayram and Atabek (2019) reported similar inequality of seniority for Turkish women journalists, who have typically shorter professional employment periods than men.

Table 2: Distribution of Survey Participants

Gender	n	Length of service	n
Male	127	less than 10 years	42
Female	28	11-20 years	54
Total (*N*)	155	21+ years	49

The survey questionnaire was applied on a web-based questionnaire and the questionnaire link was sent to the journalists' e-mail addresses that were provided by EMD. Survey item statements were designed as a 5-point Likert-like scale, 1 being the minimum and 5 being the maximum. During March 2018, a total of 155 complete and usable questionnaires were returned out of 250 e-mail addresses. Quantitative data from the survey questionnaire were processed and analysed in *SPSS*.

4. Findings

4.1. Focus group findings

Focus group analysis revealed that journalists are mostly frustrated from the current state of online pressrooms. Journalists assert that information-rich and skilfully designed online pressrooms help increase the corporations' trustworthiness. However, such information design must comply with journalistic competences. A woman journalist from a national newspaper remarks on the importance of the journalism linguistic style: "I pick up the language of a public relations agency immediately: exaggerated numbers, decorated sentences, etc. The language of a pressroom should be similar to the language of the journalists; a clear summary of the topic, later some details such as when and how this happened, etc. I prefer that the pressroom texts should be written for journalists". Such argumentative attitudes towards public relations practices are not rare among journalists. The relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists is depicted as an unquiet and uneasy one (White & Hobsbawm, 2007). Nearly a quarter-century ago, Spicer (1993) reported that journalists hold a negative attitude toward the public relations field and in 80% of the cases, they framed public relations in negative contexts. Recent studies also confirm the presence of such negative attitudes in various discursive forms (ex.: Wilson & Supa 2013; Sissons 2012). According to Shin and Cameron (2003), these adverse attitudes are also found to be reciprocal. However, today the relationship has evolved from a 'love-hate' context to interdependency. In a recent experiment, in which public relations practitioners and journalists could see their roles in action, Clementson (2019) reports that public relations practitioners align with journalists in their perceptions, and they share a certain level of in-group affiliation. As Waters, Tindall and Morton (2010) suggest journalists and public relations practitioners are becoming more cooperative and pragmatic so that the needs of both groups can be met. Therefore, writing styles seem to be an important area of debate in the online environment where both journalism and public relations practices have significantly changed.

Focus group discussions suggest that junior journalists seem to succeed in terms of adaptability to online journalism practices. Senior journalists, on the other hand, are not well-equipped with new media practices. Newsgathering practices of senior journalists usually range from traditional tools to certain limited levels of new media proficiency. One senior journalist calls himself a "hybrid journalist" and explains "I started with typewrites and now I use computers. It has been 26 years of experience and I still learn. I use online information as a reference, but I try to confirm this information through my traditional ways including face-to-face communication". This finding is comparable with a previous study (Alikilic & Atabek 2012) which reported that younger Turkish public relations practitioners adapted more easily to social media.

The e-mail was mentioned as one of the most commonly used information sources and it outweighed the use of fax, which was once the most common communication technology in the newsroom of the 1980s. *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, and *WhatsApp* were also mentioned as news sources. Focus group participants also referred to the information overload problem in terms of online media relations. They usually complained about excessive e-mails from corporation media advisors with irrelevant or low-quality content. Although they admit the importance of direct e-mails from the organization's media relations manager, the quality of the content is their most important concern in deciding to use it or not. A junior jour-

nalist from a national newspaper claims, "After a while such mails create harassment. Especially when I am repeatedly asked to confirm if I received their e-mail, I am really upset. In general, out of 100 such e-mails, I found merely 2 useful". Focus group participants also emphasized the reliability of e-mail addresses in an organization's websites. They particularly mentioned the importance of rapid response from these designated e-mail accounts.

The importance of photographs and other visuals were also mentioned. Journalists usually criticized the low quality of the photographs used in the websites or attached to e-mails. Lack of sufficient information about the photograph is another issue. Many photographs are useless simply because they even do not include minimum information such as who is in the photograph. Participants told that only a few organizations manage to offer suitable photographs that journalists can practically use. A junior journalist tells about her disappointing experience: "I could not find any photograph of a corporation's manager from their website or elsewhere. Therefore, I e-mailed the corporation's communication manager and asked for a photo of that person. After three days, I received a passport photo of that person by snail mail. I was shocked! Some organizations are really poor in online communications".

All the participants in focus group agreed on the growing importance of online media relations and online pressrooms, and the admitted that journalists should adapt to new media environment. Such considerations by journalists possibly indicate the need for a "journalist-centric" media relations model as previously suggested by Pang (2010). However, they emphasized that organizations, public or private, should improve their new media assets to communicate successfully with the media professionals who can foster informed citizens for a healthier democratic society. In this context, focus group participants cautiously pointed out what Davies (2008) labelled as *churnalism*, as a threat to the profession of journalism. According to Johnston and Forde (2017), *churnalism* is a result of hyper-commercial media environments with fewer journalists under greater pressure than ever to create. Jackson and Moloney (2016) have shown that also the public relations practitioners were unhappy with *churnalism*, a bad journalism practice of brashly copying the pre-packaged and released material as it was. Similarly, focus group participants also criticized sedentary journalism (Baisnée & Marchetti, 2006) and passive journalism (O'Neill & O'Connor, 2008) practices. A senior journalist claimed like this: "They take everything as 'granted'. They simply copy the bulletin to their newspaper as it is, without even changing a single word". They criticized their colleagues' certain practices such as laziness, copy-paste, recycling, etc. This self-criticism implies that developing a functional and balanced online media relations ecosystem is the duty not only of the organizations' media relations professionals but also of the journalists themselves.

4.2. Survey findings

Survey items mean scores and standard deviations are shown in Table 3, 4, 5 and 6. The results indicate that the surveyed journalists are using new media tools frequently and efficiently. Table 3 shows the tools which journalists in our sample use in their business and economic news reporting activities. Organizations' websites (M=3.68) are the most commonly used tool as news source. Journalists also mentioned *Twitter* (3.61), *Facebook* (M=3.51), *Instagram* (M=3.38) and *WhatsApp* (M=3.27) as frequently used new media tools as news sources.

Table 3. Survey Items Mean Scores and Standard Deviations

Survey item statements on online news sources	Mean	SD
1. I often use an organization's website as a news source	3.68	1.014
2. I often use information from an organization's Twitter account as a news source	3.61	1.030
3. I often use information from an organization's Facebook account as a news source	3.51	1.024
4. I often use information from an organization's Instagram account as a news source	3.38	1.055
5. I often use information from an organization's WhatsApp account as a news source	3.27	1.132

When they were asked which alternative information source they prefer if there is not sufficient information on the organization's website (Table 4), the majority of the journalists pointed out (M=4.17) general search engines such as *Google*, etc. This shows that when journalists are not satisfied with the information from the organization's website, they still prefer to remain on the web through a web search. Journalists also mentioned telephone (M=3.88), social media accounts (M=3.62) and e-mail (M=3.50) as the alternative sources of information when there is not sufficient information on the organization's website. Similarly, Pettigrew and Reber (2011) reported that the majority of journalists mention telephone and e-mail when they contact public relations staff.

Table 4. Alternative Information Sources Mean Scores and Standard Deviations

Survey item statements on alternative information sources	Mean	SD
6. When there is not sufficient information on the organization's website, I prefer to get information through general search engines such as Google, etc.	4.17	.836
7. When there is not sufficient information on the organization's website, I prefer to get a contact through the organization's telephone numbers	3.88	.959
8. When there is not sufficient information on the organization's website, I prefer to get a contact through the organization's social media accounts	3.62	1.030
9. When there is not sufficient information on the organization's website, I prefer to get a contact through the organization's e-mail	3.50	1.127

As Wilcox and Cameron (2009) put it, "where PR sources are credible, there should be less suspicion in the relationship with journalists" (p. 301). Trust is one of the basic elements of successful online media relations. Table 5 shows the results concerning the trust element in online media relations. The result for the first item (item 10) clearly indicates that a dialogic style feedback (dialogic loop) is vitally important for the journalists. The majority of journalists (M=4.35) emphasized that they trust more in the organizations if they receive fast answers from the designated e-mail address of the authorized/responsible media relations person. Additionally, items 11, 12 and 13 indicate that online media relations is an important element for journalists' trust in organizations.

Table 5. Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of Survey Items on Trust

Survey item statements on trust	Mean	SD
10. Fast replies from the designated e-mail address rise my trust in the organization	4.35	.719
11. Trustworthy organizations' should have online pressrooms or media sections in their websites	4.28	.825
12. I trust more in the organizations which offer rich and comprehensive content in their websites	4.10	.857
13. I also trust in the content of the site of the organization in which I already trust	3.99	.719

Certain types of content in online pressrooms are especially important for journalists. Journalists designate photographs (M=4.53) and news archives (M=4.44) as the most important contents for an online pressroom. On the other hand, name (M=4.32) and e-mail (M=4.39) of the authorized person-in-charge of media relations are specified as essential elements in an online pressroom, again indicating the importance of a dialogic style since journalists would prefer a direct two-way e-mail communication with the authorized media relations person of the organization. This result is fairly similar to Tekgroup research (2018) outcome that 97 % of US journalists find it important to access public relations contacts within an online pressroom. The order of importance of content types is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. The Order of Importance of Content Types

Content type	Mean	SD
Photographs	4.53	.526
News archive	4.44	.705
E-mail of the authorized person in-charge of media relations	4.39	.746
Name and surname of the authorized person in-charge of media relations	4.32	.843
On-site search engine	4.27	.689
Logotype and other visuals of the organization	4.23	.834
Event Calendar	4.21	.665
Press bulletin	4.20	.828
Videos	4.19	.807
Media kit	4.14	.803
Social media accounts	4.12	.924
History of the organization	4.08	.904
Research and sectoral reports	4.05	.790
Product and service brochures	3.98	.854
Frequently asked questions (FAQ)	3.90	.920
Annual reports	3.90	.962
RSS and e-mail subscription for news	3.90	.944
CVs of top managers	3.86	.949
Sustainability reports	3.80	.980
Sound files	3.58	.977
Instant messaging	3.50	1.052

Finally, in order to test *H1*, surveyed journalists are grouped into two clusters using the k-means clustering technique. K-means algorithm is a simple, robust, efficient algorithm for clustering a wide variety of data into groups (Wu, 2012). Our clustering analysis yielded two groups of journalists: Group 1 (*N*=56) included senior journalists with lower usage levels of new media platforms (*Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram*, and *WhatsApp*) while Group 2 (*N*=96) included junior journalists with higher usage levels of new media platforms as news source. ANOVA statistics between standardized *Z-scores* of seniority and new media usage levels of the groups were significantly different ($p<0.05$ for seniority; $p < 0.001$ for new media usage) after iterating 9 times. Table 7 shows the differences of means between Group 1 and Group 2, and Mann-Whitney U test results for the trust item responses summed together (survey items 10+11+12+13). These items relate trust to the success of online pressrooms. As can be seen from Table 7, hypothesis *H1* is supported: Junior journalists with more frequent new media platforms practice (Group 2) would have more trust than the senior ones in organizations with successful online pressrooms. As pointed out by Macnamara (2014) trust plays a crucial role in the relationship between journalists and public relations practitioners. Our finding introduces the effectiveness of online pressrooms as another factor to this trust relationship for new generation journalists.

Table 7. Mean, Z and p values of negative perception items for online media relations

Trust	Mean (Group 1)	Mean (Group 2)	Z	p
Sum of trust items(10+11+12+13)	*14.76*	*16.05*	*-2.789*	*.005*

5. Discussions and Conclusion

We assume that successful online media relations require the perspectives of both public relations practitioners and journalists. Media relations is one of the main tasks of the public relations practitioners, and in order to improve media relations, they must pay attention to the journalists' views thoroughly. This paper focuses on journalists' perspectives about their expectations and preferences in retrieving information from corporate online pressrooms. In a mixed design, qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the members of the Turkish Economy and Business Reporters Association (EMD). A focus group conducted with 11 journalists revealed their expectations and preferences for online media pressrooms and explored how they verbally express their demands. This qualitative data was then used for the structuring and itemization of a survey questionnaire, which was applied to a sample of 155 journalists.

Results indicate that the journalists are frustrated with the current state of online pressrooms in some way. Their frustration is more on the usefulness of information, one of the five elements of dialogical communication principles proposed by Kent & Taylor (1998). Although the journalists agree with the importance of online pressrooms, they are not satisfied with what they are offered. Journalists designate visuals and news archives as the most important content types for an online pressroom. It is also stated that they trust more in the organizations if they receive fast answers from the authorized media relations person. This result indicates the importance of dialogic style in online media relations. New media platforms such as *Twitter, Facebook, Instagram*, and *WhatsApp* are specified as important tools for online media relations. *Twitter* is widely accepted as a flexible tool for journalists in general (Canter & Brookes, 2016) and Turkish journalists too benefit from its practical aspects

(Caba & Yeniceri Alemdar, 2018). Similarly, many journalists utilize the innovative possibilities of WhatsApp (Boczek & Koppers, 2020), and Turkish journalists have recently adapted to this group communication tool (Genc, 2018).

Finally, our cluster analysis showed that junior journalists with higher usage levels of new media platforms would have more trust in organizations with successful online media relations. As Aranoff (1975) proposed in his seminal work, credibility is a very important factor for successful relationship between public relations practitioners and journalists. Based on our findings, we suggest that new media technologies may also serve as a trust-elevating tool. On the other hand, the cluster of junior journalists with higher usage levels of new media platforms portrays the future of journalism. It is obvious that the next generations of journalists will be more new media oriented. Contemporary terms such as 'data journalism' or 'digital journalism' are evident indicators of such new generations of journalists. As Boyer (2013) projected, newer forms of sedentary journalism practices will be common among professionals. Public relations should prepare themselves for this new generation of journalists in order to be successful in online media relations. Inevitably, terms such as 'big data', 'data mining' and 'artificial intelligence' will be heard more frequently among new generations of public relations practitioners (Weiner & Kochar 2016).

In summary, in line with the existing public relations literature, our research suggests that the pressrooms embedded in organization/corporate websites have the potential to improve media relations online but is not currently being used to its full potential. Although we live in 'information age', many organizations are still at the beginning of realizing the real opportunities for the exchanging information through successful online media relations. In fact, most websites offer limited applications for online media relations and pressrooms. Furthermore, most of web pages are not updated frequently. As shown by Pettigrew and Reber (2010), even 45 % of Fortune 500 companies did not have anything posted from the last 7-10 days. A more recent study on 315 JSE-listed companies revealed that only 28% of these companies' websites had "last updated on…" information, meaning low levels of timeliness (Nel, 2019). However, as specified in the focus group part of our research, journalists give importance to timely and up-to-date content on web pages. Our research evidently showed that for successful online media relations, journalists mostly require high-quality visuals, searchable news archive and e-mail contacts for a dialogic communication in organization websites. Websites not complying with these traits will be considered unsuccessful in online media relations. In such cases, journalists will possibly stop revisiting and following organizations' websites. New generation journalists will trust more in organizations/corporations if they are offered better designed online pressrooms. Therefore, it is critical for the online pressrooms not to serve solely as an information subsidy providing tools as a part of brand journalism (Bull, 2013) activities of public relations practitioners.

This study has several limitations. For future studies, the sample for the focus group and survey may be larger and more diversified. For instance, the sample may include journalists from other countries for an international comparison. Likewise, a historical perspective in the form of a longitudinal research design can contribute fruitfully. An experimental design may also be very useful for comparatively evaluating certain online pressroom contents and styles. Obviously, all these alternatives could be the agenda for further research.

Public relations practitioners are expected to benefit from the findings of our research in developing better online media relations in general and online pressrooms, in particular. These findings could also be beneficial to professional web page designers and web design educa-

tors at universities and other tertiary education organizations. Well-designed online pressrooms will apparently contribute to better public relations of organizations/corporations. We equally believe that effectively and efficiently designed online pressroom would improve the quality of journalistic work, which is vitally important for an open and democratic society.

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