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THE USE OF TWITTER IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PUBLIC INFORMATION MODEL IN HEALTH SERVICES: A STUDY ON THE ISPARTA CITY HOSPITAL TWITTER ACCOUNT

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Abstract

Developments in communication technologies have caused significant changes in the communication management of institutions. Social media can be counted among the most important developments that created these changes. The tendency of institutions to communicate with their target audiences through social media is becoming more and more common. Today, a large part of the communication of a business with its target audience takes place through digital platforms. Public institutions generally use social media accounts to inform society about their fields of activity. Making information strengthens the harmony of the society with the institution. In this respect, health institutions inform their target audiences about the characteristics and processes of health care in order to provide an effective health service. Therefore, this study aims to reveal whether Isparta City Hospital uses its Twitter account to inform the public. This study includes the analysis of the posts on the Isparta City Hospital Twitter Account in 2022 within the framework of the public information model. The study used content analysis method. Firstly, the paper categorizes the posts of Isparta City Hospital in 2022 in the context of public relations models. Later, it divided the posts into sub-categories within the framework of the public information model. In this context, 99 of the 206 posts on the Isparta City Hospital Twitter Account in 2022 are within the scope of the general information model. Results explored that most of the Twits within the framework of the public information model consist of texts related to illness or healthy life. These are generally corporate news and messages shared on special days and weeks.

Keywords: public-information model, social media, health institution, Twitter, corporate communication, public relations

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1. INTRODUCTION

Changes in the world of communication and business and the current social structure cause the understanding of public relations to change (Peltekoğlu, 2016, p.95). Institutions that cannot be isolated from society must maintain communication with their target audiences. In this respect, public relations becomes an important field that provides communication between the institution and the society (Okay and Okay, 2007, p.108). Therefore, historically, public relations practices differ and change. As a result, the basic approaches adopted by public relations are changing. Grunig and Hunt (1984, p.25), who made a classification based on the practices that emerged in the historical flow of public relations, proposed a quadruple model. These are press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical models.

The press agency model, which is shaped based on informing the public, is a model that generally gives positive messages about the institution and does not include negative news. (Grunig et al., 1995, p.52). Communication focuses on telling rather than listening. Falsely distorted information can be given to the target audience. Communication is one-way, and no information flow is expected from the other party (Kalender, 2013, p.18). The public disclosure model is the announcement of the activities carried out by institutions or organizations to the public. However, unlike the press agency model, there is an effort to create a positive image (Ilgin and Ulupinar, 2020, pp.502-503). The main purpose of this model is disseminating information without persuasive intent (Okay and Okay, 2007, p.146). The public relations specialist provides information to the target audience openly, transparently, accurately, and impartially. Otherwise, the possibility of spreading negative news about the institution is higher. The basic philosophy of the institution is based on transparency.

The two-way asymmetric model is based on scientific persuasion regarding its main feature. The asymmetric model uses sociological theories and research results to make messages more understandable and clear (Okay and Okay, 2007, p.149). In this model, where persuasion is necessary, the support of the target audience is expected. The target audience is not just a buyer. At the same time, feedback is received from them. However, the institution's functioning is still the same depending on the feedback (Bekman and Soncu, 2020, p.195). On the other hand, the two-way symmetric model contributes more to organizational effectiveness than the asymmetric model.(Grunig et al., 2009, p.163). In this model, where mutual exchange of ideas is essential, there is not only a change in the target audience. When necessary, the institution can also change its policies (Alemdar and Kocaömer, 2020, p.306).

Today, the internet is one of the most important tools used to establish symmetrical communication between the institution and its target audiences. Public relations has important tasks for the target audience to participate in decision-making processes and to reach social networks easily (Durusoy, 2018, p.616). Public relations, which is the eyes and ears of the institution, is responsible for the effective execution of communication on digital platforms in

order to ensure the corporate reputation and create a positive perception about the institution (Koçyiğit, 2017, pp.62-63). Therefore, internet and digital-based activities are becoming more and more common in public relations practices. Mainly social networks can be used effectively and efficiently for communication between the institution and its target audience. In practice, social networks are widely used in corporate communication processes. For example, there is information in the literature that 95 percent of Twitter, 89 percent of Facebook, 83 percent of blogs and 82 percent of LinkedIn are used by public relations units. These data show that institutions and corporate executives care about Twitter. Twitter is gradually increasing its weight as a digital communication tool (Koçyiğit, 2017, p.86).

One of the most significant changes brought by internet technology is the replacement of monologue communication with dialog communication (Arslan, 2021, pp.10-11). Social networks take on a particular function in dialogic communication. According to Zerfass et al. (2009, p.60), the use of social media reveals sincerity, innovation, dialogue, and thoughts. At the same time, social media promotes the business or the public and enables the followers to get information about the institution or a product. It created an environment for the establishment of new relations between the institution and its target audience (Dara, 2011, p.8).

In the early days, social networks were a tool for interpersonal communication. From today's point of view, it assumes deeper functions than the communication between the source and the receiver. One of these functions is the agenda setting feature of social media. However, this feature has a different operation than traditional communication tools. Because social media, which creates its communication traditions, has brought the person from a passive position to an active position. Therefore, social networks are important for reaching health-related messages to people (Çobaner and Köksoy, 2014, p.905; Güregen et al., 2021, p.389). People use the internet intensively as an effective communication tool, especially for many situations such as searching for doctors, questioning diseases, communicating with doctors, following forums (Çobaner and Köksoy, 2014, p.901). In addition to its contribution to the communication between patients and health personnel, it also provides important opportunities for health experts and researchers to share information and ideas among themselves (Çobaner and Köksoy, 2014, p.900).

This study aims to examine Twitter within the framework of the public information model in health institutions' public relations. For this reason, Isparta City Hospital Twitter account was chosen as a case study. In this context, firstly, the posts on the Twitter account of Isparta city hospital were classified according to public relations models. Afterwards, the shares coded within the framework of the public information model were divided into sub-categories and examined.

2. METHOD

The research examines Isparta City Hospital Twitter posts. The universe of the research is the Twitter Shares of health institutions. The sample consists of the posts made on the Isparta City Hospital Twitter account throughout the year 2022. The sampled Twitter shares were analyzed with the content analysis method within the framework of the public relations model. The sampled posts were examined with two code groups in this context. In the first code group, twitter shares are classified within the framework of public relations models. In the second code group, the shares determined in the context of the public information model were divided into sub-themes. The codes in the analysis were defined in the reading of the sharing texts. In order to ensure the reliability of the coding process, the sampled posts were coded twice by the author, with an interval of 15 days.

3. FINDINGS

Isparta City Hospital shared 206 tweets under the username “@spartasehirhas” between January 01 and December 31, 2022 (Table 1). Looking at the distribution by month, there is no regular increase or decrease in shares.

Table 1. Distribution of Shares in 2022 by Months

Month	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
N	7	4	25	17	26	13	10	9	21	26	30	18	206
%	%3,39	%1,94	%12,13	%8,25	%12,62	%6,31	%4,85	%4,36	%10,19	%12,62	%14,56	%8,73	%100

In the analysis, the shares of Isparta City Hospital between 01 January - 31 December 2022 were classified as 33% “celebration”, 44% “announcement”, 99% “information,” and 30% “” (Table 2). When considered in the context of public relations models, the posts classified as “announcements” were evaluated within the scope of “The Press Agency / Publicity Model”. Because there is one-way communication, and the main purpose is to reach people. There may be an element of exaggeration in designs such as pop-up posters. The posts classified as informative were evaluated within the framework of “The Public-Information Model”. Because these posts aim to inform society on issues such as corporate functioning, illness, and education. These cover activities related to the interests of society without any promotional purpose. Posts classified as celebrations were evaluated within the framework of “The Two-Way Symmetrical Model”. Because special days and weeks were used to communicate with various segments of the society. At the same time, these posts aim to encourage the followers' participation.

Table 2. Distribution of Shares by Public Relations Models

Models	Frequency
The Press Agency / Publicity Model	44 / %21,35
The Public-Information Model	99 / %48,05

The Two-Way <u>Symmetrical</u> Model	33 / % 16,01
Other	30 / % 14,56
Total	206 / % 100

Content analysis of 99 posts classified with the theme of informing the public was made and determined in four different sub-categories. These categories are defined as corporate functioning, education, important days and diseases, and news. 11 of the posts are related to corporate functioning, 17 of them are about education, 38 of them are about important days and diseases, and 33 of them are about corporate news (Table 3). Therefore, in 2022, Isparta City Hospital informed its target audiences via Twitter within the framework of the above-mentioned titles.

Table 3. Subcategories of Posts coded within the scope of The Public-Information Model

Category	Frequency	Information Topics
Corporate Functioning	11	2022 fiscal year meeting; field exercise for hospital emergency and disaster plan; initiation of paediatric health and diseases specialist; information on patient admission through posts on topics such as inauguration, retirement, etc.; building inspection related to facility safety and operation; supervision of hospital quality standards, oncology council meeting.
Education	17	English for Citizens, Arabic and patient care courses, rational use of medicine, certificate for pregnant school trainees, intensive care nursing, diabetes school, emergency nursing, asthma patients, patient rights, protection of personal data, proper separation of waste, hepatitis, neonatal intensive care processes, drug abuse, program of adult intensive care nursing, CPR and IYT education, zero waste project, personnel communication training.
Information about Important Days and Diseases	38	AIDS, dental treatment, antibiotic use, leukaemia, cerebrovascular diseases, global iodine deficiency, menopause period, mental health, cerebral palsy disease, cardiovascular diseases, Alzheimer, first aid, public health, breast milk, hepatitis, drug use and trafficking, ALS disease, refugees, environment, consumption of milk and dairy products, MS disease, intestinal diseases, high blood pressure, celiac disease, hand hygiene, midwifery, laboratories, cancer, autism, tuberculosis, emergency medicine technicians and technicians, oral and dental health, 14 March Medicine Day, protecting kidney health, earthquake, green crescent, childhood cancers.
Informing with Institution News	33	Interview about Lung Cancer Month, programs made by the spiritual counseling and guidance unit, interview on the European Antibiotic Awareness Day, world premature day event, event of pressure injury prevention day, pregnant school, COPD, Diabetes, Interview on World Pneumonia Day, Interview about organ and tissue transplantation, interview about hand hygiene, interview on the International Day of Disaster Risk Reduction, interview for world arthritis day, Interview for the palliative day, giving diabetes school diplomas to patients,

		interview for seniors day, activity for hearing week, interview for world lymphoma day, Interview for world sepsis day, interview on obesity, surgery of a patient with breast cancer in the city hospital, act for health interview, the news of the hospital doctor's beating by the relatives of the patient, interview for glaucoma week, interview on obesity, interview for ear and hearing day, interview for civil defence day, news of job change in chief physician, visit to the chief physician.
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“The corporate functioning” category covers the institutional studies, meetings, physicians who start working in the hospital and physicians who leave the hospital. In the “education category”, the posts about the pieces of training organized for both personnel and citizens are grouped. “Important days and diseases category” covers information and advice on various diseases and the information provided in the field of health on the occasion of important days and weeks. Cancer Week, aids day, midwives week, world hand hygiene day, and laboratories day are some of them. Interviews were held with experts in the field of health on important days and weeks, and these conversations were shared on Twitter. These expert opinions are important in terms of increasing the awareness of the society. In the Corporate News category, there is the reporting of various events and conversations. “The corporate news category” includes information made through various events and interviews. Especially with the spread of social media, institutions share their corporate news through social media accounts, and people need to follow these accounts. Subjects such as the treatment methods applied in the hospital and various surgeries attract people's attention. Interviews about health on special days increase awareness of society on various health issues. Therefore, on these special days and weeks, the Twitter account of Isparta City Hospital is used as a means of informing society and raising awareness.

4. CONCLUSION

This study deals with the posts made in the Twitter Account of Isparta City Hospital in 2022 within the framework of the public information model. Therefore, the main conclusions reached in this study can be listed as follows:

- A total of 206 posts were made on the Twitter Account of Isparta City Hospital in 2022. The posts do not show a regular distribution according to the months.
- The analysis showed that 48.05 percent of the posts were made within the framework of informing the public. The public information model has the highest value compared to other public relations models.
- It has been observed that 99 posts coded within the framework of the public information model can be grouped under corporate functioning, education, important days and diseases, and corporate news.
- A large part of the information contents in the posts includes the topics of illness or healthy life. These are generally corporate news and posts on important days and weeks.

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