

Using digital tools by public relations practitioners in light of the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT)

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Abstract

The article aims to explore the attitudes of public relations practitioners in Jordanian telecommunications and smartphone companies in using tools, and the factors affecting their acceptance of employing them to communicate and interact with the public in the light of the unified theory of technology acceptance and use. The descriptive approach was adopted, and the questionnaire was distributed to (86) public relations practitioners in these companies to collect data. The study concluded; the diversity of digital tools that public relations practitioners employ in their communication with their internal and external audiences, where both e-mail and smartphone came from the most important digital tools used in communicating with the internal audience, while social networks and the smartphone came as the most used digital tools with the external audience. It also showed that the most important goals achieved because of employing these tools is measuring public satisfaction with the company's services, building relationships with customers, and identifying feedback. The results also showed that there is a statistically significant correlation between the factors affecting the acceptance of public relations practitioners (perceived benefit, ease of use, and available facilities) and the demographic variables of the sample.

Keywords: public relations, unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT), digital tools, communication, and smartphone companies.

1. Introduction

The technological and technical developments of communication have been reflected in public relations, which is one of the most important administrative functions in institutions and organizations, in developing their performance to achieve understanding and cooperation with the public. Thus, most organizations of all kinds have

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adopted digital technology to conduct their business in order to maintain positive relationships with their audience.

Public relations has become an indispensable necessity to achieve compatibility and adaptation with its audiences, as it is an administrative function that has a strategic role that contributes to providing important information, data, and consultations for decision-making in organizations, as it is the function that measures and predicts opinions and trends, and the expected reaction from the internal and external audiences of the institution (Harris & Whalen, 2006).

Recent digital transformations have given many advantages to public relations, which have turned into building interactive relationships with the public that differ in content and form from traditional means, due to the innovations in the virtual world in terms of modernization of its technologies and devices in order to become more sophisticated and effective in reaching its audiences. The term "digital public relations" has appeared as a result of the developments brought about by the technological revolution and, thus, a development in the nature of its roles and its ability to achieve its goals, which has granted it high flexibility, which requires a clear understanding and perception by organizations and those working in public relations departments to employ digital tools. These tools have become the main pillar of its activities and tasks, as they have added a new dimension to the forms and patterns of public relations tasks and the rules of strategic communication between organizations and the public.

Telecom companies and smartphones are among the most important sectors in which public relations play a major and important role. The nature of this company is characterized by competition to gain the trust of the current and prospective public to achieve its objectives. In recent times, digital means have become the mainstay of public relations tasks in these companies, which are distinguished by their superior technological capabilities based mainly on interaction, multimedia, and social networks. Public relations without these characteristics cannot have an impact because communicating with the masses, exchanging information, and managing a good reputation are the most important tasks necessary for public relations officials in telecommunications and smartphone companies. In addition, the status of companies has become linked to the image that the public forms of them and the level of their interaction and communication. Therefore, organizations today operate in an evolving and changing environment, and their success depends on level of adaption to the new digital environment. In this article, I try to identify the digital tools used by public relations practitioners in telecom and smartphone

companies in light of the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT).

1.1 Problem statement

The practice of public relations has undergone and is still undergoing a major transformation because of technological developments that have changed the nature of communication (the most important task of public relations). The use of technology has become a necessity in achieving public relations tasks that are based on disseminating information and news, communicating with the public, and developing mutual understanding and trust among them. Public relations employs multimedia as it performs new roles that are superior to the previous traditional ones, given the availability of new technologies by modern technology, which was reflected in the development of public relations practice to be part of the digital world to reach different audiences everywhere and at all times to create and share special content with it. The shift to digital public relations has become an imposed requirement due to the emergence of the Internet, which is the most important change that has occurred in the world in general and in public relations in particular. Communication and information technology contain many forms and modern arts that can be employed by public relations and meet the needs of the public, which has moved to the virtual space.

Accordingly, public relations should be more interactive with the public in order to establish mutual relations, gain their trust and support, and create good impressions, especially in light of the fierce competition among institutions to reach the masses. Accordingly, the problem of the study was to identify the extent to which public relations practitioners in telecommunications companies and smartphones employ digital tools.

1.2 The importance

The study shows the role of digital public relations in telecommunications companies and smart phones that have shifted from the traditional form to the electronic form of communication with their broad audiences. Digital public relations tools have become one of the most important factors for the success of public relations work because of the important role it plays in promoting companies and communicating with the masses. In addition, modern technology has provided public relations practitioners with new digital communication tools and methods that have not been used before as these tools have contributed to effectively strengthening their relationship with internal and external audiences.

In addition, the study seeks to reveal the attitudes of public relations practitioners in telecommunications companies and smart phones and

their acceptance of these new digital tools and their employment in public relations tasks. Accordingly, it is one of the first studies that dealt with this topic, in addition to that it will enrich Arab studies and research related to digital public relations, which will be an entry point for in-depth future studies.

1.3 The aims

This study aims to identify the extent to which public relations practitioners employ digital tools in telecommunications companies, and includes the following aims:

1. Identify the most important communication methods used by public relations in companies.
2. Identify the digital tools used by public relations in communicating with the internal and external public.
3. Identify the factors affecting acceptance of modern technology (perceived benefit, ease of use, available facilities, behavioral intention)

1.4 The Questions

1. What are the communication methods used by digital public relations in telecom companies and smartphones?
2. What digital tools do public relations use in telecom companies and smart phones to communicate with the internal and external public?
3. What are the factors affecting public relations practitioners' acceptance of modern technology in telecommunications and smart phone companies (perceived benefit, ease of use, available facilities, behavioral intention)?

1.5 The hypothesis

There is a statistically significant correlation between the demographic variables of the sample and the factors affecting the acceptance and use of technology by public relations practitioners (perceived benefit, ease of use, available facilities, behavioral intention).

1.6 Terminology

- Public relations: planned efforts that seek to influence the opinions and attitudes of the public through distinguished performance that is characterized by social responsibility and is based on mutual communication from the institution to the public and from the public to the institution (Cutlip et al., 1994, p.4).

- Digital Public Relations: Public Relations employing of modern communication technologies to implement some activities to contribute to achieving its goals(Salloum, 2006).
- Public Relations Practitioners: they are individuals who practice a profession, job or a specialized style of work (AICSR, 2002, p.989), and procedurally are male and female workers in the profession of public relations in telecommunications and smartphone companies. Public relations practitioners provide the public with information and news related to the organization's activities and effectiveness in keeping in touch with it, let alone their role in dealing with crises(Hallahan, 2004).
- The Internet: It is a system of computer networks that connects computers around the world with a unified protocol and connects millions of private and public networks at the local and global levels(Al-Mazahra, 2014, p.281).

2. Literature review

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) is the theoretical background for the current study. This theory assumes that beliefs are formed by individuals and then influence their behavioral attitudes towards the use of technology, which makes the use behavior intentional. In addition, individuals form their beliefs and modify them according to developments in matters that affect their attitudes, negatively or positively, which makes them use technology or not(Legris et al., 2003). The (UTAUT) theory aims to explain the intention and behavior of use, in addition to suggesting that expected performance, the expected effort and social impact, all directly affect the intent to use the technology, as this theory (UTAUT) used both the expected performance and the expected effort by integrating the structure consisting of the perceived benefit and ease of use in the TAM model in the expected performance factor, where (UTAUT) assumes that the effort exerted can be significant in determining users' acceptance of modern information technology, while ease of use is considered unimportant, since the user expects it in the early stages of using modern technology, so it can have a positive impact on the user's perception of the benefit of this technology(Marchewka & Kostiwa, 2014, p.93-104)

This theory had been developed by Venkatesh (Venkatesh et al., 2003) after in-depth reviewing of eight technology acceptance theories that had been used in previous studies to explain the behavior of using information systems (logical action theory, technology acceptance model, motivational model, and planned behavior theory, and the joint theory of behavior, the technology acceptance model, the personal computer use model, the theory of innovations, and the

theory of social perception)(Al-Farani, 2020), where some studies had concluded that the (UTAUT) model was an appropriate model for the acceptance and use of technology(Carlsson et al., 2006). So, we will know, by testing this model, the intention and behavior of use, and expected performance(Venkatesh et al., 2003).

2.1 Digital PR and Internet

The rapid development of the Internet as a means of communication required reconsideration of the communication strategies of public relations in all institutions and organizations (Junaid, 2015). Public relations has been more interested due to the progress occurred in the technical aspects related to the field of communications and information technology, which led to realize the growing importance of the practice of public relations(Al-Mazahra, 2015, p.15). So, then it is necessary for PR to keep pace with these developments in order to be able to survive in a world full of competition and exploit opportunities so as not to remain isolated, so digital public relations appeared in form of integration with digital means of communication to achieve its goals (Al-Salihi, 2021).

Over the years, the essential functions of the public relations have not changed, but the method of communication and interaction changed, and effected by recent technological developments and, Internet which characterized by interaction and the ability of transferring information. This gave the chances for various institutions and companies to communicate with their different audiences very quickly, then enhancing the relationships with these masses(Joudeh, 1996). So, the digital public relations is one of the latest concepts in managing the mental image and reputation of organizations with disparate audiences, which consists of different groups of customers, consumers, private and government agencies, and the media (Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2015), which can be done more effectively and efficiently by using digital tools.

Digital public relations practitioners seek to reach the public in the virtual world by searching for the most efficient tools to achieve its goals that differ from the previous traditional tools, as printed media have been replaced by digital tools such as websites, emails, and social networks. These modern tools enable organizations to carry out public relations activities more efficiently and effectively, by increasing interaction with the public, and thus developing long-term relationships.

According to the results of many studies such as the study(Basudan et al., 2022) that digital public relations has a positive and effective impact on the performance of institutions by adopting and relying on digital technologies in practice. Boateng(2019) concluded that

activities using effective online tools lead to a positive effect on trust and loyalty. Allagui & Breslow(2016) stated that new digital tools changed the nature of public relations and facilitated its functions. On the other side, Steinhoff et al. concluded that the use of the Internet increases the effectiveness and importance of marketing public relations.

The Internet, with its services, is an important means for public relations practitioners that led to performance developing in their work and communication with various groups of the public, in order to build a positive mental image of the institution and build relationships and communicate with these groups(Ghallab, 2014). It has also provided institutions and companies with opportunities to display text, images, and sound files using computer servers and web browsers on personal computers(Patrizio et al., 2022).

Internet provided the digital public relations multiple possibilities, including collecting and disseminating information, monitoring public opinion on various issues, and participating in direct dialogues with their public on various issues(James, 2008) as well as the direct communication between organizations and public without going through the job of the gatekeeper of the media portal, immediate communication with the institution's public, and providing any required information in various forms, whether texts, images or video clips, and public relations was also allowed to exist through websites, blogs, social networks or a private website of the organization, which are considered as a promotional interface for organizations, their services and products.

2.2 Digital public relations aspects

The emergence of digital public relations has added and modified its aspects as following:

1- The communication tools: Public relations has become dependent on modern technologies in the creating the content and disseminating news and information, such as websites, social networks, blogs, smartphones and multimedia which facilitates interaction and participation by the public in a communicative environment over the Internet(Theaker & Yaxley, 2017).

2- Controlling media content: digital tools allowed direct communication on websites or social networks and obtaining a quick reaction with the public without being exposed to the gatekeeper (White & Raman, 1999).

3- The audience: The audience for digital public relations differed from the traditional one, where the audience was a recipient only, while the audience in the digital era became a participant and creator of the

contents, as the public interacted with what was published on the Internet through the opinions, comments and opinions expressed on the network.

4- Media content: the digital environment had facilitated the publishing and finding the content (stories and news) in which users require(Aronson et al., 2016, p.4).

5- Measuring interaction and impact: Measuring the impact of media activities and messages on the recipient audience has become available accurately compared to traditional.

6- Interactivity with the public in two-way symmetric: Internet technology has enabled interactivity based on the balanced two-way symmetric model to achieve continuous and mutual understanding and satisfaction between the company and its public(Grunig, 2008).

2.3 Public Relations tools

The Internet includes many tools used by public relations practitioners, the most important of which are the following(Al-Mazahra, 2015):

1- Multimedia: it is the multiplicity of the elements of the media material on the Internet, such as sound, text, still images, and video clips in one product, and it is not necessary that all these media come together in one product.

2- E-mail, it is offered by most sites for free, allows the subscriber to send and receive letters, messages, and file. The e-mail is used by individuals and companies in 194 countries in the world.

3- Web: It is a service that allows the user to browse databases via a web, and it is considered as the most popular Internet application, and it refers to a group of servers connected to the Internet that provide graphic pages of information.

4- SMS via smart phones: They are messages sent via the instant message service and WhatsApp application on smart phones by using the Internet to deliver different types of text messages and multimedia messages between users or groups(Kumar & Sharma, 2017).

5- Social networks: It is an important tool for public relations practitioners to build relationships with the masses due to the immediacy of displaying texts, images and video clips, answering questions from the audience, and even complaints that are important to these companies, such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Messenger and Instagram.

6- Websites: It is a group of hyperlinked pages that contain texts, images, video clips, or audio files with a coherent and interactive

structure that aims to display and describe information and data about a certain entity or institution (Al-Zoub & Al-Sharaya, 2004).

2.4 Features of digital tools

The digital tools made available to public relations practitioners are characterized by several features, the most important of which are (Al-Mazahra, 2014):

1- Interactivity: This feature is manifested in many communication patterns via the Internet, such as instant chatting, communication networks, so that a site user can dialogue with other user, or send a message to him or her, which gives feedback an immediacy and directness compared to other media.

2- Asynchronous: It is the occurrence of communicative processes and transmission of information between two or more digital mediums that do not require the presence of the receiver at the time of transmission. In e-mail, the user can send and receive an instant message, which is kept in his inbox until access to it, and the user can postpone sending a message to reach the addressee on a specific date.

3- Non-public: It means the communication message that can target a specific individual, or group and not to random masses. It also means a degree of control over the communication so that the message reaches to target recipients (Sheikhani, 2010).

4- Hypertext HTML: (Hypertext Transport Protocol) It is a programming language used to create the hypertext documents containing links that refer the reader to similar sites. The efficiency of the site is measured by the links it contains to other sites.

3. Methodology

3.1 Methods

This study is a descriptive one, which able to describe scientific phenomena and the circumstances surrounding, and identifying the relationship between them and other influencing phenomena (Al-Mazahra, 2020).

3.2 Population and sample

The study population consisted of all public relations practitioners in (8) telecommunications and smartphone companies in Amman. The sample consisted of (86) practitioners, who were chosen by the purposive sampling method. The demographic variables are shown in table (1):

Table (1): The demographic variables

Variable	category	Company type			
		Telecom		smartphone	
		Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	20	45.45%	24	57.14%
	Female	24	54.55%	18	42.86%
	Total	44	100.00%	42	100.00%
Age	25-35	22	50.00%	20	47.62%
	36-45	16	36.36%	12	28.57%
	46-55	6	13.6%	10	23.81%
	Total	44	100.00%	42	100.00%
Education Level	Secondary school	0	0%	6	14.29%
	Bachelor	24	54.55%	18	42.86%
	High studies	20	45.45%	18	42.86%
	Total	44	100.00%	42	100.00%
Major	Journalism and Media	20	45.45%	14	33.33%
	Public Relations	6	13.64%	4	9.52%
	Management	8	18.18%	2	4.76%
	Marketing	2	4.55%	8	19.05%
	Others	8	18.18%	14	33.33%
	Total	44	100.00%	42	100.00%

The sample was distributed among (44) practitioners from telecommunications companies compared to (42) practitioners from smart phone companies. The table (1) showed the demographic variables of the sample.

3.3 Data Collection

The questionnaire has been used as a data collection tool that contains a set of interrelated and sequential questions that are answered and filled out by the respondent to collect information and data about a phenomenon or research problem. The stability of the tool has been tested by Cronbach's alpha equation at all fields as in the following table:

Table (2): Results of Cronbach's alpha to detect internal consistency coefficients.

Topics	Cronbach Alpha
Digital tools (internal public)	0.72
Digital tools (external public)	0.78
Perceived benefit	0.80
Ease of use	0.76

Available facilities	0.85
Intention of use	0.80
Total	0.84

The table above shows that the reliability coefficients for all topics of article is (0.84).

4. The results

The article reached the following results:

4.1 Employing digital tools and goals achieved:

4.1.1 The digital tools employed with internal audience:

Table (3): The sample's answers about public relations employing of digital tools in communicating with the companies' internal audience.

Tools	Telecommunications		Smartphones	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
E-mail	36	86%	28	60.87%
Web	18	43%	8	17.39%
Mobile phone	30	71.43%	28	60.87%
SMS	12	28.57%	14	30.43%
Company website	22	52.38%	12	26.09%
Multimedia	20	47.62%	20	43.48%

* Multiple-choice *telecommunication 42 , *Smartphones 46

Table (3) shows that "e-mail" one of most digital tools used in the practice of public relations in communicating with employees within the company with (86%), followed by "mobile phone" with (71.43%) but "SMS" came at the lowest (28.57%). While, in the Smartphone Company, "e-mail" came with (60.87%), followed by "mobile phone" with (60.09%), but "web" came at the lowest (17.39%).

4.1.2 The goals achieved by employing digital tools with internal audience:

Table (4): The sample's answers on goals achieved by using digital public relations tools with the internal public

	Telecommunications		Smartphones	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Developing human relations among the company's employees	9	21.43%	12	26.10%

Enhancing the level of functional communication between employees	9	21.43%	16	34.78%
Enhancing the level of functional communication with the company's senior management	15	35.72%	14	30.44%
Promoting the spirit of belonging among employees towards the company	22	52.38%	21	45.64%
Informing the various activities among the employees of the company	16	38.10%	15	32.60%
Explaining the decisions issued by the company's senior management	17	40.46%	18	39.12%
Activating the participation of employees in decision-making in the company	16	38.10%	14	30.42%

* multiple-choice

Table (4) shows that the most goals achieved by using digital public relations tools with the internal public in telecommunications companies was " Promoting the spirit of belonging among employees towards the company " with (52.38%), followed by "Explaining the decisions issued by the company's senior management" with (40.46%). But the lowest one was "developing human relations among company employees" and "Enhancing the level of functional communication between employees" with (21.43%) for each. For smart phone companies, the most goals achieved by using digital public relations tools with the internal public in telecommunications companies was " Promoting the spirit of belonging among employees towards the company" with (45.64%), followed by "Explaining the decisions issued by the company's senior management" with (39.12%). But the lowest one was "developing human relations among company employees" with (26.10%).

4.1.3 The digital tools employed with the external public:

Table (5): The sample's answers to the digital tools that are employed in communication with the external public

Tools	Telecommunications		Smartphones	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
E-mail	21	50.00%	25	54.35%
web	13	30.95%	15	32.61%

mobile phone	23	54.76%	24	52.17%
SMS	22	52.38%	22	47.83%
Company website	20	47.62%	22	47.83%
Electronic questionnaires	14	33.33%	10	21.74%
social networks	23	54.76%	26	56.52%
photo sharing sites	4	9.52%	4	8.70%
PR forums	12	28.57%	4	8.70%
Video sharing sites	8	19.05%	4	8.70%
Newsgroups	18	43%	14	30.43%

* multiple-choice

Table (5) shows that the most digital tools that public relations practitioners of telecommunications companies employ to communicate with the external public was “mobile phone” and “social networks” with (54.76%) for each, followed by “E-mail” with (50.0%), then “SMS” with (52.38%). For the smartphone companies, the most digital tools that public relations practitioners employ to communicate with the external public was social networks (56.52%), followed by “Email” with (54.35%), then “mobile phone” with (52.17%).

4.1.4 The goals achieved by employing digital tools with external public:

Table (6): The sample's answers on goals achieved by using digital public relations tools with the external public

The aims	Telecommunications		Smartphones	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Identifying feedback	20	48%	26	56.52%
Exploring public satisfaction with the company's services	26	61.90%	36	78.26%
Activating sales	22	52.38%	20	43.48%
Building relationships with costumers	32	76.19%	24	52.17%
Building a positive image of the company	22	52.38%	24	52.17%
Dealing with public complaints and resolve them	20	48%	16	34.78%

* multiple-choice

Table (6) shows that the most of goals achieved by public relations practitioners of telecom companies through employing digital tools in their work tasks was “building relationships with customers” with (76.19%), followed by “Exploring public satisfaction with the company's services” with (61.90%). For smart phone companies, the most of goals achieved by public relations practitioners of telecom companies through employing digital tools in their work tasks was

“Exploring public satisfaction with the company's services” with (78.26%), followed by “Identifying feedback” with (56.52%).

4.2 Factors affecting the acceptance of modern technology

4.2.1 Perceived benefit:

Table (7): The sample's answers on the perceived benefit as a result of using digital public relations tools

Perceived benefit	Telecommunications		Smartphones	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Improving my job performance	19	45.24%	12	26.09%
Increasing my productivity	17	40.48%	14	30.43%
Enhancing my effectiveness in my work	21	50.00%	20	43.48%
Saving my time	27	64.29%	24	52.17%
Feeling of pleasure	21	50.00%	21	45.65%
Feeling difficult to use these tools	11	26.19%	10	21.74%
Making me nervous	20	47.62%	12	26.09%
Feeling uncomfortable	13	30.95%	14	30.43%

* multiple-choice

Table (7) shows that the most of perceived benefits gotten from public relations partitioners of the telecom company in employing digital tools was “Saving my time” with (64.29%), followed by “Enhancing my effectiveness in my work” with (50.00%). But the lowest one was “Feeling difficult to use these tools” with (26.19%). For Smartphones companies, the most one was “Saving my time” with (52.17%), followed by “Feeling of pleasure” with (45.65%). But the lowest one was “Improving my job performance” and “Making me nervous” with (26.09%) for each.

4.2.2 Ease of use

Table (8): The study sample's answers on the ease of employing digital tools

Ease of use	Telecommunications		Smartphones	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Quick and easy access to the company's public	25	59.52%	24	52.17%
easy to become professional at using these tools in my field	27	64.29%	17	36.96%

Taking up most of my time doing work tasks	19	45.24%	14	%30.43
It needs to devote yourself to communicating with the public to answer their inquiries and complaints	13	30.95%	8	17.39%
Requiring a lot of effort to build a positive image of the company	10	23.81%	9	19.57%

Multiple-choice

Table (8) shows that the most aspects of ease of use of digital tools in telecommunications company was “easy to become professional at using these tools in my field” with (64.29%), followed by “Quick and easy access to the company's public” with (59.52%). But the lowest one was “Requiring a lot of effort to build a positive image of the company” with (23.81%). For Smartphones companies, the most aspects of ease of use of digital tools were “Quick and easy access to the company's public” with (52.17%), followed by “easy to become professional at using these tools in my field” with (36.96%). But the lowest one was “It needs to devote yourself to communicating with the public to answer their inquiries and complaints” with (17.39%).

4.2.3 Available facilities

Table (9): The sample's answers about the available facilities of employing digital public relations

Available facilities	Telecommunications		Smartphones	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Senior management supports the employment of digital tools	21	%50.00	19	41.30%
Senior management provides modern devices and tools for public relations tasks.	23	54.76%	26	56.52%
Senior management provides the necessary digital tools to prepare media and advertising content.	22	52.38%	28	%60.87
Senior management provides the necessary digital tools according to its financial ability.	22	52.38%	17	36.96%

Multiple-Choice

Table (9) shows that the most one of available facilities of employing public relations for digital tools in telecommunications companies was “Senior management provides modern devices and tools for public relations tasks” with (54.76%), followed by “Senior management

provides the necessary digital tools to prepare media and advertising content” and “Senior management provides the necessary digital tools according to its financial ability” with (52.38%) for each. For smartphone companies, the most one of available facilities of employing public relations for digital tools was “Senior management provides the necessary digital tools to prepare media and advertising content” with (60.87%), followed by “Senior management provides modern devices and tools for public relations tasks” with (56.52%).

4.2.4 Behavioral intention

Table (10): The sample's answers about the behavioral intention to employ digital tools in public relations partitioners

Behavioral intention	Telecommunications		Smartphones	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
I tend to keep on employing digital tools in carrying out public relations tasks	38	90%	36	82%
I intend to be a digital user in the practice of public relations	18	43%	21	48%
I have sufficient skills to employ digital tools in practicing public relations tasks	26	62%	30	68%
I intend to use digital tools as an essential tool in public relations	40	95%	40	91%

* multiple-choice

The table above showed the most one of behavioral intention items of public relations practitioners in telecommunications was “I intend to use digital tools as an essential tool in public relations” with (91%), followed by “I tend to keep on employing digital tools in carrying out public relations tasks” with (86%). For smart phone companies, the most one of behavioral intention items was also “I intend to use digital tools as an essential tool in public relations” with (95%), followed by “I tend to keep on employing digital tools in carrying out public relations tasks” with (86%).

4.3 The hypothesis:

Testing the study hypothesis: There is a statistically significant correlation between the demographic variables of the study sample and the factors affecting the acceptance and use of technology by public relations practitioners (perceived benefit, ease of use, available facilities, and behavioral intention).

In order to test the hypothesis of the study, correlation coefficients were measured for the relationship between the demographic variables of the study sample and the factors affecting the acceptance

and use of technology by public relations (perceived benefit, ease of use, available facilities, and behavioral intention) as shown in the following table.

Table (11): Correlation coefficients for the relationship between the demographic variables of sample and the factors affecting the acceptance and use of digital tools

Variable	correlation coefficient	Perceived benefit	Ease of use	Available facilities	Behavioral intention
Gender	correlation coefficient	.409*	.216	.049	.062
	Statistical significance	.028	.658	.515	.338
Age	correlation coefficient	.233	*.658	.515*	.338
	Statistical significance	.855	.010	.032	.138
Educational level	correlation coefficient	.490*	.339	.349	.181
	Statistical significance	.038	.097	.233	.386
Major	correlation coefficient	.460*	.339	.349	.181
	Statistical significance	.042	.232	.239	.330
The department that carries out public relations activity in the company	correlation coefficient	.497*	.343	.254	.297
	Statistical significance	.033	.235	.455	.348

- For the gender variable, the "perceived benefit" came with the highest correlation coefficient, amounting to (0.409) and a statistical significance of (0.028), while the rest of the fields were not statistically significant.

- For the age variable, "ease of use" came with a correlation coefficient of (0.658) and a statistical significance of (0.10), then "available facilities" came with a correlation coefficient of (0.515) and a statistical significance of (0.032). The rest of the fields were not statistically significant, but all of them were positive, which indicates that the higher the age level, the greater the factors affecting the acceptance and use of technology by PR practitioners.

- For the educational level variable, the “perceived benefit” came with a correlation coefficient of (0.490) and a statistical significance of (0.038), while the rest of the domains were not statistically significant, which indicates that the higher the educational level, the greater the factors affecting the acceptance and use of technology by PR practitioners.
- For the major variable, the "perceived benefit" came with a correlation coefficient of (0.460) and a statistical significance of (0.042), while the rest of the fields were not statistically significant.
- For the department variable that carries out public relations activity in the company, the field “perceived benefit” came with a correlation coefficient of (0.497) and a statistical significance of (0.033), which are positive and statistically significant values at the significance level ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), while the rest of the fields were not statistically significant.

The results of the study hypothesis can be summarized as follows:

- There is a statistically significant correlation between the gender variable and the "perceived benefit", but not with the rest of the fields.
- There is a statistically significant correlation between the age variable and the "ease of use", and the "available facilities", but not with the rest of the fields.
- There is a statistically significant correlation between the educational level variable and "perceived benefit", but not with the rest of the fields.
- There is a statistically significant correlation between the variable of major and "perceived benefit", but not with the rest of the fields.
- There is a statistically significant correlation between the department variable that carries out public relations activity in the company and the "perceived benefit" field, but not with the rest of the fields.

5. Discussion

5.1 Employing digital tools

The results revealed that telecommunications and smart phones companies employ digital tools in public relations with both the internal and external public, as the digital tools varied, the most important of which was e-mail, with a rate of (86%), followed by the mobile phone with a rate of (71.43%), and the company's website with a rate of (52.38%), this is due to the importance of these tools to communicate and create good relations between employees in the

organization to improve performance to achieve the goals of the organization.

The digital tools used by PR practitioners in telecom companies and smart phones varied with the external public, as social networks and the smartphone were the most used digital tools by PR practitioners in telecom companies, followed by SMS ranked second, while the website came in last. As for smart phone companies, social networks came first, followed by mobile phones. And the third place was for each of (SMS) and the website. These tools are considered as the most widely used virtual means by the public, and an urgent necessity for public relations to employ them in their tasks, especially since their activity is mainly based on the communication process.

Social networks and smart phones have provided many opportunities that were not previously available, such as switching from one-way communication to equal bilateral communication by interacting with the public and answering their questions and inquiries, in addition to enhancing their reputation and publishing information related to their activities to build bridges of trust and understanding between the institution and the public. Neill & Moody(2015) found that the use of social networks in public relations has increased the capabilities of The influence of its practitioners on the institutions and enabled them to manage their reputation. Lee(2021) considered that managing the organization's account on social networks is the responsibility of public relations practitioners. Madani & Mubarak(2022) concluded that social media and smart phones improve the level of service delivery to the public, which leads to building a good reputation for the company and its services. Wiesenberg & Verčič(2021) indicated to the importance of social media platforms as a mediator in the strategic transformation of communication, visual stimuli and the role of visual communication, as well as the importance of videos, pictures and illustrations via the Internet, in using these tools, which came in the third place with a rate of (16%). The study found that the most of practitioners are feeling with easy and comfortable in using these tools. This is consistent with the (Al-Taweel, 2019) and (Bataienh & Alafeef, 2018).

5.2 factors affecting the behavioral intention of public relations practitioners to accept and use digital tools:

5.2.1 Perceived benefit of employing digital PR tools:

The results revealed that the most important of Perceived benefit for public relations practitioners was "saving time", followed by "enhancing their efficiency and productivity", and "improving their performance." and it was found that they "find pleasure in using these tools," which came in the third place. This result is consistent with the

(Al-Taweel, 2019) who concluded that "Perceived ease of use" correlates with actual use more strongly than the variable "perceived benefit" correlates with actual use. Also, Bataienh & Alafeef(2018) found that there was an effect of expected performance, expected effort, and social impact on the behavioral use of online shopping by consumers. But, Abdullah(2018) concluded that there was no effect of the perceived benefit in the actual use of cloud computing in the telecommunications company.

5.2.2 Ease of use of PR tools

The results showed that the most of public relations practitioners in telecommunications and smartphone companies believe that digital tools allow them to reach the company's audiences quickly and easily (72%), and that these tools allow them to become skillful in using these tools(49%), while these tools were need to more devotion to communicating with the public in order to deal with their inquiries and complaints, and need a great effort to build a positive image of the company. This result agrees with Gangwar et al.(2015) and Ekufu(2012) that stated that there is an effect of the expected ease of use in the actual use of cloud computing, Nasri et al.(2013) and Montazemi & Qahri-Saremi(2015), concluded the importance of ease of use as a determinant of the perceived benefit of banking services. while it contradicts what was concluded by Abdullah(2018) that concluded that there is no impact of the expected ease of use of cloud computing.

5.2.3 The available facilities of PR tools

The results revealed the support of senior management to employ digital tools, as the most one of available facilities was "Senior management provides modern devices and tools for public relations tasks" followed by "Senior management provides the necessary digital tools to prepare media and advertising content" and "Senior management provides the necessary digital tools according to its financial ability". While the lowest was a paragraph that senior management provides the necessary digital tools according to its financial ability. This result agreed with Basudan et al.(2022), who concluded that the senior management in government institutions is keen to support public relations and harness all support and capabilities to activate all electronic communication and media channels. Gangwar et al. (2015; Low et al.(2011) concluded that senior management supports the process of adopting technology. Ariff et al.(2012) indicated to effect of self-efficacy in using the computer on perceived benefit, ease of use, and perceived credibility. But Aba'ah(2015) concluded that there is a lack of training for public relations employees to raise their capabilities in dealing with modern technology in all its forms.

5.2.4 Behavioral intention to employ PR tools

The results revealed that most public relations practitioners in telecommunications and smartphone companies have the desire to benefit from digital tools because they have sufficient skills to use these tools, and they have the intention to employ these tools. This result is consistent with what was indicated by Al-Mazahrah(2018), which confirmed the existence of a relationship between the expected performance and the behavioral intention of public relations practitioners to employ social networks in their field of work.

Abual-Ula(2016); Arafa & Meliji(2017); Martins et al.(2014) showed that behavioral intentions are influenced by both the expected benefits and the ease of use and ease of access to the system. And that there is a positive effect for each of the expected quality, expected effort, social impact, and perceived risks on the intention to use the Internet in banking services.

6. Conclusion

Digital tools have made public relations easier to communicate with both internal and external audiences of companies more effectively than before. This study discussed the extent to which telecommunications and smartphone companies in Jordan employ digital tools to communicate with their audiences. In this context, the study found that these companies employ digital tools in the practice of public relations with the internal public, the most important of which are e-mail, smartphone and multimedia to improve the quality of work and develop the spirit of belonging among employees towards companies, while social networks and smartphones were the most used tools With its external public in order to measure the public's satisfaction with the companies' services, identify feedback and build relationships with customers given that it is the most used means by the public. It was also found that the factors affecting the acceptance of public relations practitioners (perceived benefit, ease of use, and facilities) affect the behavioral intention. There was a statistically significant correlation between (gender and the perceived benefit), (age and ease of use and available facilities), (educational level and the perceived benefit, major and field of the perceived benefit, and (department and the perceived benefit). Thus, the results showed the applicability of the (UTAUT) model in the employment of public relations practitioners for digital tools in telecommunications companies and smartphones.

7. Recommendations

The author recommends developing the skills of public relations practitioners in employing the digital tools that emerge continuously through the communication environment and keeping abreast of daily innovations.

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The author certifies that he has NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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