

# General Social Media Usage in South Korea

## With a Focus on Differences Between Private and Public Organizations\*

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A number of studies have explored the importance of social media as an organizational communications tool in a Western context. With this work in mind, this paper explores general social media usage in South Korea through an online survey of 143 organizations' social media practitioners. Results show that social media are gaining perceived importance within South Korean organizations to the same extent as they have worldwide. The results also show social media usage (e.g., viral campaign experiences, CEO usage, job satisfaction, etc.) differs between three types of organizations: large companies, small companies, and public organizations. Finally, this study shows that, thus far, South Korean organizations tend to use social media to accomplish short-term or single-purpose communications goals, and practitioner satisfaction with working in social media is generally not high.

**Key words: social media current usage, social media practitioners, organizational communication, social media in South Korea**

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## 1. Introduction

The importance of social media as an organizational communications tool in a Western context has already been discussed in prior studies (Alikilic and Atabek, 2012; Briones, Kuch, Liu, and Jin, 2011; Verhoeven, Tench, Zerfass, Moreno, and Vercic, 2012). Blandchard (2011, p.7) explained that social media is the infrastructure for “socialized digital communication” that allows “people to talk with each other and share thoughts, opinions, information and whatever they can get their hands on”. In an important study, Verhoeven, et al. (2012) argued that social media has grown in significance in European organizations, while Briones, et al. (2011) emphasized that the use of social media for organizational communications purposes is both effective and essential in the emerging digital age.

South Korea has one of the highest rates of social media saturation worldwide (Han, 2012), with over 11 million Facebook users as of December 2012 (Bloter.net, Feb. 14, 2013). In South Korea, the emergence of social media has accompanied the development of external organizational communications, with such areas of professional practice traditionally focusing on disseminating information to the public via the mass media.

Worldwide, social media has made organizational communications with the public more direct, immediate, and interactive (Briones, 2011; Schultz, et al., 2011; Taylor and Kent, 2010). With the emergence of new media, organizational communications activities carried out through traditional mass media channels have been modified to accommodate social media. Alikilic and Atabek (2012) have outlined some of the ways in which the Internet and social media tools like social networks, blogs, and forums have revolutionized the dynamics of organizational communications. Others, such as Muralidharan, Dilliston, and Shin (2011), and Verhoeven, et al. (2012), have refined this analysis, noting that the perceived impact, value, and usage of social media channels in organizations can differ according to organization type and structure. This re-

search has only begun to unpack the implications of the organizational use of social media.

Given that the study of social media use by communications practitioners in organizations is a new area of academic interest (Verhoeven, et al., 2012), the topic has mostly been studied within the context of Western academia. Therefore, this paper attempts to shed light on the use of social media in South Korean organizations through exploring their social media communications practitioners' perceptions in the field. Given that a number of studies, as referenced above, have observed a relationship between social media use and organizational type, this study also considers the impact of organizational type and size on this phenomenon.

This study is significant in that it is exploratory and descriptive, aiming to analyze the bigger picture of social media use in South Korea. Data was collected from 143 practitioners from private companies and public organizations in South Korea via online survey in April and June of 2012. To frame the survey, we chose to examine the use of the six channels most utilized by South Korean organizations, as identified in a pilot test conducted prior to the survey: Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)), Twitter ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)), blogs (various services), YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)), Me2day ([www.me2day.net](http://www.me2day.net)), and Flickr ([www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)).

## 2. Prior studies on social media's usage in the communications field

Research on social media in the organizational communications field is relatively new given the short history of the phenomenon. However, studies of social media grew rapidly towards the end of the last decade, as organizations began to use social media as a communications tool (Seltzer and Mitrook, 2007; Xifra and Huertas, 2008). These studies have mainly focused on external organizational communications practices, particularly within public relations and crisis management.

Similar to this study, early research into organizational communications practice involving social media initially focused on the use of blogs, as these were the first new media tools to be widely used (Briones, et al., 2011; Yang and Kang, 2009; Seltzer and Mitrook, 2007; Xifra and Huertas, 2008). Studies examining the use of Twitter (Waters and Jamal, 2011; Wigley and Lewis, 2012; Rybalko and Seltzer, 2010; Xifra and Grau, 2010) and Facebook (Bortree and Seltzer, 2009; Lee, 2012) followed as these channels gained in popularity.

While the majority these studies have argued that organizational communications practiced using social media channels such as blogs, Twitter, and Facebook can improve an organization's relationship with the public (Rybalko and Seltzer, 2010; Seltzer and Mitrook, 2007; Taylor and Kent, 2010; Wigley and Lewis, 2012; Yang and Kang, 2009), Waters and Jamal (2011) claimed that organizations are still more likely to use one-way communication, despite social media's ability to facilitate dialogue.

The role of social media in crisis management has also received significant scholarly attention (Andreas, 2012; Karen, 2012; Muralidharan, et al., 2011; Schultz, et al., 2011; Sweetser and Metzgar, 2007), with interesting work exploring image restoration theory within a new media context (Moody, 2011; Muralidharan, et al., 2011). These studies have argued that social media channels, including blogs and Twitter, are often efficient communication tools for repairing reputation because of their technical characteristics, such as interactivity and speed (Schultz and Goritz, 2011). However, in order to recover from a crisis, it is still believed that social media approaches must employ traditional image restoration strategies (Moody, 2011).

Another area of academic focus has been organizational communications professionals' social media adoption and perceptions (Avidar, 2009; Curtis, Edwards, Fraser, Gudelsky, Holmquist, Thornton, and Sweetser, 2010; DiStaso, McCorkindale, and Wright, 2011; Eyrich, Padman, and Sweetser, 2008; Steyn, Sangari, Pitt, Parent and Berthon, 2010). Similar to this study, further studies have analyzed the effect of organizational type and size on these dynamics (Aliklic and Atabek, 2012; Verhoeven,

et al., 2012).

Such studies have commonly reported that practitioners positively regard the general importance, effectiveness, and outcomes of social media (Alikilic and Atabek, 2012; DiStaso, et al., 2011; Bortree and Seltzer, 2009; Yang and Kang, 2009). These studies have also indicated that using interactive social media has immense potential to promote dialogue, as well as a host of cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral effects (Bortree and Seltzer, 2009; Yang and Kang, 2009).

In particular, related studies have argued that practitioners' perceptions of social media differ according to organizational type (Curtis, et al., 2010; Verhoeven, et al., 2012). Muralidharan, Dilliston, and Shin (2011) and Verhoeven, et al. (2012) noted that the perceived impact, value, and use of social media channels in organizations can differ according to organizational type and structure. For example, Verhoeven, et al., (2012) argued that communication consultants and agencies in Europe have a stronger belief in the value and use of social media than practitioners working in organizations.

However, Alikilic and Atabek (2012) reported that organizational adoption and perceived importance of social media was not correlated with organizational size or type, but with practitioner's age.

### 3. The meaning of social media as an organizational communications tool

Most prior work seems to concur that social media, with its advanced technological features, has helped improve organizational communications practice as its use and importance has grown (Alikilic and Atabek, 2012; Briones, et al., 2011; Calikilic and Atabek, 2012; Smith, 2010; Taylor and Kent, 2010). The emergence of social media has also made organizational communications more direct, immediate, and interactive. Some studies have argued that social media has dramatically changed many aspects of the field (Avidar, 2009; DiStaso, et al., 2011; Muralidharan,

et al., 2011). For example, Wright and Hinson (2008, quoted in Taylor and Kent, 2010) claimed that the impact of social media on organizational communications practice is “phenomenal.”

In the light of these expectations, it is important to ask why social media is viewed as preferable to traditional media. The answer can presumably be found in the intrinsic characteristics of social media vs. those of traditional media, such as speed, interrelatedness, dialogic communication capabilities, encouragement of interactivity, openness, and transparency (Bortree and Seltzer, 2009; Brioners, et al., 2011; DiStaso and Bortree, 2012; Schultz, et al., 2011; Taylor and Kent, 2010; Xifra and Grau, 2010).

Transparency and conversational engagement are believed to be key aspects of social media, owing to their openness and interactivity (Alikilic and Atabek, 2012). These qualities could provide opportunities for organizational communications practitioners to shape their relationship with their constituents through online conversation and communities (Gilbert, 2009; Schultz, et al., 2011). Social media channels are also seen as more dialogic, interactive, and speedy instruments for building relationships. Social media are seen as encouraging interaction and strengthening the relationship between organizations and the public (DiStaso and Bortree, 2012), while the viral spread of information across social media is often viewed as having great utility for crisis professionals (Freberg, 2012).

Interestingly, these celebrated characteristics of social media highlight the growing importance of two-way communication. Social media’s utilities, such as expression (Rettberg, 2009), environmental scanning (Kellerher and Miller, 2006), conversational engagement (Paine, 2007), the sharing of values, beliefs and interests (Hallahan, 2008), issue framing (Kent, 2008), information dissemination (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas, 2009), and persuasion (Kent and Taylor, 1998), seem ideally suited to the needs of organizational communications practitioners. In addition, social media is noted for being intrinsically transparent, open, and interactive, further facilitating two-way communication and aiding relationship building and trust development with customer-facing activities central to

organizational communications (DiStaso and Bortree, 2012; Rybalko and Seltzer, 2010; Taylor and Kent, 2010). Owing to these intrinsically open and interactive characteristics, social media is also expected to help facilitate sincere dialogue between organizations and the public.

#### 4. The emergence of social media and organizational communications development in South Korea

As previously mentioned, South Korea has one of the highest rates of social media saturation worldwide. In addition to blogs, Twitter and Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest, and KakaoStory have also become popular alternative tools for external organizational communications in South Korea.

The rapid rise of social media in South Korea is closely related to the surge in local and worldwide smartphone usage (Keum and Cho, 2010). Over 30 million South Koreans own a smartphone, a very high adoption rate considering the country's population is only 50 million (ZDNet Korea, Aug. 31, 2012). Thus, it is hardly surprising that South Korea has been fertile ground for the spread of social media.

However, given that organizational communications activities in South Korea have been largely publicity-oriented (*hong-bo*), most organizational information in South Korea is disseminated through traditional mass media, such as newspapers and public broadcasting (Kim, 2003; Kim and Kim, 2010; Park, 2001). This is likely due to the fact that one-way propaganda-oriented communication dominated much of the nation's modern history under autocratic rule (Kim, 2003).

Prior studies of the South Korean organizational communications industry have shown that Korean practitioners mostly utilize one-way media relations tactics, such as public information dissemination (Kim and Hon, 1998; Kim and Kim, 2010), even though they have presumably recognized the importance of two-way professional models (Kim, 1996; Rhee, 1999). In this context, South Korean organizations can use social media to devel-

op specialized PR activities using two-way communication. For example, Kim (2003), having analyzed prior studies, noted that the specialization of PR communication can significantly increase PR practitioners' job satisfaction (Kim and Hon, 1998; Broom and Dozier, 1986).

Indeed, in South Korea, Jang and Nam (2006) and Kim and Hon (1998) have argued that asymmetrical communications strategies are related to lower levels of job satisfaction, particularly in more traditional institutions such as national broadcasting organizations. Given the potential of social media to facilitate symmetrical dialogue, the question of job satisfaction is worth revisiting.

With this in mind, South Korean organizations are now in a situation where social media is transforming traditional one-way publicity activities to direct communication with the public. Consequently, this study attempts to map this change and highlight areas for further exploration by analyzing South Korean communications practitioners' current social media usage. The study also looks at practitioners' job satisfaction with regard to social media in order to better understand the field.

## 5. Research Questions

With these goals in mind, the following research questions were proposed:

- RQ1. How are South Korean organizations currently using social media as a communications tool?
- RQ2. How important is social media to South Korean organizations?
- RQ3. What is the perceived outcome of social media usage in South Korean organizations?
- RQ4. How satisfied are South Korean social media communications practitioners with their jobs?
- RQ5. Are there any differences between large companies, small companies, and



public organizations regarding perception and usage of social media and job satisfaction?

## 6. Method

The objective of this study was to provide an academic and practical baseline to analyze the general use of social media in South Korea by social media communications practitioners. The study also looked at the effect of organization size and type (large companies, small companies and public organizations) on social media usage, perceived outcome of social media usage, and social media communications practitioners' level of job satisfaction in order to better understand this new phenomenon.

Data was collected through an online survey administered to 143 organizations between April and July 2012 in Seoul, South Korea. For the size comparison between private companies, large companies were defined as having greater than 1,000 employees, per guidelines used by the Association of High Potential Enterprises of Korea ([http://ahpek.or.kr/company/com\\_01\\_02.asp](http://ahpek.or.kr/company/com_01_02.asp)). (Because of the small sample size, a size comparison between public organizations was not conducted.) The results were then analyzed using frequency, chi-square, and one-way ANOVA analyses, using the post-hoc analyses of Scheffe's method and least significant difference (LSD).

### 1) Sample selection

This study utilized a non-probability sampling method that included snowballing sampling, a method for sequentially accumulating respondents. This method was employed because it is difficult to contact social media communications practitioners, and because social media studies do not yet feature a clear sampling framework. One respondent per organization was sampled, with respondents representing a wide range of organizational social media communication departments including PR, marketing, and social media. Ultimately, a total of 143 respondents

completed the survey (large companies  $n = 40$ , 28%; small companies  $n = 56$ , 39.2%; public organizations  $n = 47$ , 32.9%; male  $n = 81$ , 56.6%; female  $n = 56$ , 39.2%; no response  $n = 6$ , 4.2%; age 21~30  $n = 44$ , 30.8%; age 31~40  $n = 80$ , 56.0%; age over 41  $n = 19$ , 13.3%).

Respondents' social media experience varied from less than six months to over two years (less than six months = 11.8%; six months to one year = 18.1%; one to two years = 33.5%; more than two years = 35.6%). The social media experience of respondents from private companies varied further still (more than two years = 42.5% and 45.5%, respectively), while respondents from public organizations tended to have less experience (more than two years = 19.9%). A chi-square test revealed a significant difference in social media experience according to organization type ( $\chi^2 = 15.288$ ,  $n = 142$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p < .05$ ), with public organizations demonstrating relatively lower social media uptake.

## 2) Research development

The survey design adopted prior research measurement scales regarding the usage and perception of social media, drawing on work from Alikilic and Atabek (2012), Avidar (2009), DiStaso, et al. (2011), Eyrich, et al. (2008), Toledano (2010), and Verhoeven, et al. (2012). These were modified through the addition of questions developed to suit the present study. To investigate social media communications practitioners' level of job satisfaction, we added modified versions of questions used in organizational communication practitioner satisfaction surveys conducted by Kim and Hon (1998) and Serini, Toth, Wright, and Emig (1997). Items drawn from these studies were adjusted and modified based on responses to pilot interviews with five social media communications practitioners, resulting in a total of 15 items.

The first section of the survey, entitled "The Current Usage of Social Media," contained five items, which attempted to determine how social media is being used in South Korean organizations. It investigated (a) the current channels being used, (b) the channel granted most significance, (c) CEO channel usage, (d) viral campaign experience involving

influencers (including power bloggers), and (e) regular interaction with influencers. A pilot test prior to the survey identified Korean organizations' six most utilized channels: Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube, Me2day, and Flickr. Although KakaoStory has become an increasingly popular social media outlet in South Korea, few organizations had adopted it when the survey was conducted.

The second section of the survey, entitled "The Influence of Social Media," contained four items that attempted to determine practitioners' perceptions of the influence of social media in South Korean organizations. These four items concerned (a) the importance of social media, (b) the effectiveness of social media in general, (c) the effectiveness of social media in crisis situations, and (d) recent social media budgetary changes.

The third section of the survey, entitled "Actual Outcome of Social Media," employed two items to determine practitioners' perceptions of the actual outcome of social media in South Korea organizations. It investigated (a) the main objectives of social media use and (b) the outcomes of social media use.

The fourth section of the survey, entitled "Social Media Practitioners' Level of Job Satisfaction," contained four items which attempted to determine practitioner career satisfaction, investigating: (a) the level of job satisfaction, (b) the level of satisfaction with management support, (c) the level of satisfaction with working conditions, and (d) practitioners' organizational level.

All four sections also investigated the differences between the three sample groups (large companies, small companies, and public organizations) with regard to the above mentioned questions. Questions were rated on a single-item based on prior research and the pilot test results.

## 7. Results

### 1) The General Usage of Social Media

In order to answer research question 1, this study first investigated which social media channels were currently being used in their organizations (multiple responses). The data showed respondents used Facebook most (92.3%), followed by Twitter (78.3%), blogs (67.8%), YouTube (38.5%), me2day (21.7%), Flickr (12.6%), and others (5.6%). There was no statistically significant difference between the groups ( $\chi^2 = 54.942$ ,  $n = 143$ ,  $df = 50$ ,  $p = .293$ ).

The study then investigated which social media channels respondents thought were most important for their communications activities: 53.6% of respondents chose Facebook, followed by blogs (33.6%), Twitter (10.5%), me2day (0.7%), and YouTube (0.7%). This showed that there were differences between channel popularity and perceived importance, with South Korean organizations placing more importance on blogs than on Twitter. There was no statistically significant difference between the groups ( $\chi^2 = 14.645$ ,  $n = 143$ ,  $df = 10$ ,  $p = .146$ ).

**(Table 1) Social media adoption and perceived importance**

Adoption	%	Perceived importance	%
<b>Facebook</b>	92.3% (n = 132)	<b>Facebook</b>	53.8% (n = 77)
<b>Twitter</b>	78.3% (n = 112)	<b>Blogs</b>	33.6% (n = 48)
Blogs	67.8% (n = 97)	Twitter	10.5% (n = 15)
YouTube	38.5% (n = 55)	YouTube	0.7% (n = 1)
Me2day	21.7% (n = 31)	Me2day	0.7% (n = 1)
Flickr	12.6% (n = 18)	Flickr	0
Others	5.6% (n = 8)	Others	0.7% (n = 1)
Total	(Multiple responses)	Total	100%

(Table 2) Social media usage frequency by CEOs and senior executives

Usage frequency	Large companies	Small companies	Public organizations	Total
Not at all	<b>62.5%</b> (n = 25)	21.8% (n = 12)	25.6% (n = 12)	34.5% (n = 49)
Occasionally	25% (n = 10)	23.6% (n = 13)	<b>31.9%</b> (n = 15)	26.8% (n = 38)
1-3 times a month	5% (n = 2)	18.2% (n = 10)	17% (n = 8)	14.1% (n = 20)
1-3 times a week	2.5% (n = 1)	9.1% (n = 5)	17% (n = 8)	9.9% (n = 14)
Everyday	5% (n = 2)	<b>27.3%</b> (n = 15)	8.5% (n = 4)	14.7% (n = 21)
Total	100% (n = 40)	100% (n = 55)	100% (n = 47)	100% (n = 142)

$\chi^2 = 31.064$ ,  $n = 142$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p < .001$

The study then investigated how often the respondents' organizations' CEOs and senior executives used social media. Generally, respondents reported the frequency of CEO and senior executive social media usage as follows: "not at all" (34.5%), "occasionally" (26.8%), "everyday" (14.7%), "1-3 times a month" (14.1%) and "1-3 times a week" (9.9%). This result showed that CEOs and senior executives were actually using social media to some extent, with a modest percentage of CEOs using social media everyday. While 62.5% of CEOs in large companies do not use social media at all, 27.3% of CEOs in small companies use it every day. The chi-square test revealed a significant difference between the groups ( $\chi^2 = 31.064$ ,  $n = 142$ ,  $df = 8$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

The study then investigated if the respondent's organization had any experience in viral campaigns that engage with social media influencers, such as power bloggers, with 53.2% of respondents reporting experience with viral campaigns that engage with power influencers for organizational

communications purposes, and 46.8% of respondents reporting no experience. Interestingly, over half of the respondents from both large and small companies reported they had had experience engaging with social media influencers for viral campaigns (65% and 60.0%, respectively), while over half of the respondents from public organizations reported they had had no experience (65.2%). A chi-square test revealed a significant difference between the groups ( $\chi^2 = 9.525$ ,  $n = 141$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

The study then investigated if the respondents' organizations regularly interacted with power influencers. Even though more than half of respondents had experience with viral campaigns that engage with power influencers, the results showed that 60.6% of organizations had not had regular interactions with power influencers, while 39.4% had. There was no statistically significant difference between the three groups ( $\chi^2 = 1.698$ ,  $n = 142$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .428$ ).

Regarding research question 1, only two items (CEO channel usage and viral campaign experience with influencers) revealed a statistically significant difference between the three groups, while the other three items (most popular channel, most important channel, and the regularity of interaction with influencers) did not show a significant difference. In particular, the item concerning CEO channel usage showed CEOs in small companies used social networks far more often than CEOs in large companies. Also, the item concerning viral campaign experience with influencers showed practitioners in large-sized companies had far more experience than practitioners in public organizations.

## 2) The Influence of Social Media

In order to answer research question 2, the study first asked respondents to rate the importance of social media activities on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "very unimportant," 5 = "very important"). Overall, respondents had a positive perception of the importance of social media in organizational communications practice ( $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = .65$ ), with no one considering it "unimportant." There was no statistically significant

difference between the three groups ( $F(2, 140) = .852, p = .429$ ).

The study then asked respondents to rate the effectiveness of social media channels as part of their general organizational communications activities on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = “very ineffective,” 5 = “very effective”). Respondents reported that the most effective social media channels were, in descending order: Facebook ( $M = 4.07, SD = .78$ ), followed by blogs ( $M = 4.03, SD = .85$ ), Twitter ( $M = 3.54, SD = .93$ ), YouTube ( $M = 3.22, SD = .99$ ), Me2day ( $M = 2.42, SD = .93$ ) and Flickr ( $M = 2.33, SD = .89$ ). There was no statistically significant difference between the three groups (Facebook  $F(2, 137) = .319, p = .728$ ; blogs  $F(2, 137) = .791, p = .456$ ; Twitter  $F(2, 139) = 1.370, p = .257$ ; YouTube  $F(2, 137) = .319, p = .728$ ; Me2day  $F(2, 130) = 2.428, p = .092$ , Flickr  $F(2, 132) = 2.725, p = .069$ )

The study then investigated which social media channels respondents found the most effective for crisis management activities, with respondents reporting Facebook (36.4%) and Twitter (36.4%) as most effective, fol-

**<Table 3> Experience with viral campaigns and regular interaction with power influencers**

		Large companies	Small companies	Public organizations	Total
Experience in viral campaigns	Yes	65% (n = 26)	60% (n = 33)	<b>34.8%</b> <b>(n = 16)</b>	53.2% (n = 75)
	No	35% (n = 14)	40% (n = 22)	<b>65.2%</b> <b>(n = 30)</b>	46.8% (n = 66)
Total		100% (n = 40)	100% (n = 55)	<b>100%</b> <b>(n = 46)</b>	100% (n = 141)
Regular interaction	Yes	47.5% (n = 19)	38.2% (n = 21)	34% (n = 16)	39.4% (n = 56)
	No	52.5% (n = 21)	61.8% (n = 34)	66% (n = 31)	<b>60.6%</b> <b>(n = 86)</b>
Total		100% (n = 40)	100% (n = 55)	100% (n = 47)	100% (n = 142)

Experience with viral campaigns  $\chi^2 = 9.525, n = 141, df = 2, p < .01$ /Regular interaction  $\chi^2 = 1.698, n = 142, df = 2, p > .05$

lowed by blogs (23.8%). Me2day, YouTube, and Flickr were not mentioned at all. There was no statistically significant difference between the three groups ( $\chi^2 = 9.514$ ,  $n = 142$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p = .147$ ). Twitter was apparently highly regarded for crisis management activities, possibly owing to its rapid dissemination capabilities.

The study then asked respondents if there had been any social media budget changes in 2012 vs. the previous year, and if so, to what degree. Results showed that 50.3% of organizations had increased their social media budgets from 2012 levels, while 6.3% of respondents said their budgets had been reduced, and 42.7% of respondents said their budgets had not changed. Of the organizations reporting an increased budget, 28% reported an increase of over 50%. There was no statistically significant difference between the three groups ( $\chi^2 = 4.895$ ,  $n = 142$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = .298$ ).

None of the items related to research question 2 showed any statistically significant difference between the groups, implying that, generally, all three groups perceived social media to be highly important.

### 3) Actual Outcome of Social Media

In order to answer research question 3, the study first investigated the respondents' main objectives were when using social media (multiple responses). The most-favored objectives were customer relations and communications improvement (70.6%), followed by business image development (52.4%), brand awareness enhancement (47.6%), media asset development (30.8%), event and promotion enhancement (24.5%), customer feedback collection (16.1%), issue and crisis management (11.2%), service satisfaction and sales increase (11.2%), and other reasons (2.8%). There was no statistically significant difference between three groups ( $\chi^2 = 149.694$ ,  $n = 143$ ,  $df = 124$ ,  $p = .058$ ). These results suggest that South Korean practitioners mainly use social media to communicate and build relationships with the public, supported by social media's intrinsic characteristics, such as interactive and dialogic communication capabilities.

Respondents were also asked to rate the actual outcome of their social media activities on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "very unproductive,"



5 = “very productive”). Generally, the outcome level of the three groups was above the midpoint, with respondents reporting that the main outcomes of social media uptake were an increase in channel users ( $M=4.00$ ,  $SD=.78$ ), followed by an improvement in customer relations and communication ( $M=3.94$ ,  $SD=.84$ ), business image development ( $M=3.90$ ,  $SD=.79$ ), event and promotion enhancement ( $M=3.78$ ,  $SD=.91$ ), brand awareness enhancement ( $M=3.49$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ), customer feedback collection ( $M=3.57$ ,  $SD=.97$ ), issue and crisis management ( $M=3.49$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ), and service satisfaction and sales increase ( $M=3.23$ ,  $SD=.91$ ). There was no statistically significant difference between the three groups (channel users  $F(2, 140) = 1.234$ ,  $p = .294$ ; improvement in customer relations and communication  $F(2, 137) = .094$ ,  $p = .911$ ; business image development  $F(2, 140) = .284$ ,  $p = .753$ ; event and promotion enhancement  $F(2, 138) = .410$ ,  $p = .665$ ; brand awareness enhancement  $F(2, 137) = .091$ ,  $p = .913$ ; customer feedback collection  $F(2, 139) = .077$ ,  $p = .926$ ; issue and crisis management  $F(2, 137) = .091$ ,  $p = .913$ ), except with regard to customer satisfaction and sales increase ( $F(2, 140) = 8.692$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Regarding research question 3, none of the items showed a statistically significant difference between the groups, implying that generally all three groups perceive tangible outcomes, such as the increase of channel users, to be productive business results. Also, while intangible outcomes were not ranked as highly as tangible outcomes, practitioners still identified intangibles, such as relationship development and communication with the public, as expected outcomes.

#### 4) Social Media Practitioners' Level of Job Satisfaction

To investigate research question 4, respondents were asked to rate their job satisfaction level on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = “very unsatisfied,” 5 = “very satisfied”). In general, most practitioners reported satisfaction levels around or below the midpoint for every item.

Regarding their level of job satisfaction as practitioners, respondents' general satisfaction was close to the midpoint ( $M=3.38$ ,  $SD=0.95$ ). Practitioners at small companies had slightly higher job satisfaction than

those in large companies and public organizations ( $M=3.42$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ;  $M=3.39$ ,  $SD=0.85$ ;  $M=3.34$ ,  $SD=1.01$ , respectively). An ANOVA comparison between the three groups found no statistically significant difference ( $F(2, 133) = .075$ ,  $p = .928$ ).

The study then investigated respondents' level of satisfaction with management support; the results were generally lower than the midpoint ( $M=2.97$ ,  $SD=1.05$ ). Practitioners in small companies were slightly more satisfied with management support than those in large companies and public organizations ( $M=3.10$ ,  $SD=1.06$ ;  $M=2.82$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ;  $M=2.93$ ,  $SD=1.04$ , respectively). An ANOVA comparison between the three groups found no statistically significant difference ( $F(2, 137) = .887$ ,  $p = .414$ ).

When respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with their working conditions, including remuneration and general treatment, their general perceptions rated slightly lower than the midpoint ( $M=2.95$ ,  $SD=0.93$ ). Practitioners from small companies were slightly more satisfied with working conditions than those in large companies and public organizations ( $M=3.03$ ,  $SD=0.92$ ;  $M=2.87$ ,  $SD=0.95$ ;  $M=2.91$ ,  $SD=0.95$ , respectively). An ANOVA comparison between the three groups found no statistically significant difference ( $F(2, 138) = .400$ ,  $p = .671$ ).

Finally, the study investigated the respondents' perceived status within the organization, with general perceptions rating below the midpoint ( $M=2.75$ ,  $SD=0.94$ ). Practitioners from small companies rated their status slightly higher than other groups, though they still perceived it to be below the midpoint ( $M=2.94$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ;  $M=2.65$ ,  $SD=0.92$ ;  $M=2.61$ ,  $SD=0.87$ , respectively). An ANOVA comparison between the three groups found no statistically significant difference ( $F(2, 140) = 1.927$ ,  $p = .149$ ).

Regarding research question 4, no items showed a statistically significant difference between the three groups, implying that all three groups generally did not have a high level of job satisfaction.

## 8. Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore South Korean organizations' general usage of social media as a communications tool in order to provide practical recommendations based on the characteristics of organizations and social media channels, as well as theoretical implications for further research.

Overall, social media are gaining importance and have become a major organizational communications tool, both in South Korea and worldwide.<sup>1)</sup> Accordingly, the results of this study showed that social media communications practitioners in South Korea generally value social media highly.

**<Table 4> Social media communications practitioners' level of job satisfaction**

The level of satisfaction		Mean	SD	F	df	p
Job Satisfaction	Large companies	3,39	0,85	.075	2,113	p>.05
	Small companies	3,42	0,99			
	Public organizations	3,34	1,01			
Management Support	Large companies	2,82	1,07	.887	2,137	p>.05
	Small companies	3,10	1,06			
	Public organizations	2,93	1,04			
Working Conditions	Large companies	2,87	0,95	.400	2,138	p>.05
	Small companies	3,03	0,92			
	Public organizations	2,91	0,95			
Organizational Status	Large companies	2,65	0,92	1,927	2,140	p>.05
	Small companies	2,94	0,99			
	Public organizations	2,61	0,87			

1) A 2012 report by the Social Media Examiner, a major specialized social media publication in the US, showed that marketers at 83% of global companies believed social media is important in their business. Similarly, a report by the KPR Social Communication Research Lab (2012) showed that 91% of South Korean organizations' social media practitioners responded the same way.

South Korean organizations tend to use major social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and YouTube in the course of their communications activities. Currently, Facebook is the preferred organizational communications channel in terms of both usage and perceived importance. Blogs are considered to be the second-most important and effective channel, despite the fact that Twitter is the second most frequently used channel in South Korea.

Ultimately, this study shows that, while Facebook is the main social media channel in South Korea, blogs are still considered important, even though they are one of the earliest forms of social media. Facebook's popularity in South Korea likely reflects its global success due to its relationship- and communication-oriented characteristics. Meanwhile, it is likely that blogging is still considered important in South Korea, despite its age, due to its strengths as a content platform: for example, organizations can freely publish blog content without any length limitations, and blog content is globally searchable online. However, in crisis situations, practitioners perceived Twitter to be at least as effective as Facebook, likely owing to its speed and diffusion.

With these results in mind, the challenge now is to analyze *how* practitioners use these major channels to further determine each service's strengths and weaknesses, and to explore practitioners' rationales. Popular opinion often frames social media in terms of which channels are the "best," rather than which channels are best suited to certain activities and channels, and can be best integrated into overall strategies.

Meanwhile, although the perceived importance of social media is high, CEO social media usage is not; also, usage differed according to organization size. CEOs in small companies were more active users of social media than CEOs in large companies, suggesting that small companies tended to focus on social media as a cost-effective form of organizational communication.

Practitioners seem to be using social media in a sophisticated manner, despite the fact it is relatively new. This is evidenced by the fact that more than half of the respondents have experience with viral campaigns

incorporating so-called “Power Influencers.” Such work is likely to provide extensive insight into the ways in which organizations can best leverage social media for their communications needs. However, these results differed significantly according to organization type. Large companies tended to have more experience with viral campaigns and power influencers than public organizations, suggesting that public organizations tend not to use social media’s most advanced capabilities.

Encouragingly, practitioners regard social media with high importance. Most practitioners consider the main purpose of social media to be improving communication and relationships with the public, reflecting social media’s intrinsic dialogic characteristics. This aligns with prior studies in a Western context that revealed that social media are perceived to be important to and effective in organizational communications practice, with their use expected to accelerate in the future (Alikilic and Atabek, 2012; Avidar, 2009; Briones, et al., 2011; DiStaso, et al., 2011).

Another important finding of this study is that, while South Korean practitioners generally value social media from an organizational communications perspective, they mostly seem to use it to accomplish short-term or single-purpose organizational communications goals. For example, although practitioners have worked with power influencers in viral campaigns, they tend not to regularly interact with them. Additionally, practitioners’ satisfaction with working in social media does not correspond to the level of importance they assign it: the reported level of practitioner satisfaction with management support, working conditions and organizational status fell short of the importance respondents placed on social media. This gap between perception and reality suggests practitioners’ use of social media has not yet matured in South Korea, as one might expect in this nascent field.

It is particularly important to note that certain social media practices are less well-established in public organizations. For example, results show that practitioners in public organizations tend to have less experience with social media as well as viral campaigns involving power influencers. This suggests that public organizations are generally slower

to adopt social media, as previously mentioned.

These results seem to reinforce prior Western studies that showed many organizations fail to take full advantage of the interactive nature of social networking (Waters, et al., 2009; Waters and Jamal, 2011). For instance, Waters and Jamal (2011) found that organizations are more likely to use one-way communications models despite social media's potential to facilitate dialogue and community building.

In a local context, South Korean practitioners' generally low satisfaction with management support, working conditions, and perceived organizational status may be related to the development of South Korean organizational communications, which has historically been largely publicity-oriented. Indeed, practitioners' dissatisfaction may relate to the use of more dated organizational communications models. While further investigation is required to confirm this, the fact that practitioners in public organizations reported lower satisfaction levels may offer some support for this hypothesis given the more conservative culture (Lee and Kwon, 2008; Schraeder, Tears and Jordan, 2005) or communications practices (Jang and Nam, 2006; Kim and Hon, 1998) of such organizations.

Overall, this study provides a snapshot of the social media communications practitioners' general social media usage in South Korea. The authors believe the study provides a basis for more detailed future research; for example, follow-up studies tracking similar factors over time, and more detailed field use analysis, which could be of particular interest to those working in organizational communications.

Alikilic and Atabec (2012) argue that transparency and engagement are important intrinsic features of social media, and that these attributes provide opportunities for organizational communications practitioners to influence and shape relationships with the public. However, based on this study, South Korean organizations must better utilize the two-way communication capacity of social media, as well as improve internal support for social media practitioners.

One limitation of this study is that it uses only quantitative methods to investigate practitioners' social media usage and perceptions. Further

study should identify the rationale behind these results to better explain organizations' social media uptake patterns, including the reasons why certain channels are preferred to others. Additionally, for research purposes, this study employed single-item questions and a small sample size; future studies should improve upon these limitations.

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국문초록

## 국내 소셜미디어 이용 현황에 관한 탐색적 연구 기업과 공공기관의 비교를 중심으로

임유진

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서구에서 조직 커뮤니케이션 수단으로서 소셜미디어의 중요성에 대한 연구가 꾸준히 제기되고 있는 가운데, 본 연구는 143개 국내 조직 소셜미디어 담당자들의 온라인 서베이를 통해 국내 기업과 공공기관들의 소셜미디어 이용 현황에 대해 살펴보았다. 조사 결과, 국내에서도 소셜미디어는 역시 높은 중요성을 갖는 것으로 인식되고 있었으며, 바이럴 캠페인 경험, CEO 이용, 직업 만족도 등에 있어 대기업, 중소기업, 공공기관들 간 차이가 발견되었다. 특히 한국의 조직들은 소셜미디어 이용에 있어 단기적이며 목적지향적 커뮤니케이션 양상을 보이고 있었으며, 전반적인 소셜미디어 담당자들의 만족도가 높지 않은 것으로 나타났다.

**주제어:** 소셜미디어 현황, 소셜미디어 담당자, 조직 커뮤니케이션