Public Relations Practice Journal
Vol. 1, Issue 1, 2026

Vol. 1, Issue 1, pp. 46-57, 2026

Social Media and Influencer Relations in Public Relations Practice: Digital PR Strategy in Malaysia's Corporate Sector

Aisyah Ahmad*^1

^1 Graduate, Universiti Malaya
*Corresponding author: journals@isrnjournals.org

Abstract

Social media and influencer marketing can help companies communicate outside their organization, but it's not enough just to be there. The article delves into the ways in which Malaysian corporations can leverage influencers to ensure that their PR activities align with the principles of trust, accountability, and reputation among their stakeholders. A critical narrative review is a combination of academic literature and Malaysian professional research and official content governance documents. Analysis differentiates persuasion for the business from relationship management, and separates the findings presented in the article from the strategic recommendations. Five interrelated findings arise: 1) suitability of influencers is a relational process, not just a numerical one; 2) authenticity in content creation is a combination of creative independence and substantiated claims; 3) engagement in multiple languages is relational through listening and internal responsiveness; 4) governance operating across corporations, agencies and creators; and 5) the need to link communication activity with stakeholder outcomes through evaluation. Malaysian studies provide examples of the organizational advantages of social media as well as the power of digital publics to challenge corporate narratives. The article suggests a pragmatic framework that connects to the diagnosis of stakeholders, the selection of creators, transparent collaboration, responsive engagement and the assessment of outcomes. It also suggests that a sustainable digital PR strategy is not just about a good pitch, it's about good behaviour and real accountability.

Key words: *digital public relations; social media influencers; stakeholder relationships; Malaysia*

PDF Download | Cite This | Share

Article History

Received: 27 June 2026 | Revised: 22 July 2026 | Accepted: 12 September 2026

1. Introduction

Corporations have had to change how they get noticed, explain things, and respond to criticism because of social media. A company can communicate directly to audiences, but not how these audiences will interpret, adapt, or challenge the message. Recognizable personal identities and regular audience connections make influencers a very special niche in this context. Public relations professionals can work with these intermediaries to get corporate information into people's hands and into popular culture. Adds another player's credibility, editorial decisions, business ties and actions.

© 2026 The Authors | Published by ISRNJ

Malaysia is a good example of the dynamics at play. Malaysia practitioners literature shows that social media is also introduced to professional communication and has been reported as an area of concern for reputational vulnerability. In addition to that, Ahmad's (2019) survey of over 300 practitioners found moderate usage and perceived benefits of stakeholder engagement but did not indicate that each organization was strategically integrated. In an earlier study, managers from six different organisations in Malaysia were interviewed and it was found that there are applications in promotion, branding, information seeking, customer relationships and service delivery (Parveen et al., 2015). These studies offer a baseline and raise awareness of the need for cultural history, limited sample size, and the importance of self-perception in practitioner studies.

The target audiences for the corporation are not just prospective buyers. Different groups of employees, communities, business partners, journalists, investors, and advocacy groups can hear the same message from the influencer and evaluate it differently. For instance, if the corporation has a sustainability endorsement, it could draw the eyes of consumers and get them thinking about the corporation's operational history, or encourage employees or local residents to pose questions about the corporation's history. Digital PR is about managing relationships and public accountability that overlap between different constituents. Purchase intention is significant for some campaigns, but it is not an all-encompassing indicator of corporate reputation or trust.

This piece explores the questions Malaysian companies should ask themselves when integrating social media into a comprehensive PR program, as well as how to integrate influencer relations. The analysis is guided by three questions: What mechanisms are there between influencer communication and credibility and relationships? What are the organizational and governance conditions for responsible collaboration? What are the other measures of success for a company that isn't clicks? It is argued that influencer relations is a 'living process' of management, which integrates communication with action and listening, substantiation, service recovery and organisation learning. The discussion assumes that effectiveness is a state that is conditional, and separates evidence from recommendations for specific studies from recommendations for practice.

Literature review

Digital PR as relationship management

Dialogic perspectives offer a base to differentiate between digital publicity and relationship building. Kent and Taylor (1998) showed how websites could be used to help engage publics, and their later theoretical work focused on the orientation toward dialogue, rather than on the technical properties of a medium (Kent & Taylor, 2002). An organization may open up for comments and not take any influence from people that comment. On the other side, what looks like a simple exchange can have a relational impact when it leads to an understanding or healing or a shift in corporate practice. The role of interaction is therefore not so much whether it exists, but what it enables.

This distinction is further clarified in the research about conversational communication. In an organizational blogging context, Kelleher (2009) discovered that perceived conversational voice was correlated with communicating commitment, which in turn was correlated with relational outcomes. Evidence such as this could indicate communication style without making the leap that it is the cause of trust on its own. In contrast, Macnamara (2016), also emphasizes on organizational listening which is defined as the communication departments should make sure that their stakeholders' concerns are incorporated into the decision making process. These viewpoints imply that when influencers relate audience engagement with an organisation that can respond, they are relevant to PR.

One key qualification is the fact that digital technologies do not necessarily make professional practice more dialogic or ethical. In his article, Valentini (2015) disputes the uncritical assumptions that social media is a

good thing for PR. Platforms can also encourage engagement as well as promote engagement with shallow content, repetitive postings, or engagement with targeted audiences. In the field, the lesson for Malaysian corporations is to evaluate the institutional environment in which a campaign is taking place. And an accommodating creator can never pay back for a lack of complaint systems or inconsistent customer service or managers who refuse to answer the inconvenient questions.

Influencer credibility, fit, and authenticity

It's important to note that influencers are not like traditional media because the audience may be focused on a specific "persona" and the persona's "expertise," personality or experience. Freberg et al. (2011) contributed to the popularity of defining influencers as an object of PR research. Enke and Borchers (2019) later placed the concept of communication through influencers in the context of a strategic communication, with a focus on the resources and functions that creators bring. Beyond paid endorsement, this view captures that influencers can share information, create culturally relevant content, enable engagement or access to niche communities.

Large audience appeal must not, however, be divorced from suitability. De Veirman et al. (2017) show that the number of followers and features of the product influence the response of the brand. Another way to separate the components of influencer marketing is done by Campbell and Farrell (2020), who view functional aspects of influencer marketing, rather than equating all creators as advertising space. These studies are supporting a tiered approach to selection, but they do create a rule that smaller creators do not necessarily outperform celebrities. The scale, expertise, audience composition, and purpose of the message must be examined in concert, as must the nature of the corporate relationship.

Credibility is not a quality of the content but rather a quality of the source. In a recent paper, Lou and Yuan (2019) relate the dimensions of an influencer's credibility to the value of their messages. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) explore buy intention and credibility and parasocial interaction. These are ideas of complementary mechanisms, listeners can feel familiar through repeated exposure, while also feeling knowledgeable about a speaker. But just because you have heard of a creator does not mean that you are independent, nor does trust in one creator necessarily extend to the sponsoring corporation. Both of these are key aspects to consider in the analysis of campaign results.

The Malaysian influencer scholarship has also studied business results. The study of Lim et al. (2017) examines the attributes of the sources, product compatibility, meaning transfer and customer attitude within a purchase intention model. Values or variables to consider, and the restrictions of the result, are all relevant to PR. Buying is not synonymous with trust in the integrity of a corporation, the fairness of how it treats stakeholders, or how it reacts when criticized. This is the reason that it is important for corporate communicators to rely on marketing studies to pinpoint likely mechanisms, rather than re-describing their dependent variables as evidence of organizational legitimacy.

There is another layer of tension given the requirement for 'authenticity'. Business connections can be economically viable for creators—audiences can be left to wonder if they are being sold a bill of goods. When the pressure of commercialization threatens to compromise his or her authenticity, how does an influencer deal with it? (Audrezet et al., 2020) Their work provides a basis for the 'authentic' approach and honesty, and not the 'spontaneous' approach being a given that it will mean authenticity. Authenticity is judged in PR by the consistency of experience, claims, sponsorship structures and company behaviours. It's not just a style that an agency can add to a brief.

Disclosure, governance, and reputational exposure

But disclosure research suggests that this belief is not as straightforward as it sounds, and that sponsorship can actually enhance the persuasiveness of an advertisement. Evans et al. (2017) investigated the effect of disclosure language on the recognition of advertising and advertising responses, and Boerman (2020)

explored standardized disclosure of Instagram across different types of influencers. A connection between awareness of paid endorsement and influencer relationship management is made in Dhanesh and Duthler (2019). These studies collectively create recognition and relational context as two key analytical problems. What they've found should not be taken as a reassuring promise that disclosure is always a route to the generation of trust, but rather a promise that audiences will be provided with information about the commercial context in which a recommendation is embedded so that they can use it.

Reviews pinpoint a field that has a broader scope than isolated endorsement effects and is still characterized by concepts and methods that are fragmented. Sundermann and Raabe (2019) chart the research needs of strategic influencer communication, and Hudders et al. (2021) integrate the research on social media personalities' commercialization. Planning, organizing and controlling routines are discussed by Borchers and Enke (2021). This is particularly pertinent to PR teams with agency, procurement, legal or customer service teams. Collaboration is dependent on decisions made prior to publication and responsibilities after content has circulated.

Reputational risk also goes over the line from individual to organization. The theory of situational crisis communication focuses on attributed responsibility in making corporate response decisions (Coombs, 2007). A paracrisis is an issue that is manifested in the public that must be addressed before reaching the stage of a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). Nordin Selat et al. (2025) conducted a study with 15 netizens and five CEO influencers in Malaysia, finding that there are two main themes: public sentiment and digital amplification. The qualitative results provide insights into the important potential escalation processes but are not representative of the presence of these processes in Malaysian companies.

Malaysian publics and the research gap

A single interpretation of digital communication as a pure promotional one is refuted by Malaysia-specific evidence. Kaur (2015) investigates the development of environmental publics in the context of the Lynas controversy, using social media. It highlights the importance of heeding organized criticism and alternative interpretations, not taking them for granted, especially for a corporation. This lesson is not that all criticism is a "communication failure. There are cases of conflicts about some substantive decisions, evidence or allocation of risks which cannot be settled through more marketing efforts.

There is a gap in practice between studies of influencer persuasion and studies of organizational relationships. Professional adoption and perceived benefits are key findings of Malaysian practitioner studies, while consumer studies highlight specific responses to endorsements. Less can be determined about ongoing trust among various groups of stakeholders, or internal processes from a creator partnership to corporate accountability. This article tries to fill this void by conducting an interpretative synthesis. Its contribution is not a measure of the effectiveness of influencers in the whole of Malaysia's corporate sector, but a strategic argument that is local in nature.

Methodology

Research design and source selection

It is an article of critical narrative review with the use of qualitative document analysis. It's suitable for various types of conceptual research and empirical research with varying designs as well as governance texts, but it doesn't involve concealing them as a common statistical data set. Bowen (2009) gives a methodological framework for recognizing the documents as situated sources which have different authors, purposes, and evidential limitations that must be examined. The review is interpretative and not exhaustive—it is no claim that an exhaustive database search was done, that the screening flow is reproducible, or a claim of meta-analysis for this review.

The final reference corpus comprises 29 documents: 27 academic journal articles, and two Content Forum documents from the official. The academic sources were chosen based on their direct relevance to influencer communication, digital relationship, organisational listening, crisis communication and Malaysian corporate communication or the review method. The combination of the terms used in the web searches were Malaysia, public relations, social media, influencer communication, disclosure, credibility, and corporate reputation. Publisher pages, university repositories, journal records and organizational documents were given greater priority. Bibliographic information was verified from the publisher and/or the registration provided by the metadata, and corrections were made when there were inconsistencies or institutional affiliations were permitted as author.

This is the substantive academic material with supporting evidence from Malaysia that has been published in 2025. The discussion also takes place on the Content Forum's 2026 influencer consultation paper in the governance discussion. The sources were verified up to 13th October 2026. The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Content Code provides the current industry structure, and the consultation paper is not as a rule considered as a legislation. This distinction is important in order to avoid the appearance of a new policy becoming a current legal obligation. It is not intended to provide an in-depth examination of all sector-specific advertising or privacy laws.

Analytical procedure and limitations

Five organizing categories were used in the synthesis: influencer suitability, credibility and transparency, stakeholder dialogue, governance and crisis responsibility, and evaluation. These categories amalgamated concepts found in the literature and problems noted from the Malaysian studies and official documents. Using ‘thematic analysis' as a methodological approach, consideration was paid to relationships and tensions between the sources rather than to the number of times a term appeared in the texts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Findings were grouped according to areas of convergence and conflict, such as tension between a commercial control and creator independence, engagement statistics and relational outcomes.

Evidence was assessed at the level justified by each source. The survey associations were not causal effects, the interview evidence was used as evidence of 'situated' accounts, the conceptual articles were used to interpret the evidence, and the documents of governance set out stated standards or proposals, not actual compliance. If only an abstract or repository summary was available, then this information was included in the discussion. No new interviews, surveys, participant observations or data collection on the platforms were conducted and no coding reliability statistic is claimed.

Several limitations follow. The analysis of English-language discoverability may underrepresent the scholarship and professional debate of Malay-language. The foundations research relates to platforms and settings that are out of time with contemporary Malaysia. Research is inconsistent both by industry, stakeholders and geography and corporate and agency documents may focus on success. The findings are therefore propositions and practical recommendations based on an analytical approach and not an audit of the Malaysian companies. Their applicability needs to be assessed to the organization's sector, available resources, the relationship with the audience, and real communication issues.

Findings

Influencer suitability depends on relationships and purpose

The first insight is that the process of choosing influencers should start with the problem of the stakeholder(s) instead of a follower count. There are a number of potential sources for this value but they are intended for different purposes. An expert on a technical process could be ideal for public education but not for a mass awareness program. A big name can get noticed, but not many employees or communities will trust him. Therefore, suitability is a relationship between a communication task, an audience or a recognizable source of credibility.

The recommended evaluation of the audience for Malaysian corporations involves language, geographic suitability, history of the topics, disclosure practices, and quality of interactions. These are suggested decision factors – not decision factors that all Malaysian organisations are already using. Recent post comments can provide an indication of the posting author's substantive responses, tendency to make unverifiable claims, or reliance on controversy to garner attention. Audience evidence needs to be analysed critically: Follower location and engagement data can be incomplete and significant activity can be associated with paid promotion and not relevant audiences. Uncertainty should be acknowledged instead of hidden behind one attractiveness score.

Selection also calls for a clear-cut distinction between customers and other publics. A corporate employer campaign might require a credible employee experience, an environmental explanation might require technical competence and access to underlying evidence. Whichever one it is, it is not wrong for a corporation to hire a lifestyle creator to do it, but they need to explain why it's not inappropriate for the individual to interpret the subject responsibly. The key is: what will the influencer bring to the table that the organisation's channel isn't delivering. If it is just a higher quantity of impressions, the arrangement is still mostly a distribution purchase.

The selection of partner is also influenced by sector differences. The illustrations in this document are intended as suggestions of possible applications rather than reported corporate cases. A consumer goods firm that is detailing packaging modifications may choose a creator that can show how to dispose of it and lead the viewer to supplementary information. A telecom company in a discussion about service issues may have to be able to differentiate between the coverage they advertise and the coverage they may have personally experienced. A company communicating community investment would need to think about whether there are local organizations and beneficiaries that can communicate on their own or should the initiative have a popular creator as its interpreter? In both environments the choice is made based on the information need and those who will have an interest in the decision.

The examples also indicate a portfolio strategy. There may be multiple communicators for multiple purposes throughout a corporation and a consistent level of factual accuracy and disclosure. A technical specialist can provide evidence and a community communicator can lead the discussion, and a corporate official channel can document commitments and corrections. Coordination should be clear about their roles, not artificial agreement. If there is no appropriate creator, direct engagement might prove to be a more viable option. Declining an influencer partnership is an aspect of good planning, especially if the influencer's content is about something that needs authority, access, or accountability – something that a paid intermediary can't do.

Trust requires disclosure and substantive consistency

The second thing is that trust relies on congruence of creator voice, reported business relationships, and corporate conduct that is verifiable. It is important that the audience is able to understand endorsements, but disclosure does not prove that the endorsement is true. Likewise, a true claim could also result in a false impression if the speaker's relationship with the company is not disclosed. PR governance is thus required to separate the concepts of sponsorship transparency from the substantiation of claims. They each apply to a different possible failure; each needs to be checked, if the publication is to be made.

The Content Code offers practical advice. Identifiable paid or reciprocal endorsement arrangements should be included with the endorsement; the language used should be understood and should match the language of the content. Video disclosures should be placed in the video and livestream disclosure should be repeated so that later viewers will have the chance to see what is disclosed (Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia [Content Forum], 2022). Such provisions are helpful for planning disclosure during the content design process rather than an obscure tag after the content has been approved. The Code is designed on an industry self regulatory basis and should not be interpreted as being synonymous with legislation.

The 2026 consultation paper sets out more specific expectations for the responsible collaboration with influencers, including shared responsibilities and consideration of new forms of content practices (Content Forum, 2026). Its meaning here is directional - corporate teams need to expect to be judged on the way they structure their partnerships with brands and agencies. It is not an endorsement of the proposition that all of the suggested provisions are already binding. Developing a separation between the existing standards and consultation proposals also aids PR practitioners in communicating policy developments with creators and internal decision makers.

Corporations should keep a claims record for every collaboration, outlining what to substantiate, who to, and what limits to. Creators should be given the freedom to portray real experience and recognize qualifications. A contract that needs praise only makes the creator less independent. For instance, a product demonstration may be used to see how it can be used and where it cannot, but not to be used as a guarantee of universal applicability. It might result in less flashy promotional rhetoric, but it leaves listeners with a more legitimate means of evaluating speaker and sponsor.

Dialogue depends on cultural interpretation and internal response

The third is that content that is locally appropriate is just one component of meaningful engagement. The language and culture of Malaysian corporation should be determined according to their actual publics instead of one dominant audience is the whole audience. Sometimes translation is not enough, when there are different meanings of humor, everyday reference or family/community assumptions. A responsible process provides those who know the intended user an opportunity to challenge the concept prior to production. This isn't a statement of cross-cultural uniformity of preferences, but a recommendation for contextually judging.

When creators are engaged early enough to have the ability to shape the brief, their insights can be a helpful tool for making the judgment. They can offer some ideas about an unclear explanation, an unrealistic expectation or something that the corporation has missed. But being an ethnic member or fluent in the language does not mean that one creator represents an entire community. Companies need to take creator recommendations into account, along with customer comments, employee feedback and their own interaction with impacted communities. However, if the messenger appears a legitimate source, then the representation of the audience may be limited and commercially acceptable.

Organizational responsiveness is more challenging. A creator can let questions about a service flow through, without having access to the team that can solve problems. The company should determine who gets the questions answered, who can approve the answers, and how unresolved questions are brought back to decision makers. A helpful workflow separates out regular information requests from individual service cases, criticism based on evidence, and threats that require expert handling. There are different responses for each category. When digital communication is perceived to be an encounter with hostility, it stifles learning, limiting its strategic use.All negative comments are interpreted as hostile engagement and reduce the learning potential of digital communication, limiting its strategic use.

Parveen et al. (2015) relate the use of social media to Malaysian organizational interviews to perceived improvement in customer relationships and service activities. The present synthesis does not conclude that the former relationship is evidence of a direct link between PR and service processes, but rather an argument that PR and service processes should be integrated. It's helpful for a creator to provide an explanation of a new process, but the company is responsible for implementing it. When there is an expectation that communication will respond when operating systems cannot, an increased visibility can highlight the weakness more clearly.

Accountability must extend across the collaboration

The fourth finding has to do with responsibility. But communication between influencers and corporations, agencies, creators and platforms is a matter of choice, allowing everyone to think that it is someone else's problem. A corporation can agree to a general idea but not take responsibility for the exact wording; an agency can focus on meeting delivery dates or a creator can assume that any claims he makes are verified. Even if everyone involved in the consultation doesn't want to mislead, this can still be a governance risk. The best way to do this is to record responsibilities at every stage and ensure that claims made on behalf of the company are owned by the company.

A down-to-earth solution should tackle the issues of payment, disclosure, factual review, intellectual property rights, revision and limits of creative freedom. Review should be focused on accuracy, safety and agreed goals, and not to obliterate the creator's voice. Similarly, independence should not be used to justify the lack of corrections. There must be a way to determine if there are “material errors” and whether the content needs to be amended or withdrawn, and to identify the error and correct it to allow relevant audiences to see the error. Commercial terms should allow sufficient time and resources to enable these responsibilities to be carried out competently.

Fair treatment of creators is also included in governance. Frequent changing of the brief, unclear deadlines in the approval process, or a lack of payment on time can reduce team synergy and lead to hasty decisions. For smaller creators, there may be a higher likelihood that the contract language is not well defined, and that they may not have an agent or any other specialist to assist with the contract. Corporations should indicate the number of revisions, how to handle a claim that cannot be substantiated and whether the previously published content may be used in paid advertising. These are not necessarily universally the problems faced in Malaysia but are suggested safeguards for the working relationship. By establishing mutual predictability, the creators are more able to exercise judgment and the organizations have a better record of agreed responsibilities.

Reputational preparation needs to differentiate between "creators misconduct" and "sponsor misconduct". When a creator makes an error in an approved corporate claim, the company should carefully review its own briefing and review process, rather than pinpoint the creator. If there is controversy in regard to the independent personal conduct, this still needs to be substantiated and a proportional decision made regarding the partnership. Automatic defense, immediate abandoning and indiscriminate silence can be all inappropriate. The best way to do this is to find out who suffered harm, what has been found and what action the organisation can take meaningfully to address the harm.

According to Nordin Selat et al. (2025), emotional reactions and digital amplification plays a role in controversies in Malaysia related to CEO influencers. This will aid in the interpretation of monitoring and fact checking, but does not imply that the more conspicuous comments are the population. Similarly, Kaur (2015) notes that ongoing criticism can indicate organised sentiment and concern about substantive corporate activity, the environmental publics. A misunderstanding is not a real dispute that demands operational or strategic decisions; PR teams should be able to tell the difference. When it comes to influencing the public, it can be particularly dangerous when it replaces questions that management hasn't addressed.

These responsibilities are not eliminated by resource limitations, but they do impact the ways in which organizations can be carried out. For a smaller corporate team, a smaller number of partnerships, a short list of claims, one person to escalate to, and a review of audience questions might be a good starting point. For a bigger organization, shared records and business unit coordination may be necessary. In both instances, the essential question is: Is the process usable during normal working? If there is a lot of documentations no one reads, then it's of limited protection. The proposed model thus suggests that the ownership should be

clear and that it should be reviewed regularly, and that further controls should be added where the subject matter, the vulnerability of the audience, and the extent of the exposure, deem them necessary.

Evaluation should connect activity with stakeholder outcomes

The fifth finding is that evaluation needs to be defended, and that the defense needs to be an account of what changed and why the change matters. Platform outputs are: Published content, estimated reach, views, and interactions. These numbers only help to describe distribution, and do not build understanding, credibility or trust. Before deciding on metrics, an evaluative design should state the intended audience and outcome. In a campaign for explanation, understanding might be more important than reactions; in service recovery, the appropriate result may be resolution and fairness. So a relatively low-profile campaign can still be of value when it tackles a significant relationship issue.

A corporation can evaluate immediate responses through short audience surveys, through the systematic analysis of questions, or by interviewing stakeholders of the audience who are relevant to the question. It can then look at results by means of a grievance process, eagerness to find out facts and facts, or repeat measures of trust. While each method has its own set of limitations, self-selected respondents might be highly involved, sentiment classifications might not pick up on sarcasm, and a perceived improvement could be a result of operational changes more than communication. The proposed approach provides listing of these limitations along with the results. When possible, use comparison groups, baseline measures, and the same wording of questions to enhance interpretation of data but not to assure causal conclusions.

Distributional difference should also be looked at in the evaluation. A positive score does not necessarily indicate clarity within one language group or satisfaction among those directly impacted by the policy. Qualitative review can help to find out what the numerical summaries do not, and might not, find out, such as an unanswered question or a concern raised in a non-angry tone. It should be avoided by corporations to gather personal information simply because it is provided by platform tools. Patterns and people's own feedback are more proportional than individual profiling for most strategic assessments. This recommendation is not based on a specific legal exemption, but on the orientation of the article, which is one of accountability.

Evaluation plan should therefore be able to present a possible sequence of exposure to response. Discuss a fictional project about a different complaints process. The company might be able to see if audiences even saw the explanation, test if audience understands the channels available, and review if they completed the process successfully. It should also ask: How does the experience compare to the communication guarantee? If there is increased awareness but there is still no remedy, the best resolution is a limit on communication progress and an operational failure. Once there is an increase in trust, changes to services and other forms of communication activity should also be part of analysis and attributed to an influencer, if appropriate. Evaluation is practiced in this discipline in a way that is helpful to the management of the organization and not just to the campaign team.

Last, the organization should evaluate the partnership itself: disclosures were present, corrections were done, creators were informed promptly and concerns were brought to responsible managers. These process indicators indicate if a positive outcome occurred as a result of a sound practice or not. The main idea is that evaluation and governance go hand in hand. A successful PR statistic is not enough for a corporation to show good digital PR if the team isn't aware of the other sides of the content creation process, interpretation, or what happened afterwards.

Conclusion and recommendations

Corporate PR in Malaysia has unlimited avenues in social media marketing and influencer relations, but also raises the requirement for corporations to rely on relationships that they cannot control. The assessed

scholarship includes consideration of credibility, authenticity, disclosure, dialogue, and management routines. There are two additional qualifications from the Malaysian evidence: first, that professional adoption does not signify the development of mature strategic integration and, second, that digital publics can coalesce around interpretations that dispute corporate narratives. The article thus establishes the organizational role of influencer relations as an ongoing role involving understanding and influencing the actions of stakeholders as well as the creation of content.

Corporation first should set the relationship goal, and then, it is necessary to determine what publics have concerns. Then creator strengths, appropriate audience relationships, engagement and feasibility for the task can be taken into account in the selection. A written brief should differentiate between facts that have been substantiated, personal experience, and claims that cannot responsibly be made. The format and language of content should be considered when developing disclosure arrangements. These are all steps that will give a better foundation for working together, but they don't presume that one creator category or platform is always superior.

Second, there should be a responsible internal owner that can coordinate PR, agencies, customer service and relevant technical teams. Creators require a consistent way to deal with inquiries and corrections, and managers need an accountable method to handle audience concerns. Review should be able to ensure accuracy and appropriate behaviour, with meaningful creative judgement. In preparing for a crisis, the assessment of evidence, who can authorize responses and how operational problems will be resolved should be determined. Monitoring is only effective if it is used to make proportional decisions and follow-through.

Third, evaluation should be distanced from distribution statistics and audience understanding/relationship consequences. Consistent measures and focus on various stakeholder groups can enhance interpretation. Management should monitor the results and the quality of the process, such as disclosures, unanswered questions, corrections, and learning from the campaigns. Industry bodies and educators have a role to play in supporting this work in terms of the following practical training: influencer governance, multilingual interpretation, research literacy, and outcome measurement. Priorities like this extend the purpose of professional development beyond learning to use new content formats.

The propositions should be tested in future studies using a longitudinal design approach of Malaysian corporations and their publics. Comparative research among industries, organisational size, language and region would help to clearly define where influencer partnership works as a sustainable strategy for building trust and where other engagement strategies would be more suitable. Another aspect of creative work that needs to be studied is the working environment of creators and how criticism is dealt with within an organisation. But the main takeaway is still subject to the condition: When there is credible action, systems that are responsive, and a readiness to learn from the publics that are targeted, then the combination of the influencer and PR strengthens the PR.

References

Ahmad, Z. A. (2019). Embracing social media: The change and disruption to public relations practices in Malaysia. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication, 35*(1), 319–337. https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2019-3501-21

Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Moulard, J. G. (2020). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. *Journal of Business Research, 117*, 557–569. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.008

Boerman, S. C. (2020). The effects of the standardized Instagram disclosure for micro- and meso-influencers. *Computers in Human Behavior, 103*, 199–207. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.09.015

Borchers, N. S., & Enke, N. (2021). Managing strategic influencer communication: A systematic overview on emerging planning, organization, and controlling routines. *Public Relations Review, 47*(3), Article 102041. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2021.102041

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal, 9*(2), 27–40. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Campbell, C., & Farrell, J. R. (2020). More than meets the eye: The functional components underlying influencer marketing. *Business Horizons, 63*(4), 469–479. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2020.03.003

Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia. (2022). *The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Content Code*. https://contentforum.my/enhancing-the-code/

Communications and Multimedia Content Forum of Malaysia. (2026). *The influencer guidelines 2026: Principles and standards for responsible influencer marketing and brand collaborations* (Public Consultation Paper No. 1/2026). https://contentforum.my/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Public-Consultation-Paper-Influencer-Guidelines-2026.pdf

Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting organization reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review, 10*(3), 163–176. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.crr.1550049

Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2012). The paracrisis: The challenges created by publicly managing crisis prevention. *Public Relations Review, 38*(3), 408–415. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.04.004

De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising, 36*(5), 798–828. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035

Dhanesh, G. S., & Duthler, G. (2019). Relationship management through social media influencers: Effects of followers' awareness of paid endorsement. *Public Relations Review, 45*(3), Article 101765. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.03.002

Enke, N., & Borchers, N. S. (2019). Social media influencers in strategic communication: A conceptual framework for strategic social media influencer communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication, 13*(4), 261–277. https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2019.1620234

Evans, N. J., Phua, J., Lim, J., & Jun, H. (2017). Disclosing Instagram influencer advertising: The effects of disclosure language on advertising recognition, attitudes, and behavioral intent. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 17*(2), 138–149. https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2017.1366885

Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review, 37*(1), 90–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.11.001

Hudders, L., De Jans, S., & De Veirman, M. (2021). The commercialization of social media stars: A literature review and conceptual framework on the strategic use of social media influencers. *International Journal of Advertising, 40*(3), 327–375. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2020.1836925

Kaur, K. (2015). Social media creating digital environmental publics: Case of Lynas Malaysia. *Public Relations Review, 41*(2), 311–314. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.12.005

Kelleher, T. (2009). Conversational voice, communicated commitment, and public relations outcomes in interactive online communication. *Journal of Communication, 59*(1), 172–188. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.01410.x

Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (1998). Building dialogic relationships through the World Wide Web. *Public Relations Review, 24*(3), 321–334. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(99)80143-X

Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (2002). Toward a dialogic theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review, 28*(1), 21–37. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(02)00108-X

Lim, X. J., Mohd Radzol, A. R., Cheah, J.-H., & Wong, M. W. (2017). The impact of social media influencers on purchase intention and the mediation effect of customer attitude. *Asian Journal of Business Research, 7*(2), 19–36. https://doi.org/10.14707/ajbr.170035

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19*(1), 58–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501

Macnamara, J. (2016). Organizational listening: Addressing a major gap in public relations theory and practice. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 28*(3–4), 146–169. https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2016.1228064

Nordin Selat, D. S., Wan Zainodin, W. H., & Hadi Ayub, S. (2025). Contested digital publics and public sentiment: CEO influencers and public relations in social media firestorms. *Journal of Media and Information Warfare, 18*(2), 90–107. https://ir.uitm.edu.my/id/eprint/137549/

Parveen, F., Jaafar, N. I., & Ainin, S. (2015). Social media usage and organizational performance: Reflections of Malaysian social media managers. *Telematics and Informatics, 32*(1), 67–78. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2014.03.001

Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 53*, Article 101742. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011

Sundermann, G., & Raabe, T. (2019). Strategic communication through social media influencers: Current state of research and desiderata. *International Journal of Strategic Communication, 13*(4), 278–300. https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2019.1618306

Valentini, C. (2015). Is using social media "good" for the public relations profession? A critical reflection. *Public Relations Review, 41*(2), 170–177. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.11.009