

### Book Review

**Motion, R. L. (2016). *Social Media and Public Relations: Fake friends and powerful publics*. New York: Routledge. ISBN-13: 978-0415856263**

**Reviewed by Muhammad Tayyab<sup>1</sup>**

Social media has become an important part of life for most of the people, especially youth who have become more active citizens and social participants because of social media. It provides them a range of benefits and opportunities like maintaining social connections, expressing opinions, sharing their views and achievements, interaction, information and knowledge seeking, pastime and entertainment, understanding people and enhancing their support networks. They do so many things on social media because of convenience. Extensive use of social media makes people change their preferences. They start liking or disliking specific things. They build their new opinions and change the older ones.

Considering the reach of social media, its higher conversation rate and instant feedback we can say that social media has a strong impact on Public Relations and Marketing as well. This book covers all aspects that allow us to understand how Public Relations functions in this active world. It examines the role of PR by exploring the various ways that social media is reshaping like its strategies,

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approaches and tactics. Through social media, the PR practitioners can now communicate effective and less costly content easily, faster and to a large audience. It provides detail information of both fake and authentic, meaningless and meaningful, powerless and powerful audience. This book is for all students, researchers, and practitioners in Public Relations, Media, and Communication Studies.

Motion, Heath, and Leitch have done excellent work in the past. Robert L. Heath is Professor Emeritus at the University of Houston, USA. Dr. Heath is an internationally renowned scholar on public relations. He has published hundred plus journal articles and many award-winning books, including *The SAGE Handbook of Public Relations* (2010). Shirley Leitch is Dean and Professor of Communication at the Australian National University, Australia. She has done a tremendous work in communication and Public Relations and contributed in so many publications as a researcher. Judy Motion is Professor of Communication at the University of New South Wales, Australia. She has written extensively on the power of public relations, public engagement processes, organizational change and branding. Professor Motion has extensive experience in successfully supervising PhDs to completion and assessing doctoral theses. She has contributed chapters in so many books, and wrote journal articles, Conference Papers, Reports, Conference Presentations and working papers.

First strength of the book is powerful research. Authors have done a great job in finding and exploring every aspects of topic over the course of history. They have cited numerous sources, quotations

and paragraphs into each chapter of their book to strengthen the arguments and to clear things up. Social media is developing continuously and the patterns of users are also changing constantly. It has not a long history, and then Public Relations through social media is also a new concept. So having little available information, providing a book would have been a challenge to research, understand and convey all concepts. The second strength is that the book describes not only what to do but what not to do. It also seems that its main focus is to prevent PR practitioners from spoiling the image of their organization because it takes years to develop a good image but a single mistake is sufficient to destroy everything.

The book has twelve sections. Each chapter discusses the topic in detail with lot of references. Chapters are developed intelligently and provide enough information about emerging trend of social media and its historical perspective to understand all the phenomenon and the basics. All the chapters lead reader to comprehend the current issues, limitations, risks, challenges and opportunities from the audience perspective at the same time which can guide him or her throughout the journey of Public Relations through new media. The book describes not only Public Relations practices but also user perspectives to provide better understanding of both ends. It delivers the adequate knowledge about the lack of digital literacy, understanding of the norms of social media, immaturity about corporate identity risks, and the central emphasis on spin instead of authentic engagement. All these things make you

more professional and skillful when you are doing PR on social media.

Most significant strength of the book is placement of case studies and appropriate examples happened in the history. For example campaign against oil companies in America and #Likeagirl campaign by “Always” brand has been reported as biggest, successful and powerful campaigns initiated and operated through the social media. Writers included PR cases in each chapter where needed which shows the power of online world. Another strength of the book is detail explanation of different tools like Facebook, twitter and Instagram etc. it provides the strengths and weaknesses of the tools of social media so that we can use them efficiently and effectively.

Most important and obvious weakness of this book is not using illustrations or pictures. Pictures of real time examples allow reader to understand things well. It also works like brainstorming power that motivates them to come up with new ideas or to generate new messages from old ones. When reader sees an example he or she comes to know that how and which techniques has been used for that purpose so that they can apply same idea with new flavor in current settings.

Another weakness of the book in my opinion is use of over citations which means that authors just have compiled previous ideas into a book and lacked new ideas. That is why they have given references at the end of every chapter. Accumulating different ideas into one book is not bad as such and, therefore, I have mentioned this thing in strengths too because this particular thing have both positive

and negative aspects. Positive aspect I have defined earlier. I consider this pattern negative to some extent because this phenomena “Social Media and Public relations” is evolving day by day as new strategies, mindsets, behaviors, and tactics are observed over the period of time. So in latest books, reader wants something new instead of old concepts. No doubt book has discussed even the future consequences and anticipated many things but the layout conveys the opposite.

Comparison with other books from the same field is the toughest part for me. Every book has some unique and different points that make it worth reading. We can rate this book 4 out of 5 because there are some books which are not dry like this one and not rating it below 4 because this book adds many things in the discipline. There is no rating and reviews on the internet at this time because this book is new in the market. When it comes to rating, I will rank this book in top 10 books again because many writers have worked on the same topic for instance David Meerman Scott who wrote “New Rules Marketing PR”. This book is related to Social Media and Public relations and it is best-selling book internationally, with over 0.3 million copies sold so far. The main strength of the book is real times examples which makes us clear what to do. This book makes us note taking and provides new concepts and even old concepts in a new way.

The book “Social Media and Public Relations: Eight New Practices for the PR Professional” by Deirdre K. Breakenridge deals with the same topic and is a good book to satisfy our reading

instincts. This book divides the different tasks of PR experts online into eight jobs and then explains what traits and skills are necessary for that type of job. Another book covers same topic but in a different way - "Putting the Public Back in Public Relations: How Social Media Is Reinventing the Aging Business of PR" by Brian Solis and Deirdre K. Breakenridge. This book communicates about tools of PR used on social media and describe them magnificently.

"Social Media and Public Relations" focuses only on Public Relations. It provides a little detail of marketing and so there is no direct comparison with many of best books of the same discipline because most of them depict both phenomenon - marketing and PR - at once. In these books we can count "500 Social Media Marketing Tips" by Andrew Macarthy, "Growth Hacker Marketing: A Primer on the Future of PR, Marketing, and Advertising" by Ryan Holiday. I recommend the readers to read all above mentioned books too if they want to fathom the deepness of the topic.

The book is well written and have defined cultural clash, complexities and tensions between the promotional cultures of Public Relations and participatory cultures of social media very effectively. It is written sharply and documented thoroughly. So I must say that book fulfills the intentions of the writers, meaning that it conveys very effectively what was intended. Two way communication of social media provides a lot of opportunities for Public Relations experts while making it more difficult to minimise the effects of confounding variables - meaning haters, rivals, and foes. The book has accomplished its goal and delivered comprehensive tools and

tactics to gain acceptance and to serve the public interest. I would like to finish my review by quoting a line from the book. "We believe that communication, through the practice of public relations, can make society more fully functioning, and a better place to live. But we also know that swords have two edges and cut both ways." (Motion, 2016)