The Role of Social Media in the Promotion of University Libraries

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Abstract

This study seeks to investigate the types and frequency of social media tools' use in academic libraries to determine their developmental impact in Turkey. It involves 66 universities in the Marmara region in total – 24 (or 35%) are public and 42 (or 65%) are private - and only 60 of them have libraries.This data was collected by reviewing the libraries' web pages and analyzing them with some statistical tests via MS Excel. The results revealed that, in the Marmara region, 64% of libraries in private universities and 36% of libraries in public universities use social media tools. While 95% of public universities' libraries use social media tools, 5% of them do not use them, and while 90% of the libraries of private universities use these tools, 10% of them do not. In addition, it was found that the rate of the social media tools used by both groups of libraries are different: 33% use Foursquare, 26% use Facebook, 15% use Twitter, 5% use Google Plus, 4% use Blogs, YouTube, or Instagram, 3% use Pinterest or Flickr, 2% use Wordpress, and 1% use RSS.

Keywords: Social media, public relations, university libraries. Twitter, Facebook, social media tools

1.0 Introduction

The concept of effective public relations being an essential component of a well-managed library is not new. As early as 1958, the importance of public relations were discussed in pertinent professional journals. Since the early 1970s, most public libraries have implemented at least some public relations strategies to interact better with their many constituencies, including patrons, community members, and governing bodies (Marshall, 2001).University libraries support scientific studies and research activities of the universities they are affiliated with. They are expected to fulfill all kinds of users' demands for their staff and resources to be well-researched and to have a good client relationship.

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University libraries that have a good public relations strategy use social media actively to introduce the services, reduce problems, and to meet expectations. Nowadays, institutions need to make effective public relations efforts to survive, procure acceptance and meet the needs of society (Gül Çağlar, 2006). A library is a fundamental institution that universities need to have for both research and educational purposes as a part of the learning process.

It does not seem possible for a university to maintain educational and research activities without a functional library. For most organizations, public or private, a positive public image is vital to their overall success. Educational institutions, and specifically libraries, understand the necessity of having positive relations with their various attenders to ensure the continuous financial and emotional support that will lead to their ongoing growth and success (Marshall, 2001).Briefly, the purpose of public relations in libraries is to introduce the facility and its available services to work towards increasing their use, give information resources to users, to constantly establish good relations with users and to get feedback on what they offer (Guinchat & Meneoe, 1990; Gül Çağlar, 2006).

Detecting expectations and demands, like the well-being of human society, are important to figure out the necessary and influential advertisement techniques, as well as considering and understanding how these aspects are met. Each library differs in the target group it serves and/or intends to serve. Knowing the target group well (in this case, the library users) and knowing how they are different, in terms of education, age, profession, interest and manner, plays a key role in easier and more efficient communication (Öndoğan, 2010). Today's new media tools are incredibly powerful for communication, and they allow organizations to connect and engage with many different audiences (Kroski, 2009).

Academic libraries could take the opportunity of using these social networking tools to disseminate information, market services and promote new releases (Burkhardt, 2010). Social networks are places where like-minded people come together to share thoughts, ideas, and information about themselves.E-mail is one of the oldest forms of social media, since the age of computers, and it is the original form. Before there was Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, and other sites, people shared content with each other by sending it through e-mail messages (Safko, 2010).

2.0 Literature Review

In all areas of our lives, the concept of social media as a developing communication technology has expanded. Institutions facing different situations definitely want to use social media elements while they regulate aspects of public relations. By using social media, they gain an advantage over them, because it is an integral part of people's daily lives as a powerful means of expression. Social media has become an indispensable tool because of recent developments in elements like creativity, design, freedom, low cost, speed, and sharing, which are all unlike the common public relations applications. We use different kinds of technologies in our lives today, because they change according to our purposes. The presence of libraries in our societies supports our lives, especially when they maintain technology to access information that can lead us to success in every field of our lives.

Academic libraries, in particular, serve the institutions and their academic environments by supporting and enabling technologies that can lead to societal development (Biçen Aras & Çolaklar, 2013).

The devotion of social media users were predicted to grow by just 4.1 percent in North America in 2013. Compared to that, the growth rates were 21.1 percent in the Asian-Pacific countries (including China, India, and Indonesia), 12.6 percent in Latin America, and 23.3 percent in the Middle East and Africa. The Mobile Internet is determined to overtake the wired Internet by 2015 in the U.S., but this fact mainly refers to social platforms (Holmes, 2015). "Social media" was one of the biggest buzzwords of 2014, and it has an incredibly powerful role for small businesses and entrepreneurs in marketing. In 2015, it is set to run with the big boys, because it still continues to be a great medium for engaging customers (http://small-bizsense.com/4-social-media-trends-entrepreneurs-start-2015-right, 2015).

Within 60 seconds, millions of people around the world are found in various activities on the internet. Commonly, the information technology (IT) is used. What happens on the Internet in 60 seconds? In 60 seconds, the internet can be summed up by 2.603.578 Google searches, 236.036.693 sent emails, 1.119 new web users, 56.633 app downloads, 771 new websites created, 250.544 people watching a porno, 2.943 new file uploads on mega.co.nz, $412.755 in revenue from products sold on Amazon, 338 new blog posts through WordPress, 719.025.204 GB of global IP data transferred, 1.304.260 new Facebook likes, 209.337 new photos uploaded on Facebook, 360.035 new tweets, 104 hours of video uploaded on YouTube, 2.155.546 YouTube video views, 24.382 photos uploaded on Instagram, 557.779 likes on Instagram, 3.579 new photos uploads on Flickr, and 20.234.009 Flickr photos views (http://small-bizsense.com/4-social-media-trends-entrepreneurs-start-2015-right, 2014).

The primary social media instruments used in university libraries are Facebook, Twitter, RSS, Blog, YouTube, and Flickr. Facebook's main mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. People surf on Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them. It is used by 109.158.284 people (https://www.facebook.com/facebook/info, 2015). Twitter helps you create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers. Twitter is the best way to connect with people, express yourself and discover what's happening (https://about.twitter.com/, 2015). It recently announced that 302 million users per month are using it all around the world (https://about.twitter.com/company, 2015).

RSS is a simple online "reader" that automatically manages your favorite online content. It sorts and organizes your subscriptions, news, alerts, shopping deals and more. And it's all quickly and easily accessible from your computer, tablet/iPad, and mobile phone – so the content that matters most is always at your fingertips (https://www.rss.com/#, 2015). A blog (a truncation of the expression "web log") is a discussion or informational site published on the World Wide Web that consists of discrete entries ("posts") typically displayed in reverse chronological order (the most recent post appears first).

Until 2009, blogs were usually the work of a single individual, occasionally of a small group, and they often covered a single subject. Blogger is the most popular blogging service, however Blogger does not offer public statistics (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog, 2015).

YouTube was founded in May 2005 and allows billions of people to discover, watch, and share their original videos. YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe, and it acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers, large and small (http://www.youtube.com/yt/about/, 2015). Foursquare evaluates where you and your friends are with its best guesses in a free application. Its community consists of over 55 million people worldwide, with over 7 billion check-ins, and millions more every day. Over 2 million businesses are using its Merchant Platform (https://foursquare.com/about, 2015). Pinterest is a tool for collecting and organizing the things that inspire you (http://about.pinterest.com/, 2015). On Flickr, everyone gets a free terabyte. That's right, a whole terabyte with spectacular, full-resolution shares wherever you are, and available anywhere you go, forever. It is now introducing the all-new Flickr photo books (http://www.flickr.com/, 2015).

Social networking is about creating online communities, so it is important for working with and build relationship with your constituents. When teaching about social media, it is not enough to simply outline the functions, you need to define the terms and trends. It is also important to discuss the issues in informative literature in an easy-to-follow manner and to help learners to cultivate a digital identity and presence online (http://hlwiki.slais.ubc.ca/index.php/Social_media_instruction_how_to_for_public_library_librarians, 2015).

For anyone starting an academic library, one of the difficult things is presenting social media. Here are a few ideas of things one could post to one's account:

- Library news and events
- New additions to your collection
- Links to articles, videos, etc.
- Community information
- Solicited feedback
- Responses to people
- Pictures
- Anything else (Burkhardt, 2010).

Having interesting, useful content to post isimportant, but how do you let users knowabout your social media's availability? It is necessary to promote new library resources. The following are several strategies for marketing your social media presence:

- Link wherever possible
- Talk to people
- Have instructional sessions

- Print advertisements
- Post web advertisements
- Build a group of friends
- Follow and be followed in return
- Give it time etc. (Burkhardt, 2010).

In libraries, the use of social media is one form of relationship marketing that has the potential to pay great dividends in the form of user loyalty; it creates an atmosphere in which library users are connected with the librarians. Libraries are not just about tangible sources, they are also about verbal sources, meaning their workers. Therefore, cultivating user loyalty is just as important as building literary collections. Social media offers a two-way communication that will go a long way toward creating dynamic libraries that are constantly evolving in congruence with their users' changing needs and expectations. Social media has the potential for information seekers and providers to achieve a win-win relationship (Fernandez, 2009).

Academic libraries need to become digital. They need to take avantage of the tools digital and social media can provide us to open up new channels for both speaking about the business issues and problems they are trying to solve. Social media can offer us a customer connection. Libraries are going to build a culture where communicating, engaging and embracing both positive and negative feedback, makes us a better organization (Safko, 2010).

The use of social media in academic libraries is widespread in terms of marketing and broadcasting. Libraries commonly use Facebook fan pages, Twitter accounts, YouTube channels or blogs to distribute news about events, services, or resources. Libraries have also actively used these mechanisms to reach out to potential new users (Stoeckel & Sinkinson, 2015). In libraries meant for education and lifelong learning, social media is becoming more widespead in its types and uses. With technological advancements, instructors will continue to look for ways to use the popular medium in their courses that will encourage more active participation and engagement with course materials. Academic librarians are starting to do the same. This can spur creativity for using this pervasive medium to extend student learning (Stoeckel & Sinkinson, 2015).

In this study, a situation is analyzed to find out the effects of using social media as a public relations tool in university libraries. Social media tools are used in libraries to announce the services and activities of the libraries, and to create awareness, highlight the importance of the library within the institutions, and to reach a wider audience (Biçen Aras & Çolaklar, 2013).

3.0 Research Design and Methodology

As a method of data collection, situational analysis is used to review the web pages of the university libraries in the Marmara region, which is the smallest and most densely populated region of Turkey. Since Turkey is located on two continents and receives a lot of immigrants every year, its population increases every year.

Turkey's annual population growth rate in 2013 stood at 13,7%. Its population was 76.667,864 in 2013 (http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=15974, 2015), and more than 20% of the total population live in the Marmara region (http://www.slideshare.net/massive501/marmara-blgesi-ve-zellikleri, 2015), whereTurkey obtains the most tax revenue. It is the center of many banks and business opportunities, with the advent of a good state economy. In addition, the region has a high literacy rate, and the majority of universities in Turkey are located there.

There are 193 universities in Turkey. 25% of them are located in the Marmara region (figure 1), and 57% of them are public universities, 39% of them are private and 4% of them are private, vocational schools (figure 2).
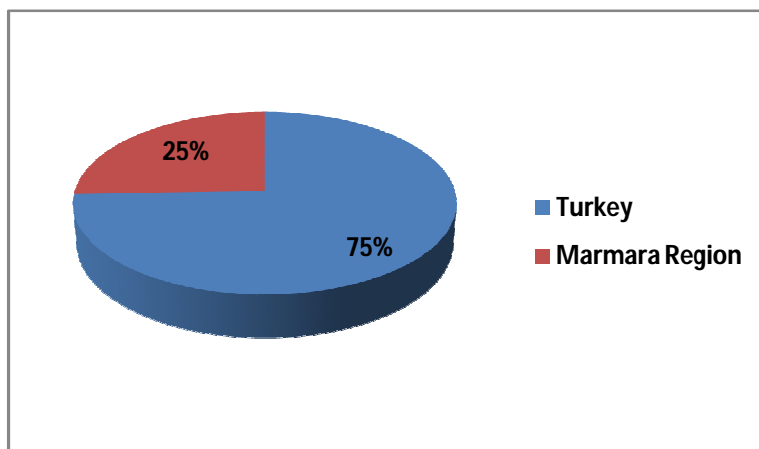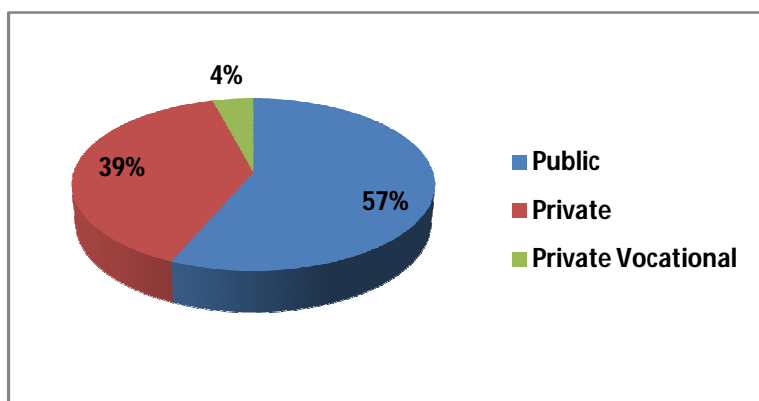

Figure 1: Universities in Turkey

Figure 2: Types of universites in Turkey

In the present findings, 66 universities in 11 cities, Balıkesir, Bilecik, Bursa, Çanakkale, Edirne, İstanbul, Kırklareli, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Tekirdağ and Yalova, were selected randomly from a list that was approved by the Higher Educational Council (figure 3)[3]. 24 out of the 66 universities are public and 42 are private (http://www.yok.gov.tr/web/guest/universitelerimiz, 2015) (figure 4). Except for six, all of the regional universities' web pages proved to have libraries.[4] The findings were obtained through analyzing data in the MS Excel program.

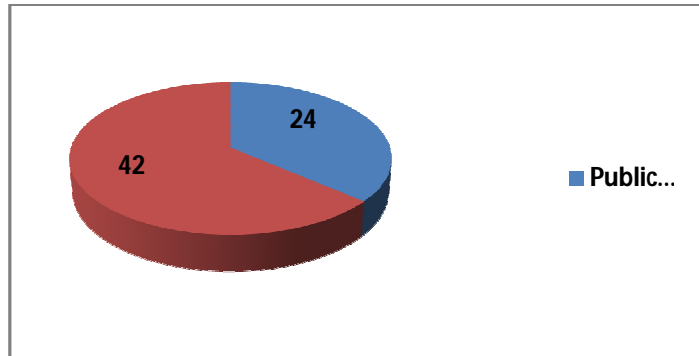**Figure 3: Map of provinces in Marmara Region**

Figure 4. Marmara Region universities

The study aims to answer the following questions:

- *"Which social media tools are used the most in the academic libraries in the Marmara region?"*
- *"Are there any differences between the public and private universities' uses of social media tools?"*

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1 See *http://www.uyduharita.org/wp-content/uploads/marmara-bolgesi3.png*.

2 Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University, Health Sciences University, Turkey International Islamic University of Science and Technology, İstinye University, İstanbul Rumeli University, İbn Haldun universities don't provide information.

4.0 Results and Discussions

4.1. Response Rate and Data Analysis

In the present study, the data is collected from the university libraries; 35% of them are public universities and 65% of them are private (figure 5). 52 of the universities in the Marmara region (41 private, 11 public) are located in İstanbul. There are 1 private and 2 public universities in Bursa, and there are 2 public universities in Kocaeli. However, there is only one public university in the cities of Balıkesir, Bilecik, Çanakkale, Edirne, Kırklareli, Sakarya, Tekirdağ and Yalova (figure 6). On the other hand, 91% of them have a library.
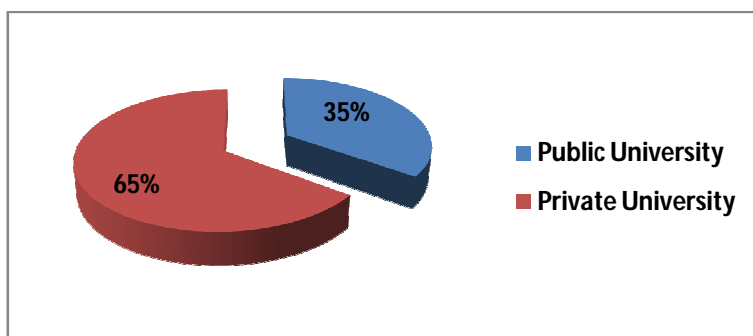

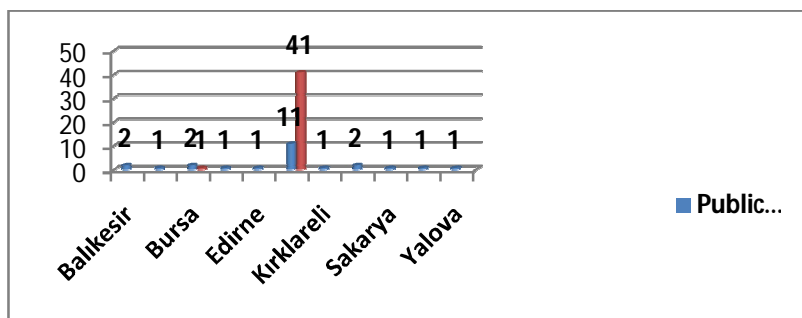**Figure 5: University libraries in Marmara Region**

Figure 6: According to provincial university libraries

The results showed that, Facebook, Twitter, RSS, Blog, YouTube, Foursquare, Pinterest and Flickr are the social media tools that are used to promote the academic libraries. 33% of the libraries use Foursquare, 26% of them use Facebook, 15% of them use Twitter, 5% of them use Google Plus, 4% of them use blogs, YouTube, or Instagram, 3% of them use Pinterest or Flickr, 2% of them use Wordpress, and 1% of them use RSS (figure 7).
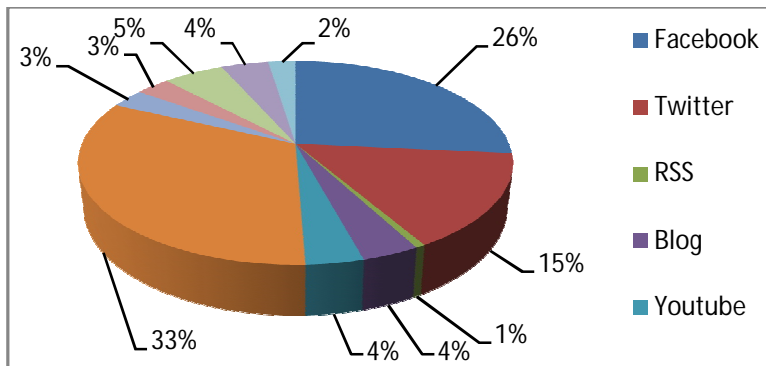
Figure 7: Used social media tools

The results also revealed that, the social media tools may vary according to the type of university. While the public university libraries prefer Foursquare, Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, Blog, and Pinterest, private universities prefer Foursquare, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and Instagram (figure 8). Among these web sites, Foursqauare, Facebook and Twitter are actively used by both.
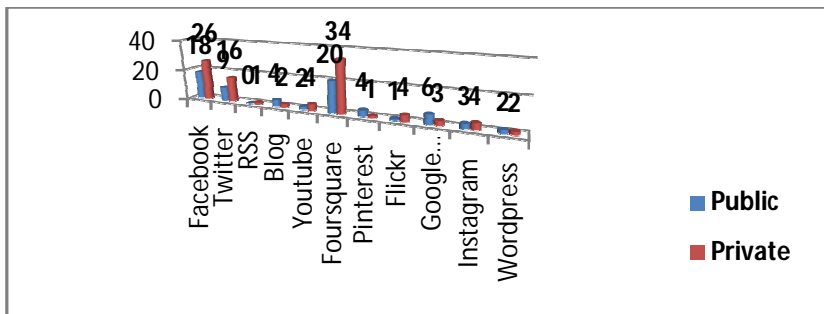
Figure 8: Used social media tools in university libraries

92% of university libraries use social media tools (figure 9). 95% of public universities use social media tools, and 90% of private universities use them (figure 10, 11 and 12).
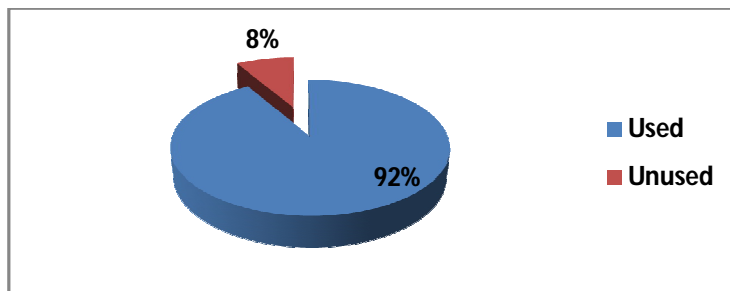

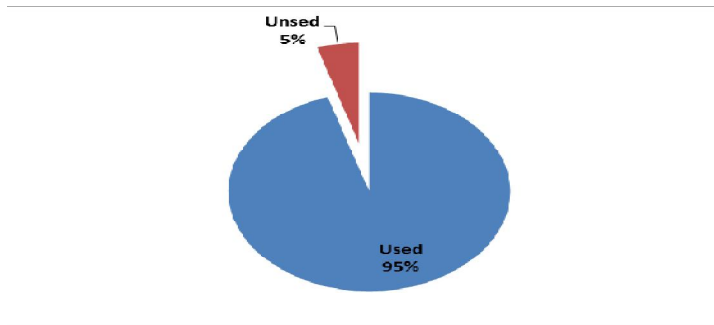**Figure 9: Utilization of social media in university libraries**
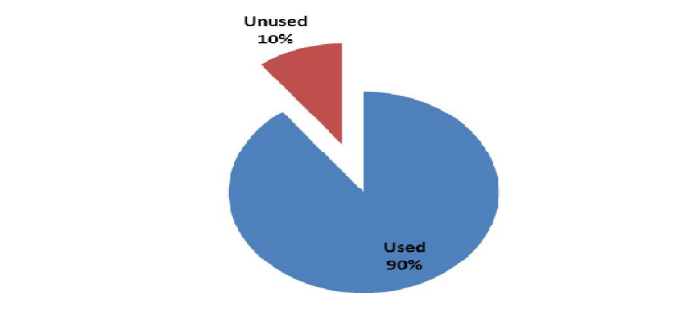
Figure 10: Public university libraries

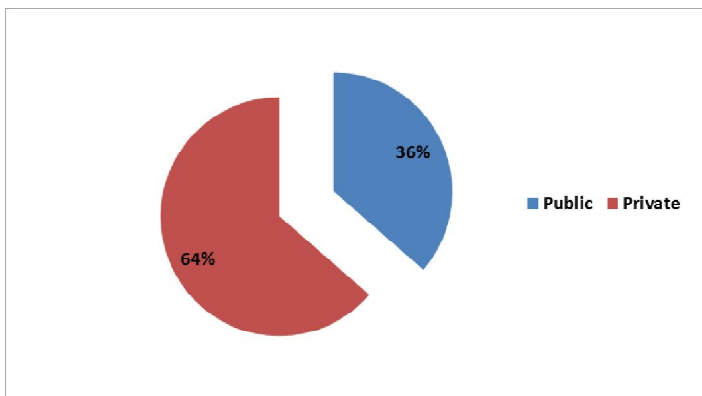**Figure 11: Private university libraries**

Figure 12: Public and Private university libraries

4.2. Discussion

Public Relations (PR) are the activities and attitudes that any individual, group, or institution uses to analyze, influence, direct, and adjust to the opinion of any group, or groups, of persons (Weiner, 1990).

Kotler and Fox define public relations for educational institutions as "*efforts to obtain favorable interest in the institution and/or its programs, typically through planting significant news about them in publications; through obtaining favorable unpaid presentation on radio, television, or in other media; or through the institution's own activities or events*" (Marshall, 2001).

Libraries of the universities both support the academic works and create an environment for people to develop themselves. While they do this, the libraries should express themselves clearly. Various tools are used to inform users that the library has all kinds of materials, and that it intends to make sure that they know how to reach the sources and determine what they want from a library.

"*Library public relations are a deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between the library and the public, (users) public relation activities help to provide a coordinated effort to communicate a positive image of the library and promote the availability of the library's materials, programs, and services*" (Israel, 2012). At this stage, we face the term 'public relations.' A business should engage in activities that both reach its targets and satisfy the needs of the customer. In this respect, it should be noted that libraries are non-profit organizations, and the term "public relations" is only used for companies.

However, regarding a university, public relations are for "*rapid innovation, sophisticated marketing, and advancements in communication which result in an increasing awareness of new options and a greater variety of choices. Thus, we should abandon our traditional choices for new products and services based on curiosity, effective marketing, and evidence of a clearly superior option*" (Neuhaus & Snowden, 2003).

University librarians are quick to recognize the importance of the president, vice-president, or the academic dean in their relations with the administration, but how often do they know their lesser administrative officers, such as the director of admissions, the alumni secretary, the registrar, or the person who is responsible for developing public relations? Recently, a new development director was appointed at a mid-western college. During his first months of orientation, the librarian was able to sit down with the new colleague and informally brief him on library problems and needs (Deale, 1958). Public relations gain the support, trust, and sympathy of the people to whom an organization provides service. The goal of the university libraries' public relations is to give people positive ideas about them. Determining the situation of the studies in a university library is vital to produce solutions for this subject and to improve public relations (Gül Çağlar, 2006).

Kotler says: "*The ability of businesses and organizations to promote their services or to make potential users aware of their products can mean the difference between success and extinction*" (Kotler, 1997). There are lots of tools which are used in public relations practices. These tools may be categorized under titles such as written, verbal, and audio-visual.

While these tools are used, they should be chosen according to the sociologic, demographic, and economic quality and quantity aspects of the addressed mass. Public relations practices mostly were in the printed forms of newspapers and magazines, verbal forms of face-to-face interviews, telephone calls, or visual forms, like radio and TV. Nowadays, public relations come in the form of new communication technologies: teleconferences, internet, web sites and social media tools. The true evaluation of these methods used in public relations determines the solutions to problems and increase the strength of the organization.

"The same methods used in marketing are used in public relations to let people know who and what you are, and to build relationships with the media. Examples include press release, newsletters, brochures, annual reports, or well-designed publications. Increasingly, libraries are utilizing interactive social media, such as blogs, Twitter and Facebook, as tools in their public relations campaigns. Unlike the traditional tools which only allowed for one-way communication, social media allows the library to engage in two-way communication, and receive immediate feedback from their various stakeholders and publics" (Israel, 2012).

The internet era brings advanced technologies for new innovations of communication and public relations tools. Social media lets the library and other information sources be used easily and effectively, everywhere and every time. Social media tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, RSS, blogs, YouTube, Foursquare, Pinterest and Flickr, create a dynamic environment for library users. Twitter, one of the social media tools, was established in 2006 so Jack Dorsey could stay in contact with his family and friends (Aharony, 2010). However, it rapidly became an address where users follow updates of favorite businesses, news feeds, celebrities and many others. In time, the organization's public relations department realized the power of social media when it spread through all of its departments as a useful tool. University libraries also started to use social media tools to open new communication channels with the public and users.

Thinking ahead, there may be some opportunities in social media that the library hasn't been effectively exploiting:

- Social media is an excellent opportunity for librarians to market their services and collections to their clientele.
- Such media enables libraries to reach a wide range of their users and attract new users.
- Libraries have the opportunity to hear from their users about the kind of services they want (Fernandez, 2009).

If these instructions were followed, the library would need training and experience in their useage, best practices, and platform communication skills before starting to interact with students and faculty through social media. It can be difficult to keep up with technology with many social media choices, and more are being created. While Twitter allows for multiple accounts for personal and professional use, Facebook does not lend this favorable work/personal life separation to its users. In a 2011 study of how faculty use social media, 70% had privacy concerns about using social media in their instruction (Stoeckel & Sinkinson, 2015).

In a study conducted in Australia, the first social media preference for libraries was Facebook (86%). Twitter was also ranked highly (52%), followed by blogging, Flickr, YouTube, RSS feeds, Skype and creating online content. Other social media applications mentioned were Pinterest and apps (Smith, 2013).Johnson and Burclaff's results of the survey indicate that 94% of libraries have some social media presence. Many institutions indicated they had accounts on multiple platforms. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were the most popular platforms in 21%, 19% and 13% of the libraries surveyed, respectively (Johnson & Burchaff, 2013).

Kai-Wah Chu and S. Du's study,academic librarians' defined social networking tools to be blogs, Delicious, Flickr, Issuu, Slideshare, Wikis and YouTube, which are not within our definition (Kai-Wah Chu & Du, 2012). In this study, Facebook (62.9%), Twitter (62.9%), blogs (25.9%), Wikis (18.5%), YouTube (11.1%), Flickr (14.8%), Slideshare (7.4%), Issuu (3.7%) and Delicious (3.7%) were found (Kai-Wah Chu & Du, 2012).Around the world, academic libraries in the United Kingdom (30%), the United States (18%), Hong Kong (15%), China (7%), Canada (4%), Singapore (7%), Taiwan (7%), Korea (4%), Germany (4%) and Japan (4%) have social networking tools (Kai-Wah Chu & Du, 2012). The present study revealed similar results to those found in Kai-Wah Chiu and Du's studies. In global and Turkish academic libraries, the most preferred tools are found to be Foursquare, Facebook and Twitter.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Most of the university libraries are in İstanbul. Libraries are using social media as a tool for public relations. Libraries mainly choose Foursquare, Facebook and Twitter as social media tools. University libraries use social media tools to notify their users about new materials and resources, to give information about library and research techniques. They also are used to create campaigns, as well as social and cultural activities.

In our study, sample libraries (which are in 29% of the universities) gradually started to use social media. At the end of this study, it is stated that the social media tools are more effectively used in the libraries of private universities than the libraries of public universities. Taking current situations and improvements into consideration, public relations and social media management courses should be added in universities' Information and Documentation Management Departments. Also, librarians should work in libraries as specialists of public relations and social media management. Furthermore, libraries should make their social media policy and accounts accessible from their web pages. In general, a lot of library web pages do not have links to their social media accounts.

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Annex 1: List of Universities

Universities in Marmara Region[5]

Public Universities in Marmara Region:

1.   Balıkesir University
2.   Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University (in the establishment phase)
3.   Bilecik Şeyh Edebali University
4.   Boğaziçi University
5.   Bursa Technical University
6.   Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University
7.   Galatasaray University
8.   Gebze Institute of Technology
9.   İstanbul Medeniyet University
10.   İstanbul Technical University
11.   İstanbul University
12.   Kırklareli University
13.   Kocaeli University
14.   Marmara University
15.   Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University
16.   Namık Kemal University
17.   Health Sciences University (in the establishment phase)
18.   Sakarya University
19.   Trakya University
20.   Turkish – German University
21.   Turkey International Islamic University of Science and Technology (in the establishment phase)
22.   Uludağ University
23.   Yalova University
24.   Yıldız Technical University

5Available at: http://www.yok.gov.tr/web/guest/universitelerimiz(accessed 12 June 2015).

Private Universities in Marmara Region:

1. Acıbadem University
2. Bahçeşehir University
3. Beykent University
4. Bezm-i Alem Foundation University
5. Biruni University
6. Bursa OrhanGazi University
7. Doğuş University
8. Fatih Sultan Mehmet Foundation University
9. Fatih University
10. Gedik University
11. Haliç University
12. Işık University
13. İbn Haldun University (in the establishment phase)
14. İstanbul 29 Mayıs University
15. İstanbul Arel University
16. İstanbul Aydın University
17. İstanbul Bilgi University
18. İstanbul Bilim University
19. İstanbul Esenyurt University
20. İstanbul Gelişim University
21. İstanbul Kemerburgaz University
22. İstanbul Kültür University
23. İstanbul Medipol University
24. İstanbul Rumeli University (in the establishment phase)
25. İstanbul Sabahattin Zaim University
26. İstanbul Şehir University
27. İstanbul Ticaret University
28. İstinye University (in the establishment phase)
29. Kadir Has University
30. Koç University
31. Maltepe University
32. MEF University
33. Murat Hüdavendigar University
34. Nişantaşı University
35. Okan University
36. Özyeğin University
37. Piri Reis University
38. Sabancı University
39. Süleyman Şah University
40. Üsküdar University
41. Yeditepe University
42. Yeni Yüzyıl University