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# **Engaging Fans on Facebook:**

How New Zealand organisations are communicating on Facebook  
to build and maintain relationships with their publics

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This research examined how Facebook is being used as a communication tool by commercial organisations in New Zealand to build and maintain relationships with their publics. The research questions were produced by identifying a gap in public relations literature, which revealed a lack of an integrated framework to assess organisations' communication with publics on social networking sites (SNS) from a relationship management perspective. The research questions explored how Facebook is being used as a communication tool by certain New Zealand organisations and their Facebook fans and how the findings of this study relate to specific relationship cultivation and outcome measures as identified in public relations literature.

A content analysis was carried out on twelve New Zealand commercial organisations' official Facebook pages. The main unit of analysis was a single Facebook post, and 21 days of material was collected. Results showed that organisations used a range of interactive and engaging communication activities/strategies such as conversation exchanges, asking and answering questions, compliments and positive reinforcements, which related to relationship cultivation strategies and relational outcomes. Communication activities such as traditional media-type relations like posting press releases or links to news stories were rarely utilised; however, communication activities such as text-based announcements appeared to substitute this.

The results were discussed in light of the research questions and concluded with recommendations to conduct further research in the area of commercial organisations communicating on SNS and the effectiveness of that communication within the relationship management framework.

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