



**SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT: A COMPARATIVE  
ANALYSIS OF GOOGLE'S ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY  
COMMUNICATION VERSUS THE MEDIA'S PORTRAYAL**

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To My Family

## **ABSTRACT**

### **SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GOOGLE'S ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY COMMUNICATION VERSUS THE MEDIA'S PORTRAYAL**

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This thesis focuses on how Google uses organizational communication strategies to introduce its organizational identity, products and services in comparison to how mainstream media outlets such as the New York Times and the Guardian portray their corporate identities. Grounded in identity theory, organizational identity, and based on literatures in media and technological advancements, the focus of this case study is comparing and contrasting how an organization uses communication strategies to introduce itself to the public, versus how traditional mass media covers the same organization through content analysis. The goal is to reveal the effectiveness of organizational communication strategies and practices. By designating organizational identity differences, the thesis makes inferences on how Google can strengthen its portrayal of identity and adjust its attitude towards certain notions.

**Keywords:** Google, Marketing, Main Stream Media, Organizational Communication,  
Organizational Identity, Public Relations

## ÖZET

### KİMLİK HESAPLAŞMASI: GOOGLE'IN KURUMSAL KİMLİK İLETİŞİMİ VE MEDYA'NIN TANIMLAMASI KARŞILAŞTIRMALI BİR ANALİZİ

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Bu çalışma, Google'ın kurumsal kimliğini, ürünlerini ve servislerini tanıtmak amacıyla kurumsal iletişim stratejilerini nasıl kullandığını ve New York Times ve Guardian gibi ana akım medyanın kurumsal kimliğini nasıl yansıttığını karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemeye odaklanmıştır. Kimlik teorisi, kurumsal kimlik ve medya ve teknolojik ilerleme ile ilgili literatürlere dayanarak; bu vaka çalışmasında bir kurumun iletişim stratejilerini kendini topluma tanıtmak için nasıl kullandığını ve buna karşıt olarak geleneksel ana akım medyanın bu kurumu nasıl yansıttığı içerik analizi ile karşılaştırılmıştır. Burada ki amaç, kurumsal iletişim stratejileri ve uygulamalarının etkisini ortaya çıkartmaktır. Tezin sonucunda kurumsal kimlik açısından kurumsal kimlik farklılıkları belirlenerek Google'ın kurumsal kimliğini nasıl daha etkili bir biçimde yansıttığı ve hangi kavramlara karşı duruş sergilemesi gerektiği üzerine çıkarımlarda bulunulmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ana Akım Medya, Halkla İlişkiler, Kurumsal İletişim, Kurumsal Kimlik, Pazarlama

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Long live COMD!

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## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

21st Century is largely governed and facilitated by technology corporations. It is inconceivable to imagine a world without the services and products without technology corporation's products and services. Whether one lives in a tiny village across Antarctica or a metropolitan city in the Americas, these technology firms navigate our daily life and they become an extension of our existence. It is no longer feasible to consider the life of an individual left untouched by the marks of these companies. The uncharted territories of the world are virtually being uncovered by technology companies' services and products. This thesis explores Google within the scope of their organizational communication strategies. The research highlights and compares how Google introduces its products and services using organizational communication strategies, and how mainstream media outlets portray their corporate identities. Marshall McLuhan, an influential theorist regarding his propositions towards technology, is famous for coining the term global village (1964) in which he stresses how boundaries vanished with the emergence of new tools of technology such as the Internet. The world has transformed into one single unit that interconnectivity is omnipresent. In the status quo, humans have the agency to access information like never before thanks to the developments in technology. By these advancements, McLuhan (1964) draws attention to how the future might look like without the conventional boundaries. People who had an insatiable

desire to read and conduct research merely had the opportunity to extract the information from a single medium. In the modern era, there are various open-source platforms of information. In the status quo, Google serves as a search engine that could compile relevant data in seconds and present it to its users. This means that with new technology tools, people have virtually limitless resources for information. In terms of having access to information, Google has transformed the way people obtain information about their world and surroundings.

Google has had a major role in the establishment of McLuhan's (1964) "global village" as it connects the world to each other with an unprecedented flow of information. With its products and services, Google proved to be successful as many people use it regarding its new media tools such as search engines, maps, back up systems, software (android), and ads. These tools created such a network that gives the sense of a global village where physical boundaries lost their meaning and a virtual space came into being where people can be a part of a global community. The flow of information went through an exponential growth with the utilization of these media tools. Since McLuhan's (1964) main concern is to illuminate how enhancements and innovations in technology will impact the world we live in, it seems appropriate to utilize his research to this thesis. "The medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium-that is, of any extension of ourselves-result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology" (McLuhan, 1964, p. 107). As new technology tools develop and emerge, they become ubiquitous all over the globe. Needless to say, these tools such as

smartphones and tablets become an extension of ourselves due to the software and opportunities they create. Google has its share of software applications in which they have an enormous impact on the daily lives of people. “McLuhan understood that media – from the gramophone and the camera to the typewriter and the telephone – are not simply mechanical objects but profoundly human responses to sensory impairment, dismemberment, mourning, and death” (MacDonald, 2006, p.506). MacDonald (2006) draws attention to the motivations behind the innovations by giving examples of gramophone, camera, and typewriter. This is to advocate it would be invidiousness to perceive these tools merely as hardware. These relatively new media/technology tools were developed towards meeting particular needs and demands of our changing and ever evolving social lives. Once, when an individual had sought an answer to a question he/she would have to physically be in a particular place and at a particular time such as libraries and newsstands. In the status quo, Google is the profound information system response to having access to a wide range of knowledge. Therefore, people are not confined within the limits of the pre-internet era and currently, they have the agency to access diversified forms of information.

McLuhan (1964) asserts that technology has revolutionized our daily lives. Regarding daily habits, the usage of smartphones, virtual reality devices, tablets, and laptops serve as sufficient proof of how technology has infiltrated into the lives of millions of people across the globe. “For McLuhan a specific medium of communication offers a person a particular way of knowing and understanding the world heavily influenced by that particular mode of communication” (Fishman, 2006, p.570). Considering the patterns of

how we compose reality and deconstructing the groundwork for essential topics in the state of affairs, Google, as the technology revolution's signifier, has been the pioneer. Moreover, McLuhan (1964) frequently engages with dualisms in his research including content vs form and time vs space. One of the most recognizable dualisms that he's known for is hot vs cool media. McLuhan (1964) asserts that hot medium is attributed to a phenomenon where there is no requirement for macro-scale participation. In other words, people do not have a responsibility for a great deal of commitment in such media. Newspapers and radios qualify for such a category which also contributes to this thesis from a theoretical framework. McLuhan (1964) also contemplated media as a living organism that has a central nervous system, eyes, and brains. Indeed, media is a living organism that never sleeps and is within a constant flux. The central nervous system can be concretely witnessed in the world as Google's enormous server storages where virtually limitless information is being stored.

Other scholars have also studied how new technologies changed the society and human life. Raymond Williams (2004) primarily focuses on how television affects society and the types of impacts it might have on it regarding the psychological and cultural aspects. He particularly investigates the linkage between "media and society" and "media and technology" with the anticipation of discovering any prospective cause and effect relationship that might impact society as a whole. The aim of this research is to apply Williams's theoretical approach to the Internet, that is to say, Google. Williams (2004) asserts that technology's impact, the internet has been unparalleled regarding its role in shaping our social relationships and discourse. In other words, this transformation with

internet initiatives also significantly affected the way people construct their realities and the decoding process of meaningful frameworks. Williams (2004) formulated the term of technological determinism to create a better form of understanding of the emergence of media tools and its effects. “New technologies are discovered, by an essentially internal process of research and development, which then sets the conditions for social change and progress. Progress, in particular, is the history of these inventions, which 'created the modern world'. The effects of the technologies, whether direct or indirect, foreseen or unforeseen, are as it were the rest of history” (Williams, 2004, p. 13). Research and development are the essential phases in the process of the creation of a modern world. Through technological advancements, its unavoidable to experience various forms of changes and adjustments within a society.

McLuhan (1964) and Williams (2004) provide a vision and overarching understanding to how technology fundamentally altered human life. In other words, these two scholars enlighten the public regarding technology impact on the life of an individual as well as the masses. Thus, they provide a theoretical background in the process of analyzing Google’s corporate communication regarding its high technology influence on a global scale. An idea resembles a commodity which can be regarded as the most valuable asset in a corporation’s life. The promotion of an original idea may lead to a great corporate victory which would mean the success of the corporation, through the effective use of many different organizational communication strategies including public relations, advertising, and marketing. The rewarding collaboration between these strategies proves to be essential for the existence and sustainability of a corporation. In order to identify a

convenient market place for particular products and services, it is crucial to maximize the utility of public relations and marketing. Thus, this thesis draws attention to the significance of organizational communication strategies as it creates the public image for others to see. Due to the broad nature of the topics explored, the thesis explores corporate communication strategies by implementing agenda-setting and identity theories to the analysis. In addition, case study methodology provides concrete examples which will enable one to reify theoretical frameworks. By focusing on highly acclaimed internationally prominent newspapers such as The New York Times (NYT) and The Guardian, the aim is to explore and develop an understanding of how corporate image/identity is being shaped and transferred through mainstream media. Reading traditional newspaper articles on Google captures how the global village created by Google's products and services is being perceived through the gaze of news organizations which deliver content to millions of readers. The comparison between how Google uses organizational communication strategies to introduce their services and products versus how mainstream media outlets portray their image is depicted through concrete content analyses. The thesis analyzes news articles from NYT and the Guardian as well as Google's press releases. When conducting a research on Google, organizational communication provides the essential framework regarding how the technology giants operate. "Play an important role of critique in exposing organizations as discursive sites of contradiction, where systems of power and politics are enacted and reproduced in ways that benefit some stakeholders over others" (Mumby, 2014, p. 119). Thus, organizational communication explores how organizations operate within a complex mechanism and the relationship between organizational members and its stakeholders.

The thesis asserts that the successful cooperation of the organizational communication strategies such as public relations and marketing can serve as a booster or otherwise significantly deteriorate a corporation's image. By focusing on various types of products and services, the thesis demonstrates how vital organizational communication is for a corporation in its lifespan. As well as manifesting their organizational identity, the thesis also encapsulates the crucial role of mass media organs in establishing an organizational identity for organizations. Moreover, the thesis offers a comparison of two behemoth technology corporations within the framework of their organizational identity.

**RQ1.** *How does Google use organizational communication strategies to communicate its organizational identity through their products and services?*

**RQ2.** *In comparison, how do mainstream media outlets (NYT & The Guardian) portray Google's organizational identity?*

### **1.1. Google Inc.**

The technology giant Google was founded in 1998 by Larry Page and Sergey Brin in California, United States. According to Starr (2020), Google is considered one of the "Big Four" technology corporations such as Facebook, Apple, and Amazon. Google resembles a god-like agency regarding its virtually infinite range of data storage. In basic perception, Google is being regarded as a search engine. In fact, it is much more than a search engine. It's vital to be aware of Google in its entirety. Just as it would be inaccurate to consider Amazon merely consisting of a sales delivery platform, the same applies to Google. The corporation transformed into a platform which permeated into the

daily lives of billions of people. Besides being a popular search engine, it enables people to pinpoint their precise location, find their way to their home, watch their favorite channels on Youtube, backup files on Cloud, power their smartphones through Android and so on. Evidently, Google encompasses a vast array of products and services which focuses on both software and hardware.

Elias (2020) states that Google has more than 100.000 employees worldwide as of 2019. According to Klebnikov (2020) , Google’s market value exceeded \$1 trillion by 2020 which marks the significant hold of the corporation in the market economy. According to Google’s official website, “Google’s mission is to organize the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful” (Google, n.d.). Google promotes products and services such as Google search, maps, earth, translation, cloud, and chrome for the purposes of searching and exploration. Particularly with the search feature of Google, the name Google transformed into a verb. The phrase “Google it” became synonymous with conducting a research on the web. Today, one can investigate from an advanced academic research (google scholar) to various dinner recipes and daily essential knowledge to navigate their life. The maps service provides location services to millions of people with extra information on traffic conditions which aims to provide the ideal route for its users. It also provides the top attractions within a specific area which informs its users for potential experiences.

Google earth portrays a macro-scale maps function where users can experience what it looks like to take a glimpse at space. Google's translation service enables people to communicate in more than 100 languages (Google, n.d.). Chrome serves as a fast and secure browser with enhanced add-ons with the aim to enrich users experience. As mentioned before ( Elias & Petrova, 2019), Chrome surpassed its competitors such as Mozilla Firefox, Safari, and Internet explorer and became the dominant browser by 2017. "In 2008, Google introduced Chrome, a new browser that quickly swept away the competition. Ten years later Chrome had a 63 percent share of the global browser market, with Apple's Safari a distant second at 14 percent (Awio Web Services 2018)" (Lamoreaux, 2019, p. 111). There is an apparent success that Google achieved in a variety of platforms such as Chrome and its search engine. Other services like Safari, Mozilla Firefox, and Internet Explorer could not demonstrate a similar success compared to Google Chrome. When it comes to watching and listening, Google presents the video sharing platform YouTube and Google play films which is widely used around the globe. According to Sorkin and Peters (2006), Google acquired the popular video sharing website YouTube for \$1.65 billion in 2006 which can be considered as a significant development for Google within the media industry. In terms of hardware, which is powered by their own software (android), Google produces and distributes Pixel smartphones as well as Stadia, a cloud gaming service. Google particularly is known for its creation of "android" a software system that is used around the globe. Brandom (2019) reported that Google announced there are 2.5 billion active Android devices as of 2019. Google also introduced a new way of communicating around the globe titled "Gmail" in which proved to be quite successful. Elias and Petrova (2019) indicates that Gmail is the global leader in terms of email services with 1.5 billion global

active users. Google goes beyond investing in different branches of the technology industry by focusing on lobbying activities. “In the first three-quarters of 2018, Google spent more on lobbying in Washington (\$16.5 million) than any other business corporation, more than the American Medical Association or the American Hospital Association, and considerably more than twice as much as the National Rifle Association” (Lamoreaux, 2019, p. 113).

Google’s flagship cloud service Google drive allows its users to store their files in various formats such as documents, charts, pdfs, photos, and videos. While concentrating upon its users on a personal level, Google also offers services for the business world which can mainly be considered as advertising tools. By offering services such as Google Ads, AdWords, and Google Analytics, Google appeals to the business world mainly for marketing/advertising purposes. “As of October 2010, 67 percent of its revenue came from ads on Google websites. Another 30 percent came from Google’s ad network (AdWords). What this means is only three percent of its revenue comes from nonadvertising sources” (Simon, 2011, p. 127). Hence, services such as Ads and AdWords corresponds to the majority of Google’s profits. This situation also demonstrates that Google managed to acquire a prominent space within the advertising universe as its services greatly contributed to their overall revenue. Since the age of information is associated with the unprecedented rise and growth of the internet and communication technologies, it is vital how Google executives portray their vision towards the era. Schmidt, Google’s CEO between 2001-2011 and executive chairman of Google between 2011-2015, and former director of Google Ideas wrote

extensively on the issue of Google's potential impacts on our future. Schmidt and Cohen (2013) assert that the notion of connectivity will be more accessible and affordable which will have a direct affect on the way we live.

They conclude that with wide spread online experience through public wireless hot spots and high-speed home networks, people will discover brand new ways of interacting with each other and how we define reality surrounding us. "Communication technologies represent opportunities for cultural breakthroughs as well as technical ones. How we interact with others and how we view ourselves will continue to be influenced and driven by the online world around us" (Schmidt & Cohen, 2013, p. 5). By maximizing the utility of communication technologies, the way we define ourselves and the channels we use to communicate with others is drastically evolving. The online world surrounding us is mostly powered by Google's products and services. "What was once a small search engine company has evolved into arguably the most powerful and far-reaching digital platform the world has ever seen" (Simon, 2011, p. 114).

"The newfound ability to obtain accurate and verified information online, easily, in native languages and in endless quantity, will usher in an era of critical thinking in societies around the world that before had been culturally isolated" (Schmidt & Cohen, 2013, p. 34). By exploring and wandering in the virtually endless online universe, the user has a unique tool at their disposal to find answers to their questions which was not accessible and abundant earlier. In the most basic sense, the way people construct their

reality and the way they shape their discourses towards specific issues are directly affected by the advanced forms of searching on the internet. Schmidt and Cohen (2013) argue that within a place that is underdeveloped in terms of physical infrastructure, connectivity will be serving a vital role for people who desire to initiate businesses, involve in e-commerce, and communicate with their government in a brand new level.

“Google was undertaking one of the most ambitious strategies in business history: to organize all of the world’s information. In particular, to capture and control every cache of productive information that currently existed on, or could be ported to, the web” (Galloway, 2017, p. 149). Hence, Google is one of the most significant corporations around the world to study in terms of organizational communication. The corporation itself organized itself so effectively that they regulate the information surrounding us, thus our perception of reality. Organizing all of the world’s information is indeed at the core of its operations. For this reason, conducting research on how they introduce their products and services that regulate the information circulation around the world is crucial.

“Consider Google. It speaks to the brain, and supplements it, scaling up our long-term memory to an almost infinite degree. It does so not only by accessing petabytes of information around the globe-but just as important, substitutes for our brain’s complex and singular search ‘engine’ ” (Galloway, 2017, p. 169). Galloway (2017) portrays Google as if it is a living organism that surrounds people in every domain possible. For Galloway (2017), Google operates through such a complex system that it can be depicted as the human brain which also resembles a sophisticated system in human

nature. “Google adds the brute force of ultrafast processing and highspeed broadband networking to race around the world to find, on the right server, the exact piece of information we desire” (Galloway, 2017, p. 169). Hence, Google maximizes the utility of high-speed networks and processing which provides a wide range of search services to millions of people around the world. Google Inc. is a leading corporation in terms of information technology.

By extracting and providing the precise information that is requested by its user, Google became a platform for global access to information. Achieving such success requires meticulously executed tasks with a team effort. The organizational communication within Google Inc., thus symbolizes a sophisticated system which played a major role in the success of the corporation. Through their organizational communication units, Google accomplished to be a platform that provides any type of knowledge desired by its users and knows an individual better than the individual her/himself. Hence, it is essential to discover organizational communication strategies being implemented by Google. Marketing, public relations, and advertising for the product or service is as significant as creating product and service. The purpose of this thesis is to reveal the efficacy of organizational communication strategies for a technology corporation so it can maintain and preserve its own existence.

## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Since the thesis explores the organizational communication strategies implemented by Google in order to introduce their services and products to the public, it is essential to focus on the smallest units constructing the corporations. Considering that corporations are kept alive by people (employees) working for them, both employees and corporations are impacted by the notion of identity. For employees, the sense of identity can also become affiliated with belonging to somewhere or to a group. This means that identity can be regarded as a malleable notion that can adjust to a particular ecosystem in time. As mentioned before by Albert and Whetten(1985), particular values, manners, visions, and belief systems can be internalized by the employees of an organization. Investopedia (2020) contends that working at Google is generally associated with creativity, innovation, being original, brand new ideas, and high intellect. Hence, these aspects might be appealing to individuals who would like to associate their identities with such values. On the other hand, corporations such as Google has to present itself in such a way that it would exalt both their employees and customers. In other words, corporations are obligated to maintain a positive corporate identity through their products and services along with corporate social responsibility projects to cement their existence in the business world. In the context of an organization's associated meanings and values, the sense of identity becomes a crucial topic. Both for consumers and the

members of an organization, there are particular ways that people identify themselves through a vision, mission, and a set of beliefs. This can also be regarded as a sense of belonging to a group or a social circle.

## **2.1. Identity Theory**

For the reasons mentioned above, identity theory provides the theoretical basis for this thesis. It is crucial to recognize how people, who form the organizations and groups, identify themselves, and relate themselves to the world. An organization is comprised of a group of people who gather around a common goal and achieve a particular type of mission. It is imperative to focus on the roots of the notion “identity” so it can provide an advanced form of understanding when it comes to analyzing organizational communication. Without exploring the core elements within an organization, it would not be possible to construct a coherent and plausible analysis.

Tajfel and Turner (1979) have provided the basis for the social identity/group theoretical framework. Since the focal point for this thesis is organizational communication, it is plausible to develop an understanding of what a group consists of and how individuals define themselves within those groups. How people affiliate themselves with a particular type of group and in this case an organization, is a significant aspect to concentrate on. Tajfel and Turner (1979) define “group” as an assemblage of people who share similar belief systems, and possess a form of social consensus within the respective social group they belong to. Another inevitable form of conceptualization is social categorization.

“Social categorizations are conceived here as cognitive tools that segment, classify, and order the social environment, and thus enable the individual to undertake many forms of social action.” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p.40). In other words, by the existence and practice of social categorizations, individuals attach particular meanings to their existence and associate themselves with specific social environments as well as locations. According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), the social categorization process paves the way for self-reference as well. Self-reference is a form of understanding that indicates how an individual positions him/herself in society. Furthermore, these constructed social groups support individuals in terms of their self-identification within a social hierarchy. One of the most recognizable hypotheses in this work is that individuals have an endeavor to improve and sustain their self-esteem. They struggle to achieve and maintain a positive self-concept as well as possess negative and positive value connotations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Tajfel and Turner (1979) emphasize that there are three types of factors that regulate intergroup differentiation in social situations. First, in terms of their self-concept, individuals have to embrace their group membership as it also contributes to the sense of a group’s self-identification. Second, there should be such an atmosphere that would enable intergroup comparisons where individuals will have the agency to decide and assess the respectful attitudes associated with them and their surroundings. Third, the reception of the out-group should be pertinent for comparison regarding its eminence, affinity, and distance. Tajfel and Turner (1979) proceed by highlighting why people differ in their social surroundings. “The aim of differentiation is to maintain or achieve

superiority over an out-group on some dimensions” (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p.41). This statement is applicable to the analysis of organizational structures. Whether an employee regards him/herself as Google’s family member, they indeed attach particular forms of attributes (generally positive connotations) to themselves. “The cognitive function, resulting in the accentuation of similarities and differences, was the utilization of the category membership of individual items for ordering, systematizing, and simplifying the complex network of social groups confronting individuals in their social environment” (Tajfel, 1982, p. 21). Thus, Tajfel (1982) posits that cognitive function plays an essential role in terms of the adjustment of individuals and social groups within a given social environment. Tajfel (1982) asserts that social categorization serves a vital role within the context of intergroup communication. One can observe that values are being attributed to individuals as part of their membership in their social group. Hence, social taxonomy is an imperative aspect of intergroup communication. YouTube’s virtual space can serve as an example for social categorization where user-generated contents are being categorized and attracts potential users in a certain way. Intergroup communication occurs within the categories created by the users who populate such virtual spaces.

Both users (consumers) and members (employees, executives) of an organization have their own internal dynamics regarding their social formation. Within a group or an organization, diversity is a common situation especially considering multinational corporations as they promote diversification and inclusion. Dovidio, Saguy, and Shnabel (2009) state that the dynamic relationship between stability and change can be

manifested through cooperation and conflict within a group which should be regarded as a development phase in the group's lifespan. The successful implementation of organizational communication strategies also depends on the cooperation and coordination within its units. Since organizations are constituted by several departments or units, one should also explore the notion of organizational identity. Ultimately, identification is a central motif to this study both on individual and organizational level.

## **2.2. Organizational Identity**

Olins (1990) posits that within the formation of organizational identity, all forms of communication attempts along with the entire range of products and services are vital. Olins explicitly demonstrates that when an organization introduces any of its services and products, this action communicates their organizational identity to the public and their stakeholders. Within this context, it is reasonable to argue that Google communicates its organizational identity with every action it takes including press releases and launching various types of products and services. Aust (2004) defines organizational identity "as an organization's distinctive character discernible by those communicated values manifest in its externally transmitted messages" (p. 523). Aust (2004) asserts that the distinctive characteristics of an organization directly communicates its own values and identity. Albert and Whetten (1985) posit members of an organization derive meaningful frameworks for themselves as organizational identity presents them a set of belief systems, values, and archetypes of manners. Verboven (2011) asserts that in order to communicate with stakeholders, corporate websites are crucial instruments. Hence, the corporate website where Google's press releases are

located is utilized in this thesis as it effectively communicates their corporate identity to their stakeholders and to the public.

The way organizations communicate its own identity is through ads, news articles, innovations, and initiatives. “Through various modes of corporate communication, including innovative designs, advertisements, programs, and news releases, corporations seek to effectively educate, entertain and inform their stakeholders, and establish and modify relationships with them. Corporate rhetorical success is reflected in enhanced reputation and respectability, which in turn has significant economic consequences” (Dhir, 2006, p. 249). Within corporate communications, there are various types of channels such as advertisements, news/press releases that could be utilized in order to effectively communicate with stakeholders of any given corporation. The art of rhetoric should be recognized by corporations as it can be a tool that paves the way for an excellent reputation and great financial success for a long and healthy lifespan. Dhir (2006) contends that the construction of reputation and image along with public relations management is firmly associated with rhetoric. Dhir (2006) asserts that the dissemination of information and freedom of speech are being bolstered by emerging technologies. In this context, particularly Google serves a pivotal role in the dissemination of information.

“During organizational creation, staffing and hiring, and creating and developing the organization’s products and services, organizational members are communicating with one another and with stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, and regulators. Thus, organizational communication covers a wide variety of communicative activity across

several different types of senders and receivers—as individuals, groups, or teams— and the organization as a whole” (Keyton, 2017, p. 506). Hence, it is plausible to assert that communication is the core aspect that powers and maintains an organizational body. In order for organizations to be functional and conduct their operations in a coherent pattern, communicating amongst the members of an organization is essential. Indeed, the active communication between an organization’s member and its stakeholders is what keeps the organization alive and allows it to properly conduct its business. “Are processes which create, maintain, and dissolve social collectives, that these processes constitute the work of organizing, and that the ways in which these processes are continuously executed are the organization” (Weick, 1965, p. 1). Organizations are described as living organisms that have agency over the creation and sustainability of a social collective.

Balmer (1998) asserts that organizations should be actively challenging with adversaries to uphold a positive and strong image towards their prominent stakeholders and other stakeholder groups. They should be aware of environmental challenges (social, economic) at all times and take a stance accordingly. Hence, they would be able to achieve a benign corporate reputation which ultimately portrays an effective and tenacious corporate identity. “First, the concept of corporate identity is fundamentally concerned with reality, ‘what an organisation is,’ i.e. its strategy, philosophy, history, business scope, the range and type of products and services offered and its communication both formal and informal” (Balmer, 1998, p. 979). Balmer (1998) defines corporate identity in the entirety of what a corporation’s services are and why it

exists for. Hence, the products and services of Google define its corporate identity.

“Schmidt and Ludlow (1996) state that the mix comprises of five elements: corporate culture, corporate behavior, products and services, communication and design as well as market conditions and strategies” (Balmer, 1998, p. 980). Corporate identity is firmly associated with almost every action that a corporation takes. Since the thesis explores how Google introduces their products and services in the public sphere, corporate identity is highly significant. King (1991) predicates that throughout the assesment process of organizations, clients significantly observe the corporate culture. In other words, organizational culture emphasizes the range of products and services that an organization introduces to the public.

James (1990) asserts that within the formulation of a new identity, %75 of the work of a consultant would consists of comprehending the organizational culture. Downey (1986) hypothesizes that the origin of corporate culture can be traced back to corporate identity. For Downey (1986) the culture of a company emphasizes “what” whereas the identity focuses on “why”. Kilmann (1985) asserts that culture implements a particular style or characteristic to a corporation. Schein (1990) explains organizational culture in six steps. “1) A pattern of basic assumptions, 2) invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, 3) as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, 4) that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore 5) is to be taught to new members as the 6) correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.” (Schein, 1990, p. 7). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) contend that at a time where a prominent or ordinary player in a particular industry engages in a certain

action that would have the potential to affect how business is conducted, many other organizations can imitate this action to legitimize its own activities. After millions of people started to use Google search engine and its advertisement services, corporations such as the Russian owned Yandex and Microsoft operated Bing attempted to adapt similar business strategies (search engine) within the information technology industry. “Organizations compete not just for resources and customers, but for political power and institutional legitimacy, for social as well as economic fitness” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 150). Institutional legitimacy and political power can be closely associated with the practices of a corporation, such as their products and services. These two components can serve as enforcement for gaining significant agency regarding institutional legitimacy.

### **2.3. Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporate social responsibility is also one of the core elements regarding the evaluation of a corporation. Today, a corporation is not merely defined with its financial success or the way they appeal to their stakeholders, but how they contribute to their community. “It refers to the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society” (Bowen, 1953, p. 6). Bowen is considered to be one of the earliest scholars to study this subject. Bowen demonstrated that the businesses were responsible for more than their loss or profit statements. Davis (1960) addresses social responsibility as “businessmen’s decisions and actions taken for reasons at least partially beyond the firm’s direct economic or technical interest” (Davis, 1960, p. 70). Davis (1960), famous for his Iron Law of Responsibility, mentions that the social power of

managers or industrialists should be adequate to their communal accountability. “The idea of social responsibilities supposes that the corporation has not only economic and legal obligations but also certain responsibilities to society which extend beyond these obligations” (McGuire, 1963, p. 144). This definition is particularly significant since it indicates that social responsibility exceeds the boundaries of economic and legal mandates. McGuire (1963) states that an ideal corporation should resemble a decent citizen that focuses on the society as a whole in aspects such as the welfare of its society, its education as well as its politics. Walton (1967) asserts that the deep relationship between corporation and society should be acknowledged and must constantly be reminded by the executives that they should seek to achieve their objective respectively. “A socially responsible firm is one whose managerial staff balances a multiplicity of interests. Instead of striving only for larger profits for its stockholders, a responsible enterprise also takes into account employees, suppliers, dealers, local communities, and the nation” (Johnson, 1971, p. 50). Johnson accentuates that a socially responsible corporation would be concerned with its surroundings and its country as well as its commercial profits.

“Before anything else, the business institution is the basic economic unit in our society. As such it has a responsibility to produce goods and services that society wants and to sell them at a profit. All other business roles are predicated on this fundamental assumption” (Carroll, 1979, p. 500). Hence, Carroll (1979) delineates that as the most commercially fundamental unit in a community, corporations have the responsibility to contribute to the overall welfare in their community with its products and services.

“Corporate social responsibility is a commitment to improve community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources” (Kotler & Lee, 2005, p. 3). Within the context of corporate social responsibility, the common keyword seems to be well-being and improvement amongst scholars. Carroll (2015) contends that the functional aspect of CSR can be considered as the corporate leaders’ philanthropic, economic, ethical, and legal values to enhance the common welfare of society. “Business contributes to the common good in different ways, such as creating wealth, providing goods and services in an efficient and fair way, at the same time respecting the dignity and the inalienable and fundamental rights of the individual” (Garriga & Mele, 2004, p. 62). Furthermore, Garriga and Mele (2004) underscore that corporate social responsibility can be viewed through four core elements. First, pursuing and achieving long-term profits, second, executing the business agency in a conscientious manner, third, consolidating communal desires, and fourth, devoting itself in the right ethical way to the greater good of the society.

Davis (1960) asserts that a business has to use its agency in a liable way as it is a social establishment. Hence, the description of CSR includes common phrases such as responsibility and well being. “Finally, companies operating in retail trade, warehousing and storage of pharmaceuticals, telecommunication, consumer electronics, and construction industries implement CSR activities that are discretionary and they prioritize fulfilling their responsibilities towards the community” (Ozdora-Aksak & Atakan-Duman, 2016, p. 248). Google is a corporation that can represent and promote a wide range of industries including pharmaceuticals, consumer electronics, and

telecommunication. The existence of the corporations operating within these industries is mainly powered by Google's services and products.

### **2.3.1. Corporate Social Responsibility and Google Inc.**

Corporate social responsibility is one of the most significant topics on Google's agenda. Particularly in the age of information, technology corporations that provide access to information are aware of the vital role of social responsibility. According to google.org, Google consistently engages with activities that could significantly benefit different types of communities. Google \$100 million of funding per year in order to foster the innovation and advanced technologies that could benefit communities around the globe. Google claims that by the end of 2022, the aim is to grant \$1 billion in total to support communities in terms of providing education, economic opportunities, in-demand digital skills, and utilizing artificial intelligence to assist in job matching in the best possible way (Google, n.d.).

Especially in times of global crisis, information technology corporations can be at the frontline in terms of access to information. The disease COVID-19 can be regarded as one of the biggest global crises of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The corona virus infected over 2 million people and caused the death of 130,000 worldwide as of April 2020 (NYT, 2020). Google has announced that people's interest in the disease COVID-19 escalated by +260% globally through Google search service. Users pursued information about vaccine developments and travel advisories (Google, 2020). Google, through its philanthropic division google.org, committed \$50 million to challenge the disease

COVID-19 which supports small businesses, provides access to educational materials, and concentrates on health and technology. Google also announced that they will be donating \$5 million to COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund which will assist the World Health Organization (WHO) in the surveillance and mapping of the spreading of the virus. The fund also provides the fundamental supplies and knowledge to the frontline workers during the pandemic. (Google, 2020). Google's CEO Pichai announced on March 27, 2020 that Google committed over \$800 million to support small and medium-size businesses worldwide as well as health organizations and governments, and health workers. He contended that in association with Magid Glove & Safety, Google will be providing 2-3 million face masks to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Foundation. Google provides ad grants to WHO and many government agencies so that they can post vital information about how to avert the spreading of the disease COVID-19 worth \$250 million. Furthermore, a \$200 million fund package is granted to NGOs and financial institutions which will support small businesses to access the capital (Pichai, 2020).

Commitments by Google to a wide range of organizations that contribute to the well-being of communities both on a local and global scale demonstrate an ideal profile for a corporation. Providing essential medical supplies during the pandemic, granting financial assistance to small and medium scale businesses across the globe, and responding to various different questions of its users regarding the disease COVID-19 through its search service are concrete examples of corporate social responsibility.

## **2.4. Advertising, Public Relations, and Marketing**

When a product comes into being after a complex process of manufacturing, the next phase is to consider how and where to sell it. A commodity should possess such captivating features that the buyer should feel mesmerized. Selling a product or an idea requires a comprehensive understanding of potential customers with great coordination between the departments such as marketing and public relations. Multinational corporations such as Google appeal to millions of people worldwide and this must have been achieved through sophisticated and effective organizational communication management. Before examining how Google introduces its services and products to the public, it is imperative to be aware of the literature regarding public relations, marketing, and advertising to understand the roots of the actions and its consequences.

Belch and Belch (2003) contend that the practice of advertising has transformed itself in such a state that it has become a vital integral aspect for both consumers and organizations. The capability of meticulously curating particular types of messages to diverse backgrounds of communities granted advertising a crucial role in terms of marketing. Ranging from multinational corporations to small and medium-sized businesses, advertising has been the dominant channel when it comes to selling their products and services. The American Marketing Association describes marketing as “The process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives” (Belch & Belch, 2003, p.7). Belch and Belch (2003) assert that the notion of exchange is also a focal point in terms of marketing. Considering the

way it appraises the buyer of a corporation's services and products, advertising assumes a critical role in the exchange process. As the types of products and services proliferate, they also challenge the potential consumers who don't have sufficient time and energy. Considering the market in the status quo, well-established, famous brands have great agency in terms of competitive nature. Thus, brand identity possesses significant agency in the context of selling a commodity in a highly competitive market place. Marketing experts are aware of the vital role of brand identity as it serves to the growth and profits of a corporation.

Belch and Belch (2003) stresses that packaging, logo, name, design, and the efficiency of a product or service as well as all types of visual cues constitute the essence of brand identity. The advertising of the brand is the utmost contributor for the brand to come into being. "Advertising is defined as any paid form of nonpersonal communication about an organization, product, service, or idea by an identified sponsor" (Belch & Belch, 2003, p.16). Newspapers, radio, and tv can be regarded as the nonpersonal component of advertising which has the capacity to convey messages/information to mass audiences simultaneously. Belch and Belch (2003) assert that advertising is a significant tool to establish a brand image and has symbolic means for corporations which is a crucial function for organizations in terms of selling their products and services. Particularly during the age of information, technology is evolving at an unprecedented pace and people are experiencing exponential growth of internet usage in their daily lives.

Bagwell (2007) expands on 3 different approaches to advertising. First, it modifies consumer's tastes and creates brand loyalty which is classified as persuasive advertising. Second, informative advertising represents the lack of accurate information in markets considering the search cost may daunt the consumer of learning the product's price, quality, and existence. Thus, advertising allows the consumer to receive information on the prices and the location of a product at low costs. As a result, advertising generates competition among corporations and promotes entry for new players by allowing them to promulgate their product's, and prices. Third, complementary advertising assumes that consumers might prioritize social prestige for themselves and when the service or product has advertised the usage of the service or product might create even greater prestige. Chamberlin (1933) asserts that corporations can distinguish themselves from their rivals through the utilization of advertising. The distinctive feature of a corporation would provide benign circumstances regarding expansion in the market.

To attract attention to a particular product, idea, or commodity, the essential aspect of it ought to be interesting. Hence, the notion of "interest" is at the utmost significance for both the consumer and the corporation. Ideally, the material/product should connect with the consumer in such a way that it touches the consumer's emotions and makes them feel a connection or somehow associated with the product. Berger and Iyengar (2013) assert that an idea can generate sympathy by avoiding conventional means of conveying a message. The narrative should violate expectations and promote a novel or exciting way of telling a story. Berger and Iyengar (2013) stress the significance of generating creative ways that would not be expected from a common-sense perspective. Silvia

(2008) contends that the notion of “interest” is firmly associated with innate affection and consists of two core elements, comprehensibility, and novelty. Berlyne (1960) stresses that novelty can be regarded as something complex, new, or exciting. The novelty ought to be plain and simple so that people can understand without adversities which could be considered as comprehensibility. Lancaster (1990) proclaims that generating various options for a product both provides the appropriate platform for customer predilection and grants the customers the opportunity to distinguish themselves. Moore and Hutchinson (1983, 1985) argue that research conducted on advertising suggests that it is possible to expect a boost on the purchase aspect of a given commodity even with negative ads as it escalates brand recognition.

Advertising itself can appear in various forms and shapes including a corporation's inventory that is presented to the public. Berger, Draganska, and Simonson (2007) assert that a brand that has a wide range of options to choose presents a sign of quality to its customers. “A brand offering greater variety of compatible options, that is, options that require similar skills, is perceived as having greater category expertise and, consequently, is more likely to be selected” (Berger et al., 2007, p. 460). Google is the concrete reflection of this statement. With a wide range of services and products, these corporations communicate firm and assured messages to their customers. Considering the field of information technology, Google conveys the message that they are experts in their field as demonstrated with their diverse backgrounds of products and services.

The state of having extensive product and service categories within a brand also has the agency to affect the inferences of a potential customer. As a result, it affects the preference of a customer towards a brand. A corporation that offers a wider range of services and products in a line of business, conveys the message that it has the essential expertise in the field and it has devoted itself to gain an enhanced form of understanding in the scope and detail of the category where customers have different appetites (Prahalad & Hamel, 1997). Hence, Google would convey the message that they have the ultimate mastery in their fields by offering diverse backgrounds of products and services. In terms of being uniquely personalized for its user who seeks answers to different types of questions, Google knows the user better than the user knows his/herself. In other words, Google can be regarded as an expert which can demonstrate customer's interest areas, favorite books and movies, consumer orientation from purchase history, and places they like to visit. All these are made possible through its wide range of services and products that keep track of their actions.

Internet as a platform offers a massive playground for marketers since it has access to potentially millions of people at the same time through their smartphones, tablets, and laptops. Belch and Belch (2003) indicates that internet marketing or interactive media paves the way for a constant flux of information where users are participants that can customize the form and shape of it. This is especially accurate regarding Google's significant control over the flow of information on the internet. Google search and Google ads are concrete examples of services that allow its users to participate in the flow of information in real-time and actually convince them to make online purchases.

Public relations is a significant marketing tool in terms of communicating the corporate identity and brand image. Belch and Belch (2003) defines public relations as “the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest, and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance” (p. 23). Essentially it engages with actions concerned with a corporation’s public image which can range from corporate social responsibility campaigns to how to present a service/product to the public as it also serves as a signifier of the corporate culture. In other words, public relations attempts to regulate and maintain corporate image through well-arranged dissemination of information about itself. Belch and Belch (2003) contend that public relations could engage with community-related activities, fundraising, and financing exclusive activities to maintain a positive image of a corporation. Hence, corporate social responsibility can be considered as an aspect of public relations since it underscores the engagement of a corporation with the public.

Kotler (2010) claims that through products, services, technology, and its brands a corporation establishes a value for its customers. Those customers and managing the entire process results in lucrative business and accomplishment. Kotler (2010) asserts that there are two main challenges in terms of creating an ideal platform for potential customers. First, customers can be complex, and it’s not always clear to comprehend their actual needs. Clarity is indispensable for customers since they are not always aware of what they desire or need subconsciously. Hence, a successful marketing strategy

requires the corporation to understand the customer in its entirety. The second challenge is to be aware of the consumer's part in the whole competition process since a corporation attempts to create a competitive advantage through creating customers. "The foundation of a successful competitive marketing strategy is a deep and holistic understanding of buyers, their motivation, what they value, and how they choose" (Kotler, 2010, p. 6). Corporations rely on successful competitive marketing strategies to thrive and prosper within the business world. In other words, marketing is the quintessential continuous process that a corporation needs to survive and transform itself into a lucrative business. Kotler (2010) emphasizes emotional, economic, and functional are the fundamental values that potential costumers base their decision before purchasing a service or product. Power, affiliation, self-image, and control are prioritized by customers related to their emotional values. Kotler (2010) claims that corporations focus on growing faster, building a reputation, and making profits whereas customers focus on more concrete objectives such as losing weight in comparison to having a healthy life.

Public relations and advertising are marketing tools which are at the core of organizational communication. Hence, familiarity with the literature review greatly contributes to understanding how corporations carry out successful businesses and thrive in their respective sectors. Yet, it is equally significant to be aware of how mainstream media outlets portray Google's corporate identity. As successful organizational communication strategies empower a corporation, so does the news coverage of the mainstream media outlets. When mainstream media services such as the NYT and the

Guardian decided to include these types of initiatives in their news coverage, the awareness of a given corporation increases. When actions in the context of corporate social responsibility are placed in the news coverages, this most probably increases the sympathy of the corporation towards the public. News coverage of an action that contributes to the overall welfare state of a society can be regarded as part of an organizational communication strategy of a corporation. Specifically, public relations initiatives and projects communicate the identity of a corporation. As much as corporations invest in the society in which they live, they gain a certain level of respect and sympathy. The deeds towards a society convey the message that X corporation is a responsible and noble organization that is not merely concerned about making profits but also to the improvement of the society.

Hearit (1994), emphasizes several different communication strategies used by corporations in times of crisis where the department of public relations plays a key role in crisis management. "First, it attempts to present a convincing and plausible description of the situation in which the wrongdoing allegedly occurred that offers a competing narrative to the one commonly reported. Second, to diffuse the anger and hostility directed at the company, the organization issues a statement of regret that expresses concern but acknowledges minimal responsibility. Third, the organization engages in dissociation to remove the linkage of the organization with wrongdoing" (Hearit, 1994, p.115). Public relations is not merely a tool that is utilized for introducing services and products but also it can be used as an effective mechanism to cope with various adversities. As Hearit (1994) describes three ways to respond to adversities, this

thesis implements these strategies as a possible response to the negative portrayals of organizational identities by media outlets.

This thesis poses the following research questions:

**RQ1.** *How does Google use organizational communication strategies to communicate its organizational identity through their products and services?*

**RQ2.** *In comparison, how do mainstream media outlets (NYT & The Guardian) portray Google's organizational identity?*

### CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis is a case study where both qualitative and quantitative analysis is applied. The case study contains a content analysis of various resources. The newspaper articles are acquired from the LexisNexis database. The analysis is filtered by searching titles included Google between the 1st of February and the 1st of July 2020. It is also narrowed down by designating the language as English, the content type as news, and publication type as newspapers both for the NYT and the Guardian. A total of 42 news articles were analyzed from the NYTimes while the Guardian analysis revealed 60 articles. The data for Google press releases were obtained from blog.google. A total of 60 Google press releases posted between the 1st of July and 15th of June, 2020 were included in the analysis to ensure balance in the three different media analyzed.

**Table-1** The distribution of articles

	February 2020	March 2020	April 2020	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	Total
The NYT	10	8	7	7	10	-	42
The Guardian	7	6	15	12	18	2	60
Google Press Release	-	-	-	-	58	2	60

### **3.1. Content Analysis**

Since a portion of this thesis research concentrates on the content of mainstream media outlets regarding their portrayal of Google, content analysis proves to be quite useful.

“Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson, 1952, p. 55).

Furthermore, Budd, Thorp, and Donohew (1967) characterize content analysis as “a systematic technique for analyzing message content and message handling-it is a tool for observing and analyzing the overt communication behavior of selected communicators” (p. 2). The observation and analysis of the message content and the way it delivers a particular discourse is an essential aspect of content analysis. Kassarian (1977) asserts that “content analysis is a scientific, objective, systematic, quantitative, and generalizable description of communications content” (p.10). As well as being qualitative, content analysis can be used for quantitative studies where the common features are highlighted as being objective and scientific regarding the emphasis on the composition of communications.

In addition, Schreier (2012) contends that three core aspects constitute qualitative content analysis such as being flexible and systematic as well as the reduction of data.

“Qualitative content analysis shares many features with other qualitative research methods, such as the concern with meaning and interpretation (see Willig, Chapter 10, this volume) of symbolic material, the importance of context in determining meaning, and the data driven and partly iterative procedure” (Schreier, 2012, p. 173). Hence, content analysis significantly engages with the meaning and forms of interpretation of

communication practices. “In this article, qualitative content analysis is defined as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Through various definitions from different scholars, it can be observed that systematization, taxonomy, meaning, objectivity, and interpretation are considered as key factors in qualitative content analysis. Krippendorff (2018) indicates that content analysis highlights the symbolic connotations of communications regarding its correlation and the aftermath, hence enabling data analysis of a particular context. He suggests that written documents, images, and verbal discourse appear to be significant resources for the data of content analysis. Mass media elements such as newspapers and television can be appropriate platforms to be studied through content analysis.

Krippendorff (2018) points out that the literature of content analysis consists of among the resources such as newspapers, books, films, and magazines. “Content analyses of news sources and references to foreign countries in various national media have demonstrated considerable imbalances in international news flow and attention. Systems for monitoring a corporation’s symbolic environment by content analyzing newspaper clippings on issues and public attitudes of interest to that corporation have aided experiments in public relations and signaled significant changes in product perception, corporate image, state of the competition, and so forth” (Krippendorff, 2018, p. 404). As stated by Krippendorff (2018), analyzing newspaper content has been a common practice that provides solid support for the public relations strategies of a corporation.

Furthermore, it is possible to assert that conducting content analyses through newspapers demonstrated how malleable perception can be over time in terms of a corporation's identity, image, and attitude towards a particular service or product. By analyzing news articles published in the NYT and the Guardian about Google, the aim is to reveal how effective news stories/narratives and coverages can be in terms of the perception towards a corporate image. In terms of the usage of content analysis, Krippendorff (2018) stresses that this method provides an equal and objective approach to all research components regardless of time, location, and who conducts the research. "Content analysis allows researchers to establish their own context for inquiry, thus opening the door to a rich repertoire of social-scientific constructs by which texts may become meaningful in ways that a culture may not be aware of" (Krippendorff, 2018, p. 404). Being able to proceed with your own analysis provides the researcher to be relatively more flexible and adjustable within the process of research and potentially allowing a wide range of empirical results. He also claims that the innate postulant for content analysis includes scholarly texts, embedded symbols, themes, metaphors, and figures of speech. Thus, applying content analysis to newspapers will fit directly into this context.

Lutz and Collins (1993) put forth that content analysis forestalls any sorts of bias against a notion by not depending on preceding taxonomies. Furthermore, Lutz and Collins (1993) assert that it would be plausible to derive cultural meanings via applying content analysis as long as there is a meticulous process of coding in these images. In other words, to decipher the cultural meanings of an image, content analysis can be implemented. "First, Lutz and Collins are suggesting that content analysis can reveal

empirical results that might otherwise be overwhelmed by the sheer bulk of material under analysis, and Manovich and Douglass (2011) also argue that cultural analytics can reveal patterns that would not be visible to lone researchers exploring a handful of images” (Rose, 2016, p.87). Therefore, content proves to be quite useful in terms of clarifying complex data, enabling researchers to conduct their researches in a better way in terms of maximizing the utility of time dedicated to the collection and analysis of data. “Content analysis is a way of understanding the symbolic qualities of texts, by which he means the way that elements of a text always refer to the wider cultural context of which they are a part” (Rose, 2016, p.87). Indeed, the usage of various texts and images possess embedded social/cultural meanings. As one of the most effective organizational communication strategies, public relations deals with the social/cultural ramifications of particular actions taken by a firm. These actions by the firms and the role of public relations will be discussed in detail in the later chapters.

“Content analysis focuses on the image itself. But there are the three other sites at which an image’s meanings are made: the site of its production, the site of its circulation, and the site of its audiencing. Content analysis have much purchase on these sites” (Rose, 2016, p. 103). Rose (2016) indicates that there are several limitations while conducting a content analysis. It is reasonable to draw attention to other channels in which meanings are produced. Hence, the case study encapsulates and even strengthening the research process of this thesis by drawing attention to mainstream media outlets where the meanings are produced and circulated amongst a wide range of audiences.

### **3.2. Case Study**

The analysis and conclusions of this thesis were made possible through the utilization of qualitative research and case studies. Qualitative research enables one to gain a fundamental and in-depth understanding of an issue that proved to be useful in the context of this study. Case study was applied to Google to grasp quintessential features of organizational communication. Hence, it is vital to be familiar with the literature associated with this study. One of the most prominent scholars of case study is considered to be Robert Yin. “A Case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Since the internet revolution is a relatively recent development, Google is an ideal candidate in terms of being one of the most powerful technology corporations in the world to be studied as a case study. The content analysis data consists of newspaper articles and Google’s press releases. The data set acquired from the case studies can be considered as plentiful and comprehensive as they are inspired by real-life cases. Yin (2009) claims that case study is conducted with an expectation towards answering how, why, and when especially when a particular issue is being investigated. He also states that a case study can be practical and useful when the researcher has little or no control over the data or the context. “You would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions—believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study” (Yin, 2003, p. 13). Moreover, Yin (2003) states that case study research prioritizes the usage of multiple data sources as it establishes in-depth comprehension in the context of a given phenomenon. Another comprehensive definition of case study research highlights types of multiple data sources along with the

definition. “Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes” (Creswell, Hanson, Plano & Morales, 2007, p. 245).

This thesis utilizes newspaper articles/reports and official websites of corporations as primary sources of information to be used in case study research. One can encounter various types of case studies as they are being utilized for different contexts. Stake (1995) identifies three categories such as instrumental, collective, and intrinsic case studies whereas Yin (2009) introduces four types of case studies such as multiple, single, holistic, and embedded. For the sake of this study, multiple case studies are conducted. Yin (2003) contends that the notion of replication is at the center of multiple case studies in which for each case the procedures are being imitated. Moreover, Stake (1995) contends that to delineate the features of a case or to define them, storytelling is an effective tool. In addition, Merriam (1998) contends that case study is “an in depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p.40). Indeed, an in-depth analysis of Google provides a meaningful insight into how a technology corporation operates in a sophisticated system that thrives in the era of information. The expected result by conducting a case study to this thesis is that it will shed light on contemporary issues of the technology companies and clarify how organizational communication strategies are being used through concrete, real-life examples. It is also possible to argue that case

study and qualitative analysis are both the offsprings of the desire to constitute a better understanding of a particular phenomenon and the motivation to explore it.

### **3.3. Qualitative Analysis**

Exploring the meaning of a phenomenon and how that affects the ones who are involved is important to consider when conducting a qualitative inquiry. Merriam (1998) states that “understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5), constitutes the core characteristics of qualitative analysis. In other words, qualitative analysis is a significant tool in terms of exploring how people establish and shape their surroundings and reality.

Many people utilize the power of symbolism which attaches meaningful frameworks to their constructed reality. “The importance of symbolic interactionism to qualitative inquiry is its distinct emphasis on the importance of symbols and the interpretative processes that undergird interactions as fundamental to understanding human behavior” (Patton, 2002, p. 113). Google constantly deploys symbols as a way to communicate with their customers. As Google possesses mass amounts of information, the organization is aware of the most desired types of knowledge of its user. Hence, Google has the potential to provide a deeper understanding of human behavior through its products and services.

Van Maanen (1979) provides a broader definition to qualitative analysis as “an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world ” (p. 520). Describing and decoding particular phenomena is made possible through case study research. Thus, qualitative analysis and case study empowers the research conducted on Google. Qualitative analysis provides a deeper and more sophisticated understanding regarding how Google presents itself to the public sphere. The next section focuses on the case studies conducted on Google’s products and services which makes it possible to observe how successful coordination of organizational communication looks like.

This thesis incorporates content analysis by systematically analyzing news articles and press releases with a coding sheet that identifies their number, title, author, word count, themes and keywords, mentions, COVID 19, and partnerships. Hence, the thesis systematically analyzed and observed what was communicated through the press releases and news contents. Qualitative analysis is implemented to support the taxonomy in coding and identifying in themes and keywords which revealed privacy, antitrust, connecting and helping businesses, and surveillance. Qualitative analysis was particularly useful in designating the significance of the context and the meaning attached to it. The content communicated during the pandemic was significantly associated with the contents communicated by the press releases and news articles. The implementation of a case study provided a deep understanding of how Google communicated its organizational identity and news articles coverage of that identity.

Applying a case study revealed how NYT mainly criticized Google through privacy infringement, antitrust investigations, and surveillance whereas how Guardian highlighted the issue of privacy from a different perspective. It also revealed how Google refutes most of the accusations made by news organizations by stating scientific numbers of how many people/communities they have supported with how much funding.

## **CHAPTER IV: ORGANISM OF GOOGLE**

### **4.1. Almighty Google: Ask Me Anything**

The technology behemoth presents itself through diverse segments to the public. There is no doubt that it is best known for its search engine service. Today, the action of searching became synonymous with “Google”. The term “google it” refers to the act of searching something online. This virtually endless search engine encapsulates a wide range of topics and provides access free of charge to anyone who has an internet connection. “Google is often seen as a self-empowering tool that assists users, particularly individual consumers, to search for information without being bombarded by advertisements” (Lee, 2010, p. 923). Since excessive advertising can be a deterrent factor in the usage of a service or a website, Google’s users enjoy having access to information in a relatively less stressful way.

Wirtz (2019) indicates that Google search engine is available for use in 173 languages and presents itself with more than 180 domains. The fact that Google search engine is available in 173 languages communicates its corporate identity in a crucial way. It is globally accessible to many users from different backgrounds and it is free of charge. Google’s statement that it wants to organize the world’s information and make it accessible to everyone directly corresponds with the fact that through its search engine,

Google appeals to millions of people worldwide. Clement (2020) states that Google dominates the global market with 87.35% as of January 2020. This is the material manifestation of Google's global dominance over its competitors such as Bing, Yahoo, or Yandex. Galloway (2017) stresses that by accounting for 90 percent of market share within the European Union, Google is once again the technology champion.

The global market share statistics communicate the corporate identity of Google in a positive framework. Since millions of people prefer Google search engine as their primary means of accessing information demonstrates that users have a sense of trust towards corporation which is why they constantly use the service. "As a search engine, Google prides itself on providing objective search results that are not biased by advertisers' money. Google separates search results from advertisers' links so that users can differentiate 'real information' from 'paid information'" (Lee, 2010, p.910). Hence, Google's corporate identity is being depicted as a source of real information provider rather than being confined within the limits of sponsored and paid-for marketing information. By including a wide range of sources of information, Google markets itself as an all-inclusive platform where every kind of information can be accessed. Wirtz (2019) portrays Google as a vital gatekeeper in terms of having access to information through the internet which means that the administrator of a search engine possesses the agency to impact the types of information that users can locate and access. Especially in the era of information, being nicknamed as the gatekeeper of information can contribute to the perception of the corporate identity of Google. "We began as a technology company and have evolved into a software, technology, Internet, advertising and media

company all rolled into one” (Google, 2008, p. 17). Google’s annual report in 2008 also delineates Google as a corporation with a wide range of expertise and investments. Transforming itself from a startup company to a technology behemoth that became identical with searching or accessing information delineates a successful and trustworthy corporate identity. Conti (2009) contends that by using Google services such as Gmail, Google Maps, and YouTube, users willingly submit and share their information with the corporation. This demonstrates the extent to which users trust the corporation enough to hand over the control of their personal information. Google’s corporate identity is being depicted as a trustworthy corporation through its user’s active participation in Google’s services. “The free supply of the Google search engine is particularly important. Google AdSense enables both companies and individuals to add a search box to their own website, giving them a share in profits when other Internet users click on one of the advertisements that appear on the search engine results page” (Wirtz, 2019, p. 212). It seems that Google search engine is more than an answer to inquisitions but also it serves as a massive platform where both individuals and corporations can effectively communicate with each other and conduct business.

The vast network created and controlled by Google can be considered as one of the core strengths and reliability of the organization. Network does not solely refer to the virtual space but also the people and other organizations that participate in it. “The network owns the means of production-communication which makes possible the production of commodities and gives the network ownership of those commodities” (Jhally & Livant, 1986, p. 135). Thus, Google represents the power of being the owner, producer, and

distributor simultaneously. Establishing such a network is as significant as making it sustainable. Wirtz (2019) argues that without a lucrative business network and ingenious communication between businesses, Google wouldn't be regarded as a prosperous and powerful corporation as it is today. The offspring of successful management of communication between business to business and business to customers is lucrative business. "Google aims to deliver relevant advertisements to users, and deliver potential consumers to advertisers. Google hires as many people in sales and advertising as in engineering" (Lee, 2010, p. 914). Hence, Google focuses and relies on a successful communication line between businesses and potential customers. Within the boundaries of a technology corporation, there is a general tendency to consider the hiring process mainly for engineering positions. Google does not comply with this understanding and values the diversity of workforce by hiring people for advertising and sales units within the corporation. This is an indication of how Google values and acknowledges the significance of diverse departments within its business.

By utilizing organizational communication strategies such as public relations, marketing, and advertising, Google gained a considerable amount of success and respect worldwide as illustrated by financial statements which also communicates their corporate identity as a global leader and expert in the technology industry. "Due to a continuous and innovative revision and extension with specialized search services for images, news and geographic information, Google is the most frequently used search engine worldwide" (Wirtz, 2019, p. 213). The culture of constantly developing itself through revisions and innovations, Google became known for its successful management skills across its

organizational communication units. Girard (2009) asserts that Google revolutionized the conduct of business by making a comparison with how Toyota developed lean production system where the priority is getting rid of waste and still protecting its quality. Girard (2009), provides an example of how Google operates in small teams and utilizes peer review derived from academic publishing system.

For Google, providing a wide range of information is equally significant with people freely gaining access to data. Even though technical practices come to the forefront regarding gaining access to data, it can also be regarded as a political and economic stance. “The development of technology involves not only technical choices but also political and economic ones” (Sussman, 1997, p.19). Respectively, any type of global corporation can be faced with particular challenges regarding the country in which it operates. Thus, taking a stance can also be economically maleficent and can cause an obstacle in the expansion of a corporation. “Google's current head of global policy, Rachel Whetstone, has publicly said, "At Google we have a bias in favor of people's right to free expression in everything we do” (Ammori, 2013, p. 2269). The notion of “freedom of expression” seems to be a core asset for Google’s corporate value. Thus, Google is also marketing itself as an organization that prioritizes free expression.

“China, for example, censors the Internet for its citizens, and Google has long struggled to reconcile its commitment to freedom of expression and information with the Chinese government's rather different values” (Ammori, 2013, p.2263). This particular example demonstrates Google’s effort to challenge censorship and advocate free expression on a global scale. Since Google is also known for its global influence through millions of

active users, the corporation promotes people's right to have access to information without any fear or hesitation.

#### **4.2. Google and Android Phones**

Although Google is best known for its search service, they invest in other sectors as well. "Google's acquisition of Motorola's segment called Motorola Mobility for 12.5 billion USD in 2011 highlighted the importance of gaining access to the mobile market. This acquisition granted Google access to one of the largest portfolios of patents within the mobile sector, especially to capacities to produce smartphones based on Google's operating system Android" (Wirtz, 2019, p. 209). The acquisition of Motorola seems to be a milestone for the production capacity and product development regarding Android. Acquisitions are strategic movements of corporations to expand and strengthen themselves within a given market. Google's decision to acquire Motorola granted a massive agency to Google as they can proceed with new initiatives in the technology industry. The fact that Google significantly invests in the mobile market signals that the corporation is determined to claim its leadership in information technology as well.

Wirtz (2019) posits that by 2011, Google sold about 180 million devices and Android accounted for 52.3% global market share. These are astonishing figures considering a corporation's identity through their financial success. This financial success alone can serve as a marketing or public relations strategy. It would be unrealistic to discuss a global accomplishment if it wasn't for successful management of organizational communication. Wirtz (2019) indicates that in 2016, Google achieved 90.27 billion USD in revenue, and it sustained a constant annual growth rate of 20.3%.

### **4.3. Google: Email and News**

Moreover, Wirtz (2019) contends that Google highly benefits from its complimentary services. He highlights how users can utilize Google's free of charge services such as Gmail and the corporate image itself as it became interchangeable with the term search. Wirtz (2019) asserts that Google's core assets include high competence regarding its effective management of load balancing and its software in relation to the technological infrastructure, Google's corporate and product brand, its exhaustive ability to contextualize through its search engine, and promotion of advertisements.

Randeree and Mon (2011) accentuate that web-based publishing should be considered as a milestone in terms of the news authorship. Web-based publishing paved the way for news to be written and published from traditional news media organizations to bloggers. In that context, Google news is the embodiment of this context. Google news "gives users both searching and browsing functionalities, creating opportunities not only for targeted searching but also browsing to increase serendipitous information discovery" (Randeree & Mon, 2011, p. 347). By underlining 2 significant features searching and browsing, Google news stands out as a platform that allows its users to encounter and explore other news topics besides the one in particular interest.

Wirtz (2019) states that Google offers Google news which systematically generates content in more than 35 languages and Google maps that offers a simulation of earth constructed in accordance with geographical data. The fact that Google News content is

available in more than 35 languages demonstrates that Google appeals to a wide range of audiences in accessing news information as well. Besides ordinary trivia inquires, Google gathers and generates global news content which signifies the efforts of Google to deliver even more information content to its users. “It sends more traffic to news sites than does any other website, so Google's platforms play a large role in how people even learn about news” (Ammori, 2013, p. 2266). Hence, Google’s function is not limited to the gathering and generation of information but also it is a crucial mechanism regarding how people become aware of what’s happening both on a national and international layer. In the context of information technology, Google’s corporate identity seems to be depicted as an expert in information technology regarding its all-inclusive information delivery portfolio.

The existence of Google News represents a collection of news stories gathered from various media outlets. As Shaw (1979) demonstrates, the way these news stories are organized, arranged, and the way various events are prioritized, sets the agenda for the public. Since Google controls the portal of news, it has the agency over setting the agenda for across the globe. As the news content can be accessed in over 35 languages, this means that Google has the potential to set the agenda of millions of people worldwide. Mentioned before by Carroll and McCombs (2003), newspapers can function as a transmitter of specific types of messages to the public. Therefore, Google News is a portal with multiple resources that has the potential to affect many people by conveying particular forms of messages.

#### **4.4. Google: Master of Mapping and 3D**

Patterson (2007) asserts that the age of information highlighted how users access and consume knowledge through videos and images. He adds that technological tools have become commonplace shifting from the understanding of a career pursuit. These technological tools were developed and introduced by corporations such as Google where free access to everyone is prioritized. One of the most significant services of Google is its Google Maps service. At its core, maps is the ultimate guide of a user's navigation in their surroundings with specific routes and locations. According to Google maps platform (Google, 2020), Google maps encapsulate more than 200 countries and districts, approximately %99 of the world, established by trustworthy extensive data resources. Moreover, a staggering amount of 1 billion users are entertained per month on maps database. Google maps platform also indicates that 25 million updates occur on a daily basis which indicates an astounding load of participation on a global scale. In light of these figures, Google invigorates its corporate identity as a vastly popular interactive information provider. Randeree and Mon (2011) assert that the revolutionary advancements of Google in the context of online mapping have altered the conventional means of locating places, goods, and services. According to Randeree and Mon (2011), zooming in and out on the street levels, satellite map, and visual-written direction are some of the features that are at the disposal of Google maps users. "Modified maps are also being used online to rapidly communicate news-related information such as disaster zones, shelters, and emergency escape routes" (Randeree & Mon, 2011, p. 348). Hence, Google maps also serves as an interactive communication channel in times of crisis which is in favor of the exchange of information. In catastrophic incidents, the exchange

of up to date information is imminent regarding survival situations. Randeree and Mon (2011) assert that Google's services paved the way for brand new ways of generating, analyzing, accessing, searching, and displaying information.

Google Earth is another noteworthy service that Google has to offer. Lee (2010) stated that Google acquired Keyhole Inc. in 2004 which developed expertise in geospatial data visualization. Today known as Google Earth, the service became a popular tool amongst users around the world. Sheppard and Cizek (2009) noted that Google Earth after a year being launched hosted more than 100 million users. This success and popularity of a service points to a wide range of functions from diverse backgrounds of users can enjoy. Rysstedt (1995) asserts that what print materials were missing is being represented through a digital atlas which provides different interactive opportunities for its users. In this context, Google Earth is a concrete example of a digital atlas that presents a platform where users can interact with the digital globe. "Virtual globes offer the benefits of accessibility, interactivity, and engagement in landscape visualisation to millions, with the promise of greater representativeness in the views seen by users, improved accuracy of 3D imagery, and accelerated learning" (Sheppard & Cizek, 2009, p.2115). Particularly Google Earth is the concrete form of the virtual globe where it reaches out to the masses. Appealing to the eye through improved visualization of data and gaining the respect of millions of users, Google Earth proves itself to be the virtual globe.

“Google Earth that allow for spatial debate of maps within maps, new levels of interactivity and user agency with maps, and the ability for non-professionals to engage in these activities” (Farman, 2010, p. 872). This way Google Earth has opened the globe up for discussion through visualizing the geospatial data where users can interact with the digital globe. Furthermore, Farman (2010) makes an interesting point by attributing Google Earth as a provider of a form of time travel. “Thus, as users of Google Earth engage with the historical timeline function, the satellite or aerial photograph serves as an index of a specific moment in time and a representation of that ontological materiality captured by the photographic technology” (Farman, 2010, p. 875). Through its sophisticated and advanced technological infrastructure, Google Earth is being depicted as a tool that would enable a form of time travel in which can be regarded as a unique feature for the corporation as it distinguishes itself from others. Farman (2010) makes an interesting simile to Google Earth by underlining the theoretical framework suggested by McLuhan. According to Farman (2010), the connection between the geographical map and the stream of information resembles the idea of “global village”. For Farman (2010), the ability to navigate and interact is the reflection of an interconnected global village. Thus, the corporate identity of Google is being presented to the public as a corporation that connects the world to each other which makes it a global authority in communication.

From an educational perspective, Google Earth is also used by students and encouraged by teachers. Although a general audience enjoys the service, students also benefit from the interactive features. “The very nature of Google Earth allows students to explore the

earth in a dynamic and interactive manner, helping them understand the spatial context of their locale and engage in spatially oriented learning in an entertaining and meaningful manner” (Patterson, 2007, p.146). Thus, the service is particularly useful for students as it stimulates interest in geographical topics in an unconventional way and delivers meaningful insights in a pleasant way. Patterson (2007) contends that the ability to encourage critical and spatial thinking as well as developing technological skills for students represents a core strength of Google Earth. Both through Google Earth and Google Maps, the corporate identity is depicted as an organization that designates the global standards in communication and connection.

Through Google Maps and Google Earth, the technology behemoth portrays the world unlike anything ever seen before. Previously, people had to rely on print materials such as maps and atlases to find specific locations and routes. The conditions before the age of information significantly affected the flow of information and knowledge was not widespread in general. The lack of resources and time-consuming nature of the material that was used to find specific locations was significantly dependent on the technology of that day. With the emergence of Google, the world has witnessed an extraordinary revolution that altered the way people define their surroundings and developed meaningful frameworks that would guide their lives daily. With Google’s technology services such as Google Maps and Google Earth, not only it has become much easier and faster to access information but also users started to engage with such data in an interactive manner. Through the utilization of technology, Google’s organizational identity is being reflected as an organization that transformed the way people find

regions and locations in an interactive way. In addition to providing advanced forms of data visualization, Google also displays vital real-time information that can guide its users during times of natural disasters and crises. Considering Aust's (2004) definition of what constitutes an organization's identity, Google is defined by its distinctive character and expertise in data visualization which can be interactively engaged. Google communicates the value of sharing knowledge with everyone who can utilize it in accordance with their inquires. Google's mission statement is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible to everyone which is also the reflection of their organizational identity.

McLuhan's (1964) term Global Village is also a remarkable metaphor especially for Google's expertise in data visualization. Thanks to Google Maps and Google Earth, the world has genuinely become a global village where virtually nothing is left undiscovered. Even if a user never left his/her city or country, they now can virtually travel all around the world through Google's services. By developing data visualization and 3D graphics, Google has literally revolutionized the way we see the world. Thus, the world transformed into a global village that can be explored at the fingertips of the user. Google's Earth and Maps services resemble the human eye on the world within the context of McLuhan's (1964) metaphor that designates media as a living organism.

#### **4.5. Google: The Virtual Social Space via YouTube**

The acquisition of YouTube in 2006 granted Google a significant advantage regarding its position in the media business. YouTube is a video-sharing website that provides its

users the opportunity to watch, upload, and publish content online. Besides the basic function of watching/listening to various different types of videos, the platform offers its users to create their own channels which pave the way for a brand-new form of communication. “In 2016, YouTube had over 1.3 billion users worldwide, who altogether uploaded more than 300 h of video to YouTube every minute” (Wirtz, 2019, p. 216). In light of these statistics, it is feasible to assert that YouTube clearly appeals to millions of people worldwide where users both watch and create content on the platform. The ability to interact between channels and communities can be regarded as one of the effective features that allures its users. The platform hosts more than 2 billion logged-in users per month and they watch a billion hours of video every day where they generate lots of reviews. In addition, YouTube can be managed in 80 specific languages and they are locally available in more than 100 countries which is an indicator of its global approach (YouTube, 2020).

“Tagging, social networking, and the abundance of user generated content make YouTube the quintessential Web 2.0 site” (Gill, Arlitt, Li & Mahanti, 2007, p. 16). This statement signifies that YouTube is not a platform that is only used for watching videos but also has crucial implications on the participatory culture. The interaction between users and the user-generated content creates a virtual space where people can engage and socialize. This feature is particularly valid among youngsters who enjoy participating in new forms of social life. “Youth are attracted to YouTube because the barriers for them to participate are low, their creation is easily circulated and shared, informal mentorship and instructions facilitate their developing identity, their levels of contribution matter,

and they feel socially connected to peers within the community” (Chau, 2010, p. 73). From this point of view, it is reasonable to argue that YouTube also plays a significant role in the life of young people by presenting them a virtual social space and a type of mentorship.

Tolson (2010) characterizes YouTube as post-television which revolutionized the classical way of watching TV. “In this form of video production, not only is there no hierarchy of discourse, but also, as suggested earlier, clips of ordinary people, media people and celebrities are interlinked, in a single network” (Tolson, 2010, p. 285). The single network provides a massive virtual social space for its users where they can engage in many different topics ranging from entertainment to automobiles or from cooking to music and movies. Tolson (2010) asserts that through engaging with user-generated videos, YouTube users have the opportunity to establish their own experiences. On the other hand, Tolson (2010) highlights that when users engaged in classic television format, they would face pre-written, pre-produced, and pre-edited productions. In other words, by having no institutional trademark or influence, YouTube provides a space where many people from different backgrounds can participate in content creation and engage with their content. Through engaging with user-generated content, users respectively have more space and opportunity to reflect upon themselves. Thus, YouTube became a platform where its users can feel free to expose themselves to a wide range of productions which would contribute to their own viewing experiences on a variety of topics. Engaging with virtually endless amounts of online video content from different categories presents the potential to impact its user’s sense of reality and

identity. “Indeed, it is because so much of the symbolic material mediated via YouTube originates in the everyday lives of ordinary citizens, or is evaluated, discussed, and curated by them, that YouTube, in theory, represents a site of cosmopolitan cultural citizenship” (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 79). The cosmopolitan citizenship metaphor refers to YouTube’s ability to engage its global users in various ways with each other as holds a significant role in their daily lives.

“YouTube’s value is partly generated out of the collective creativity and communication of its users and audiences, and its culture has both commercial and community motivations and outcomes” (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 75). The key characteristics of the platform are identified as collective creativity and communication between the audiences and users. Hence, the corporate identity of Google is also partly defined through the same aspects since YouTube is its subsidiary. A platform where millions of people come together to participate in a “cosmopolitan” culture through watching videos, communicating with each other ranging from music to other forms of entertainment on a daily basis designates Google’s corporate identity as a genuinely global platform. By encouraging worldwide participation and greatly contributing to the formation and sustainability of globalization through YouTube, Google appeals to anyone at any age everywhere.

The global communication network of YouTube can be utilized in the dissemination information and delivering insights that can be beneficial for both general audiences and

students. Burgess and Green (2009) argue that YouTube satisfies the requirements to be a worthy mediating structure for the cultural public sphere by being massive and global. Biddinika, Syamsiro, Novianti, Nakhshiniev, Aziz, and Takahashi (2019) state that YouTube is such a platform where a total duration of 100 hours of videos are uploaded per minute to demonstrate the massive participation of its users. According to Biddinika et al. (2019), YouTube can play a crucial role in student engagement with different topics and encourage them to gain a deeper understanding of a given topic as well as developing critical thinking skills.

There are many different YouTube channels that appeal to students and general audiences. Big Think is a channel where topics such as science and entrepreneurship are being discussed by experts including Neil deGrasse Tyson, Michio Kaku, Richard Dawkins, and Richard Branson in a way that can be understood by the general public. Crash Course is another channel that offers a wide range of topics such as artificial intelligence, history of science, theatre and drama, and sociology discussed by experts in their fields. Ted Talks is also a widely known platform where valuable insights are shared on various topics by influential figures such as Bill Gates and Yuval Noah Harari. These channels constitute a few examples of platforms that share information and insights to general audiences and students.

In addition, YouTube can be significantly beneficial for spreading information and raising awareness on renewable energy which is a critical concern of the 21st century.

“YouTube as a potential tool to fulfil lack of information on renewable energy technology. It also fulfills all aspect of public knowledge vehicle; free, easy to access, user generated content, and able to play on-demand” (Biddinika et al., 2019, p. 1536). YouTube is portrayed as an ideal platform to reach masses with regards to its simple access, user-generated content, and the ability to engage with on-demand productions in order to promote and disseminate information on renewable energy. Biddinika et al. (2019) add that users can find videos on YouTube regarding the operations of particular countries on renewable energy which enables users to follow their developments. YouTube reflects the corporate identity of Google as a platform where people can socialize in a virtual space and a channel that prioritizes its users.

It can be observed on YouTube that people create their unique pages/channels where users who have akin interests can subscribe. Gradually people start forming groups that represent a social consensus in accordance with their social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The sense of belonging to a particular social group is also what makes YouTube appealing for its users. Virtual groups and identities begin to emerge where people socialize with others in a digital sphere where a global community is being created. By focusing on the information era capabilities and structures, this thesis also reveals the new, global, and interactive ways in which people socialize that was not possible before. As people encounter more and more diverse social structures and identities through YouTube across the world, there is no doubt that it also affects other people’s sense of identity. Before the internet platforms such as YouTube, the dissemination speed and publication scale of information were quite limited due to the lack of technological

developments. Today, YouTube has accelerated the speed of information flow at unprecedented levels as well as widening the scale so that millions of users can participate in a global culture. McLuhan's (1964) idea of a global village can be regarded as a manifestation of YouTube. The global village was created in a virtual space with the participation of millions of daily users. As more users and organizations participate in YouTube, the more content is being generated. Thus, the global village is kept alive by the user-generated content that also creates a sense of a global community and several distinct identities. It represents an interconnected network where the conventional means of boundaries disappeared and new interactive methods and formats of communicating with others and our surroundings emerged. It can also be regarded as a tool that depicts how the future might look like where the flow of information and the massive scale of participation in a single network as argued by McLuhan (1964).

Another perspective is that YouTube liberates culturally isolated places that were invisible before. These places can be particular regions, territories, locations, countries as well as local food, dance, and traditions. The wide range of categories are virtually endless to describe but YouTube manages to delineate these topics in video format where massive amounts of users can watch and interact with them anytime, anywhere. It is by virtue of YouTube that people can transform their view of life, the way they identify and associate themselves, and become a part of a global community. Moreover, the platform can be observed as if it was a living mechanism since its existence was made possible through the participation of millions of people who generate its content.

Even its name “YouTube” suggests the user that it is a special place for them where they can curate their own tube as they wish.

Williams (2004) studied how society might be affected through the existence of television as well as its cultural ramifications. There is a compelling resemblance between television and YouTube as it almost personalized the activity of watching for its users. The customization appears to be one of the most remarkable features that users appreciate. The cultural ramifications can be observed through the widespread existence of social influencers who have millions of subscribers. It can even be considered that those users might perceive those influencers as role models for themselves. Through the idea of role modeling, even the sense of identity might be affected. Thus, Williams’s (2004) inquiry in the context of television’s impact on society can be adjusted to how the internet (YouTube) might impact society regarding social relationships and how people’s discourse might be shaped towards reality.

#### **4.6. Google and Advertising**

Although Google is mostly acknowledged for its search engine, the advertising segment is also crucial for Google. As well as a platform that provides a vast array of information, Google benefits significantly from advertising. “The most important revenue streams are advertising revenues generated through integrated advertising solutions and keyword advertising by AdWords. The customer chooses various keywords that describe the product or service advertised so that these products or services appear in the search results” (Wirtz, 2019, p. 217). As clearly stated, AdWords

holds a vital position for Google's overall profit. Wirtz (2019) asserts that %90 of Google's total income was gained through advertising channels in 2017. Thus, it is reasonable to contend that advertising or AdWords can reflect the organizational identity of Google in a significant way since it is the main source of income for the corporation. The relationship between how a corporation advertises itself and how it makes a profit by serving as an advertisement platform is especially intriguing. Lee (2011) puts forth that Google is a platform that derives its power from and relies on the revenues generated through advertising. Since millions of people use Google on a daily basis, the potential advertisements can penetrate through the lives of masses from a single network. Google is the ideal place for advertisements since users submit virtually endless inquiries each day. Lee (2011) stresses that AdWords is the core product of Google in the advertising business that enables small and medium-sized firms to benefit from advertisements who are lacking the financial means to do so on television. "Instead of buying a time slot as in broadcast ads or buying a space as in print ads, advertisers bid for keywords on AdWords. Keywords are terms and phrases that users input in the Google's search box" (Lee, 2011, p.437). In other words, the essence of AdWords consists of text-based search advertisements.

"They wrote the Google search engine algorithm for their PhD dissertations. They aimed to develop a search engine that could objectively rank pages according to relevance, not according to the amount of money paid by site owners to the search engine company" (Lee, 2011, p.436). Lee (2011) asserts that the founders of Google initiated their core business as an academic project and prioritized relevancy as the criteria for the ranking

of pages which would forestall corporations that have significant capital resources against small and medium businesses. Besides conducting business and profiting from it, Google also paved the way for greater participation in advertising especially for the corporations that do not have the means to financially support themselves in advertising. “The ads thus trade on Google's reputation for delivering the most appropriate search results to entice users to click on them, while making a potentially global advertising audience available at very low financial and technical cost” (Tan, 2009, p.477).

Repeatedly, scholars associate Google’s fame with it’s ability to connect its users with the most relevant information possible upon their request and this is firmly connected with its low cost so that its affordable to a wide range of enterprises. “Google wants to ensure that advertisers with small budgets do not unfairly compete with those with big budgets” (Lee, 2011, p.438).

Underscoring its ability to be affordable to small and medium-sized firms and therefore equalizing them with big corporations that have significant capital resources, Google portrays itself as an all-inclusive corporation. According to Lee (2011), two main aspects operate the system can be considered as cost per click and cost per a thousand impressions. He adds that when an advertisement pops up a thousand times, the advertiser pays a certain price to Google is considered to be cost per thousand impressions. Each time a user clicks on an ad, the advertiser pay a certain price that is regarded as cost per click. These text-based search ads provide the opportunity for users to be connected to their relevant search for keywords. Lee (2011) believes that, this way Google is a significant agent that drives the expansion of the advertising market.

Essentially, AdWords is an online service that appeals to advertisers since they can purchase ads on Google. The fact that users receive information in a way that is tailored for their inquiry underscores the customizable feature of Google. Hence, Google's organizational identity is presented as an information gatherer and provider that is unique to the user according to his/her keywords. As Aust (2004) asserts that organizational identity is revealed through its distinctive characteristics that are associated with its services and products, through AdWords, Google can be defined as a service that provides specifically tailored information upon the request of users. It is vital to note that internet users are the main drivers of this system and they make it sustainable considering they are the ones constantly typing in the keywords, thus generating associated ads.

Google created such a system that no third-party can penetrate or infiltrate its system and disrupt the ideology behind AdWords. "Google is able to sell to advertisers because it controls both the advertising and the ratings systems. An outside ratings firm cannot generate the same data because Google, as the search engine, owns the data" (Lee, 2011, p. 443). The inability of another corporation to affect the policy or implementation systems of advertisements and ratings is a crucial advantage. As Google internalized the philosophy that knowledge is power, they were also aware that effectively controlling that data is as important as being the global information provider. Since Google owns the data that they are promoting or selling, it reinforced their position at being a global authority in both provider and controller of information. "Google sells what it claims to sell information. As an advertising agency, it sells keywords. As a ratings company, it

sells statistics of keywords. As a content provider, it sells search indexes. All these forms of information have exchange value because Google (along with other information companies) transforms information, which otherwise has no value, into commodities in the market” (Lee, 2011, p. 434). As clearly stated, Google is no longer associated merely with its search engine but with its multiple functions that are related to the same system. Since Belch and Belch (2003) characterized advertising the business of all types of payments for nonpersonal communication of a corporation to promote its products and services, Google’s AdWords serves as a seller of keywords. Hence, Google’s organizational identity is being portrayed as an advertising agency that is made possible through AdWords. The fact that Google owns the data they’re advertising and has full control over the rankings (ratings) of the information being presented to users, makes Google a global force in the context of data power.

Advertising can also be characterized by the activity people do when they encounter forms of advertisements which is the watching-time. Since people are potential customers for corporations, they become the targets of organizations. “The watching-time of the audience has been (quite correctly) characterized as the domination of “free time” by capital to aid in realizing the value of commodities-in-general” (Jhally & Livant, 1986, p. 130). Considering the high mobility and usage of Google services as well as how much people spend time on their tablets, laptops, and mobile devices, advertisers can smoothly dominate user’s free time and attempt to sell their goods. “What advertisers buy with their advertising dollars is audiences’ watching time, which is all the media have to sell. That advertising rates are determined by the size and

demographics of the audience is ample confirmation of this” (Jhally & Livant, 1986, p. 130). This statement highlights the association between advertising and audiences’ watch time where the attention of the audiences attention is being captured. Since the Internet is being used by masses on a global scale, advertisers desire to turn this into an advantage with the hope of potentially reaching out to millions of users at the same time. Since Google can be considered as a platform that controls the traffic of online information and regulates how people even access knowledge, Google epitomizes the ideal platform where advertisers can reach their audiences. As Jhally and Livant (1986) underscore the core asset that media sells, watching-time is being evolved into a form of commodity. Hence, advertisers profit through Google’s vast network where they penetrate the minds of millions of people at the same time.

“As epitomized by Google AdWords, search engine advertising has drastically altered the landscape of online advertising, creating a truly global marketplace with the potential to advance trade liberalization far beyond any governmental or even intergovernmental action could achieve” (Tan, 2009, p. 508). Thus, Google also reflects its organizational identity as a driving force in the forming and shaping of a global marketplace. The creation of such a notion not only highlights the significance of supply and demand, but also lays the groundwork of a global space where many different players would have the opportunity to participate in the business world. Lee (2011) underscores that Google internalized the doctrine that through the internet connection, accessing knowledge would be swift, and also being able to access as much information as possible is

preferable. This demeanor spurs and stimulates the interests of users to use Google services even more which leads to a sustainable business.

Olins (1990) stated that organizational identity consists of all activities conducted by an organization to introduce its products and services. Through AdWords, Google presents its organizational identity as an advertising and rating corporation. In addition, Google also appears to provide a platform that favors both big and small enterprises in terms of financial conditions for advertising. Moreover, AdWords also displays and offers various different products and services that are associated with other organizations which invigorate Google's corporate image as the master of generating and distributing data across the world.

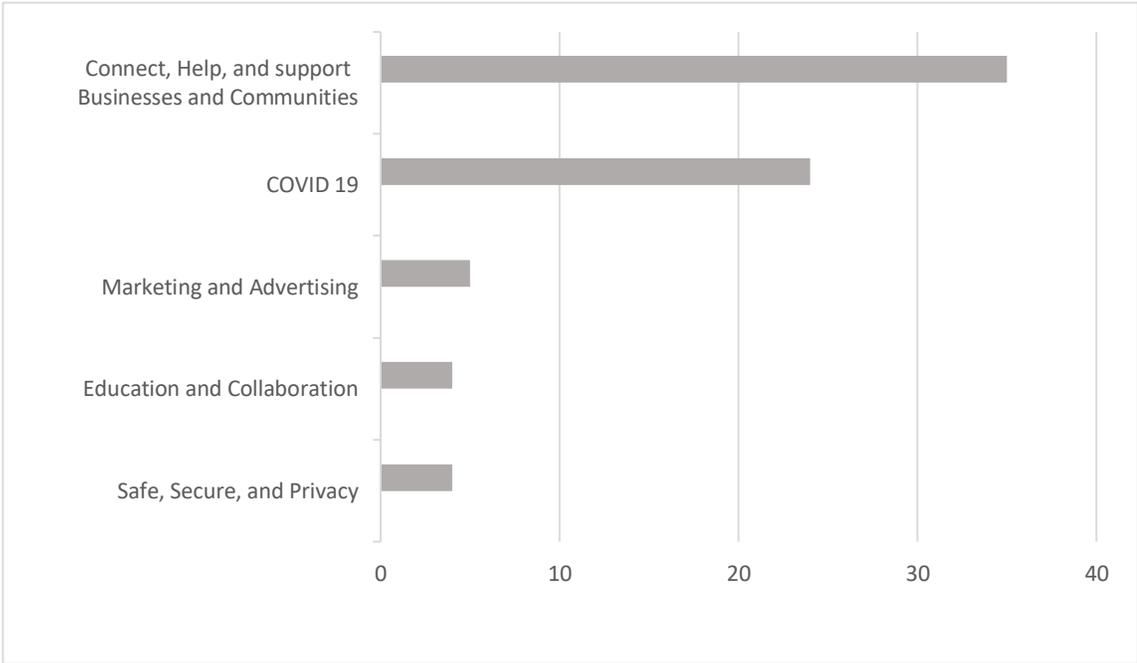
## **CHAPTER V: DICHOTOMY OF IDENTITIES: PERCEPTION WAR BETWEEN GOOGLE AND NEWS ORGANIZATIONS**

This chapter focuses on analyzing disconnects or commonalities between Google's organizational identity in relation and its portrayal on mainstream media services. Hence, an in-depth analysis of news articles on the NYT and the Guardian versus Google's press releases on various topics such as products and company announcements reveal how Google establishes its organizational identity while also further reflecting and comparing its prevalent position in the mass media and technology industry. The coding sheet includes 9 different components including; article number, title, date, author, word count, products mentioned, keywords and themes, mentions of certain people, Covid 19 related information, and partnerships.

### **5.1. Analysis of Google Press Releases and Google's Self Representation**

The first research question focuses on the content analysis of Google's press releases from [blog.google](http://blog.google), which is the official press release portal of Google Inc.. Press releases of an organization reflects their organizational identity from their own perspective. Between July 1 and June 15 2020, a total of 60 Google press releases were analyzed. Since a search between the 1st of February and the 1st of July contains a total of 359 press releases, it would not be possible to balance the number of materials analyzed from each three different media. A total of 38.372 words were analyzed in 60 press releases. Within these, 24 press releases mentioned Covid19 which is significant for the timeline

of the analysis. Google’s press releases are categorized based on their subjects. This analysis further reveals how Google utilizes organizational communication skills to maintain a strong presence in the industry. Acknowledged as a global technology giant that controls, organizes, and provides access to information, it is important to examine how Google defines and communicates its own corporate identity. This also provides the chance to observe whether there are commonalities or a disconnect between the way mass media portrays Google and how the technology behemoth reflects itself. Below are the most common keywords and themes that Google uses to characterize itself as well as promoting its products and services.



**Figure-1** Google press release analysis between July 1 and June 15, 2020

### **5.1.1. Connect, Help, and Support Businesses and Communities**

Google significantly emphasizes the words connect, help, and support when characterizing itself and marketing its services. 35 out of 60 press releases included these themes/keywords while mentioning their activities and initiatives. This means that more than half of their press releases were centered upon the notions of helping and supporting different communities. Considering the keywords, they are associated with positive connotations.

#### ***5.1.1.1. Support for Journalism***

The first press release dated July 1, 2020 by the president of Google Europe, Middle East, and Africa, Brittin states that they will financially support 100.000 people's education on Google IT Support professional certificate. Considering the ever-changing nature of the job market, Google envisions the fundamental skills that a person must have to survive in a technology-driven world. Google states that it is focusing on under-served or under-represented groups of people who would otherwise have difficulty obtaining digital skills that are essential for the future of the job market. In addition, the same article suggests that Google supports local businesses by establishing a communication line with their customers where customers can learn the operating hours, availability, and pick up options of the business. As seen in some news articles by the NYT and the Guardian, there are criticisms about Google regarding their relationship with news organizations. The criticisms mainly focus on how Google made significant profits over news organizations which were perceived as an unfair approach by the articles. Media organizations highlighted that Google exploited its global power on the local news agencies and they should be paying their fair share for doing so. The press

release dated June 25, 2020, by Bender, VP Product Management of News, stated that globally over 5,300 local publishers received funding through Google News Initiative. In addition, local publishers were supported with \$15m to mitigate economic turmoil. Particularly after the Covid19 pandemic had global economic ramifications, Google states that they are building on the support they gave to journalism. Contrary to the criticisms, Google openly declares that they support journalism and they take action to help maintain a high quality of journalism by providing funds to local news organizations.

June 24, 2020, dated press release by Harding, director of Analytics and Revenue Optimization, News and Publishing, states that NCI, news consumer insights program, supported thousands of news outlets in approximately 130 countries that can lead the outlets to a more lucrative business. This reflects Google's supportive stance toward news agencies. The opposite of exploitation, Google seems to be significantly contributing to the well being of news organizations. Since the main criticism for Google derives from the financial exploitation of the technology giant, it is significant to be aware of how the business transaction works between Google and the news agencies.

June 23, 2020, dated press release by Stewart, VP of Global Partnerships, demonstrated that as a result of evaluating the top 100 news corporations, the research revealed more than 95% of the advertising revenue was maintained by the news organizations in the case of utilizing Google's Ad manager. The criticisms highlighting the financial exploitation of Google over news organizations seems to be an ineffective statement. As a high-level official announced, over 95 percent of the advertising revenue is being kept

by the news publishers. In the same article, Google states that the revenue kept by Google is being spent on the cost of business such as the development and maintenance of data centers and the improvement of artificial intelligence so it can maximize the benefits of technology. With this statement, Google reflects itself as a transparent organization that constantly seeks to develop its technological infrastructure.

Another press release dated June 23, 2020 by Hsiao, Vice President and GM, Apps, Video, and Display Advertising at Google, stated that publishers controlled more than 69% of the revenue generated by using Google Ads or Display and Video 360 when they created advertisements. Google's advertising business is the most engaged unit with news organizations. Google plainly states that when publishers use Google's services to promote their content, publishers keep over 69 percent of the income which is yet another response to criticisms. June 26, 2020 dated press release by Gingras, VP of News, asserts that Google directs its users to news websites 24 billion times per month which provides the opportunity for news publishers to turn them into subscribers that can lead to an increase in their revenue. These statements can be considered as a form of response to the frequent criticisms against Google exploiting news organizations. The fact that Google sends its users to news sites 24 billion times per month, thus providing an economic opportunity for news organizations reflects how Google contributes in many ways to these organizations.

### ***5.1.1.2. Supporting Nonprofits, Refugees and Businesses***

In terms of supporting various communities and nonprofit organizations, Google is present in various areas that aim to help and train people in relation to their needs. The press release dated June 22, 2020 by Stephanie Davis, the managing director of Southeast Asia contends that Google trains approximately 200,000 people in South Asian countries including Indonesia, Cambodia, and Thailand through a \$3.3 million funding from google.org. By partnering with nonprofit organizations, Google supports women, marginalized community members, and people with disabilities. The \$3.3 million grant underscores the crucial role Google plays in the economic development of Asia particularly in the aftermath of the Covid19 pandemic. As Google's grant paves the way for better training for digital skills for the South Asians, it also contributes to the local economy of the region. By encapsulating a wide group of people, Google reflects its inclusive structure as an organization.

One of the most unfortunate groups of people can be refugees who require assistance in many fundamental ways. As part of supporting communities, Google continues to be present in the lives of desperate people. The press release dated June 20, 2020 by Fuller, president of Google.org, claimed that they have allocated more than \$30 million funding to support over one million refugees for emergency support. \$30 million is quite a significant funding resource that demonstrates the willingness of Google to challenge the adversities of people who had to flee from their homelands. Within the same article, Google highlights that Youtube supports UNHCR with a \$250,000 budget which helps

to provide clean water, hygiene materials, and medical care to the communities and refugees in need.

The press release dated June 18, 2020 by Hurtado, head of Google Ad Grants, asserts that an extra \$200 million, adding up to \$1 billion will be provided to support nonprofit organizations in 2020. The same article indicates Google's funding is an important resource for nonprofits to challenge the post Covid19 pandemic recovery and response as well as racial inequality issues. The same press release adds that an Indian nonprofit, Feed My City, supported people in need by connecting them with food resources during the pandemic lockdown. By utilizing Ad Grants, Feed My City managed to raise enough donations to feed almost 1,000 families. Hence, Google's funding provides an opportunity for nonprofits to support people in need, especially in the aftermath of the pandemic. In other words, Google's support to nonprofit organizations and communities through grants and donations touches upon thousands of people's life.

Another remarkable example of how Google supports nonprofits is the startup company FoodFinder. Griffin launched the app and website of FoodFinder which aimed to connect people to the relevant information to find food resources. The press release dated June 15, 2020 by Mishra, Google for nonprofits program manager, stated FoodFinder helped 3,000 people daily and they received eight times more visitors to their website and application with Google's support. Google Ad grants enabled the organization to connect to more than 25,000 people. By utilizing Google's Ad grants

service, FoodFinder was able to support thousands of people in need who were affected by the pandemic. Another way that FoodFinder benefits from Google's services to support local communities is by using Google Maps which provided information on businesses like operation hours. Hence, users were able to view locations and the supply of food during the pandemic. Google's products and services became a channel of support for nonprofits so that they can play a significant role in the improvement and recovery of various communities. The founder of FoodFinder praises Google for enabling them to authenticate 50,000 food programs and connecting them to over 300,000 people with food resources. Clearly, the founder of FoodFinder credits Google for the existence and sustained operations of his company. By supporting nonprofits, Google promotes itself as an organization that deeply cares about the improvement and recovery of communities.

#### ***5.1.1.3. Supporting Women***

Since Google highlights the importance of supporting communities globally, it also has a particular program for women. The press release dated June 16, 2020 by Amigo, program manager of Women Will, asserts that Shu benefited from Google's training program Digital 4.0 and subsequently took her business online. Shu witnessed an increase in revenue which also contributed to her local community. Google's Women Will program serves as a mediator for female entrepreneurs to unleash their full potential in the business world. This way, women can have their own economic freedom as well as contributing to their community. The same article suggests that Women Will along with their partners, trained over 36 million women which contributed to a gender-

balanced workspace. Google's initiative trained millions of women in digital skills which supports women's inclusion in the workforce within their communities.

Clearly, Google enjoys sharing numbers and statistical data in their statements. This is also a reflection of their vision, accomplishments, and desire to support and improve people with different backgrounds Google frequently emphasizes the concrete support for nonprofits, especially during the pandemic. This indicates that Google acknowledges how the pandemic damaged the global economy and they express their desire to be part of the recovery and solution caused by these calamities.

As millions of people were forced to stay in their homes during the pandemic, they spent more time on their mobile phones and laptops. Online shopping and searches for local service providers became even more popular as people wanted to avoid physical contact since it was an easy way to get infected with the coronavirus (COVID-19). The press release dated June 17, 2020 by Dischler, vice president and general manager of Ads, states that Google's shopping tab will enable its users to access vital information such as product availability, delivery, and locations of the local businesses. This decision was prompted by observing user search data where recently inquires for curbside pickup and in-stock soared over 70 percent. This way Google connects consumers to the businesses which lead to the growth of economic activity. In other words, businesses enjoy a broader spectrum of customers as more consumers find the relevant information they are looking for through Google's services. Another way that Google helps businesses to

grow is through their ads services. It is important to keep in mind that the majority of Google's total revenue is derived from the ads. The press release dated June 17, 2020 by Spalding, director of product management and small business ads, contends that Google Maps is being used by more than 1 billion people per month to find direction, businesses, and their surroundings. Through promoted pins on Maps, businesses can be more visible to users where they can access delivery options and other offers related to the respective business. This feature highlights smart campaign which helps businesses to stand out in the virtual world through the Google Maps platform. The fact that more than 1 billion people enjoy Google Maps means that there are that many potential customers for the businesses who can manage to be present in the virtual world. Besides highlighting a particular business, the opportunity to offer more relevant information for customers underscores the potential to attract more customers. Through the integration of smart campaigns to Google Maps, businesses can attract potential customers and thus increase their revenues.

#### ***5.1.1.4. Support for LGBTQ+ and Black+ Communities***

Google expresses how they take cognizance of some of the most underrepresented and unfairly treated communities around the world. At any given time, it's possible to encounter unfair treatments against people of color and members of the LGBTQ+ communities. The press release dated June 17, 2020 by Pichai, CEO of Google and Alphabet, contends that Google supports the Black Community by allocating \$50 million to support their organizations. In addition, \$100 million is granted to Black-led organizations and small businesses which supports and acknowledges the importance of Black Communities. Pichai underscores that Google is constantly investing millions of

dollars in funding to support various levels of the Black community. Small businesses and organizations that support the Black workforce are at the core of the idea of supporting the Black community. Hence, Google supports, recognizes, and raises awareness of the importance of the Black community for the society in which they live. The press release dated June 15, 2020 by the Pride 2020 committee indicates that google.org supports more than 70 organizations on a global scale by granting \$1.2 million which strengthens the lives of LGBTQ+ communities. Thus, Google expresses that they are committed to supporting communities such as LGBTQ+ with concrete grants through Google.org. Overall, one can observe that Google significantly invests in the idea of supporting LGBTQ+ and Black communities, women, nonprofits, refugees and businesses, and journalism. Within their press releases, Google highlights how much funding they provide these entities and how those grants improve the overall well-being of people in need.

### **5.1.2. COVID 19**

Throughout Google's press releases, the disease COVID 19 was mentioned in 24 out of 60 press releases. This demonstrates that almost half of the press releases were concerned with health issues. Since the disease COVID 19 had a direct global economic and risk impact on many businesses and communities, it is natural that press releases also focused on this issue. Google mainly discusses this topic through their support to small and medium enterprises and different communities around the world. Various grants and funding programs were provided for business organizations by Google that can be considered as a life line support. In other words, some organizations may have been at the edge of bankruptcy or even shutdown if it was not for Google.

The press release dated June 15 2020, by Brittin, the president of Google Europe, Middle East and Africa, contends that the disease COVID 19 had a major impact on how people conduct their businesses. During the pandemic, people were forced to isolate themselves from the outside world which led them to spend more time online. Subsequently, digital skills became even more popular and in-demand assets for many organizations. The press release underscores that developing these digital skills were crucial particularly during the pandemic. Brittin asserts that they have observed an exponential growth by 300% in the number of people who registered for Google's free digital trainings. He also states that the turmoil in the job market was triggered and accelerated by the disease COVID 19. Hence, acquiring digital skills and developing them became an urgent issue both for employees and employers. By allocating additional funding and resources, Google contended that they desired to play a crucial role in the economic recovery in Europe.

The press release published on June 15 2020, by Carter, head of skills-based volunteering, articulates that Google supports the Trevor Project that plays a critical role in the well-being of people during the disease COVID 19. The project provides support in terms of confidential crisis occasions 24/7 in every form of communication including text and phone free of charge. People who felt themselves isolated from their surroundings, hopelessness, and emotional stress were supported through this support initiative. Carter underscores that people's demand for support from the Trevor Project soared particularly after the pandemic. Google announced that they are reinforcing this project with its artificial intelligence technology (AI) to reach out to even more people in

need for assistance. By implementing AI, Google asserts that they significantly helped to allocate the projects resources more efficiently that led to connecting to more people as well as recognizing and prioritizing high-risk people at the same time. Hence, Google supported a project that provided critical assistance to traumatized people as a result of the disease COVID 19 impacts.

The press release dated June 17 2020, by Porat, CFO of Google and Alphabet, asserted that Google supports businesses financially during the disease COVID 19. Porat underscored that Google provided \$125 million to support small businesses. By partnering with Opportunity Finance Network (OFN), Google provides low-interest rate loans to businesses so that they can pay their rents, salaries for employees, and serve their customers without any disruption in the order of their businesses. Since the disease COVID 19 caused a global economic turmoil in various countries, financial support can be considered as a savior for organizations. This way, Google communicates its own organizational identity through its press releases as a supportive, community-engaged, and sensitive one.

### **5.1.3. Safe, Secure, and Privacy**

Google emphasized the keywords of safe, secure, and privacy in 4 out of 60 articles. Being in the technology industry and to be credited for being an information provider brings the topics of privacy and security into question. Google as a technology giant expresses how deeply they care about these topics. The press release dated June 24, 2020 by Phicai, CEO of Google and Alphabet, contends that

Privacy is at the heart of everything we do, whether it's keeping Meet video calls secure, protecting you from security threats, or being the first major company to decide not to make general purpose facial recognition commercially available and create clear AI Principles that prohibit use of our tools for surveillance. As we design our products, we focus on three important principles: keeping your information safe, treating it responsibly, and putting you in control (para. 1)

Thus, contrary to the criticisms by news articles, Google's top executive explicitly declares that privacy, protection, and safety are at the core of their operations. Pichai not only aligns the core values of their business but also emphasizes Google is the first major organization to challenge the issue of surveillance over its products and services. Also, treating information responsibly reflects the respect of Google to its user's data. In the same press release, Pichai reassures their users that they never sell information to anybody and they do not exploit information for advertising. This statement clearly rejects the criticisms from news articles that they exploit user's personal data to create targeted ads that generate more revenues in return. It also ensures its user's privacy over the concerns of third parties obtaining their personal information. The same article also contends that Google applies automated protection systems such as Safe Browsing, that daily safeguards over 4 billion devices from malware. Google Play also serves as a protection layer by scanning softwares when users are downloading applications. Google underscores the utmost importance of protecting data through its product Safe Browsing that provides protection to billions of users every day.

Another criticism by the news articles stemmed from Apple and Google's partnership on the contact tracing system during the pandemic. The main concern was that personal information and their location data was not safe and could be exposed or evolve into a surveillance program. Within the same press release, Pichai asserts that Google supports health officials to challenge coronavirus (COVID-19) by utilizing a "differential" privacy system in the process of the collection of location data. This underscores that Google both protects user privacy and supports health officials with their Google Maps service. Once again, Google explicitly declares that there are no security flaws with the contact tracing system and reiterates how their initiative supports public health authorities and the public itself without exposing them. Thus, Google ensures its users that their private data is kept private. The press release dated June 30, 2020 by Wong, developer advocate of Google Cloud, contends that Google delicately tracks the hard drives from the reception to its elimination since the devices include highly sensitive data. The meticulous tracking of these hardwares assures that the data stays private and no third party can access it. Google highlights data security by addressing how they track hard drives that contain user's sensitive information. They explain how meticulously the action of tracking highly sensitive hardwares are handled which ensures its users that Google respects their privacy and acts responsibly. Overall, Google promotes itself as the premier champion of privacy and security and refutes the criticisms from the news articles.

#### **5.1.4. Marketing and Advertising**

Google underscores the keywords marketing and ads in 5 out of 60 press releases. One should recognize that the more people spend time online on their smartphones or laptops

the more they get exposed to hundreds of ads attempting to sell them a service or a product. The question is how do they come into being? Why do business owners invest heavily in these online ads? Clement (2020) asserts that there are approximately 4.57 billion people using the internet as of April 2020. This statistic itself is a solid reason why business owners should be engaged in online advertising. This situation also represents a great opportunity for technology corporations as it can turn out to be a lucrative e-commerce zone. Since there is a lot of potential for business transaction for both consumers and corporations, online ads are appealing by nature. Simon (2011) asserts that Google Ads is the main unit that powers Google's overall revenue.

An example of how Google is marketing one of its widely used service is the feeds. A press release dated June 24, 2020 by Mitby, director of product management claims that Wish, an e-commerce company, received 105% higher purchase rates as a result of embracing Google's feeds and the deferred deep linking technology. The owner of Wish claims that Google's services helped Wish to be more visible and alluring for its customers. Wish, invested in Google's feeds and deep linking service which made them stand out for consumers. The services provide the consumers with a pleasant navigation experience as they can locate and access what they desire by promoting tabs like display and shopping tabs.

Google emphasizes its user-centric approach when developing and marketing their services like deep linking. Mitby highlights that the deep linking technology as a user-

friendly service that allows consumers to be directed to the pertinent page in the app without any concerns to submit the same information separately. The same press release indicates that the Japanese e-commerce corporation, Rakuten Ichiba received four times more purchase rates as a result of adopting Google's deep linking technology which provided smooth navigation for their consumers. Google's marketing strategy seems to be derived from concrete success stories from various different corporation's statements. Clearly, organizations that utilized Google's services such as feeds and deep linking benefited in terms of generating more revenue.

Any given unit of an organization would consider how to allocate their resources so they can achieve the highest possible performance. Google's products and services seem to capitalize on being time and cost-efficient. This means that using Google services allow an organization to better adjust themselves to the changing nature of consumer behavior. The press release dated June 22, 2020 by Akulich, product manager of Display & Video 360 contends that by using the new application programming interface (API) which directly connects your business to Google's Display & Video 360 for generating campaigns, businesses can become more dynamic and active. By being more efficient in the creation and editing of a campaign means significantly reducing the time you spend on generating them. Google's technology proves to be working in harmony as it can be observed through the connection between its different services and products.

The same article states that Philips was able to reduce its workload in creating campaigns from hours to a few minutes by connecting its templates to Google's Display and Video 360 service. The case of Philips exemplifies how Google's service Display & Video 360 significantly reduced the amount of workload of an organization. Thus, they can maximize their performance by investing their time in other parts of their business so they can make even more profits.

A press release dated June 18, 2020 by Rettke, director of product management of YouTube Ads, claims that 70% of consumers expressed that they purchased products after discovering them on YouTube. Hence, YouTube became a magnet for marketers to make more profits. Google-owned and operated YouTube, became a pivotal platform for many businesses as a potential venue for marketing purposes. As YouTube is daily used by millions of users, this means millions of potential consumers for business owners. In this case, Google manages how ads can be displayed and promoted to millions of its daily users. YouTube is being promoted to marketers as a virtual magnet that can significantly contribute their overall revenue by displaying their products.

The same press release indicates that the automobile corporation Jeep's Korea branch adapted to Google's lead forms which provided thirteen times boost in completed leads for 84% cheaper. This demonstrates how Google technology maximizes the efficiency of businesses through practical ad systems. Hwang, Jeep's Korea marketing manager claimed that Google's ad platform provides the most efficient considering other ad

platforms. Google's lead forms provide corporations a cost-effective and efficient way of engaging with potential customers by establishing a connection directly from YouTube to the site of the respective product. Within this context, Google's YouTube platform is a dynamic virtual space to attract the attention of potential consumers.

#### **5.1.5. Education and Collaboration**

So far, Google presented itself as a supporter in a variety of ways including communities, businesses, and as a prominent player in the ads sector. Another significant way Google reflects its organizational identity is its explicit support for education and diversity. Since education can be regarded as the pillar of a civilized and sophisticated society, it is significant to observe Google's initiatives towards education. The press release dated June 25, 2020 by Peter from Google.org, declares that Google is allocating a further \$1 million support to Black and Latin as well as any teacher needing materials so they can stimulate more interest and inclusion in the classes. Apparently, Google accentuates the significance of diverse identities of both teachers and students in education, and concretely supports them with millions of dollars. Specifically emphasizing Black and Latinx teachers also indicate that Google supports underrepresented communities. Google seems to be the champion of inclusiveness in education.

Another remarkable way that Google contributes to the notion of education is through its Certified Coach Program. A press release dated June 23, 2020 by Balso, senior program manager, asserts that they are offering a "Certified Coach" program which provides

education free of charge to veteran coaches so they can directly cooperate with educators to encourage the use of technology in schools. This project allows educators to improve themselves and utilize technology during the learning process in classes.

Educating students is as important as training teachers and coaches since they are the ones who impact students' lives. Google's initiative recognizes and highlights how pivotal educators are in the life of future generations. When students receive higher quality education and guidance from more qualified and sophisticated educators, the results will indubitably lead to a more successful generation. By supporting and investing in educators, Google also contributes to the overall well-being of a community.

The same press release states that Google announced their project's preliminary results revealed that the initiative managed to mitigate the stress level of teachers as well as making them more productive and competent. Furthermore, 97% who trained with Google's initiative stated that the training supported them in cases such as class preparation. In addition, the project proved to be beneficial for students. The project detected 10% more efficiency in trained educators in utilizing technology to stimulate more interest for students in class activities compared to non-trained ones. Hence, Google scientifically demonstrates that their initiatives preliminary results unveiled that almost all trained teachers expressed that coaching strengthened their skills in lesson preparation and differentiation. In addition, coached teachers also managed to stimulate

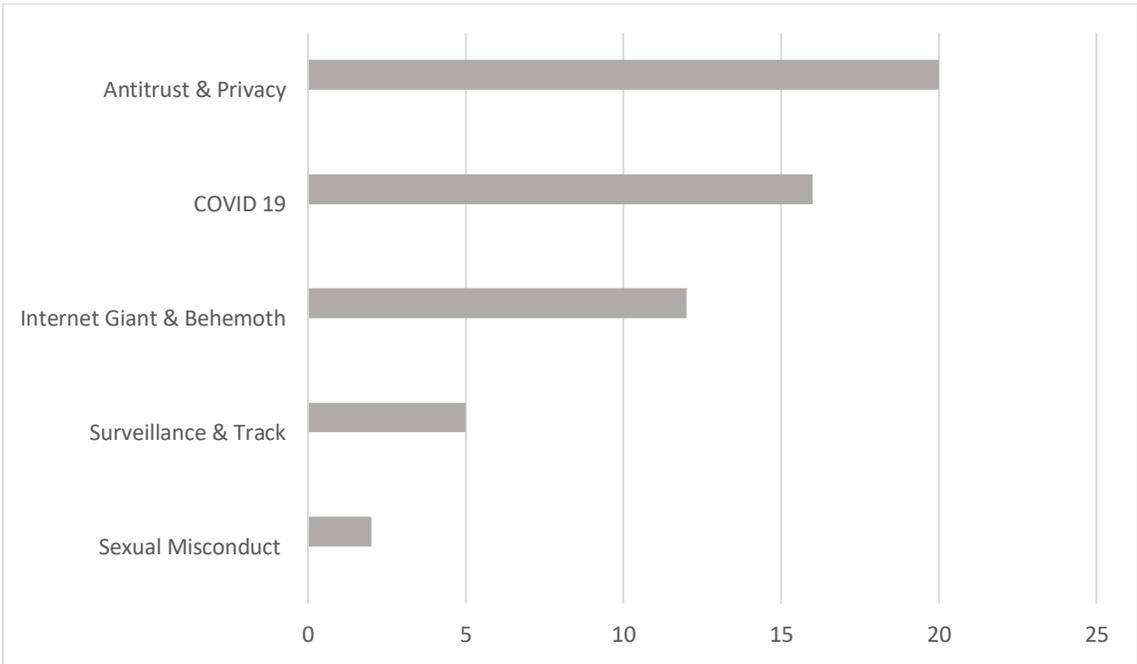
more interest in students with technology. Increasing student engagement in lessons and more self-confident educators are key to success in education. Thus, Google communicates its organizational identity as a firm supporter of the future generation as well as teachers who educate them.

## **5.2. The NYT Approach to Google**

So far the thesis only focused on Google's self-identity communication. The second research question focuses on how the NYT and the Guardian portray Google's identity. Mass platforms such as major newspapers have a significant role in shaping the discourse. As Tracy (2020) underscored, the NYT hosts more than 5 million subscribers as of 2019, this is an indication of the global power of the newspaper. Thus, the NYT sets the agenda for millions of people by conveying a wide range of news content as well as with specialized thematic sections such as opinion, politics, business, arts, and technology. Hence, the news organization is a daily source of information for millions of people.

Thus, the NYT coverage of Google has the potential of shaping the discourse of millions about the corporation. For this reason, analyzing this coverage may allow one to develop a deeper understanding of how a news organization can shape the organizational identity of the technology giant. The goal is to answer the first question, how do mainstream media outlets such as The NYT and The Guardian portray the organizational identity of Google. This chapter focuses on how the NYT portrays the organizational identity of

Google Inc. The data is collected via the Lexis Nexis database. The analysis is filtered by searching titles that included Google between February 1 and July 1, 2020. It is also narrowed down by designating the language as English, the content type as news, and publication type as newspapers. A total of 42 news articles were published during this time period and were included in the analysis, with 16 out of 42 articles mentioning COVID 19. A total of 51645 words were used in 42 articles. The next section offers the quantitative and qualitative content analysis results of the most common keywords and themes that are associated with the description of Google’s organizational identity.



**Figure-2** NYT Analysis between February 1 and July 1, 2020

**5.2.1. Antitrust & Privacy**

When describing Google, the NYT remarkably uses the words “antitrust” and “privacy”, with 20 out of 42 news articles concerned with antitrust investigations and the notion of

privacy. Hence, the keyword's antitrust and privacy create a negative framework by nature for the audience. If such a prominent technology corporation is frequently characterized through these phrases, it would be plausible to consider that the technology giant has a track record of security issues. Particularly in the age of information, data safety is as significant as a person's physical security. Since data can be stored and traced around the world, security becomes a vital issue, particularly for technology corporations. As Google is a dominant global power in the distribution and regulation of information or data of millions of users, it is a precarious situation for the technology corporation to be associated with data security.

Before focusing on news articles, it is noteworthy to be aware of a court decision by the European Union against Google. Peschke (2015) asserts that Gonzalez, a Spanish citizen, accused Google of demonstrating data that was irrelevant and out of date. He underscored that when the word "Gonzalez" was being searched from Google's search engine, people would encounter the auction notification of his already sold property. This also exemplifies that the Web never forgets and its memories are widely accessible. Gonzalez contended that Google revealed search results that was no longer valid and infringed his privacy. The EU court decided in favor of Gonzalez, the right to be forgotten, and this was also considered to be a decision against the long-lasting memory of the Web.

The news article published on June 26, 2020 by McCabe and Kang, cites that attorney general Barr underscores technology corporation's power needed observation and he might file a lawsuit blaming Google for its exploitation in the technology industry. The NYT is intensively focused on the issue of lawsuits and subsequently antitrust investigations. In this quote, the main concern is with the execution of power by Google in the technology market. Since Google is regarded as a dominant global power in the technology industry, it has attracted a considerable amount of attention from government agencies as well as corporations. Within the news articles, the most commonly mentioned actors appear to be government agencies.

McCabe and Kang (2020) draw attention to the Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission to illustrate how Google's operations are under scrutiny. These two agencies are also indicators of how significant the situation is in terms of the usage of the massive power in the technology industry. In addition, McCabe and Kang (2020) underscore that in most cases, antitrust investigations would take longer to conclude but as Attorney General Mr. Barr is involved in the process, its been moving unusually fast.

Besides antitrust investigations, privacy is an indispensable topic both for Google and relevant government agencies. In an era where the flow of information and mobility is at unprecedented levels, privacy is extremely significant for users and hence the corporations. Within this context, the management, storage, and distribution of

information or data is the top priority in the 21st century. The news story published on June 25, 2020 by Wakabayashi reported that Google is implementing a new policy that would delete data such as location history and similar data from the web after 18 months. This can be considered as a response by Google to the privacy issues they've been addressed to clarify frequently by different parties such as government agencies and general users. According to Wakabayashi, Google claimed that user data plays a critical role in personalizing products when the critics were accusing Google of compiling data to make their business more lucrative.

The same news article underscores the fact that Google attracts more than 1 billion users per month which is an indication of its power to host massive amounts of data on its users. Thus, critics do have concerns about how Google can keep tabs on its users to make even more profit. On the other hand, Google's statement highlights the significance of personalization and denies the allegations of profiting more by utilizing personal information. Antitrust investigations can significantly damage an organization's identity both financial and reputation-wise.

The news article dated June 23, 2020 by Lohr asserts that Google paid \$8 billion to the European Union and \$170 million to the United States within the scope of antitrust investigations regarding its market position. Google also decided to provide extra protection to children by making changes in privacy policies on YouTube. Google's

suffering from the antitrust investigations and subsequently being forced to pay astronomical amounts of money both within the European Union and the United States is an indication of how government agencies are closely watching their operations. Satariano (2020) underscores that the French data protection authority convicted Google to pay 50 million Euros for not being transparent in terms of explaining how they acquired data from its services such as Google Maps, search engine, and YouTube. According to a recent article dated February 19, 2020 by Satariano and Pronczuk, the European Union can be considered as a notorious watchdog on technology corporations although they couldn't manage to build their own technology ecosystem.

Google has also become an agenda topic during the COVID 19 pandemic. Google and Apple announced a partnership that aimed to slow down the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) by introducing a system called "contact tracing". The news article published on Jun 3, 2020 by Nicas and Wakabayashi claims that the partnership between Google and Apple, whose software systems power almost all smartphones across the globe, to help slow the pandemic highlights how critical the health crisis has become. The article highlights that the software developed by Google and Apple would inform people whether they were in contact with a person who was infected by the virus. Furthermore, they underscore that this project aims to support health officials in terms of efficiently allocating their resources as well as maximizing their time efficacy. Nevertheless, there were questions raised in terms of privacy associated with the tracking of people. Although Google and Apple are characterized as behemoths in the technology industry, the concern related to privacy still exists. The same article adds that

Google claimed that turning off the user's location history on Android smartphones will not prevent them from compiling location data. This statement explicitly portrays Google's organizational identity in a negative framework by citing Google's historical track record of privacy problems. It particularly highlights that Google issued a statement that they continue to collect user data which is precisely the focal point of critics and government agencies.

Another significant news article regarding antitrust investigation and privacy is concerned with children in New Mexico. The story dated February 21, 2020 by Singer and Wakabayashi reports that New Mexico's attorney general Hector Balderas filed a federal lawsuit stating that many students' data has been collected by Google such as their browsing history, videos they have watched on YouTube, and their personal information. The news article cites that the lawsuit accused Google of violating the federal Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. The same article highlights that globally 90 million teachers and students engage with Google education tools for free such as Google Docs and Gmail along with over 25 million of them using Chromebooks. This situation emphasizes Google's potential ability to have access to millions of user's personal data which raises the privacy issue. The article also underscores that Google paid \$170 million to the New York State regarding the illegal collection of data of children on YouTube. The fact that Google paid a \$170 million fine related to the unauthorized personal data collection of children communicates their organizational identity in a way that the corporation has serious issues concerning data protection and user privacy particularly, with its track record. As pointed out by several news articles,

Google also earned a reputation of abusing its power in the market by utilizing its advertising, search engine, and android operations.

The news article published on May 16, 2020 by Kang, McCabe, and Wakabayashi (2020) characterizes Google as:

“Google captures roughly one-third of every dollar spent in online advertising. Its search engine is the on-ramp to the internet and controls what information users see, while the company owns many of the critical tools and technologies used to advertise online. It also boasts seven businesses with more than one billion users” (p. 14).

This particular description demonstrates Google’s superiority in the technology industry. Moreover, they also underscore that Google corresponds to 90 percent of web searches globally. Hence, Google is the target of government agencies for privacy and data security regarding its massive power on a global scale. Antitrust and privacy thus became notions that are discussed among the public and government agencies. Since Google is being acknowledged as the global dominator in the technology industry particularly with its search engine service and video platform YouTube, its organizational identity is portrayed as the gatekeeper of information as well as the main information distributor and organizer that millions of people seek every day. Consequently, this also means a significant responsibility for the corporation. The storage of millions of people’s information and how that is handled became the primary concern of the lawsuits cited above. The fact that half of the NYT articles include

antitrust and privacy to characterize Google's organizational identity is a demonstration of the problem of trust towards the company.

Hence, the NYT sets the agenda of the day for its massive subscriber database. In terms of shaping the discourse of millions of readers, the news corporation plays a pivotal role. In this context, as many readers access the NYT database to read news about business and technology, engaging with articles concerned with privacy issues and antitrust investigations indeed makes an impression on the readers. There is no doubt that such impressions are likely to be negative as the readers confront articles approaching the privacy issue with various different examples including children's protection to general user safety.

### **5.2.2. COVID 19**

In NYT analysis, 16 out of 42 news articles focused on the disease COVID 19. The articles coverage of Google in relation to the pandemic can be considered more critical in comparison to Google's press releases and the Guardian. NYT approaches this issue in various ways one of which is in political terms. The news article published on March 14 2020, by Shear and Wakabayashi, state that Trump exaggerated Google's role in the pandemic. Trump rhapsodized Google by claiming that an immense progress was made in the combatting of the pandemic by 1700 engineers. The news article revealed that there were approximately 1000 employees working on Google's project instead of 1700 and there was no data on displaying the testing sites. The news story was associated with criticizing Trump administrations response to its crisis management amid the pandemic.

Subsequently, the article mentions that Pichai, CEO of Google and Alphabet, established a system where Google employees can volunteer in the combat against the disease COVID 19. Eventually, more than 1700 employees signed up to be a part of the team that challenges the effect of the pandemic. The article suggests that this demonstrates how eager Google is to work closely with the Trump administration even if the stakes are very high.

The news story dated March 17 2020, by Wakabayashi and Singer, discusses the potential risks and privacy concerns regarding how will Google observe and handle people's personal data in relation to the pandemic. The news story states that Google might face legal problems due to having received millions of personal data from a hospital system without the consent of those patients in order to screen the people who might have been affected with the disease COVID 19. This creates a negative corporate image for Google as it explicitly associates them with legal penalties for the violation of the privacy of millions of people. The idea to support health officials with advanced Google technologies seems positive and favorable but it also highlights the question of at what expense will Google accomplish its mission. In terms of the disease COVID 19, NYT mainly criticizes Google for its data collection methods, handling of the data, and having a strong technological agency to manipulate the data it gathers.

The news story published on April 5 2020, by Stephans-Davidowitz expresses that Google's search engine service can provide assistance in locating the developing areas

of the disease COVID 19. The news article contends a paper published in Nature, a highly respected journal, demonstrates that Google supported researchers to develop a model in order to discover epidemics before anyone else. Google's gathering of influenza data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was considered to be crucial in supporting the researchers. The news story contends that Google's search engine has the potential to support the tracking of the disease COVID 19 by focusing on keywords and phrases that might point out to the symptoms of the disease. Hence, Google's technology can be useful in the challenge with the pandemic.

The news article published on April 19 2020, by Chavern highlights that Google should be paying its fair share to local publishers in France. According to the article, the majority of the news business was significantly crippled in terms of lowered advertising income amid the disease COVID 19. The news story asserts that major technology corporations such as Google, significantly enjoy the web traffic it gains by users and makes profit from disseminating news content considering the massive amounts of people who searched information about the disease COVID 19 during the pandemic. Hence, the news article argued that Google should be paying for its fair share to the news publishers. Moreover, the article states that Google manipulated its dominance in its market share in France with 90% and rejected to pay news publishers. The French publishers argued that their main source of web traffic came through Google's search engine. From this perspective, NYT portrays Google's organizational identity as a manipulative and unfair one.

### **5.2.3. Internet Giant & Behemoth**

12 out of 42 news articles described Google as an internet giant and/or behemoth.

Although these phrases traditionally have positive meanings, they also possess negative connotations. The news story published on March 20, 2020 by Conger characterizes Google as the internet giant when she highlights that Anthony Levandowski, the lead engineer in the development of Waymo self-driving car business, stole trade secrets and even convincing Google's employees to work for him. The article stated that Levandowski stole over 14,000 files associated with Google and Waymo. Hence, Levandowski faced charges including theft and soliciting trade secrets from Google. The article also stated the court ruled that Mr. Levandowski should pay \$179 million in compensation to Google. Particularly this case is a representation of how Google's intellectual property is a valuable commodity and a globally recognized one. Google as the technology behemoth made a name for itself by recruiting talented employees and their actions led to the creation of successful projects such as Waymo.

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Google launched another initiative called Verily which would support people in terms of guiding them through the coronavirus (COVID-19) testing locations. The news article published on March 17, 2020 by Wakabayashi and Singer claimed that Wang, Verily spokeswoman, underscored that their priority was to be aware of who is critically sick would not come to their sites since the site was not equipped well enough to treat them. Wang mentioned that the project is in its early phases and pointed out that they aimed for the ideal operational capacity. In addition, she emphasizes that they are open to developing a deeper

understanding and improvements regarding the monitoring and testing of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Based on Google representative's official statement, their organizational identity is being portrayed as an organization open to development and willingness to embrace new information to further improve their respective operations. Yet, being characterized as a technology giant or behemoth does not always refer to something positive or constructive. The same article suggests that despite being defined as a technology giant, Google seems to be struggling with accusations related to the acquisition and storage of user data. When Google compiled millions of user data via a deal with Ascension (hospital system), this raised the questions of violation of privacy since the data was shared without the explicit consent of those users. There is no doubt that these types of news articles undermine Google's organizational identity.

A news article dated February 27, 2020 by Goel and Masood draws attention to an occasion in Pakistan related to the notion of censorship where the government of Pakistan decided to implement strict censorship policies on the internet. At this point, the expected outcome was that technology corporations such as Google and Facebook would comply with those new rules or otherwise prepare for its consequences such as being completely terminated in the country. The expectations failed and the technology giants threatened to withdraw from the country which meant abandoning millions of its users in Pakistan. The article reports that the government retreated from imposing censorship on the internet as a result of the reactions that came from the technology giants as well as the backlash faced from the public. Hence, being a technology giant

such as Google can represent such an immense agency that can challenge foreign governments' policies and eventually make them retreat. This way, Google's organizational identity can be regarded as the technology corporation that contended with censorship policies and advocated freedom of expression as well as the right to access information.

It is also significant to note that this case is also being added to the track record of Google. The article expresses that big technology corporations such as Google and Facebook, are having more and more conflicts with national states regarding the prohibition of technology services. In the case of having conflicts with national governments, Google suffered from antitrust investigations and lawsuits both within the U.S and in Europe. Google had to compensate for its court-decided unlawful actions in millions of dollars. Hence, the technology giant's organizational identity falls into disrepute in terms of violating the laws and the invasion of privacy.

The technology giant Google is most famous for its search engine but one should not underestimate its power in the advertising business. The news article dated February 1, 2020 by Wakabayashi and Hsu emphasize that the advertising business corresponds to 80 percent of Google's total revenue. This fact alone underlines how critical the advertising operations are for Google. The arrangement and delivery of advertisements also represent the simultaneous dissemination of information to millions of users which means that they also play a role in the way they shape their discourse. The article states

that Google was being accused of manipulating people to click on more paid results which obscured the difference between unpaid search results and paid ads. Consequently, marketing executives claimed that they were compelled to spend more on Google. Being a dominant actor in the advertising business can generate many questions regarding its implementation policies. Google has been accused of deceiving people with ads so that they can make more profits over them. The problem that is being emphasized here is that Google shifted the way they present ads to a more profit-oriented approach. There is no doubt that any corporation would seek ways to turn its business into a more lucrative one. Yet, critics argue that Google presents its ads in such a way that it deludes its users while forcing corporations into making more investments Google's ad business. In this context, Google's organizational identity is being portrayed as deceptive and fraudulent.

#### **5.2.4. Surveillance & Tracking**

A total of 5 out of 42 news articles mentioned surveillance and tracking when talking about Google. As people spend more time with their smartphones, there are many applications asking for the consent of users to access their location and storage. This can be regarded as the conventional method of tracking users or implementing a surveillance program. Critics mainly open the notions of surveillance and tracking up for discussion in relation to Google's operations that directly affects its users. Nonetheless, the news article reported on June 18, 2020 by Zaveri reports a case regarding the surveillance

issue related to Google from an unconventional perspective. According to the article Google's parent companies air delivery initiative Wing received its first approval from the Federal Aviation Administration for commercial deliveries. This is an indicator of how conventional methods of business transactions, purchasing commodities, and receiving them are evolving into a new phase. Thus, Wing is now officially permitted to deliver goods with its drones.

Yet, there are concerns related to this new delivery system based on its technological ramifications. The article points out that a survey revealed 54 percent of Americans rejected the idea of having Drones flying close to their homes while 11 percent supported the idea. The support for limited use was 34 percent. Evidently, more than half of Americans that participated in the survey rejected the idea of having drones nearby their living areas. Having drones flying close to people's homes raises the questions of surveillance which can make many people uncomfortable.

Since there were reactions to commercial drone usage, the Wing spokesman Bass issued a statement of why people should not be concerned about the existence of drones. The article cited that it is faster, environment-friendly, and safer to acquire goods by using drones. Wing spokesman underscores that receiving goods is safer with drones than the traditional ways of delivery methods as well as saving customers time and being environment friendly. Here, Google's organizational identity is being portrayed as a user and environment friendly and prioritizes safety. Through the use of drones to serve commercial deliveries, Google's Wing presents itself as a critical actor that can modernize the way people receive their packages at their convenience. Meanwhile,

drones can also be defined as a form of surveillance that would highlight the issues of privacy. People might not trust that the drones would merely be operated for commercial delivery purposes.

As mentioned before, two technology rivals announced a partnership that aimed to halt the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). During the pandemic, a software solution was introduced that would notify people if they are in contact with virus-infected individuals. According to a news article dated June 3, 2020 by Nicas and Wakabayashi Apple and Google introduced a system called contact tracing with the purpose of warning people to nearby infected people. The article explained the system as for smartphones to perpetually log to devices that come nearby, thus leading to contact tracing. As a result, the system would warn the user if the individual is in contact with a disease infected person. The ability to constantly log in to other devices and engaging with a virtually infinite amount of user data created serious concerns related to the privacy of people. In other words, being constantly tracked by softwares also means that data is stored in different servers which is a complication for many people. As Google became the center of discussions after Wing's drone delivery operations, another project frequently associated with surveillance came into light. Launched by Google, Sidewalk had a project in which they envisioned it to be the city of the future. This city was planned to be established in Toronto.

The news article dated May 8, 2020 by Austen and Wakabayashi described the project as a dystopian surveillance city of the future. In the article, Google was characterized as the online world's all-seeing eye which caused unease regarding the control mechanism of data, leading to privacy issues. Characterizing the project as "Google's all-seeing eye" being implemented to the physical world is the reflection of the surveillance issue. Google being the eye seeing everything also means the platform can store everything. One of the most disputed topics is the data ownership issue in which Google is generally known to be the owner of millions of users' data. In the age of information and the Internet, knowledge is the real agency and a valid currency. The news article also states that with this project, sensors would record the movements of people to adjust and improve every aspect of their life including traffic lights, dumping trash, and protecting them from extreme heat and cold. Google's technology, vision, and algorithm are being evolved into a god-like power. The ability to track people's every move in the name of regulating a living space causes uneasiness among people. In this context, Google's organizational identity is being associated with a living organism that controls every aspect of human life and implements a type of surveillance into a resident's daily life.

The news article dated March 11, 2020 by Austen states that "critics cast it as a recipe for a surveillance-driven, corporate-controlled urban dystopia and objected to turning over public spaces to one of the world's wealthiest companies" (para .2). The article published on May 8, 2020 by Austen and Wakabayashi contend that amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Sidewalk announced that they are halting the project "city of future" in Toronto citing the global economic turmoil. The article claims

that the cancellation of this project is an achievement for society and a withdrawal for surveillance capitalism. In this context, Google is being referred to as a representative of surveillance capitalism and is defined as an organization that captures the society rather than supporting it. Hence, it is possible to encounter phrases that have negative connotations in the NYT articles which set the agenda for many of its readers.

### **5.2.5. Sexual Misconduct**

A total of 2 out of 42 news articles linked Google with sexual misconduct which is a very delicate issue, especially in the business world. Although only 2 news articles involved the issue of sexual misconduct, the notion itself takes any entity under extreme pressure given the delicacy of the occasion. The news article dated February 23, 2020 by Scheiber and Conger reveals that Google paid \$90 million to Rubin, known as the founder of Android software so that he would leave the corporation amid sexual-misconduct accusations by an employee. According to a news story published on February 13, 2020 by Wakabayashi and Griffith, Andy Rubin is quite an important figure for Google as he is the leading name in the creation of the Android operating system. The fact that Google paid off Mr. Rubin so he would leave the corporation is an indication that the corporation wanted to exonerate itself from sexual misconduct allegations. Although Mr. Rubin denied the accusation against him, the news articles highlighted the case which became associated with the corporation as well. The article also states that Andy's start-up company Essential managed to receive \$330 million from external funding which demonstrates his credentials associated with his Google

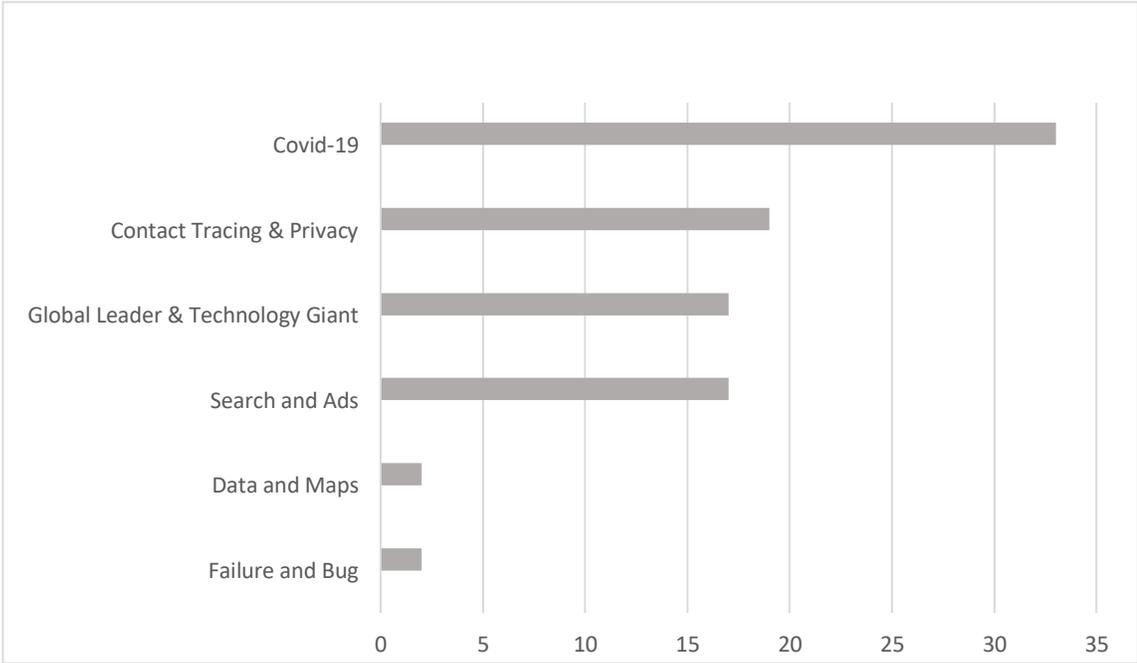
identity. In other words, he was being acknowledged as the founder of Android software which was developed in Google. As being the founder of Android software which powers millions of smartphones at any given time, Mr. Rubin has a track record of success in the technology industry. Thanks to this success he managed to raise significant amounts of funding for his start-up. In this case, Google's organizational identity presents itself in a successful, lucrative, productive, and creative image. Concurrently, being referred to as being the face of sexual misconduct and subsequently, the attempts to cover it up by offering an exit package deteriorates Google's organizational identity.

### **5.3. The Guardian's Coverage of Google**

The Guardian is a prominent newspaper across Europe and particularly in the United Kingdom. Just as the NYT represents high-quality news content on a global scale from a US perspective, The Guardian is also a major figure both globally, especially in the UK. According to Waterson (2018), the Guardian has been declared to be the most trusted newspaper in the UK by an industry report. In addition, Waterson (2018) states that the Guardian appeals to more than 23 million readers per month which is an indication of popularity among people. By being popular in the UK and across Europe, the Guardian's news content established an internationally prominent place for itself. This also means that the Guardian has the capacity to set the agenda for millions of people every day.

Thus, this thesis incorporates a comparative analysis of the Guardian's coverage of Google. A total of 60 news articles have been analyzed to reveal how the media outlet

portrays Google’s organizational identity. In comparison to the NYT, the Guardian approached Google in a relatively more neutral stance and sometimes supportive of the organization as well as criticizing it. The analysis is filtered by searching news article titles that included Google between the 1st of February and the 1st of July 2020. It is also narrowed down by designating the language as English, the content type as news, and publication type as newspapers. A total of 60 news articles that contained 63.989 words were used in the Guardian’s news articles in relation to the description of Google. A total of 33 news articles mentioned Covid19. Below, a detailed analysis is provided of the most used keywords and themes used to characterize Google, which includes contact tracing and privacy, global leader and technology giant, search and ads, failure and bug, and data and maps.



**Figure-3** The Guardian Analysis between February 1 and July 1, 2020

### **5.3.1. COVID 19**

The Guardian's analysis revealed that 33 out of 60 news articles were focused on the disease COVID 19. In other words, more than half of the news stories were concerned with the pandemic and its impacts on the business world as well as the society. The news article published on April 3, 2020 by Hern highlighted that Google's data provided insights in terms of how the disease COVID 19 reshaped consumer behavior in terms of shopping. Google's location data in the UK demonstrated that physical shopping or visits to retails on foot decreased more than 85% during the pandemic. Considering the lockdown in many parts of the world, the consumer habits have changed out of necessity and this was documented by Google's data.

The news story published on May 7 2020, by Cecco, underscored that Google itself was also affected by the economic turmoil created by the disease COVID 19. Google's project of establishing the "smart city" in Toronto had been cancelled within the scope of economic austerity policy. Google underscored that the global economic ambiguity caused by the pandemic led them to terminate the world's first smart city project. Hence, while readers can encounter news about Google's support to business organizations and communities, they can also realize how the technology corporation itself was negatively affected amid the pandemic.

Another news story dated June 26 2020, by Hurst asserts that particularly during the disease COVID 19, it is highly significant what kinds of information that people can

access through the internet. Since Google's search engine is the most widely used one to access any kinds of information, the news story contends that Google has a critical role in terms of the dissemination of that data. The article indicates that when people engage with misleading inaccurate information about the pandemic, this can result in concrete damage in real-life. Hence, the article suggests that as the global information provider, Google has a responsibility to check and provide quality content so that there won't be any unpleasant occasions due to misleading information on the internet. The article also states that Google should support its users/readers in terms of making plausible decisions on the credibility of information they access about the pandemic from Google's search service.

The news article published on May 20 2020, by Paul indicates that Google and Apple announced a partnership which led to the development of the contact tracing system that supported health officials to challenge the spread of the disease COVID 19. According to this article, Google indicates that by sending exposure notifications to users, their system will play a critical role in terms of decelerating the disease COVID 19. In other words, Google's technology would maximize the efficiency of hospitals by slowing the virus and maintain a low occupancy rate in the intensive care units of hospitals. This means that the support from Google will help prevent overwhelming the capacity of hospitals and thus maintain their capacity to help other people in need.

### **5.3.2. Contact Tracing and Privacy**

Throughout their news articles, the Guardian substantially uses the words “contact tracing” and “privacy” when referring to Google. The content analysis revealed that 19 out of 60 of the articles were centered upon these words. In the age of the Internet, there is no doubt that privacy is at the utmost importance. The more people engage with the internet, whether with their smartphones, tablets, and computers, the more information is being shared with technology corporations. In this case, Google can be regarded as a platform that knows a person better than that person. Hence, the issue of privacy can easily be triggered. In other words, the issue is focused on how Google handles, processes, and/or stores the data it has collected from its users.

Contact tracing and privacy are interlinked especially in the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. As also mentioned in some NYT articles, the general criticism was that Google is collecting huge amounts of user data and using it for targeted personalized advertising. Critics argued that this leads to the problem of revealing the explicit consent of users which is another incident of invasion of privacy. Nevertheless, the Guardian’s approach to this issue has rather been neutral or even at times supportive of Google. The news article dated July 1 2020 by Veale stated that by utilizing “federated” or “edge” privacy technologies, Google and Apple support health officials during the COVID 19 pandemic without seeing or exposing people’s data. The article contends that through the proper usage of privacy technologies, Google would not engage with anyone’s personal data. Moreover, he states that the new cryptographic tools support an

individual's privacy by avoiding any kind of infiltration to sensitive data. The article articulates that this is the central idea of the contact tracing mechanism developed by the cooperation between Apple and Google.

These new tools can prioritize data safety so there won't be any concerns related to privacy. Hence, unlike previous articles related to privacy and contact tracing, the Guardian delineates Google's organizational identity as an organization that respects its user's privacy by utilizing the latest technology available. As mentioned before, Google is mostly being targeted for the enormous data it gathers from its user's to use them in personalized ads and how they handle, store, or process this personal data. The news story dated June 24, 2020 by Hern, the UK technology editor for the Guardian, states that Google will automatically erase the data of new user's records on the web after 18 months. He addresses this issue related to privacy by directly quoting Google's top executive. Within the same article it is stated that the CEO of Google, Pichai reassures the public opinion that as an organization, Google prioritizes user control over data, their safety and works towards the most convenient ways that users can benefit from their services. Hern also reports in the same story that "Google's auto-deletion features, by contrast, allow the company to continue to gather user data, and personalise products with it, while reassuring the privacy-conscious that their information will not be stored indefinitely" (para. 7). Evidently, this news article acknowledges that Google won't stop collecting user data for its commercial services, but they also champion the privacy of its users. Hence, the turmoil generated by the NYT, activist groups, or government agencies is not reflected in the Guardian's coverage. There is no doubt that the majority

of the issues related to contact tracing and privacy stem from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

After Apple and Google announced a partnership to challenge the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and support health officials in the process, their software functionality known as contact tracing became a topic of discussion mostly related to the privacy and data sharing. According to a news story dated June 18, 2020 by Murphy, Sabbagh, and Hern (2020) the National Health Service in the UK advocated a contact tracing system that espoused a centralized system that failed to operate. In their news article, they state that Apple and Google support a “decentralized” model regarding the collection of data which means there won’t be a central or single official database. This way, Google challenges privacy infringement accusations. A centralized system means that data would be stored in one, single, and central database which raised concerns over privacy. It is critical to note that Google and Apple encourage the decentralized approach to contact tracing which ensures that data will not be incarcerated in a single database, thus protecting the privacy of user data. According to a news article dated April 21, 2020 by Hern Google recognizes the highly sensitive nature of user privacy and acts accordingly. In the case of 300 privacy experts supporting Google’s approach to the contact tracing issue demonstrates Google’s organizational identity as a privacy and safety-focused organization. In other words, Google is challenging the idea that could pave the way for the governments to establish a surveillance state in the future.

According to Sabbagh and Hern's news story published on June 18, 2020 Google is also keen on cooperating with government agencies rather than disputing them. This demonstrates that Google has a collaborative and constructive approach to issues related to technology. The news article contends that Google explicitly emphasizes the issues of privacy and safety as their top priority while expressing that they are open to collaboration with the UK government. This also demonstrates that Google is not a technology organization that operates arbitrarily quite to the contrary, they value cooperation to reach the ideal standards for its users.

Clearly, the readers can encounter news articles that support Google's corporate image of being a privacy-oriented organization. Yet, criticisms can be encountered too. As the United Kingdom decided to leave the European Union, also known as Brexit, Google decided to move its UK users' data to the United States. According to the news article dated February 20, 2020 by Gibbs, Google officials expressed that it is not logical to store UK users' data within an EU member state since the UK is not a part of the bloc anymore. Still, there were criticisms focused on Google's decision since Europe is considered to be a safe zone for data protection. The article also stresses that mass surveillance programs will have easier access to non-US citizens data in the case of the relocation of British user's data to the U.S. Google's organizational identity suffers because of its decision to relocate the UK user data into their base country the US. The critique also underscores that the decision could pave the way for mass surveillance which precisely relates to the privacy problem. The same article claims that the UK must be in compliance with European data protection as technology giants such as Google

have extensive information on its users. As Google attracts millions of users at any given time, it means that the organization also gathers that much information from its users which can be considered a significant power in the age of the internet. This also means that Google knows the user better than the user itself. Under the US privacy laws, which is considered to be weak by the European perspective, the worry is that there won't be any privacy as a result of the relocation of the data center. Overall, in terms of contact tracing and privacy, the Guardian articles contribute to the understanding that Google respects and prioritizes its user's privacy while also criticizing the company.

### **5.3.3. Global Leader and Technology Giant**

A total of 17 out of 60 news articles emphasized the words technology giant, behemoth, and global leader when describing Google, which is in fact similar to NYT coverage. Indeed, the scale of the organization and its reach of power is a widely acknowledged fact. At the same time, being a technology giant can also make an organization a target for governments, activist groups, and other related figures. Hence, such a reputation comes with a significant burden. This means that as a technology giant, Google should execute its operations in a delicate, well-thought, and meticulous manner. Hurst's news story dated June 26, 2020 highlights that digital giants such as Google must be on high alert for the information they are providing to their users. Particularly during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the web can be a perilous virtual space where panic and misinformation spreads around faster than the pandemic itself. The article claims that when people access misleading information regarding the pandemic, it can lead to real-life incidents such as sickness. Being infected by misinformation through the internet is

equally dangerous as being physically exposed to the virus. One might even state that the misinformation on the internet spans across continents at an unprecedented pace, even outpacing the speed of the actual virus, and can mislead people about the virus and protection methods. Considering that Google entertains millions of people at any given time, it becomes a serious issue about what kind of information is being disseminated to the public. Through Google's search engine and ads services, knowledge is consistently being consumed by millions of users across the globe. Hence, the article claims that as a technology giant, Google does have a responsibility to challenge misinformation within the context of the quality reception of news and information.

Being a global leader in the technology industry can attract a considerable amount of attention especially from media agencies. The corporation's stance towards certain topics linked both to international and national matters are significant. Wong, Greve, and Pengelli's news article dated June 20, 2020 points out that the Trump administration's decision to suspend the issuing of an H-1B visa attracted a significant amount of criticism from the technology industry. H-1B visa is a widely preferred employment method particularly in the technology industry that allows non-US workers with specialized knowledge to work in the US. The news article cites Pichai, CEO of Google and Alphabet, that Google recognizes how immigrants significantly strengthened the American economy in terms of transforming it to the pioneer nation in technology as well as the formation of Google.

Pichai also championed equal opportunity for immigrants and expressed their dedication to include them in their workforce. An official statement by the chief executive of Google on the Trump administration's decision demonstrates Google's organizational identity as well. By this statement, Google both acknowledges the vital role of immigrants in the growth of Google as an organization and promotes opportunities for all in the workplace. Explicitly embracing immigrants' right to work in the US and recognizing their fundamental role in the technology industry reaffirms their commitment to the diverse workforce which reflects their organizational identity as an all-inclusive one. Since Google is being labeled as a technology giant, this also refers to the huge financial achievements of the organization. The news story dated May 31, 2020 by Meade underscores that the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) was instructed to develop a new code for the digital giants so that they would share their advertising revenue with Australian media organizations. This meant that Google gains a remarkable benefit in the country and the Australian authorities wanted Google to share their wealth in a fair way. Google rejected to share their advertising revenues. The article asserts that Google's Australia director Mel Silva underscored that it is the news publishers that genuinely profit by the courtesy of Google's search service as it can be observed with 3.44 billion visits to their web pages at no cost. Moreover, the fact that Google contributed approximately \$218 million in value to Australian publishers demonstrates how Google Search plays an essential role in the dissemination of information and providing access to many people in Australia.

By both providing access to information and financially contributing to the Australian publishers, Google proves to be a significant part of the daily routine for both internet users and for the business world. Australian authorities focused on pressuring Google to share its advertising revenue with other publishers since they believed that Google had significant leverage in the market economy which lead to an anti-competitive environment. The news article dated February 14, 2020 by Karp suggests an inquiry was initiated concerning technology behemoths such as Google and Facebook's dominance over the advertising income. It was foreseen that this case posed a risk for organizations that hire journalists. The inquiry demonstrates that Google is being perceived as a menace to the existence of other businesses. Being characterized as a behemoth, Google resonates in various perspectives both in the US and outside the US. The global usage of Google's search engine service and the phrase "to google it" linked to searching for anything, designates Google's superiority in the age of information. In addition, it is significant to be aware that Google is increasingly becoming an agenda topic not only for business organizations but also for government agencies. Prompted by the marketplace, the dominance, of Google, government agencies such as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) as well as American Government bodies are closely following Google's operations. Google's ability to attract attention on a massive scale also reaffirms it as a technology giant.

#### **5.3.4. Search and Ads**

The truth is Google's ads business accounts for the majority of Google's revenue and its also interlinked with the search services. Google can be considered the leader in the ads business as many different organizations pay to be promoted. Google's ads service has

the potential to reach out to millions of people virtually at the same time. Whether from a smartphone, tablet, or a laptop, Google ads consistently introduces many different products and services of respective businesses. Particularly during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, digital ads became more popular than usual as people were under lockdown as part of the measures to contain the spread of the virus. People started to spend more time online than usual as they were quarantined in their homes. Hence, the more time they spent online, the more they encountered with ads. As a result of the fear of the spreading of the virus, consumers concentrated even more on online shopping and subsequently, businesses adapted themselves. Based on the growing concerns of the ways that the virus can spread, contactless payment through the Internet became a popular way of shopping. E-commerce became increasingly important for both consumers and businesses. Specifically, local business owners seem to have benefited from Google's target ads. A news article dated June 26, 2020 by Usborn indicates that thanks to Google's targeted advertising Baxton's business "Fresh Fish Daily" improved its visibility and profits in an instant during the COVID 19 lockdown measures. Mr. Baxter praises Google's targeted advertising during the pandemic since it significantly contributed to the visibility of his fish business. He underscores that conventionally what would take a long time happened very quickly thanks to Google's service. Baxter states that through targeted advertising, online orders soared from 20-30 to between 200 and 300. He consistently underscores how his business gained significant momentum and financial success by expressing the increase in their online orders. The increase required him to rearrange his staff to meet the demand. Baxter links this financial success and increased visibility of his business to Google's tools such as targeted ads.

Another example of how Google's tools played a vital role in a business is the Little Box of Books which is a children's book enterprise. This family business also experienced the period of the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown which was critical for their children's book business. Just as many people were under lockdown, the schools were also closed. Pollard and Langston were the couples that operated the business and they decided to use Google My Business service just as Baxter did for his own. The news story published on June 24, 2020 by Poulton puts forth that the Little Box of Books' website received three times more traffic between March and April. More importantly, 90% of the visits consisted of new customers. In addition, the owners of the enterprise expressed that they maximized their sales during this period. As a result of using Google's tools during the pandemic, Pollard and Langston turned a crisis into an opportunity. The business owners praise Google's services for their financial success by stating the majority of the web traffic was from newcomers.

Evidently, Google became an organization that provided a thriving atmosphere for small enterprises by maximizing their visibility during the pandemic. Especially local enterprises thrived during the lockdown by recognizing and adapting themselves to e-commerce via Google's tools. In addition, Google Trends also revealed valuable insight in the context of consumer desires. In the same article Poulton adds that Google Trends unveiled that the search inquires for homeschooling exponentially increased as much as fourfold before the lockdown period. Hence, Google Trends demonstrated what people were curious about the most which could lead business opportunists to act accordingly.

Google's organizational identity is portrayed as a lifesaving organization particularly for small businesses during the lockdown period associated with Google My Business and Google Trends services. The news story published on April 21, 2020 by Simons asserts that the Australian government acknowledges the increasing dominance of digital platforms like Google on the news content. Hence, the government is closely following Google's operations and the desire is to legally force them to share their advertising revenue with Australian media organizations. Furthermore, the article points out that Spain became the first country to force Google to pay for news content. Subsequently, Google decided to terminate its Google news services in Spain. This demonstrates how Google can sacrifice one of its services and not submit to action by force. On the other hand, it also indicates that Google does not comply with a country's regulation as well as minimizing its expenses. The article highlights that people mainly use Google as they can access any information they desire from its search engine. In addition, it states that Google's main source of income is from its ads business although the organization's name is a trademark for its search service. Martinson's news story published on April 19, 2020 characterizes Google as the world's biggest search engine, she also holds Google accountable for the COVID 19 economic impact on the news industry in the UK. The article blames technology corporations such as Google and Facebook for their responsibility in the economic turmoil by claiming that they ignored news journalism. This situation indicates that Google made a significant profit from the contents of news journalism but they failed to pay their fair share to the news organizations. Nevertheless, the same article asserts that Google and Facebook recently began supporting the newspapers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

While there is a criticism, there is also recognition of support from Google. In terms of organizational identity, Google is portrayed as an organization that supports newspapers in times of a global crisis. During a crisis period where many businesses filed for bankruptcy, the support of a technology giant must have been meaningful for the newspaper organizations. One should also recognize that Google's ads business and search service played a crucial role, particularly during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. As many businesses thrived and expanded their operations and scale through Google's tools and services, consumers also benefited from discovering new products and services which made e-commerce more active than ever.

#### **5.3.5. Failure and Bug**

A total of 2 out of 60 articles described Google with the words failure and bug. The news article dated April 8, 2020 by Hern underscores that Google's Cloud system suffered from an outage which led to disruptions and failures of some of its services. The article states that the outage caused delivery failures at Gmail and it completely blacked out Snapchat for over an hour. Apparently, Google's cloud system is very significant in Google's services operations. A failure even for a short period of time can cause major disruptions for millions of users benefiting from Gmail email services and other related services. Failures and bugs can be a nightmare for both the service provider and consumers. Since Google is widely referred to as a global leader in technology, failures can significantly damage its reputation. Another article published on February 4, 2020 by Hern contends that a software bug caused strangers to receive Google Photo

service user's personal videos. This incident lasted for four days which can be resulted in private videos being emailed to strangers. This dire situation underscores the violation of privacy. The bug led to the leak of personal information to strangers which should be a serious problem for both users and Google.

The Guardian characterizes Google with a bug in its software which can be associated with privacy issues. There is no doubt that Google's reputation might be damaged by this flaw. The trust of users is essential considering the loyalty and investment to Google as a technology giant. The violation of privacy as a result of a software bug is a factor that can deteriorate Google's organizational identity. The same article also indicates that Google Photos appeals to its users with unlimited cloud storage with the compromise of utilizing users' files to improve its machine learning algorithms. In addition, the article underlined that YouTube's advertising revenue was more than \$1 billion last year which is a projection of how the advertising business is vital for Google's income source.

#### **5.3.6. Data and Maps**

Google's advertising business and Google Maps can be considered as a visualization of data. During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Google Maps proved to be very useful both for consumers and organizations. The consumers were able to learn whether businesses were operational or shutdown as well as pick up options. Organizations enjoyed the benefit of communicating with their customers in terms of their operating hours and delivery options through Google Maps services. The disease COVID-19 also

affected shopping and people significantly focused on online shopping. This is convenient for consumers who prioritized online (contactless) payment and saving time as goods were delivered in front of their doors.

A news story published on April 3, 2020 by Hern asserts that Google's data on locations revealed that physical shopping at British shops decreased by 85% and particular areas are close to bankruptcy as a result of lockdown measurements. In times of crisis, data from Google Maps can provide insights about commerce and the business world. As Google Maps demonstrates, the majority of physical shopping significantly decreased during the lockdown measures in the face of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Google also ensures the public opinion that user privacy is the priority. Since Google's critics frequently refer to privacy issues, Google uses every chance to express the value and protect user privacy. Since Google Maps is a data-driven service, it informs and navigates users based on other user's data. The news story made available on February 3, 2020 by Hern (2020) asserts that Weckert, an artist based in Berlin, manipulated the Google maps service by using 99 secondhand phones in a cart which constantly transmitted movement and location data to Google servers. Consequently, he managed to create an artificial traffic jam where in fact there was no such thing. Weckert puts forth that Google Maps data has real-world consequences as it constantly navigates and directs cars in various optimal directions so users/drivers would save time. In addition, Weckert acknowledges that the way people perceive a map and how they interact with it

has essentially been altered with Google Maps. Thus, besides having real-world effects, Google Maps fundamentally shaped our notion of navigation and maps. This example reflects Google's organizational identity as an organization that fundamentally reshaped our understanding and interaction with maps and the notion of navigation.

## **CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

This study demonstrated how Google communicated its organizational identity through 60 press releases between July 1 and June 15, 2020. It also disclosed how the NYT and the Guardian portrayed Google's organizational identity by analyzing news articles between February 1 and July 1, 2020. By conducting a quantitative and qualitative content analysis, this thesis demonstrated the keywords and themes used to delineate Google within a specific timeline which can be considered as a contribution to the existing literature. In the age of information, the technology behemoth Google navigates the daily lives of millions of people. Google's products and services such as Google Search, Google Maps, Gmail, Google Drive, Android software, and YouTube, play a crucial role when people engage with technology. Particularly with Google Search, Maps, and Gmail, it is safe to claim that Google is the gateway for information. Considered as the world's largest information provider and search engine, Google controls what kind of information people can access and engage with. In a technology-oriented world where almost everyone is perceived to be a potential consumer, Google assumes the role of being the superpower as an information (about products and services) provider.

Google became the manifestation of McLuhan's (1964) global village where the world began to operate with advanced technology which affects millions of people's daily lives. The way we communicate as well as accessing and transmitting information drastically evolved in the age of Google. Gmail and Google Drive are major examples of how people communicate and engage with information. Google's reputation as a technology behemoth stems from its global dominance and its deep-seated user population. Kotler (2010) contends that a rewarding marketing strategy is based on the organization's ability to understand and embrace the consumer in its entirety. In other words, being aware of consumer behavior, desire, and motivation, an organization would be capable of executing a productive marketing strategy. Considering that Google knows its user's better than the user itself, Google epitomizes the state of being a successful global organization. Tajfel and Turner (1979) assert that through the process of social categorization, people gain a new sense of identity. The concrete reflection of this can be observed via YouTube where millions of people come together and interact with each other. The term "YouTuber" became a new form of identity for many people as it started to be associated with "influencer". Being a YouTuber also became a job where people can earn their living. By generating content for their viewers, YouTubers establish the unique channel of communication where they engage with their viewers. In addition, the concrete reflection of Tajfel and Turner's (1979) definition of a group can be observed on YouTube. A number of people (users/viewers) who embrace similar beliefs with a social consensus power YouTube communities by interacting with user-generated content. In other words, they form "virtual" social groups on YouTube where they interact with each other's contents and form unique communities. With G Meet and

Gmail, Google connects billions of people and various different groups/communities across the globe to each other.

In relation to Tajfel and Turner's (1979) notion of "differentiation", Google declared its global superiority and dominance in the marketplace. Both in the US and in Europe, Google's search service is the most used. Google differentiates itself from other organizations through its dominance in the ads business as well, with a cost-efficient and effectively targeted strategy. Tajfel and Turner's (1979) sense of categorization, the way people shape and organize their understanding of their surroundings, is also reflected through Google's services. Google search engine provides the relevant categorizations of information in a matter of seconds in results as millions of users search answers for their questions. Olins (1990) contends that an organization communicates its identity to the public and stakeholders through the introduction of their products and services. The introductions of services such as Google Maps, YouTube, and Gmail communicate Google's organizational identity as a platform that connects millions of people and communities to each other as well as assisting in navigating their daily lives.

Furthermore, within the scope of corporate social responsibility, Google's initiatives' such as google.org that provide grants and funds to various different projects. As mentioned in the analysis of Google press releases, Google highlights connecting, helping, and supporting businesses and communities. Subsequently, Google provides scientific numbers of how much grant/funding they allocate to supporting education, small businesses, refugees, LGBTQ+ and Black communities, and journalism as well as the part they play in the improvement and recovery of South Asian communities. By

indicating how many people they have helped and trained through these projects and initiatives', Google portrays its organizational identity as a supportive, inspiring, and generous one.

This thesis focused on the differences between how Google communicates its organizational identity in comparison to the news media's portrayal. The NYT and the Guardian coverage sections provided an insight into how news media organizations demonstrate Google's organizational identity. A total of 102 news articles revealed that the essential criticisms were mostly focused on privacy, exploitation, and surveillance. These news organizations accused Google of exploiting their global dominance and marketshare in the technology industry and making unfair profits over their user's data. Particularly, the NYT gave wide publicity to how Google faced antitrust investigations both in the U.S and in Europe. This constructs an organizational identity as unreliable and dishonest for Google. In addition, the news organizations accused Google's projects and services of becoming an instrument of the surveillance state. The first research question was addressed via the analysis of Google's press releases. A total of 60 press releases revealed that Google constructed its organizational identity by highlighting its core values such as privacy and safety-oriented, responsible, and a consistent supporter of businesses as well as communities. The remarkable detail in the press releases is that Google often discloses how much funds/grants it allocates for their ideas and projects. In addition, Pichai, the CEO of Google and Alphabet, openly declares that they never sell user's data to third parties to make more profit and user's data privacy is at the utmost

importance for Google. This statement also responds to the criticisms associated with privacy.

Despite the harsh criticisms received from news media organizations, Google constantly counters these negative portrayals and provides scientific evidence such as numbers of people, businesses, and communities they've supported as well as the many funding programs to address the accusations from news organizations. Thus, Google strengthens its claims with concrete empirical numbers. This way, Google refutes the defamatory arguments by news organizations. This thesis reveals that there is a major disconnect between how Google communicates its organizational identity versus news media organizations' portrayal of this identity. The surprising aspect of this study was that NYT approach to Google, which represented the American perspective, was significantly more critical than the European perspective represented by the Guardian. While NYT and the Guardian criticize Google for its lack of privacy protection, being manipulative and unfair, Google emphasizes how they are a privacy-oriented, helpful, and supportive organization for the communities with their initiatives.

Belch and Belch (2003) claim that marketing is the development of the creation of price, concept, distribution, and promotion of the products and services. Thanks to Google's deep understanding of consumer behavior, the organization epitomizes the concept of successful marketing execution. By setting the standard in the promotion and pricing for thousands of organizations through Google's Ads services, Google is one of the most

successful organizations in developing marketing strategies. In addition, Belch and Belch (2003) characterizes public relations as assessing public interests and determining corporate policies in order to be acknowledged by the public. Particularly through google.org, Google created various different grants and funding programs to support small businesses, Black and LGBTQ+ communities, women, journalism, and nonprofit organizations. By focusing on many different sections of society, Google manages to conduct effective public relations policies through corporate social responsibility initiatives and expands its influence even further. Despite all the criticisms from mainstream news organizations, Google still globally hosts millions of users on its products and services such as search, maps, and android. As a result of successful marketing, public relations, and promotion of its organizational identity, Google maintains and preserves its global dominance in the technology industry. Google should persist the way it prioritizes user privacy and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

For future research, a reception study of Google can be conducted on students. Since Google is mainly acknowledged for its search engine, many people are not aware of what Google is in its entirety. By dividing students into two groups, they can be required to read news articles about Google. While one group can focus on Google press releases, the other group can concentrate on news articles. After they read an interview could be conducted. This can reveal how people's perceptions might change when thinking about Google.

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