Original article

Self-Presentation of Fraternal Organisations on Social Media

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Abstract - *This study examines self-presentation of fraternal organisations on social media. The qualitative study particularly investigates how the oldest fraternal organisation in the world, Freemasons, use Facebook to present its identity. Drawing on self-presentation theory and using cyber-ethnography, the study generally showed higher levels of tactful online self-presentation to enhance visibility, growth, reputation, relational perceptions and member profiling. Our results also established that Freemasonry is largely portrayed as philosophical and charitable society with a structured network of prominent male-dominated people. Within the body of work on online self-presentation, there is much focus on individuals, and in recent academic scholarship, professional bodies and other corporate organisations. However, there is dearth of literature on fraternal organisations, especially their use of social media to strategically present themselves. This study, therefore, significantly addresses this gap. The study also provides clarity and a more nuanced picture of the practices of Freemasons.*

Keywords - *Self-presentation, fraternal organisations, Freemasons, Social Media, Facebook*

I. INTRODUCTION

Since Goffman (1959) theorised the concept of self-presentation, researchers have emphasised the need to investigate this phenomenon among individuals, groups and more recently, organisations (e.g. Castro, 2018; Tong *et. al.* 2020). Research suggests that, in the past few years, a growing number of individuals and organisations purposely project desired images unto others (e.g. Lindholm & Yzerbyt, 2018) or manage impressions they create of themselves (e.g. Elison *et. al.,* 2006; Leary, 1996). According to Yang and Brown (2016), self-presentation reflects various forms of behaviours that are intended to construct and maintain an impression in the minds of others. In essence, then, the conceptualisation of self-presentation by Yang and Brown (2016) suggests the processes of taking cognisance of others while being the self. Although some aspects of self-presentation are deliberate and strategic (sometimes even deceitful), other aspects play out unconsciously (Leary, 1996; Zarghooni, 2007).

Indeed, research has shown that self-presentation is no longer confined to face-to-face or physical interactions, but also extends to internet mediated contexts (e.g. Tong *et. al.* 2020). Evidently, "broader technological developments have given rise to new forms of media which presents new opportunities for companies to engage their stakeholders on a daily basis" (Tench and Amo-Mensah, 2018, p.85). Within this context, the proliferation of social media has provided interactive and efficient tools for organisations to foster relationships as well as adapt communications to the varying information requirements of all target groups (Crane and Glozer, 2016). Significantly, social media incorporates "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan and Heanlein 2010, p.60).

In the extant literature, studies have confirmed that organisations do not only engage in self-presentation but are actively doing so on social media (e.g. Giplin, 2010; Greer & Ferguson, 2017) to mirror offline behaviours (Chambers, 2013) and to allow for two-way communication through dialogic modes (Amo-Mensah & Tench, 2015). Accordingly, fraternal organisations, such as the Freemasons, are also optimising the use of social media to connect with key stakeholders and to exhibit practices they consider important (Ganon, 2014). Flores (2014) affirms that Freemasons are now generating a number of social media handles and are actively involved on social media platforms such as Facebook. Clearly, the increasing importance of self-presentational practices on social media paves way for fraternal organisations to be noticed. In order to therefore gain insights into what the situation is for Freemasons, there is the need to understand how the organisation presents itself on Facebook.

Again, there have been lots of research examining self-presentational perspectives, ranging from making sense

of the behaviours of individuals, institutions and in particular social encounters. On studies that assess how individuals represent themselves to the social world, Castro (2018) discussed the significance and impact of self-presentation in letters of request; Lindholm and Yzerbyt (2018) investigated the dynamics involved in strategic self-presentation by individuals; while Svennevig (2013) interrogated direct and indirect self-presentation techniques involved in conversations. With regard to organisations, Van Den-Bosch, De-Jong and Elving (2004) examined how consistent self-presentation can be used to enhance an organisation's corporate visual identity whereas Stratulat (2019) studied how Volkswagen managed its impressions during the Emissions scandal in 2015. Greer and Ferguson (2017) however found that in contrast to the vast literature on how individuals construct impressions of themselves, studies that focus on organisational self-presentation are comparatively limited, particularly for fraternal organisations (e.g. Taylor & McCradle, 2018)

At the same time, numerous academic studies have also examined how self-presentation plays out in internet environments which has resulted in the coinage 'online self-presentation' (e.g. Fullwood, 2018; Yang & Brown, 2016). For instance, Yang and Brown (2016) examined online self-presentation of College students on Facebook; Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) investigated how self-presentation is used by individuals to create online identities; while Chiang and Suen (2015) studied how self-presentation is employed by jobseekers on LinkedIn. Specifically, in organisational social media environments, Terrell and Kwok (2011) examined how hospitality companies employ self-presentation on Facebook looking at the impression management tactics they employ. Greer and Ferguson (2017) investigated how local television stations employ self-presentation on Instagram to enhance corporate image. On their part, Park, Rogers and Stemmle (2013) evaluated how nonprofit and for-profit health organisations use Facebook to present their identities. From the foregoing, it is evident that the phenomenon of self-presentation has been studied widely. However, studies have not been extended to include fraternal organisations (Nemenoff & Schenk, 2018). Also, although extant studies on self-presentation have focused on social media from myriad perspectives, there are limited studies on how fraternal organisations use social media to project their identities (e.g. Taylor & McArdle, 2018). Nemenoff and Schenk (2018) explicitly state that literature on fraternal organisations' use of social media is scant.

Meanwhile, Stewart (2014) argued that, despite decades of abandonment of Freemasons by academics, European academics are beginning to study the phenomenon critically using primary source materials like antique documents and ledger books. These recent studies on Freemasons are consistently concentrated around the historical aspects of the organisation (e.g. Jacob, 2007;

Snoek & Bogdan, 2014). According to Kenney (2014), the predominant historical focus means relatively little attention has been paid to activities of present-day Freemasons. There are some studies conducted on the use of the traditional media by the Freemason fraternal organisation (e.g. Calderwood, 2013) and other studies that concentrate on the secrecy of the organisation (e.g. Davies-Undiano, 1999). There have also been publications to reveal the public and media relations practice of Freemasonry and its relationship with the mass media (e.g. Gunn, 2008), as well as sensational portrayals of freemasonry in popular culture, in films and in works of literature (e.g. Mahmud, 2012). Kenney (2014), however, argues that, academic scholarship on contemporary Freemasonry is scarce, thus, very little is known in academic circles regarding the workings and representations of the present-day masonic lodges.

Clearly, the discussions above highlight gaps in the management literature on self-presentation, online-self presentation, social media, fraternal organisations and the study of Freemasonry. Scholars have also argued that although most fraternal organisations share several similarities, there is the need to study them separately since they all have peculiar histories (e.g. Weinbren, 2010). To address these gaps, we examine the online self-presentation practices of the Freemasonry, the most prominent and oldest fraternal organisation in the world (Snoek & Bogdan, 2014), via social media through the lens of the theory of self-presentation (Goffman, 1959), with particular focus on the United Grand Lodge of England Freemasonry Facebook page. The United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) is the largest grand lodge in the world and the principal governing body for the regulation of Freemasonry in England and the Commonwealth nations (Calderwood, 2013).

This study is one of the few works that concentrates on online self-presentation of fraternal organisations, an unexplored area that has emerged as an important research focus. The value of the study lies in the new insights that add to the prevailing literature on Freemasonry and self-presentation and the originality of the findings that have useful implications for scholars, researchers and practitioners alike. In the following section, we discuss the underpinning theoretical perspectives and related empirical research. The procedures adopted for carrying out the research are examined next. The results of the study are then discussed after which the paper concludes highlighting future research considerations.

II. FRATERNAL ORGANISATIONS, SELF-PRESENTATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Fraternal organisations have been viewed from varied perspectives since they began appearing in the late 17th and 18th centuries. In a historical study, Weinbren (2010) for instance observed that while some communities perceive fraternal organisations as a network of people responsible for creating modern social ordering, others

consider these organisations as secret societies, that "use elaborate rituals to unite its members in a bond of brotherhood" (Clawson, 1985, p. 672). Fraternal organisations have been largely considered as part of non-profit organisations and mainly registered as such in most of the countries they operate (e.g. Hall, 2016; Swagel, 2014). According to Hall (2016), fraternal organisations such as the Freemasons, Knights of Columbus and Order of Odd Fellows were among the earliest non-profit organisations that: (1) have a fraternal purpose, (2) operate under a lodge system, and (3) insure members and their families against death, disease, and disability. Other prominent fraternal orders in the world include Illuminati and Orange lodge (Weinbren, 2010).

The literature suggests that Freemasonry is the oldest fraternal organisation in the world (Hall, 2016). Modern Freemasonry began in 1717 with the establishment of the United Grand Lodge of England (Calderwood, 2013). The primary organisational structure of Freemasonry is the lodge, which houses the performance of masonic rituals and initiations as well as lectures, teachings and sometimes social events (Davis-Undiano, 1999). Robinson (1989) argued that the organisation used the lodges in teaching and imbibing principles and virtues that medieval stonemasons subscribed to. The organisation's conventional adoration of secrecy- the private nature of its lodge meetings and the difficulties involved in becoming a member - have all generated some misunderstandings and misgivings from many outside the organisation (Calderwood, 2013). Gunn (2008), however, argues that positive mentions of Freemasonry in Dan Brown's book, *Da Vinci Code* that sold over 65 million copies and the release of the movie *Da Vinci Code* in 2006, coupled with recent positive spins in the popular media and on the internet have positively affected the image of the organisation.

The advent of social media has also presented a new platform for fraternal organisations to present themselves (Fullwood, 2018). Research has shown that social networking sites allow users to present an image of themselves to others, making these sites instrumental for organisations to engage in successful and strategic self-presentation (e.g. Yang & Brown, 2016). A study by Fullwood (2018) established that there is an over-controlled and redacted self in online spaces where self-presentation is mostly tailored to reflect offline behaviours (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2017). Other scholars are of the view that online self-presenters are likely to accentuate certain desirable traits than others, thereby engaging in some sort of conscious self-presentation (e.g. Attrill-Smith, 2018). In other words, online users make conscious attempts to present an ideal image largely untypical of their offline identities (Papacharissi, 2002).

Some studies also indicate that self-presentation on social media platforms goes beyond what users include in their profiles, status updates and posts (e.g. Rui & Stefanon, 2012). Russmann and Svensson (2016) for instance found that non-profit organisations' use of Instagram was largely about impression management rather than user engagement. Similarly, in an investigation of how non-profit organisations use Facebook and twitter for fundraising activities, Lassila (2010) observed that although donor support for non-profit organisations is largely based on self-presentation techniques, the organisations adopted posts that stimulated emotions of pity and hope among potential donors. In a related development, Park, Rogers and Stemmle (2013) examined how non-profit and for-profit health organisations use Facebook to manage their brands. Through quantitative content analysis of 1,760 Facebook wall comments of 35 health organisations, the findings revealed that health organisations strategically employ self-presentation and advertising techniques to manage their image as well as promote their brands. The study however noted that interactive social media features that could boost the organisations' self-presentational techniques were largely under-utilised. This finding accentuates arguments that visual elements like photos and videos are significant online self-presentation tools (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2017; Greer & Ferguson, 2017). The study also confirms arguments by Saxton and Waters (2014) that organisations are not exploiting the potential benefits of social media to project their identities.

In contrast to the study by Park, Rogers and Stemmle (2013), Anderson, Buckley and Tindall (2011) indicate that Black American fraternal organisations commonly known as Black Greek Letter Organisations (BLGOs) generally present themselves on social media through symbolisms and visual images to reflect strong cultural and historical linkage to Africa. The findings also point out that BLGOs maintain a philanthropic identity online. This finding confirms arguments from historical studies and other recent studies that have that shown that fraternal organisations display philanthropic tendencies (e.g. Hall, 2016; Swagel, 2014). Again, the studies by Russmann and Svensson (2016), Lassila (2010) and Park, Rogers and Stemmle (2013) indicate that fraternal organisations' use of social media are primarily for self-interested motives. These findings are in agreement with a quantitative study by Esrock and Leichty (1998) of Fortune 500 companies and other studies on self-presentation that have shown that organisations use social media platforms to reflect corporate objectives that inure to their benefit (e.g. Russmann and Svensson, 2016).

Conversely, Gilpin (2010) observed that online channels for self-presentation and image construction can largely reinforce core concepts of an organisation to promote an enhanced corporate image. On the other hand, Greer and Ferguson (2017) quantitatively examined 4,390 visuals uploaded on the Instagram pages of 343 television stations in the United States and found that audiences displayed more

affinity to general news and community content rather than organisational self-impressions. This finding is in consonance with the term, 'self-presentation by association', which suggests how self-presenters accentuate their worth or credibility by projecting their relationship with specific content or people (Zarghooni, 2007).

Taken together, the review above suggests that self-presentational behaviours are not limited to individuals. Organisations also employ social media and other online platforms to manage their impressions. In spite of this, extant studies have not particularly focused on online self-presentation of fraternal organisations (e.g. Nemenoff & Schenk, 2018; Taylor & McArdle, 2018). It is also evident that even though the theories of self-presentation were developed before the proliferation of social media, they are still relevant in studying online behaviours. Studies in organisational online self-presentation (e.g. Greer & Ferguson, 2017; Gilpin, 2010; Terrell & Kwok, 2011) relied on Goffman's (1959) self-presentational theory, confirming the relevance of the theory to this study. Gilpin (2010) for instance observes that the self-presentation theory of Goffman (1959) is a significant lens through which one can understand how an organisation frames itself in distinct contexts.

Based on the aforementioned and the gaps highlighted in the literature, this study draws on Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation to examine how the United Grand Lodge of England presents Freemasonry on Facebook. The study pays attention to the Facebook posts to reveal ways in which the Freemasonry fraternity exists and projects itself in the social media space. The central questions addressed in this study are:

1. How does the United Grand Lodge of England portray Freemasonry on its Facebook page?
2. What are the motives behind Freemasonry's online self-presentation?

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Overview

This study examined the online self-presentational behaviours of Freemasonry, drawing data on Facebook. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, a qualitative research approach was employed to gain in-depth understanding of how self-presentation is carried out on the organisation's Facebook page and the motives that necessitate the generation of individual posts on the online platform (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research seeks to explore and interpret meanings embedded in texts, therefore, we relied on this approach to interrogate the meanings that are rooted in the texts (photos, written-texts, and videos) that the Freemasons use on their Facebook page in their quest to manage impressions about

their organisation. Studies in the extant literature have relied on qualitative approaches to examine online self-presentational behaviours of organisations in different sectors (e.g. Anderson *et. al.* 2011; Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013; Stratulat, 2019).

B. Sample

The United Grand Lodge of England's Facebook page was purposefully sampled in order to generate rich data for the study (Merriam, 2009). As the name implies, purposive sampling involves intentionally or purposely selecting an item, data or participant to be studied (Merriam, 2009). The literature points out that, the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) is the first and oldest Grand Lodge and it is recognised by Masonic scholars and historians as the most prominent and influential lodge globally (Snoek & Bogdan, 2014). The UGLE also appears to have the most active and up-to-date Freemasons Facebook Page, with the largest following and the highest number of likes (Calderwood, 2013). As of the time of conducting this study, the Facebook page of the UGLE had 52, 315 number of likes. Purposive sampling is a widely used strategy in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases that help to understand phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 2009). Many communication researchers have adopted this sampling technique to hone in on very specific participants, cases and phenomena (e.g. Amo-Mensah and Tench, 2015; Stratulat 2019). Within the context of self-presentation, Anderson *et. al*. (2011) for instance adopted purposive sampling processes in their study of how three Black Greek Letter Organisations (BGLO) present themselves.

C. Procedure

The study relied on cyber-ethnography (online observation) to assess the online engagement and performativities of the Freemasons fraternal organisation looking at how the phenomenon of self-presentation is employed by the organisation in the cyber world, precisely Facebook. Cyber- ethnography, initially referred to as 'netnography', 'virtual ethnography' or 'digital ethnography', is basically an ethnographical study carried out on the internet (Hine, 2000). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018) ethnography provides researchers the opportunity to study groups in their natural setting over a long period of time. Studies have affirmed that due to technological advancements and subsequent development of social media and other computer-generated software, such groups have gradually moved into online communities where they become occupants of those spaces (Akturan, 2009; Tench & Amo-Mensah, 2018). This, then, means that, ethnographic studies or studying groups of people in their natural setting or habitat now include online environments where social interactions and cultural behaviours are dominant. Many researchers have adopted cyber-ethnography in the area of online self-presentation (e.g.

Djafarova &Trofimenko, 2018; Greer & Ferguson, 2017) confirming its suitability for this study.

The Facebook page of the UGLE was located and carefully examined between February, 2019 and February, 2020 to analyse self-presentational performativities as they unfolded on the social media platform. Every individual post including articles, videos, photos, and status updates around the period of study was gathered, observed thoroughly and evaluated. The Facebook page was monitored regularly to check updates. In line with previous researches (e.g. Crane and Glozer, 2016; Samy *et. al.* 2015), the study utilised thematic analysis procedures drawn from the extant literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). This analytical technique involved closely examining the data, identifying common recurring patterns and relationships of the data collected on the Facebook page and interpreting the data in line with previous research and theories (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Online self-presentation

On the extent of online self-presentation, the findings suggest higher amounts of online impressions as also established by Bij de Vaate et. al. (2020). Findings indicate that with the emergence of online platforms, Freemasons have been capitalising on the availability of social media to reaffirm their prominence. As rightly noted by Flores (2014), the fraternity is steadily trying to remain conspicuous in the public arena in order not to risk becoming obsolete. Calderwood (2013) suggested that Freemasons utilised traditional media such as newspapers in the twentieth century to give the craft prominence. In present days, however, masonic lodges are keeping pace with technologically mediated communications in order to maintain visibility (Fullwood, 2018). The data showed that Fraternal organisations which were hitherto considered as secret societies have realised the significance of social media spaces and are among various organisations and users presenting themselves online.

On the other hand, with regard to ways in which the UGLE desires Freemasonry to be known on Facebook, the results from the online observation generally indicated that the UGLE relies significantly on Facebook status or posts, hence, self-presentational strategies were primarily informational. Overall, strategies for fostering engagement with online audiences such as discussion forums were not fully maximised, similar to the observations by Adams and Frost (2006) and Waters and Jamal (2011). In their study of how non-profit organisations in the United States use Twitter for self-presentation, Waters and Jamal (2011) for instance observed that informational strategies were used more often than two-way communication approaches.

The literature makes clear that engaging with stakeholders is crucial to the success of any organisation (e.g. Tench and Amo-Mensah, 2018). Many studies have shown that effective stakeholder engagement translates into meaningful organisational outcomes such as gaining visibility and creating positive perceptions (e.g. O'Riordan and Fairbrass, 2014; Trap, 2014). The findings however suggest that, although Freemasons have a social media presence, stakeholder management practices have not been fully developed online to generate the needed attention and perception towards the organisation. The Wisconsin Masonic Manual for instance states that, it is important for the Freemason fraternal organisation to stay active and up-to-date on social media to create awareness among relevant shareholders and for social interaction. The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer also found that, social media provides a readily available go-to source of information that ultimately creates some level of trust for organisations.

In relation to the nature of posts, the findings revealed that the UGLE suggestively created posts to depict Freemasonry in four main ways, as: 1) Altruistic; 2) High Social Network; 3) Structured Men's Club; and, 4) Philosophical. Of the 205 posts that were analysed within the 12-month period of cyber observation, as shown in table 1 below, 41% of the posts was on the fraternal organisation's portrayal of prosocial behaviours, particularly philanthropy. The second most populous posts by the UGLE in self-presenting the Freemason organisation on Facebook related to high social status (27%), followed by posts that portrayed Freemasonry as a male dominated well-structured fraternal organisation (22%), and then, posts that showed the organisation possesses philosophical views about life (10%).

Table 1: Frequency distribution of online self-presentation

Kind of Posts	Occurrence	Percentage
Altruistic	85	41
High Social Network	55	27
Structured Men's Club	45	22
Philosophical	20	10
Total	**205**	**100**

The findings revealed that Facebook serves as a platform that Freemasons expressly used to promote the organisation's value of altruism, consistent with the findings by Weinbren (2010) and Calderwood (2013) that fraternal organisations were significantly magnanimous and performed several charitable acts. As far back as 1984, Bridgen noted that fraternal organisations played significant roles in the economic wellbeing of their provinces and towns. Hall (2016) buttresses this assertion, indicating that Freemasonry is the oldest charitable organisation in the world. As observed from the table above, Facebook posts that depicted the organisation in this light placed first on the aggregate list. In portraying the altruistic attitude of Freemasonry on

Facebook, there were uploaded photos with captions to describe exact charitable activities the organisation engaged in at one point or another. The organisation further uses a hashtag, *'#Charity Tuesday'* on weekly basis to share posts of charitable works to attract the attention of online audiences.

It was also observed that, charitable posts predominantly involved donations and grants by lodges under the UGLE towards health related causes. Out of the 85 posts on charity, 51 posts constituted contributions to health-related activities such as donations to various hospitals and assistance to patients to pay medical bills, among others.

Figure 1: A post indicating a dementia-related programme

According to Swagel (2014), fraternal institutions are more committed to raising awareness on health-related issues and financially supporting such ventures. Other philanthropic efforts of the organisation spanned across supporting humanitarian events, to donations to veterans, the aged and bereaved families. The data for instance showed how instrumental the organisation was in raising support for

disaster victims of the Australian Fires and Cyclone Idai in Southern Africa in 2019.

As shown in Figure 2, the fraternal organisation also shared Facebook posts of parties, fundraising dinners, sports events and other organised functions where monies were solicited to support charitable acts.

Figure 2: A post showing a fundraising dinner

This online posture suggests how funds are raised to support the philanthropic works of the Freemasons. This finding relates with the practice of disclosure by non-profit organisations as stated by Russmann and Svensson (2016). Nemenoff and Schenk (2018) also emphasised that it is relevant for non-profit organisations to make their operations somewhat transparent so that audiences and donors would know how funds are generated and disbursed. Swagel (2014) similarly reinforces this position that throughout its history, the Freemasons have raised substantial funds within its own membership, relying on dues and funds generated internally for philanthropic purposes. In line with the theory of self-presentation, there is strategic self-presentation to align the organisation's outlook with expected societal values (Hall, 2016). The organisation consciously accentuates the trait of being altruistic and employs front stage self- presentation to register this (Goffman, 1959; Zarghooni, 2007).

The second most populous post by the UGLE in self-presenting the Freemason organisation on Facebook related to high social network, which comprised 27% of the individual posts analysed. According to the data, the organisation presents itself as a network whose membership is largely made up of prominent figures in the society. Mostly, posts were made in reference to Freemasons who have made significant contributions to society and are known worldwide. For instance, there were posts portraying prominent Actors, Musicians, past Presidents, people from Royal families and other renowned individuals across diverse professions and fields, with captions indicating they have been active Freemasons (See, for example, Figure 3 below).

Figure 2: A post showing the Duke of Kent in his Masonic Regalia.

References were also made to copies of petition letters written by some notable figures to join the organisation. This finding resonates with assertions by several authors that Freemasonry has somewhat given a picture of itself as a reserve for elites and aristocrats (Calderwood, 2013; Snoek & Bogdan, 2014). In other words, the organisation associates itself more with the crème de la crème of society. In light of techniques of self-presentation, this finding accentuates the tenets of self-presentation by association (Leary, 1996). In essence, the UGLE's effort of accentuating its connection with successful and influential individuals is a way of basking in the reflected glory of these people to present a high social status and credible posture.

Another way the UGLE presented Freemasonry as a high social status network was in allusion to posts on grandeur architecture and magnificent lodge rooms belonging to the organisation. It was found that the UGLE's ownership of grandeur architecture is part of their online self-presentation and this finding reflects Bagozzi *et. al.* (2020) position that some organisations wish to appear prominent to their constituents through material possessions such as architecture and buildings. For instance, the post below indicates the UGLE's reliance on structural designs in self-presenting the organisation as a high-status setup.

Figure 3: A post showing an edifice of the Freemasons.

There were other captions that accompany posts or photos such as '*Amazing image of the largest lodge room of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Cornwall*', '*Incredible photos of the ceiling of the grand temple*', consistent with arguments that architecture is a defining feature of masonic attraction and status (Curl, 2011). According to Bagozzi et. al. (2020), material possessions are major contributory factors and reflections of self-presentation.

The data on Facebook also portrayed Freemasonry as a highly structured male-dominated society as depicted in Figure 5 below. Photos and posts on the organisation's Facebook wall were generally made up of men (making reference to men or giving reverence to accomplished men). There was no post that paid homage to any woman who was a Freemason or presently active in Freemasonry. This portrayal is in tandem with arguments by masonic scholars that conventional and mainstream Freemasonry is not very receptive to women, although the literature suggests there are some female-only lodges (e.g. Snoek & Bogdan, 2014). According to Calderwood (2013), mainstream Freemasonry admits into its membership only men and since the UGLE is the prototype of conventional masonry, it is quite expected that the organisation will be presented as a male dominated fraternal order on Facebook. In addition, the organisation presents itself on Facebook as a very structured institution with a pecking order of men. There were posts indicating the installation of New Grandmasters and other lodge officers to oversee provincial grand lodges and district lodges. As also reflected in Figure 5 below, there were uploaded photos of men in uniformed masonic regalia after lodge meetings, and other Freemasonry events like parades and masonic processions.

Figure 4: A cross-section of Freemasons in their Official Regalia

Aside the portrayal of master masons and grandmasters who oversee lodges, the UGLE also throws light on other officials that deal with its corporate activities such as board of directors, CEOs, public relations managers, marketing, and social media managers. As well, the UGLE uses Facebook to highlight conferences, symposia and job vacancies such as business development officers and corporate sales consultants that are peculiar to structured corporate firms. For example, there was a post captioned *"fantastic #PCOPForum2020 communications event which saw representatives from all 48 provinces gather at #UGLE to share ideas, make suggestions and get to know each other"*.

On the UGLE Facebook page, the organisation also showed it possesses philosophical views about life, through posts and quotes on leadership, mentorship, human relations and love, among others. Some of these philosophical sayings were from Benjamin Franklin, Voltaire and other famous individuals and philosophers. The examples below indicate some of the philosophical quotes that characterised the UGLE's Facebook page.

Figure 6: Some philosophical quotes on the UGLE's Facebook page

From this finding, the observation by Stratulat (2019) that Freemasons have an entrenched sustainable position as a philosophical society holds true. Insights from the literature suggest that Freemasons portrayed the organisation as a knowledge-inspired one in the early days to make the organisation attractive to others (e.g. Jacob, 2007). From the theory of self-presentation, this finding denotes the tactic of attitude statement where self-presenters largely elicit subtle information to point out beliefs or principles (Zarghooni, 2007).

B. Motives for online Self-Presentation

In relation to the motives behind the UGLE's online self-presentation, the data suggest that the online behaviours and portrayals were largely goal-driven, in tandem with ideas in the extant literature (e.g. Attrill-Smith, 2018; Zarghooni, 2007). Attrill-Smith (2018), for instance, observed that an online self-presenter selects and presents aspects of the self that can strategically be programmed to meet a particular goal. From this perspective, the individual Facebook posts identified three key motivations for the organisation's online self-presentation: image and identity management, visibility and expansion of membership.

The analysis indicated that one of the motives behind the UGLE's online self-presentation is purposefully to project its image and identity. This finding resonates with assertions by scholars that the primary motivation for many organisations' social media use and online self-presentation is image and identity management (e.g. Gilpin, 2010; Greer & Ferguson, 2017). Fullwood (2018) also found that self-presentation is relatively an identity construction and image management function. With the context of self-presentational theory, Leary (1996) further postulates that managing the impression one makes on others through strategic self-presentation is a way of claiming desired images and identities.

Fombrun (1996) views organisational image as the general valuation held by an organisation's constituents through perceptual depictions of an organisation's actions and prospects. Scholars have noted that Freemasonry has had a very controversial image and status (e.g. Gunn, 2008). Thus, the organisation has widely been regarded as a secret society or an occult group involved in clandestine practices (Gunn, 2008; Tajudeen, Jaafar & Ainin, 2018). Perhaps, the organisation's active presence on social media is an effort to

manage and dispel such impressions considering the positive posts that characterised the Facebook page. Calderwood (2013), however, found that Freemasons widely employed traditional media to erase erroneous impressions about the organisation.

The evidence also suggests that, the organisation's online self-presentational behaviours are driven by the desire to maintain visibility. Findings reveal that the UGLE's usage of Facebook is inspired by the urge to keep up with contemporary forms of communication to make Freemasonry noticeable among social media users, an instance is this post:*"It's a BIG day for Buckinghamshire Freemasons as they descend on Freemasons' Hall to initiate over 100 candidates from their ever-growing waiting list of over 250 people"*. This finding implies that Freemasons consider Facebook as one of the effective publicity and marketing tools needed not only to be in the limelight, but also to guarantee some form of modernism to an otherwise ancient organisation. This finding reinforces arguments by Tajuuden, Jaafar and Ainin (2018) that social media platforms provide easy and affordable means of publicity and sustainability. Also, Nemenoff and Schenk (2018) suggest that fraternal organisations who incorporate a defined social media strategy in their communication plans are more likely to maintain relevance in the virtual world. Boyd and Elison (2008) similarly mentioned that social media sites are unique, not only because they foster relationships, but also because they allow users to articulate and make themselves visible. As the data suggest, the Facebook page affords persons and entities who align with the goals and interests of Freemasons to 'like' and interact with published posts such as texts or articles, videos, audios and photos.

The study also established a conscious attempt to significantly increase Freemasonry membership. *"Joining Freemasonry will put you in great company. Find out more about joining…", "If yesterday's…Initiation day has piqued your interest in joining Freemasonry, check out the link below to find out details of #Freemasons in your area…"* are examples of posts on the UGLE's Facebook page. The data revealed that online self-presentational activities are leveraged to stimulate the interest of individuals who might be enthused about becoming members of the fraternity. This finding corroborates Ganon's (2014) observation that social media presence is critical to influence and broaden masonic membership. Although it has been observed that membership of Freemasonry dropped significantly in the 1970s through to the early 2000s, the use of social media is helping to address the situation (Flores, 2014). Freemasons are therefore using social media, particularly Facebook to inspire awareness and interest about the organisation to attract audiences and subsequently engender in them the desire to be recruited. The terms 'nurture interest' and 'attract' were predominately used to represent innovative ways to attract and retain Freemasons.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined the online self-presentational behaviours of Freemasonry. Based on the theories of self-presentation and the concept of cyber-ethnography, the qualitative study particularly investigated how the fraternal organisation use Facebook for identity construction. The findings from the study suggest that, the UGLE understands the relevance of online self-presentation and makes efforts to present Freemasonry in admirable ways through significant postings of appealing contents. Examining the specific ways the UGLE presents Freemasonry on Facebook, the study found that altruism had the highest rating as far as self-presentation is concerned. Also, it was found that the organisation portrays itself on Facebook as a prominent philosophical institution with members among the crème-de-la-crème in society. Also, the motivations behind the UGLE's online self-presentation was inspired by the wish to manage reputation, create visibility and influence the growth of membership. The study provides clarity and a more nuanced picture of the practices of freemasons. It is one of the few works that concentrates on online self-presentation of fraternal organisation, an unexplored area that has emerged as an important research focus. The value of the study lies in the new insights that add to the prevailing literature on Freemasonry and self-presentation and the originality of the findings that have useful implications for scholars, researchers and practitioners. It must be noted that, the study only focused on the United Grand Lodge of England Facebook page, and therefore, findings should be considered within this context. Significantly, there are several avenues for further research. Additional research is required to examine how the profiles of masonic pages are set-up on Facebook and other social media platforms for self-presentational purposes. Also, future researchers could investigate audience responses or stakeholder engagements with respect to social media posts by fraternal organisations. In doing so, comments and likes on the posts could be analysed. There are also avenues to understand what kinds of self-presentational posts generate more traction from followers or audiences in terms of likes, reactive emoticons and comments. Additionally, future researchers can widen the scope of this study by incorporating other Freemasonry pages and other social media platforms of the organisation to interrogate the phenomenon of self-presentation.

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