Original Article

Impact of Social media Use on Public relations Practice in Select Private Universities in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

For public relations to be effective in the 21st century, higher learning institutions have resorted to using social media in order to be upfront in in-service delivery. Even with the accessibility and use of social media platforms, less is known about the impacts of social media use on PR practice in select Universities in Kenya to communicate. This paper thus explores the impact of social media on public relations practice at University K and St Paul University Universities in Kenya. This study was conducted in two private Universities in Kenya; since they have public relations departments as well, they have fully chattered private Universities in the Nairobi region, thus a representative of other higher learning institutions with successfully implemented communication departments. A mixed methods approach including a survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews involving 270 survey participants and 2 in-depth interviews with the public relations and communication practitioners, was adopted. Data was generated using questionnaires and analysed using SPSS version 23, whereas interviews were analysed thematically. The study findings revealed that social media had positively impacted service delivery at the public relations departments. It was revealed further that social media: helped to publicise their achievements besides activities; enhanced information quality, created a convenient platform for the public to engage with their organisation; widened accessibility to information as well as enhanced the organisation's lobbying power for their public support for their positions. Based on this, the study therefore, recommends that; Universities should utilise the abundant opportunities provided by social media so as to keep in touch with the public. Exploiting the social media applications fully will help organisations with a

broader reach for Public relations activities. And thus, effective communication and mutual understanding.

INTRODUCTION

The paper examines the impacts of social media use on public relations practice in select private universities in Kenya. The paper is divided into five main sections: the background of the study, the methodology, the results and discussion, and the conclusions and recommendations.

Background of the Study

Social media encompasses online skills, rehearses, or else communities used by people to generate ideas plus sharing views, comprehensions, and know-how viewpoints with all (Television Bureau of Advertising, Inc, 2009). The tools include Social Networking Sites (SNS) instance, Facebook plus other networks of small computer blogging like Twitter (Hopkins 2014).

Public relations practice is, thus, a fundamental intermediary among organisations. Originally, there was an assumption that organisations employing social media in their communications with the public may not have difficulties but rather be easy besides beneficial. Nevertheless, evidence shows that organisations have partaken thus far in comprehending users' experiences and sense concerning social media (Heller-Baird and Parasnis, 2011). Internet growth in the 21st century; remains the utmost noteworthy expansion in lieu of media. Public relations practitioners are accorded a sole chance to gather data and check public views on issues, in addition to charming their public in direct discourse concerning varied issues on the internet (McAllister & Taylor, 2007). For the organisation to succeed, there is a dire need to consider the opinions of key public, for instance: investors; consumers; stakeholders; employees, and other community associates in the organisation's locality.

Professionals and scholars in communication studies have emphasised that it is vital developing and implement public relations strategies (Wells et al., 2005). Thus, the enhancement and comprehension of virtual communiqué through social media tools in PR are nevertheless unavoidable in the modern world. Social media offers communication a path from the public to the organisation and vice versa, thus translating to two-way communication. Grunig and Hunt (1984) emphasised the importance as well as the value of two-way communication in emergent reciprocal public-organisation comprehension, mutually outwardly as well as inwardly.

In the last two decades, there have been augmented demands by the public for more inclusivity, accountability as well as transparency in the organisation's Public relations practices. This is

partly because a number of organisations are faced with a scenario where the majority of their workforce is enlightened on their rights, commonly a right to data, rules, and programs. Similarly, the notion that the public is upset by the ineffectiveness of communication from the Public relations Officers and constant dependence on traditional media yet social media is in place. Therefore, in view of this, many organisations have employed social media in their communication, but how these sites have been influential to public relations has not been adequately and empirically investigated in Kenya (Gorman and McLean, 2009).

Universities globally are experiencing unparalleled transformation and defying numerous challenges brought about by the infinite and intricate processes of globalisation and liberalisation (Mok, 2003). The rapid expansion of higher learning institutions has been key to a number of contests. Besides the continued existence of universities in modest education, the environment will exclusively hinge on how those institutions will position themselves through Public relations, Social media use, Strategic Planning of marketing activities; plus, management of the public for sustainability in the present-day uproar of globalisation and struggle. And on the same note, social media are increasingly taking dominance over traditional media. Unfortunately, this issue clearly points to the absence of understanding about how to essentially use social media well (kent & Saffer, 2014).

As the emerging media and the management of social media last, equally a Public relations obligation, fresh roles inside Public relations are looked for (Neill and Lee, 2016). The roles include social listening; social media technician; policing; virtual media relationships; strategy maker; employee recruiter, and inner social media executive (Neill & Lee, 2016). Therefore, for easy understanding of these roles, researchers and practitioners similarly must be in a position to sightsee exactly the way organisations utilise novel media in communication and the impacts thereafter.

According to Wright and Hinson (2017), since 2009 research has been conducted on the application of digital media by Public relations practitioners. Though their sample comprised African practitioners, 90% of the respondents were centred in North America. As a result, it is imperious to advance unfathomable comprehension of exactly how practitioners from Africa, and particularly Kenya, consumes social media in their day-to-day practices and their effects on public relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The available literature concerning Social media impacts, on the other hand, has primarily been written from the western perspective with limited journal articles documenting African public relations and precise areas of the world. It is indeed evident that Africa needs to define its current position in relation to global public relations literature. This paper thus endeavours to fill the gap in the existing literature and look at trends specific to the Kenyan scenario.

Public relations and social media are not relatively new phenomena in Kenya. Progress in the advancement of effective communication in organisations has been laid in place in recent times. Social media can be defined as "web-based applications where the creation of profiles and connection of people takes place" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The use of social media is widespread amongst public relations practitioners besides encompasses critical tools for public relations. Public relations practitioners are able to build more new relationships across a wider landscape and in a sustainable fashion never before possible (Waddel, 2010). The rise of social media has led to the growth of Public relations practice (van der Merwe, Pitt, and Abratt, 2005). Despite the fact a lot of studies have been carried out in the field (Hill & White, 2000; Levenshus, 2010), the rapidly shifting nature of technology renders a number of them inadequate. Presently, social media is considered a fundamental part of Public relations campaigns. The findings of Oneya (2010) research revealed that social media civilises an organisation. The researcher asserts that social media gives an organisation a face since interaction is the driving force for the organisation and its public. A study conducted by Hill and White (2000) demonstrates the speedy uprising brought about by social media in public relations. The outcome of the study revealed that by the year 2000, internet use as a Public relations technique was not given much attention by public relations practitioners.

Concerning the Social media context, the explored literature consists of the Social media evolution, several online tools and their applications, and the impact of the public relations profession besides matters of access and infrastructure (Falk, 1994; Giovannetti et al., 2003). The literature on public relations is studied so as to have a clear understanding of the practice, applicable theories, the role of public relations practitioners, the numerous functions involved, the possible issues or challenges faced by practitioners, and the impact of social media on the PR practice. (Cutlip et al., 2000; Phillips, 2001; Holtz; Kiambi, 2010; Lattimore et al., 2004; Breakenridge, 2008; Broom, 2009). In addition, the literature regarding the public relations practice in New Zealand, along with the impact of social media in other industries such as radio and banking is also explored. Not much is known about the role that new media plays in the public relations industry here (Podder, 2005; Tymson & Lazar, 2006; Choi; McEwan; Sterne, 2008; Mersham, Theunissen & Peart, 2009).

Wright and Henson (2008 and 2013) did a longitudinal study on emergent media use in public relations. The study outcomes showed that social media offers exceptional prospects for both the public and PR professionals. The findings further showed that the emerging new media and social media efficiently assist as a regulator for impacting collective and managerial transparency, promoting a clear and moral culture besides traditional news media. (Wright & Hinson, 2013:14).

In addition, Wilson and Supa (2013) carried out research on the impacts of Twitter on public relations journalists. The study adopted a questionnaire of 340 journalists and 291 public relations practitioners. The study outcomes showed that the importance of Twitter as a platform for sharing information was evidently acknowledged as significant for both public relations and journalism.

Moreover, Wright and Hinson (2009) conducted research on the application of social media by about 574 Public relations experts in the US. The leading questions included the general importance of social media and their level of significance to PR in an organisation. The study revealed that search engine marketing was the most important, followed by blogs, social networking sites, video sharing, and message boards with social bookmarking and photo sharing being the slightest well thought-out. Another different research carried out in the United States showed that the PR practitioners were certain that conventional media and social media work together as well as the impact each other. A substantial percentage of PR experts are persuaded that blogs and social network sites affect the content in the mainstream media as pointed out by Wright and Hinson (2008d, 2013).

A few studies conducted in Kenya on the impacts of Public relations comprise the models, the training needs, the challenges, and relevance, amongst others. Adoyo (2014) did a case study on the impacts of social media on the Kenya Revenue Authority. The study findings revealed that Facebook and Twitter were used. The study further revealed a negative impact (laziness) on public relations officers. Furthermore, Kiambi (2010) did an investigation of PR models and cultural influences in Kenya. The outcomes of the study revealed a positive inclination. Omondi (2012) analysed the performance of PR practice in government ministries in Kenya. The results concluded that public relations practice has a greater effect on the government based on 46% of the study respondents.

In conclusion, past studies indicate that the use of social media is on the rise. Considering that social media use by Public relations departments is growing tremendously with the technological revolution and globalisation. However, with minimal studies in Africa and Kenya specifically. There is no precise study done in higher learning institutions, specifically at private universities. This paper therefore, attempted to explore the impacts of social media on public relations in the largely neglected Kenyan private Universities.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted mixed methods research, which offers quite a lot of benefits to researchers (Bryman, 2012). The mixed methods research design is well-defined by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) as one that uses both quantitative and qualitative techniques for data collection and analysis in either a sequential or a parallel method. Mixed research was aimed at helping the researcher with concrete

confirmation for clarifying a problem using more than one technique to address a problem, besides trying to resolve problems using numbers and words (Creswell, 2003). The rationality of triangulation supposes that both qualitative, as well as quantitative approaches be merged towards offering a general understanding of the study phenomenon, consequently, the origin of mixed approaches (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Generally, mixed research studies provide distinct prospects for augmenting both explanatory power and data quality (Greene et al., 1989; Tashakkori/Teddlie, 2003; Bryman, 2006). In merging varied social phenomenon viewpoints, the mixed research approaches support measurement expansion besides enhancement of execution, authentication as well as results validation, besides offering an additional multifaceted social phenomena justification (Greene et al., 1989).

Research Design

This is the way data is collected, measured as well as evaluated in order to accomplish definite study goals (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). This paper employed a survey design, which according to Wilson (2014) requires a sum contributor within a short period of time and is designed to include interrogations on what, how, and why. Survey designs are also known as Cross-sectional research design, which involves the collection of data from several cases (Wilson 2014, p. 112). This helps the researcher to complete the research within a very short period of time. The key advantage of Survey design is in terms of time and cost efficiency

(Gravetter and Forzano (2012). A survey questionnaire was distributed to 10% stratified students from various years of study so as to obtain quantifiable data, besides interviews with 2 senior management in charge of Public relations and communication (from the two Universities) sampled purposively to warrant focused data.

Population and Sampling

The study targeted a total population of 2700 students enrolled in University K and St Paul University and 2 two senior management in the custody of communication and Public relations at University K and St Paul University, respectively. Sampling is the practice of choosing and studying a subset of a population in order to obtain information regarding a phenomenon (Somekh and Lewin, 2005). In determining the study sample, both probability and non-probability were adopted (particularly purposive and stratified sampling). The researcher adopted non-probability sampling to get the qualitative sample of the senior management in charge of communication and PR in the two institutions. And this suited this study because the intention of the study was not just to make generalisations but rather on in-depth information (Creswell, 2003). On the other hand, probability sampling was adopted to get the quantitative sample of the 10% of the students from each year of study and faculties in both Universities, on the fact that they were senders and recipients of information in social media in the University and thus could provide different viewpoints on social media use in public relation.

Table 1: Population

Institution	Populations		
	Target Population	Actual Population (10%)	Total
St. Paul	1200	120	120
University K	1500	150	150
Total	2700	270	270

Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaires and interviews were used for data collection. Both closed and open-ended questions were applicable to the study. Primary qualitative data from senior management in charge of PR and

communication at both institutions were purposively collected through face-to-face in-depth interviews and recorded. In-depth Interviews were conducted so as to source qualitative data besides targeting the respondents' real opinions on the research problem (Kelleher & Brinkmann, 2009).

The questionnaires, on the other hand, were adopted as tools for collecting data (Wilson, 2014) which included stratified students who were senders and recipients of information in social media in the University and hence could offer diverse views on the use of social media in public relation (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). The suitability of the questionnaire largely revolved around its convenience, reliability, and validity in the provision of targeted answers. The instrument was pilot-tested using a reduced interrelated sample preceding its administration on the intended respondents.

Data Analysis

Data presentation was performed using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences Statistical (SPSS) Version 23 and presented on tables and bar graphs, whereas qualitative data analysis involved details from empirical literature that was thematically analysed in line with the research objective.

Ethical Considerations

In terms of ethics, we sought permission from the significant organisational authorities to gain access to the related participants besides geographical sites. We likewise developed an informed consent form designed for participants to sign before undertaking the research Creswell (2009), acknowledging the fact that their rights would be protected during data collection, guaranteeing confidentiality besides ensuring the anonymity of our participants and keeping their names secret. This was geared towards keeping the information for the intended purpose. Ethical clearance was also sought from the ethical clearance board as well as the National Commission of Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI).

Reliability

This is the amount to which an original study will yield consistent findings with the current study findings once repetitive (Jugenheimer et al., 2014; Monette et al., 2014).

To increase the questionnaire's reliability and validity, an internal reliability test was executed on wholly questionnaire objects. In addition, the split-half method was applied where questionnaires were divided founded proceeding every single fifth questionnaire. For instance, the first group constituted the fifth questionnaire, the second group constituted the tenth questionnaire, the third group constituted the fifteenth questionnaire, and so forth. This involved dividing questions randomly on one topic between the two groups then and there comparing the reactions (Jugenheimer et al., 2014).

Validity

Validity is the degree to which the function designed for an instrument equates the application it performs (Onwumere, 2005). To determine the validity of the instruments in this study, the questionnaires were pretested by 6 student respondents from the two institutions, and their feedback was included in improving the questionnaire. The central survey thus followed.

The pre-test was valuable to the study in the succeeding ways;

- The accuracy of the analysis method was largely determined by the analysis of administered questionnaires

- Integration of critical questions, suggestions as well comments from the respondents

- It helped in reducing indiscriminate errors and increasing the reliability of data collected

- Deficiencies in the questionnaire were discovered.

Further, in ensuring a unified representation of each strata the researcher adopted a stratified sampling technique thus levitating the validity of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study objective that guided this paper was to examine the impacts of Social media use on public relations practice in St. Paul's and University K (CBD) in Nairobi County. We chose the two institutions since: they are among the fully chattered private Universities in the Nairobi region; thus, they are representative of other higher learning institutions that have successfully implemented communication departments; secondly, the researcher is familiar with (St. Paul's and University

K) and therefore negotiating access would not bring
any contest in the course of data generation.

Table 2: Response rate for the two select Universities

Institution	Actual responses	Non-responses	Total
St. Paul	119 (44.1%)	1 (0.4%	120 (44.4%)
University K	150 (55.6%)	0 (0.0%)	150 (55.6%)
Total	269 (99.6%)	1 (0.4%)	270 (100.0%)

For the purpose of this paper, we administered 270
questionnaires to the survey participants from two
Universities, University K (150) and St. Paul
University (120). The table above shows the
distribution of respondents.

Table 3: Demographic data for questionnaire respondents in both Universities

Variable	Values	St. Paul	University K	Total
Gender	Male	47.90%	68.00%	59.10%
	Female	52.10%	32.00%	40.90%
Age	Under 20	27.70%	36.00%	32.30%
	21-30	45.40%	49.30%	47.60%
	31-40	18.50%	12.00%	14.90%
	41-50	5.90%	2.00%	3.70%
	Above 50	2.50%	0.70%	1.50%
Nationality	Kenya	94.10%	3.00%	97.40%
	Ethiopia	4.20%		1.90%
	Congo	1.70%		0.70%

From *Table 3* above, the majority of the respondents
were male (59.1%) aged between 21 to 30 years
(47.6%), and of Kenyan nationality (97.4%).

**Impact of Social media use on Public relations
Practice**

The research question for this paper was examining
how WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter use changed
the way St. Paul's and University K engage with
their public. This question encompassed two
prompts (the likelihood that reaction from the public
can change the organisation's position) and
(contacting the organisation has been made faster).
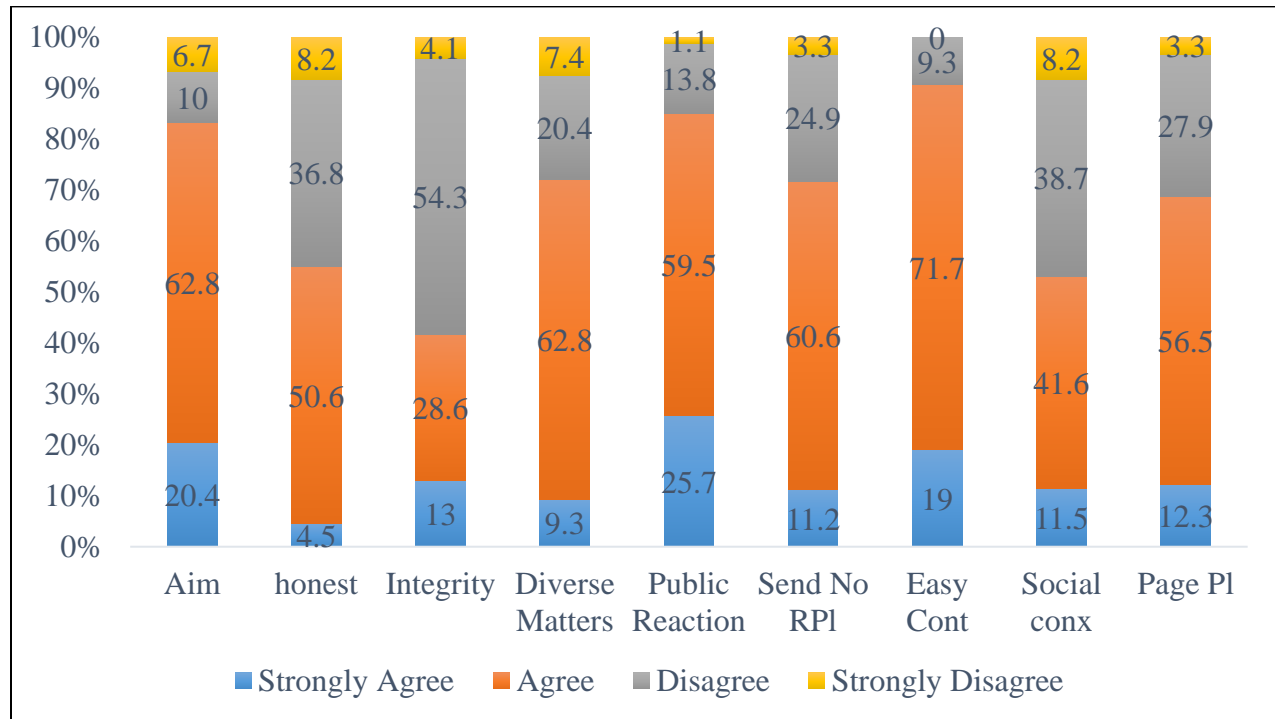
Figure 1: Agreement on Facebook Use

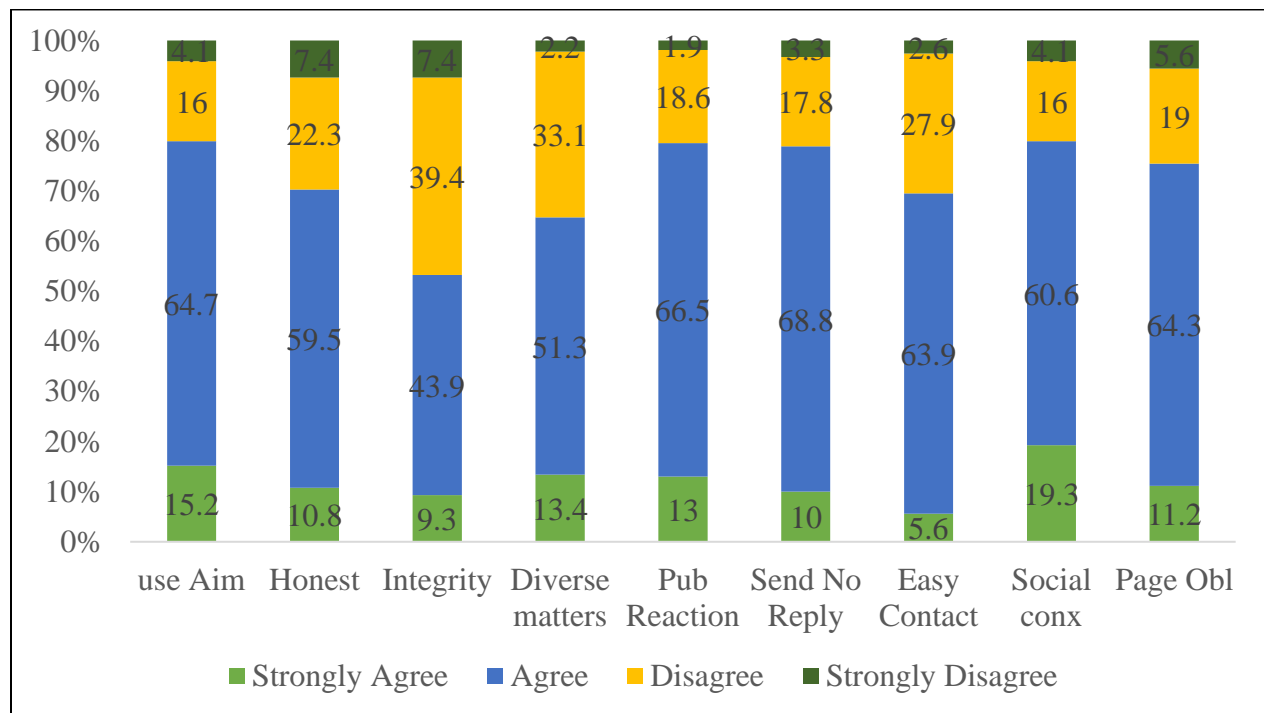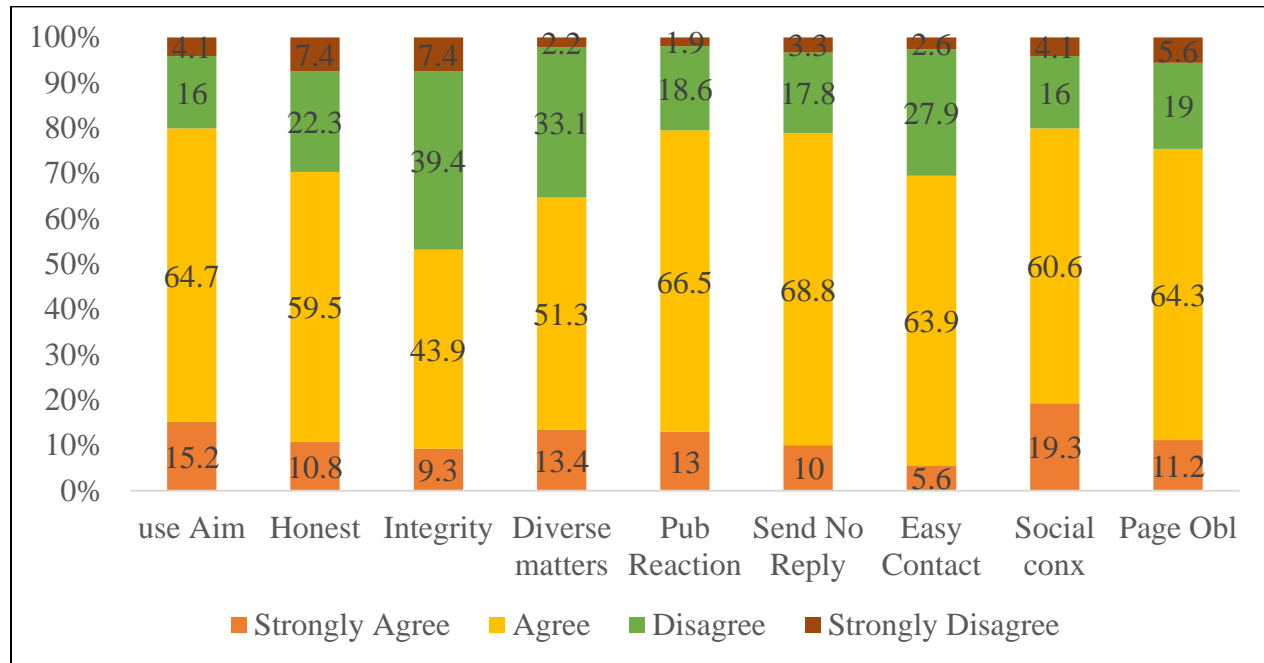**Figure 2: Agreement on WhatsApp Use.**

Figure 3: Agreement on Twitter Use.

The two survey questions (the *likelihood that reaction from the public can change an organisation's position*) and (*contacting the organisation has been made faster*) were aimed at gauging the survey participants' degree of response concerning the impact of social media on public relations in the two institutions. A Likert scale was employed, where 1 was denoted 'strongly agree' besides 4 represented 'strongly disagree'. A percentage rating was obtained for each of the itemised statements on the two questions across the two institutions on (WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook) use. So, a higher rating as per the question inferred a robust agreement by the participant and vice versa.

On the first item (the *likelihood that a reaction from the public can change an organisation's position*), it was established that the majority of the respondents (85.2%) Facebook users felt that the reaction from the public could change the organisation's position. Whereas Twitter and WhatsApp appealed to (79.5%) of participants, an indication that the respondents were inclined to use WhatsApp and Twitter consistently in trying to change the organisation's earlier taken position.

On the second item (*contacting the organisation has been made faster).* The findings revealed that the

majority (90.7%) of respondents were of the view that through Facebook contacting the organisation has been made faster, with (69.5%) of Twitter respondents and (68.5%) of WhatsApp respondents

Overall, from the two survey questions, the findings revealed that the majority of the survey participants in the two Universities agreed that WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook had impacted the practice of public relations. However, it is remarkable that the analysed survey data in reference to this objective only focused on the public's perspective as the participants. Hitherto, the senior managers in charge of communication and PR's viewpoint, as portrayed in the data from in-depth interviews, presented the utmost concrete insights with regard to the issue.

Notably, the in-depth interview analysis revealed that WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook had affected the way in which both University K and St. Paul Universities' PR practitioners engage with their public in communication. Additionally, it is remarkable that the findings attained in this repute are not from the PR practitioners but rather from the public hence an indication of the effect social media had on the students of the two institutions. We therefore, established that the responses from the in-depth interview participants were consistent with those collected from the survey participants. This

was based on the fact that social media made communication easier, gave room to public information, and permitted a chance to evaluate the organisation; it is fast and favourable, particularly during the pandemic, besides being convenient compared to traditional media. For instance, according to St Paul's interviewee, social media has *"bridged the gap between the organisation (sender) and the public (receiver) respectively"*.

Although the interview participants acknowledged the aforesaid positive impacts of social media, they similarly lamented that social media had abridged the considerably needed personal boundary where they strongly faulted social media as the origin of weakening in personal communication, hence resulting in misunderstandings

In reaction to this objective and in reference to *Figures (4.4, 4.5, and 4.6* above), there emerged two prompts 9 (the likelihood that reaction from the public can change the organisation's position) and 11 (contacting the organisation has been made faster). On the first prompt 9 (the likelihood that reaction from the public can change an organisation's position), the researcher established that the majority of the respondents (85.2%) were Facebook users, while Twitter and WhatsApp appealed to (79.5%) respondents, a suggestion that the respondents inclined to use WhatsApp besides twitter consistently in trying to change the organisation's earlier on taken position.

On question 11 (contacting the organisation has been made faster), the researcher found out that the majority (90.7%) of respondents revealed that through Facebook contacting the organisation has been made faster, with (69.5%) of Twitter respondents and (68.5%) of WhatsApp respondents.

The easiness and speed of contact as well as the capacity of social media to allow the respondent's public to critique their institutions signifies an alteration in the control balance among the institutions besides their public. Primarily, the practice of Public relations was limited to one-way asymmetrical communication as well as two-way asymmetrical sometimes the public being the receivers. Social media provides changed the conversation and the power dynamics seem to change in the approval of the public. Hence, enabling the organisation to engage the public in a

manner that is alike to the ordinary. The findings tally with Kelleher (2009), which showed that social media platforms offer new Public relations potentials via their reliable communication style besides informal social expression. Remarkably, this does not infer the fact that the public messages get equivalent consideration as they offer the organisation. The suggestion is that the variation in an equilibrium of authority in relations, as apprehended in the two-way symmetrical model (Grunig and Grunig 1992), does not inevitably imply that the organisations besides its public have an alike effect on the communication processes.

Consequently, it cannot be insinuated that the public's power to disapprove as well as reach their institutions more simply through social media disregards the sender's role besides the recipient in the communication process (Theaker, 2001). These outcomes, therefore, confirm the observation by L'Etang (2008) that communication remains asymmetrical. Though, it is remarkable that the outcome of this study failed to show that St Paul University and University K practised a two-way symmetrical model of communication. While this may solidify the two-way model uncompromising as L'Etang (2008) claims, there is a lack of proof evidence to back the view that the two-way model is completely difficult to apply in the practice of Public relations. Notably, this study offers proof showing that some of the two-way symmetrical model traits of communication are extant in the Kenyan Public relations practice.

The researcher noted that it is remarkable that the analysed qualitative data in reference to this question only focused on the public's perspective as the respondents. Hitherto, the senior managers in charge of communication and PR's viewpoint, as portrayed in the analysis of data and outcomes of qualitative data in the subsequent section (qualitative analysis), presented the utmost concrete insights with regard to the issue. The qualitative data also helped the researcher in comparing the views of the public besides those of the PR practitioners at both University K and St. Paul University. Notably, the researcher's understanding of this outcome is that WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook use affected the way in which both University K and St. Paul Universities' PR practitioners engage with their public in

communication. It is remarkable that the findings attained in this repute are not from the PR practitioners but rather from the public hence an indication of the effect social media had on the students (public) of the two institutions.

In establishing the outcome of this objective, the researcher was interested in correlating with other demographics so as to understand if, indeed, they contributed to change or not. On the demographic representation of the interviewees, their experience in years, gender, and the roles they play in their relevant organisations. From the analysis, the researcher established that experienced Public relations practitioners hold high Public relations positions at both University K and St Paul University. For instance, St Paul University interviewee had worked in the Public relations field for 12 years respectively. At the same time, University K had 7 years of Public relations experience. This revealed that the organisations still have a public relation practitioner that joined Public relations in the year 2010 as well as 2014, holding an influential position charged with the responsibility of making decisions concerning the organisation's Public relations practice. Even though this may appear to be an ageist dispute, the views of these experienced interviewee respondents on social media use plus incorporation by Public relations showed that age might impact the opinions towards incorporation.

Without a doubt, among interviewees from the two institutions, the respondents from University K were the only PR professional that did not use WhatsApp as an official communication media to reach the public; this was on the fact that it had not been worked out by the organisation as official means of digital communication. However, University K still indicated that WhatsApp was still used by different subsets to communicate. For instance, class representatives, alumni groups, and other different subgroups used it for personal purposes. When queried further, the interviewee from University K indicated that they had a dedicated department for handling social media communication more so on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, with plans underway to officially embrace WhatsApp as a backup to the existing social media.

When queried further on whether social media changed the way they communicated with their public, indeed both interviewees acknowledged that What Sapp, Twitter, and Facebook changed the Way University K and St. Paul University PR practitioners communicate with their public. This was based on the fact that social media made communication easier, gave room to public information, and permitted a chance to evaluate the organisation; it is fast and favourable, particularly during the pandemic, besides being convenient compared to traditional media.

For instance, St Paul interviewee described social media as follows:

> *"Basically social media use has bridged the gap between the organisation (sender) and the public (receiver) respectively".*

Although the survey respondents approved of the aforesaid progressive impacts of social media, they were similarly of the contrary that social media had abridged the considerable desired personal boundary where they strongly faulted social media as the origin of weakening in personal communication, hence resulting in misunderstandings. The outcomes of this study support Fitch's (2009a) findings, which recognised that without new media awareness and particularly the lack of understanding regarding social media with its prominence on interactions, engagement besides involvement between experienced practitioners has consequences for Public relations. The outcomes of this research spread the outcomes of Fitch (2009a) by validating the kind of consequences on Public relations owing to scarce social media comprehension by Public relations practitioners. These impacts comprise the undesirable public perceptions of the public to the organisation

CONCLUSION

Generally, this paper has examined how WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter use has changed the way St. Paul's and University K engage with their public; we looked at this question from the perspective of effects or impacts. Social media has brought to the practice of public relations. The study revealed that WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook changed the way

PR practitioners in the two Universities engage with the public. Particularly by making the relationship between the public and the organisation at ease hence giving the public access to critical information besides allowing them to evaluate the organisation. From the study findings, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook changed the manner in which University K and St. Paul University Public relations practitioners engaged with their public. This was so to make communication easier, give room to public information, and permit a chance to evaluate the organisation. Basically, social media use has bridged the gap between the organisation (sender) and the public (receiver) and has reduced the receiver-sender gap between the public and the organisations, respectively. Based on the researcher's Reflection of all findings from both qualitative and qualitative data

Recommendations

In relation to this, we recommend that education practitioners' specifically in higher learning education, ought to sightsee further efficient and innovative means of incorporating the use of social media in elevating the quality of learning at higher learning institutions of e-learning and thus tap the potential of these sites in lieu of improving communication besides embracing two-way communication.

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