OPTIMIZING SOCIAL MEDIA IN CORPORATE COMMUNICATION TRENDS TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

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DECLARATION

I Catherine Njoki Kamau do hereby declare that this research project is entirely my own work and where there is work or contributions of other individuals, it has been dully acknowledged. To the best of my knowledge, this research work has not been carried out before or previously presented to any education institution in the world for similar purposes or forum

Signature…………………………………Date…………………………………….

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Supervisors' Approval

I do hereby certify that this research project has been presented for examination with my approval as the University of Nairobi Supervisor.

Signature……………………………………. Date……………………………………

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my family who have supported and sacrificed a lot during my studies.

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I wish to thank the Almighty God for giving me the gift of life to write this thesis. I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisors Dr. Samuel Kamau for his professional guidance and motivation that enabled me compile this thesis. I wish to also extend my gratitude to my classmates whose presence offered me psychological motivation and the need to learn more. Finally, I thank my family for supporting me throughout my studies at the various levels and their unconditional love to me is my greatest strength.

ABSTRACT

The general objective of this study was to examine the elements that guide successful social media strategies for business organisation s. Specifically, the study sought to establish how corporates are integrating social media into their corporate communications strategy, the critical elements of an effective social media strategy in business organisation s and social media tactics that organisation s are using in corporate communication this was primarily a qualitative study. The study was mainly conducted through in depth interviews with 20 social media managers, digital strategists and corporate communication professionals coupled with an analysis of 4 social media pages and activities of four corporates. The study used purposive sampling. These organisation s were selected based on OLX social media awards winners of 2016. The interviewees were selected form organisation s that had been nominated and some who won these awards. The data collected was analysed based on specific thematic areas relevant to the study and was organized around the objectives of the study. The study engaged social media managers and digital strategists and ethical considerations were considered when collecting data. Respondents were assured of confidentiality before any interviews were conducted and consent was sought from all the respondents of the various questionnaires issued. The findings indicate that organisation s have to be responsive to emerging and evolving social media trends. Additionally, an effective strategy backed by the right personnel and budgetary support is necessary for organisation s to tap into the potential benefits social media brings to organisation s. They should have communication goals to ensure they optimize social media communication. These goals should be Specific, Measurable, Realistic Attainable and Timely. The research also brought out that social media managers should ensure to build relationships with online opinion shapers and brands with huge following to improve on their visibility. Make social media a culture as opposed to a department. Once everyone in an organisation understands the power of social media and owns various social media initiatives, it becomes easier for social media managers to communicate to external customers.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter focuses on the background of the study, outlining the statement of the problem, its objectives, justification and scope and limitation of the study

1.2 Background of the study

Would an internal social media initiative bring benefits to a business? An important but mostly neglected factor is the feelings of workers towards the organisation. Most organisation s have begun to use social media tools for interaction purposes with their employees in the internal environment and or externally to serve their clientele. Several companies, including KCB and Safaricom Kenya for instance, have excelled through the use of social media in their internal environment to arrive at their goals which include cost reduction, innovation stimulation and higher levels of revenue. Despite this, a number of companies have neither used social media tools in their internal environment nor realized the importance of these tools to them. Locally, the Social media buzz is at its peak especially with the ongoing shift from old school to new school Pragmatic advertisement.

The objectives of social media internally, have to concentrate first on the growth of emotional capital which is an organisation 's good will and mode of operation for it to prosper. The emotional capital of a company are assets based on emotions that have been created by the organisation together with its stakeholders over a period of time. Goodwill present to people defines emotional capital which is a dimension of social capital that is specific (Eskimi 2016).

A virtual community and network that enables people to interact through creating and sharing ideas and information is what is referred to as social media.(Mostert, 2012). Popular social media platforms are Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Viber and Instagram. There has been tremendous growth of social media usage in organisation s, since most of the clientele is now on social media. According to Africa Internet Statistics and Kenya Internet and Telecommunication reports (2016), there were approximately 31 million internet users in Kenya in 2016 against a population of 45 million people, which translated to 61% penetration of internet usage. This means that more than half of the country's population is on social media. This has made it easy for many organisation s to market themselves online at a cheaper cost as compared to using broad cast media which is more expensive and does not reach a wide audience anyway. Social media is not limited to specific time frames or specific age groups and channels making it more convenient.

Social media has become an important customer engagement tool, resulting to organisation s recruiting social media officers, to manage their online clientele. There has also been an emergence of various awards to organisation s that are doing well on social media. An example is the OLX SOMA awards that are held annually. In 2016, the awards had various categories such as the social corporation category, where under financial services award, KCB won.

However, Social media platforms have also proven to be a nightmare for some organisation s as negative publicity has been fueled on these platforms, affecting the organisation s negatively. In Kenya in 2016, Chase Bank was put under receivership because of panic spread on social media, about the bank closing. The Central Bank of Kenya revealed that the bank was doing well, until malicious messages about the Bank started circulating on social media platforms, leading to mass withdrawals by the banks customers, forcing the central Bank to put Chase Bank under receivership.

1.3 Research problem

The adoption and integration of social media in modern organisation s has brought many benefits to these organisation s such as but not limited to modern day digital branding, crisis management, responsive customer relations, digital marketing and campaigns, among others. However, social media has also posed many challenges for business organisation s. Some organisation s have been thrust headlong into crisis through social media, case in point, Chase Bank that went into receivership after panic withdrawals occasioned by social media chatter. Additionally, organisation s are unable to control the quality and accuracy of information disseminated through social media (W. Glynn Mangold a, 2009).

While Social media is a relatively recent innovation, not many organisation s have understood how best to use social media to achieve their communication goals. Most organisation s are yet to master the best strategies to use to derive maximum benefits from social media use, they are unsure how to measure and demonstrate the value of social media, and consequently they are not tapping into the potential of social media as a tool that can revolutionize their corporate communications.

While there has been significant scholarly interest in social media for corporate communications, Social media communication is a very dynamic field and the Social Media platforms keep evolving. Previous studies have largely focused on the perceived benefits of social media and most of them are based in the western world. There have been relatively very few studies that have brought out the elements that inform a good social media strategy, especially in the Kenyan context. Many organisation s have not been able to adapt to these evolving needs of Social Media Communication.

Social media communication initially passed for a pass time; a hobby rather than any business development tool. Just recently there were employer employee wars with regards to eating away company time on say, Facebook. But currently companies are moving fast to install the Digital Marketing departments. However, it's not well defined as to what an appropriate Social media communication strategy is, and how to strategically use it for communication purposes to gain the maximum advantages. The researcher thus acknowledges that that other several researchers have identified social media as a communication tool that is effective. According to (W. Glynn Mangold a, 2009), social media is crucial in consumer communication affecting things such as attitudes before and after purchase and customer's level of awareness. (Edosomwan, 2011) Notes that companies must allow their employees to leverage on their network if they have a well-built social profile. However, they have not established critical elements for an effective social media communication strategy in business organisation s. This study therefore sought to determine the critical elements for an effective social media communication strategy in business organisation s with a view to addressing the gaps.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to examine the elements that guide successful social media strategies for business organisation s.

Specifically, the study sought to:

i)   To investigate how corporates are integrating social media into their corporate
     communications strategy.

ii) To examine the critical elements for an effective social media strategy in business
     organisation s.

iii) To explore the   different social media tactics used by corporate s in corporate communication.

1.5 Research Questions

i)   How are corporates integrating social media into their corporate communications strategy?

ii) What are the critical elements for an effective social media strategy in business organisation?

iii) What are the most effective social media tactics in corporate communication?

1.6 Justification of the Study

Most organisation s are yet to establish the critical elements that contribute to successful social media communication. This study will be useful in bringing out these elements upon which parties of vested interest can use the findings to enhance implementation and adoption of the elements in the communication strategies for their organisation s. The study will also be used as reference for development of future research.

1.7 Scope and Limitation

The study focused on evaluating the success factors for an effective social media communication strategy in business organisation s. Geographically the study was confined to Nairobi County as this represents the largest number of social media users, and most organisation s that are active on social media in Kenya have their headquarters in Nairobi. The study was subject to some limitations including but not limited to confidentiality of information and the fact that interviews are generally costly in respect to time and resources. Some respondents were reluctant to give the strategies used by their organisation s due to confidentiality policies. These limitations however did not affect the outcome of the study as mitigation measures shall be sought.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Social media- This is a variety of internet-based and mobile services which enable people to exchange information and ideas online, adds to user centric content or joint online community

Corporate communication- This is an important aspect of the corporate work industry and is a management function or a department in a workplace.

Communication Strategy- This is choosing the most important objectives of communication, and in relation to attitude, recognizing a particular brand and its strategy.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the literature on success factors for an effective social media communication strategy in business organisation s. It describes the various theories and diagrammatically shows the conceptual framework.

2.1 Introduction

The mode of communication used by individuals has changed due to technologies for example televisions and radios. The other thing that has also contributed to change in communication amongst individuals is the internet. It has also caused significant changes in consumer behavior.

Traditional means of communication and face-to-face communication are different from computer-mediated communication in terms of the latter's uses and capabilities. Modern means of communication for example VICOPs in which mass mediated and interpersonal communication haven't been clearly separated, have come up because of social online media Apart from seeking to be informed, an individual in that space can hang out with his or her peers and can also socialize with other people. This online digital space has a number of advantages over the offline public.

It has the ability of letting individuals access any information that had been posted in the past, any person at any moment can simply search for any information and obtain it, it can be replicated, its contents remixes with other platforms' contents and (Boyd and Ellison, 2007) having an audience that is not visible. Before the introduction of mass media technology, studies on communication focused much on interpersonal communication. Laughey, (2007) posits that the coining of the term mass media was in 1920 and the same year had the introduction of newspapers and radio. The effects of media and propaganda were emphasized in studies during early 20th century.

The scholars that undertook the examination of the consequences of propaganda and media included Lazars Feld, Lewin and Lasswell. An important analysis of technology and communication was carried out in the 1950s and in to the 1960s by scholars like Innis and McLuhan. Media theory has eight strands that can be distinguished, (Laughey, 2007). One of the strand theories that has formed a major basis of the current study is the strand theory of interactionist and structuration which comes from the sociological tradition of symbolic interactionism. The current study has borrowed from interactionist media theory because it takes into consideration the relationships between technology, texts, interpretative audience and producers. (Laughey, 2007, p. 78)

The society is assumed to be a system of interpersonal interactions and communications and this has formed the basis of Bloomer's (1969) *theory of symbolic interactionism*. A person's reality is created from the shared meanings of his or her interaction with other people and things. An individual can possess identity through social interactions that are symbolic. The latest communication conditions have come into existence due to CMC and a deep description of them has been made in theories that are computer mediated for example the SIDE theory by Reicher (1984), the social information processing theory by Walther (1992), the social presence theory by Short et al. (1976) and the media richness theory by Daft and Lengel (1984).

Goffman, (1959); Lea and Spears, (1992) suggest that how people view each other is influenced by interaction that is face-to-face since contextual cues like facial expressions, tone and mode of dressing are taken into consideration. This is not the case for CMC as most of these context cues do not exist.

The *social presence theory* by Short et al. (1976) suggests that socially, impersonal communication exists where there is minimal presence between individuals. They further posit that a mediated form of communication is very distant since it does not constitute the use of contextual cues.

Individuals are creating profiles online which gets to be shown to the entire online audience thus facilitating generation of identities. Goffman (1959) suggests that in the digital platform, peoples' impressions and performance are managed by the digital identities and in his theory of self-presentation, he explains how people exhibit their expressions towards others. These expressions aim at creating a good and admirable impression. (Laugey, 2007).

Goffman (1959) uses drama metaphorically to describe the social life and points out that each and every person on the multiple social platforms has a number of duties to perform. An individual exhibits a version of himself that is different for every audience. Boyd and Ellison, (2007) note that identity is greatly developed when one performs for the public as one is able to know how the reaction of others.

A company's persona created to enable a company to fulfill its objectives is referred to as corporate identity. Thus, production of identity for the formation of a good impression is important to a company. Christensen & Askegaard, (2001) propose that image and identity are basically viewed to be the opposite ends in communication. This is an agreement arrived at despite the numerous and diverse ways of describing corporate image or corporate identity. Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, (2006) propose that corporate communications are either unplanned or planned and they join these opposite ends and. The research assumes that in VICOPs the interaction of unplanned and planned communication is in a manner that cannot be controlled and is because an information uploaded by a company is received and analyzed by all the other VICOPs members and company members.

Christensen & Askegaard (2001) note that images and identity seem objective and their importance and existence mostly depend on the audience's preference and the ability to interpret and are socials tools that are volatile. It is assumed that in the virtual environment, capability to interpret, behavior and preference are peculiar and therefore studying corporate virtual image in VICOPs is very important. Another complex thing is that the boundary separating a company from its audience is turning out to be blurrier more so with the use of online platforms to communicate.

Organisation s' members also form part of the stakeholders' group (Christensen & Askegaard, 2001) and they may come together in social networks to fulfill the roles of the company members and those of stakeholders too.

2.2 Review of Empirical Literature

Communication amongst most individuals today is majorly being affected by social media. Social media is very important when it comes to influencing people especially when they are engaged directly through this platform (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008) – it serves many functions such as catching up with family and friends, reaching journal readers and networking with fellow workers.

Stelzner, (2009), came up with many questions regarding social media since it had been in place for less than a decade such as who can really consider himself or herself as an expert? Does it pay off to have a social media account that is active in terms of the time and resources employed? How can one go about the things being offered by social media that is in a digital environment that is rapidly changing? This could well spotlight the slow adoption.

Branding and marketing of products are critical roles of social media but it is also increasingly being used for reaching out to consumers for brands (Woolf, 2009). Companies are using social media in monitoring conversations regarding their goods and services, industry, competitors and to reach out to customers regarding what they have to give the market. (Owyang, 2007).

Communication in organisation s has significantly transformed through the use of social media that has features that make it cheaper as compared to the traditional tools such as electronic mail. Blogging and tweeting has led to the creation of communities for enterprises, quick exchange of information and promotion of goods and services (Owyang, 2007). Based on the research, success factors for an effective social media communication strategy in business organisation s, we can look at the different aspects as; digital revolution; social media and business organisation s; social media in corporate communications; problems and opportunities of social media usage in business organisation s; social media strategies for business organisation s.

Sometime back social media was not thought of as something that could help businesses perform better and was just seen as something that was passing by (Woolf, J. 2009) but with time the notion has proved to be wrong. The number of people using the internet is more than three billion and more than two billion of them own accounts that are active (STATISTICS, 2017). Social media is not an option for businesses anymore as it has really helped businesses in providing important information on consumers and how they can be reached and has served as a very beneficial marketing tool. It is difficult to navigate social media platforms for example Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. For an organisation , one has to first identify the impact social media will have on it (Weiss, T. 2007). Some of the benefits of this platform to an organisation include, it attracts more customers, marketing, builds relationships, and helps identify dissatisfaction in customers for improvements and real-time updates

Stelzner, M. 2009 argues that the social media platform can aid one in reading the minds of your customers. One has to let people express their views on this platform regarding the goods and services you're providing and take the comments positively at all times. One has to respond to the reactions of other people and identify what is liked and not liked by the customer and take the necessary action to improve. One can also consult with the customer regarding the business ideas he or she has to avoid making mistakes (Stelzner, M. 2009)

Communication in corporations has experienced revolution due to social media and this has quickly changed the distribution and measurement of public relations (Mallinson, B. 1996) corporate communication has moved from the old way of one-way output to a dialogue where all stakeholders have control over information. Public relations is being carried out in a different manner, has become very important in corporate communication process as it has brought a variety of options to individuals practicing public relations all thanks to social media. (Hunt, T., & Grunig, J. 1994)

 A company can pass information to its stakeholders in a manner that is direct and instant through social media thus moving from the old pure output to an enlarged dialogue of corporate communication between the customer and the company (Owyang, J. 2007, and May 16). Social media has online platforms used by individuals to create and share information with other people (Television Bureau of Advertising, Inc., 2009). A few of these are blogging sites, video and photo sharing site, social networking sites, gaming sites, social event systems and podcasting. Such up comings have become more popular during the last ten years and are increasingly used to conquer the rapidly changing corporate communication industry by individuals practicing public relations. (STATISTICS 2007).

Social media has made corporate communications to move from the traditional way where information was entirely controlled by the company to a dialogue where stakeholders and not only the company, have power over information. Through it, executives can be questioned by the stakeholders and they can also get beneficial information from the views of stakeholders in a very direct manner (Owyang, 2007). The social media platform other than enhancing corporate communication has also contributed a lot to public relations aspects such as changing negative mindsets and creating good relationships and maintaining them.

There has been the examination of how social media has transformed public relations from practices that were traditional in several studies. The studies sought to find answers on the importance of social media in corporate communication and more so the impact of marketing through social media in terms of its benefits and challenges. Michael Stelzner, a social media marketer undertook an online survey of 880 participants in March 2009.

The study aimed at identifying the people who use social media marketing, the reasons they use it, the time they use it and the manner they use it (Stelzner, 2009). Stelzner undertakes an examination of the most common questions individuals practicing public relations ask regarding social media, the tools of social media that are common and that are needed by practitioners to advance their knowledge in analyzing demographic content and the importance of marketing through social media all in his Social Media Marketing Industry Report.

Social media has been recently innovated and so is social media marketing. Many individuals who responded expressed queries regarding how the effectiveness of social media can be measured, how one gets started with marketing using social media and the tactics to can be used (Stelzner, 2009).

According to Stelzner, 88% of the surveyed practitioners used social media marketing but just 72% of them have used it for barely a few months. The time spent on social media marketing was also measured and 39% of the respondents spend ten hours or more weekly and 64% devote five hours or more each week.

The most important benefit of social media to a company is enabling it to be more exposed and this was put forward by 81% of the people who responded. The other important that came after this was the creation of new relationships for the business and higher levels of traffic. According to Stelzner's research, Facebook, LinkedIn, blogs and Twitter were identified to be mostly used for marketing and most of the respondents expressed interests in social bookmarking sites as sites they wanted to learn more on (Stelzner, 2009). His study also highlighted that a practitioner will increasingly spend more time on social media in a week if he or she has been using it for quite a while.

2.3 Social Media and corporate Communication

It is important for an organisation to determine if using social media is a necessity within the organisation before implementing in the strategy. Bingham and Conner (2010) points out that not all companies should have a social media strategy, especially if their targeted audience are not internet users. Such an attempt would be costly and futile (Bingham & Conner, 2010). It is therefore crucial for organisation s to find out whether a social media strategy would be used for brand promotion or internal and external communication purposes. As an online corporate communication tool, the social media is a crucial tool in the development of a powerful global discourse (Badea, 2014).

A similar opinion is held by Berger (2008) who states that the social media platform has given everybody an opportunity to take part in an online conversation, exchange ideas, knowledge and other media such as music and videos. By putting in place the right online communication tools, organisation s are able to create an authentic community where individual and team cooperation is natured among employees and other stakeholders can exchange skills and experience in real time. It is also important for an organisation to assess its preparedness to implement a social media strategy, and identify any potential barriers that may block its progress and efficiency. Furthermore, they should also decide whether to adopt and use proactive social media strategies within their working environment.

Bingham and Conner (2010) argue that a proactive social media strategy can and should only be used and be a success if it will eventually contribute towards fulfilling an organisation 's strategic goal. To be efficient, Badea (2014) states that a social media strategy should be aligned with the organisation 's communication and general strategic goals. In addition, Bingham and Conner (2010) states that efficiency as well as applicability and relevance of a social media strategy also depend on the team that drafts and implements it.

Bingham and Conner (2010) states that the implementation of a social media strategy can be done by an organisation 's marketing team with close cooperation with departmental heads. Alternatively, a professional corporate communication agency can be contracted and assisted by representatives from the organisation s, who will ensure that the social media strategy is aligned to the communication and general strategic goals (Bingham & Conner, 2010). In addition to supporting these two options, Gershon (2013) has outlined the key steps in creating a feasible online communication strategy. He alludes to setting short-term medium-term and long-term goals, making editorial plans, implementing the strategy, monitoring and having a mixed communication

channels approach. It is important for top level managers to monitor the implementation and results of their social media strategy using performance indicators, which are set during inception. The impact of a social media strategy can be seen by monitoring the organisation 's reputation, turnover, association and brands.

Bingham and Conner (2010) identify qualitative and quantitative indicators that should be considered by an organisation when designing and implementing a communication channel. The indicators include degree of community involvement, quantity of content published, relevance of general conversations, interaction and conversion rate, increased traffic to the website, positive or negative feedback, number of fans/ followers/ members as well as the number of user's responses through tweets, retweets, comments, shares, likes, referrals and mentions.

Bingham and Conner (2010) states that the cost of implementing a social media strategy is often underestimated. Even though the physical cost is always lower than conventional channels, the human resource required inflates the costs because highly qualified online corporate communication professionals and decision makers within the organisation or contracted public relation agency have to be involved. In addition, additional costs may be introduced depending on the organisation's communication objectives, needs and activities.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

A Theory consists of statements and principles created to illustrate a number of phenomena or facts more so those that have been repeatedly tested and can be utilized in making predictions regarding natural phenomena. A particular subject matter can be understood, explained and predicted better using theories.

A formal theory has syntactic features and only has meaning when assigned a semantic component like when applied to facts and relationships of the actual historical world as it unfolds (Zima, 2007).This study used Excellence theory And technology Acceptance Model.

2.4.1 Excellence Theory

This theory was brought into existence by David M. Dozier, James E. Grunig and Larissa A. Grunig between the period of 1970s and 1980s. The International Association of Business Communicators Research Foundation was the sponsor of Excellence Theory which was an integration of several theories. A test was carried out on the theory and an interview of senior and junior workers of three hundred and twenty-seven firms was conducted (Grunig, 2008). It included non-profit organisation s, government institutions, companies and cooperatives in the U.K, U.S.A and Canada. (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 2008) illustrated that to make a firm more effective, public relations that promote quality development and creations of long lasting relationships that are strategically constituted should be practiced.

This theory is a foundation theory of Public Relations that explains public relations roles in organisation s. It advocates for a symmetrical communication in as far as social media usage is concerned. In primary essence, the organisation by virtue of using social media should not just use it as an avenue to throw upon their users' instructions and orders but rather give information and get feedback from information consumers as well.

Excellence theory looks at the integration of the entire stakeholders in the communication schedule. According to the theory, Social media should be fully integrated in terms of tactics, content and overall strategy. The theory posits that public relations could enable the adaptation of organisation s to their external and internal environs (J. Grunig and L. Grunig, 2008).

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Functions of individuals practicing public relations in institutions were also examined. J. Grunig & L. Grunig (2008), argue that public relations helped institutions in making decisions strategically that allowed practitioners to strategically fulfill their function of managing behavior. J. Grunig and L. Grunig (2008) also illustrated that above a strategic management role, top public relations executive has to form part of the organisation 's dominating coalition and also have control over decisions. Public relations have to be headed by a manager that sees things in a strategic manner and not in an administrative manner. (J. Grunig and L. Grunig, 2008. The theory illustrates a number of attributes and practices that aid in building quality and relationships that are long lasting by using social media in organisation 's corporate communication.

2.4.2 Technology Acceptance Model

Davis (1989) came up with this model and it constitutes common models of research that have been used in the prediction of the usage of information technology through the targeted. Technology Acceptance Model has been made verifications to in order to analyze every single behavior in accepting technology in the various information systems.

This model has two things that are considered for success to be measured; importance perceived and ease of using the technology perceived. Davis (1989) gives perceived usefulness a definition, it is the enhancement of the job performance of an individual when he or she uses a certain technology and which has subjective probability. Perceived ease of use (EOU) refers to the degree to which the prospective user expects the target system to be free of effort. TAM as a model states that, ease of use and perceived usefulness are the crucial in determining the actual system use. External variables influence the perceived usefulness and ease. These external factors are political, social and cultural. Language, skills and facilitating conditions are social whereas legal factors are effects of technological advances in political situations.

TAM alludes that the attitude of using a specific technology focuses on the evaluation of the user and desirability of using a certain information system. Behavioral intention on the other hand in relation to TAM is the measurement of the probability of a person to use the application.

This model justifies the use of social media by individuals will be determined by the perceived usefulness or the perceived ease to use social media in accessing information or passing across an intended meaning. For results to be achieved the systems being used have to be friendly and assurance that through social media quicker responses are likely to prevail.

Sensitization in terms of changing the targets attitudes in to embracing social media as well as advantages of using systems is key according to this model.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework
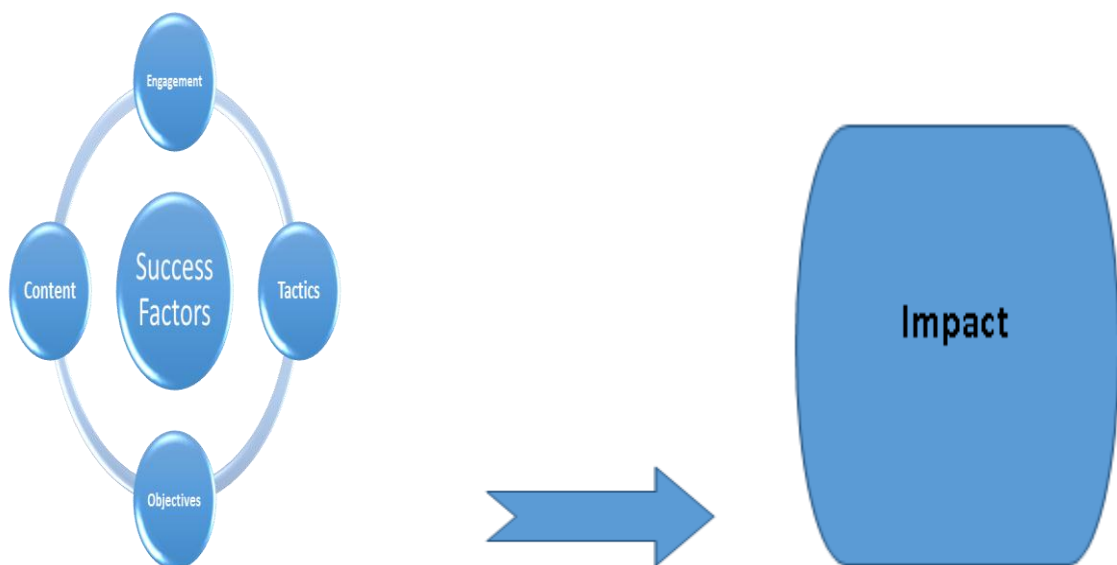
(Source: Author 2017)

2.5.1 Content Strategy

Steve job is quoted as saying content is king (Jobs, 1996). Social media users can employ a variation of content strategies which will include but not limited to: Sharing photos on Twitter to add retweets. From the time Twitter announced online pictures, most users have experimented with the idea and it turns out to prove workable in as far us tweeter retweets is concerned. Sharing Content More Than Once. The advantages of this include, the ability to reach individuals in different time zones and sharing information with other people as well as increased traffic. Reframe Content to Suit Your Audience; this helps with attention seeking and helping them connect since relevance is sought. Keep on Top of Your Brand and Find Great Content with Mention; it helps wade off competition alongside guaranteed Google ratings. Mention is an important equipment that enables you monitor things such as your competitors to help you be on top of your brand through the entire web. One first creates a new alert when he or she signs up to have an account.

The Excellence theory that this study evokes above advocates for symmetrical communication as far as using social media is concerned; organisation s should thus put forth social media content that allows the end users to interact with away from just bombarding them with marketing driven content. A quick glance at say KCB, Kenya Power and Airtel social media content and you conclude they have not really found this balance outright. Most of their social media communication is marketing based. However smart social media users have taken to these corporates pages to say raise product concerns which have been noticed.

2.5.2 Engagement

Customer engagement is defined in multiple ways: creation of loyalty through a psychological process; manifestation of behavior; degree of vigor, dedication, absorption and interaction that characterize a psychological situation (Zeng *et al* 2015,) There is no consensus about what constitutes engagement in social media or how to measure it.

Social media or social networking sites (SNS) are now part of our routine. People wake up and open their accounts to follow their news, friends and family life or to create content (Oviedo et al, 2014). According to the Marketing Science Institute, forty-six percent of people using social media discuss news stories and half of Facebook users share information obtained from external links (MIS 2016). The power is all in the hands of customers since online social networks have come up more as a place for users to distribute their contents or can be seen as a two-way communication platform (Friends or foes, 2016).

According to Khan (2015), social media may be described as follows: people can participate, it is owned by the users, can build relationships, it is open, very easy to use and is freely (Kumar *et al*, 2010). The author distinguishes between two types of social media: static and dynamic (reaction in real time) (Kumar *et al*, 2010) Social media are also defined as: "online platforms where users chat, share videos and pictures, companies make their fan pages and many more" (Shivani et al, 2016)).

These actions can also be perceived as measures of engagement in social media. Indeed, researchers and practitioners have referred engaging in social media as the action of liking, commenting and sharing content from the brand. These actions can be categorized as behavior manifestations.

Therefore, the action of buying a product is not the only way to measure engagement in social media platforms (Chauhan, & Pillai, 2013). Another kind of behavior seen with social media's arrival is the eWOM, a form of interaction. Social media made the transfer of information to others easier. eWOM is defined by some authors as any good or bad statements regarding a good or a service or company made by potential, current, or former customers, which through the internet are availed to a number of people and organisation s (Daugherty, T. & Hoffman,2014).

2.5.3 Tactics

Companies should concentrate more on how to be social and not so much on social media. Social media relevancy and or efficiency can be realized through tactics such as; Build an Ark; No one in your organisation should be the owner of social media strategy. Social greatly affects a company and therefore a cross-functional team to aid in conceiving and operating the rest of the strategy has to be created. Social media strategy like listening and comparing must always be considered (Edosomwan, 2011). The organisation 's activeness and success on social media will be guided by consumers and competitors and therefore the organisation has to identify and choose the success metrics. It has to determine how it will make a difference businesswise, what measures it will use for evaluating the effectiveness of social media strategy, how it will measure returns on investment, which audiences it will interact with on the platform, how will it balance the attention it gives to customers and that it gives to family and friends and lastly what are the demographics and psychographics of the customers (W. Glynn Mangold a, 2009)

On tactics, most organisation s are getting it almost right since everyone endeavors to maximize ROI (Return on Investment) Companies go ahead to hire social media managers and or Influencer marketers to help with optimizing their social media usage and success around the aspect of Content and stakeholders' engagement.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research methods to be employed in the study. It covers research design, research approach, study population, sampling and sampling techniques, research instruments, data collection as well data analysis and interpretation.

3.1 Research Design

Research design can be described as the plan, structure and strategy of investigation conceived to get answers to research questions and control of variance (Kerlinger, 1964). It is a process that provides answers to issues such as techniques to use to gather data, the kind of sampling strategies and tools used and how time and cost constrain was dealt with (Cooper & Schindler, 2003).

The study used qualitative design that primarily involved in-depth interviews with selected communication professionals, and an online ethnographic analysis of selected social media pages that helps understanding social interaction in contemporary digital communications contexts.

3.2 Data Collection Techniques and Tools

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic manner that enables the researcher to answer research questions, evaluate outcomes and draw reasonable conclusions. Mugenda & Mugenda (2003) describes primary data as first-hand information collected, compiled and published for some Purpose. In seeking to collect primary data, the study used in-depth interviews with selected communication PR professionals, social media experts and Social Media Supervisors. The study also involved analysis of selected social media pages for selected organisation s.

3.2.1 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviewing or unstructured interviewing, is a type of interview which researchers use to elicit information to obtain a holistic understanding of the interviewee's point of view or situation; it can also be used to explore interesting areas for further investigation. As in-depth interviewing often involves qualitative data, it is also called qualitative interviewing. This study used in-depth interviews which involved asking participants open-ended questions, and probing wherever necessary to obtain data deemed useful by the researcher.

3.2.2 Review and analyses of social media pages

Online ethnography is a specific set of research practices related to data collection, analysis, research ethics, and representation, rooted in participant observation. In the analysis, a significant amount of the data originates in and manifests through the digital traces of naturally occurring public conversations recorded by contemporary communications networks. It is a tool used to analyze online fan discussions about different discipline especially in areas that include but not limited to marketing research and consumer research.

Review and analysis of data from social media pages including Facebook, twitter or Instagram was done after the interviews had been conducted and the researcher got sufficient data. Data analysis was by first; exploring the responses by the participant, identifying the number of the responses, classifying the responses depending on their similarities and putting them into respective categories. Data analysis involved examining the raw data; reducing them to themes and represented the data in narratives in the final research text.

3.2.3 Target population

Kothari (2005) defines a target population as a universal set of the study of all members of real or hypothetical set of people events or objects to which an investigator wishes to generalize the result. This study targeted communication professionals and social media managers and digital strategists.

3.2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedures

Sampling is the process of obtaining representative data from a population. This study employed Purposive sampling, to come up with a sample. The sample consisted of 20 PR and communication professionals, Social Media managers and digital communication experts. The study further identified four organisation s social media accounts were studied and analyzed. These organisation s were selected from a list of winners of OLX Social Media Awards in 2016.

3.3 Data analysis

Bailey refers to data analysis procedure as the process of packaging the collected information, putting it in order and structuring its main components in a way that the findings can be easily and effectively communicated. In qualitative data analysis, the researcher moves from the raw data collected as part of the research study and use it to provide explanations, understanding and interpretation of the phenomena, people and situations which were being studied. In addition, it gives procedures for analyzing data, techniques for interpreting the results of such procedures, ways of planning the gathering of data to make its analysis easier, more precise and more accurate. Since the research design is qualitative, the analysis entailed data from interviews and the analysis of social media pages. Data was categorized based on the thematic areas arising from the responses given in the interviews and the observations drawn from the analysis of social media pages.

3.4 Validity and reliability

Reliability is considered as the level of internal consistency or stability of a measuring instrument. Research requires dependable measurement. Measurements are reliable to the extent that they are repeatable and that any random influence which tends to make measurements different from occasion to occasion or circumstance to circumstance is a source of measurement error. Reliability is the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it measures. Errors of measurement that affect reliability are random errors and errors of measurement that affect validity are systematic or constant errors. On the other hand, validity refers to how well the test measures what it is purported to measure. In other words, it refers to the credibility or believability of the research. The researcher used more than one data collection method to answer the same research question and compared responses given.

3. 5 Ethical Considerations

The study engaged social media managers and digital strategists and ethical considerations were considered when collecting data. Respondents were assured of confidentiality before any interviews were conducted and consent was sought from all the respondents of the various questionnaires issued.

 In addition, the study followed systematic procedure required by the University of Nairobi where the researcher was cleared to proceed for field work after certified by the board of examiners and issued with the Certificate of Field work (see appendix III). Thereafter, the study was tested for anti-plagiarism and originality report (see appendix IV) was issued by the

University and after proposed corrections, certificate of corrections (see appendix V) was issued.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the findings from the in-depth interviews conducted with the Social media communication experts and the selected communication professionals. The analysis of selected social media pages will also be presented. The study sought to examine the critical elements for an effective social media strategy in business organisation s, and the various responses will be analyzed in a bid to answer this.

4.2 Respondents information

Respondents in this study were Communication professionals registered under PRSK, and Social media experts. 20 PR and communication professionals and Social Media Communication experts were selected to form the sample. The study further identified four organisation s whose social media accounts were studied and analyzed.

4.3 Findings

The following were findings of the study

4.3.1 Analysis of In-depth Interviews

4.3.1.1 Social media has evolved as an important tool to drive innovation in corporate communications

Social media platforms have become an innovative communication tool that is being used for marketing, brand awareness and relationship building with customers. Most organisation s have invested heavily in the digital platforms and migrated many of their conversations and

engagements to online platforms giving customers direct feedback channels with senior management persons in organisation s.

> *"Social media has broken down bureaucracy, customers can now get the attention of a CEO from the comfort of their homes, whereas earlier, one had to book an appointment to get their attention".* (Respondent 1).

Social media has enabled firms to converse with the external and internal public in a very real manner. It has also enabled stakeholders to closely watch companies with regard to communication ways that are not ethical. Therefore, both companies and stakeholders require social media for their performance and to enhance communication between them.

Social media has enabled brands to build new audiences and have a wider reach. By Communicating through it, organisation s get to drive traffic to their websites and also amplify their messages across multiple platforms.

> *"It is interesting to see how brands can use a trending topic go get likes and following, a good example is the #githeriman who was at some point the most sought-after celebrity by brands such as Britania and Churchill".* (Respondent 2).

The study found out that having an online presence allows organisation s to influence conversations in their favor and avoid negative trends. Social media therefore becomes an important platform in crisis management and communication. (J Park, 2012), argues that there should be a crisis manager who quickly admits and apologizes to the mistakes a company makes on social media.

4.3.1.2 While there are specific manifest benefits for integrating social media in corporate communications, there are equally many pitfalls

Integrating social media in the overall communication strategy is generally useful for most organisation s, however, it also potentially introduces new challenges which if not well managed, can neutralize all the good achieved.

Benefits

Most respondents agreed that social media is very beneficial in corporate communication as: Organisation s can reach a wide audience at a lower cost compared to other promotional channels such as print and broadcast media.

These audiences could be converted to customers or followers. Respondents also brought out the aspect of speed and efficiency. Social media responses are instant and feedback is instant, encouraging engagement. This agrees with Kotha, S., Rajgopal, S., & Rindova, V. (2001) who in their journal on Reputation building and performance: An empirical analysis of fifty most successful internet firms, pointed out that social media enhances consumer participation by allowing them to express what their views are, and is referred to as the manifestation of consumer behavior to the organisation that goes above the buying behavior.

Social media has complemented traditional communication channels, allowing room for all varieties of audiences to be integrated in organisation al communication. Organisation s should however strive to incorporate social media in traditional marketing platforms example by giving twitter and Facebook Identities in print and broadcast adverts.

> *"I was once a copyrighter at an agency and I noted that social media helped many companies communicate to clients with ease as opposed to the same old bland uptight communication" (Research data)*

4.3.2 Social media networks are a brand's voice and content

It was noted that social media enhances the organisation 's marketing of the product as well as the sales since new consumers can be quickly and easily found and also facilitates the formation of a customer-base.

Marketing on social media platforms improves brand loyalty. Consumers are more likely to be faithful to the brands that are in the social media platform. A company should therefore make use of social media tools to help in connecting with the customers. A social media plan that has been strategically set up could pull customers towards being loyal to a brand.

Respondents also noted that social media channels such as LinkedIn are being used as a recruitment channel by organisation s.

> *Most organisation s are now directing jobseekers to their LinkedIn pages and discouraging hard copy and email applications. This goes to show how everything is going the digital way in organisation s.* (Research data).

Organisation s are also using social media to launch new products and in crisis communication, to respond to negative propaganda touching on the organisation , instead of using the normal press releases. It is easier to tweet a response to negative publicity which will be widely shared as opposed to calling for a press conference to counter negative publicity.

One respondent notably highlighted how social media is being used for Corporate Social Responsibility activities such as raising funds. Organisation s such as Red Cross are now using social media platforms to mobilize funds for charitable causes such as *#MalariaresponseKe,* which supported the fight against Malaria in Baringo, Kenya in 2017.

Red cross is very good at Crisis communication on social media. They will raise funds for charitable causes, update their followers on their CSR projects. Their page is one of the best when it comes to communication on social media."
(Respondent 2)

4.3.3 Challenges

Respondents noted that social media could easily be used to spread fake and inaccurate information. Negative trends could easily damage an organisation s reputation. An example is the Kenyan case of Chase Bank where inaccurate information circulated on social media leading to panic withdrawals by the banks customers resulting to the regulator (Central Bank of Kenya) placing the Bank under receivership.

Delayed Reponses in times of crisis could do much harm to an organisation on social media than good.

> *Had chase bank responded to malicious messages that went around on social media about it going under receivership, maybe they could have saved the bank".* (*1ˢᵗ Respondent*)

> *"Zuku are very good at ignoring customer complaints and responding days late. How is that even helpful? I terminated their services long time ago because of this". (Research Data).*

A major pitfall of social media use in organisation al communication is cyberbullying and reputation risk. Social media users can hide their real identity and use the platform to tarnish brand images, as well as harass Social Media pages' administrators, who are tied down by organisation al social media policies. Social media users have come up with groups such as *mtandao manenos* which are sensitizing Kenyan users on effects of cyber bullying.

Some customers might not be engaged if it is not a complaint. The researcher noted that most organisation s do not respond to social media engagements unless they are complaints that require follow up. This affects social media effectiveness as communication is not consistent and customers lose confidence in social media communication.

The respondents noted also that Social media provides disgruntled employees, consumers or hackers the ideal unedited platform to speak out against a company or share personal details as well as sensitive information which need not be disclosed to the public.

4.3.4 Optimization requires deliberate efforts and a carefully crafted strategy

From the study, optimal use of social media channels by organisation s can be achieved by putting out content more frequently, and ensure it is the right content for the specific platform. Frequent supply of content will ensure consistency, and will attract a wider audience. More than half of the respondents agreed that creative content attracts more likes, retweets and a large following for an organisation s social media page.

Social media managers should build relationships with online influencers and brands who have large following, who will retweet and share their content, ensuring a wider reach at minimal costs. Locally brands strive to maintain relationships with bloggers such as Cyprian Nyakundi and encourage them to verify stories before publishing to maintain the brands online image. Brands are now contracting users with a large online following to promote their products and be their brand ambassadors. Such personalities include Jeymo Ule Msee who is contracted by KCB Bank, and Grace Msalame who is contracted by Uber, and comedian Njugush who is the Kenya Forest Service and Bountiful Safaris brands ambassador.

Organisation s can also use hashtags and images to increase engagement and have their content found. Trending hashtags will be retweeted and shared and this will increase visibility for an organisation s content. Organisation s can also use creative and trending memes to generate interest in their communication. Locally, brands use hashtags like *#gainwithxtiandela* to gain followers and ensure their tweets reach a wide audience.

For optimal use of Social media channels, Social media managers should establish the best time to post for the different platforms, to ensure the content gets to the targeted audience. For example, organisation s should establish when their followers are most active on twitter and post at that time as there will be a likelihood of retweets and sharing on Facebook. Social media managers should make use of measurement tools that help in determining the peak hours for specific social media channels.

Organisation s should also integrate Social Media with other marketing channels such as emails and advertisements on print and broadcast media, to encourage following and create awareness of the existence of these channels. This can be done by including user names for different social media platforms to encourage following and liking of social media pages

Business organisation s should also have visually attractive and well-designed social media pages, to encourage likes and following. Catchy profile pictures and homepages will arouse interest with social media users encouraging following and likes.

 Organisation s should continuously train their social media personnel to instill knowledge and skills as well as competence to handle online marketing more effectively. Most respondents agreed that organisation s should invest in social media in terms of human resource, training monitoring

tools to reap the maximum benefits such; reaching more customer and improving their quality of

services rendered.

> *"Most organisation s go wrong by giving interns to handle social media. This is a sensitive job and should be handled by experienced personnel. It is time management in various organisation s appreciated the value and sensitivity of social media" (Research Data).*

Social media managers should also be up to date with current trends, as trends keep changing hour

in hour out, and organisation s must keep up with these trends to remain relevant, an analysis of

KCB, Airtel pages during the election period showed that these organisation s used the *#githeriman*

hashtag which was trending, to communicate with their audience. Britania went ahead to get

people to like their page and reward any persons who liked, shared their content and gave any

leads on where #githeriman could be found, which gave them a lot of following.

4.3.5 Different social media platforms are used in different ways in corporate

communication some are more strategic than others.

4.3.5.1 Facebook

Majority of the respondents agreed that Facebook is most commonly used social media platform.

> *"I use Facebook since it's the most popular and widely used social platform I post my products on my Facebook profile page, this information is accessed by millions of Facebook subscribes, who after their likes on the product, the same information circulates to their mutual friends, this leads to circulation of the information widely and accessed by many individuals.to me its works so good". (Research Data).*

This agrees with data from Facebook audience insights that shows that out of the

2.047(https://www.statista.com) billion Facebook users globally, Kenya has a population of 6.2

million users as at 30th june2017 (http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm). Facebook is

used by many organisation s strategically due to its large population that makes up a big market

for companies. Also, the age bracket that use Facebook is diverse hence forming all the target

group for any product or services. Facebook is very strategic when an organisation wants to put out sponsored posts and marketing videos as it allows sharing. Organisation s can use tools such as Facebook analytics which measure when an organisation s page has a lot of traffic so that they can out posts at that time to ensure maximum reach.

4.3.5.2 Twitter

 Twitter also is a very crucial social platform where by an organisation creates twitter handle account and invite followers who are interested in the organisation product, so when advertising their product, they post an interesting hashtag where followers can access online to view the products on Display.

> *"I'm able to associate an image with my business when I use twitter to everyone who follows me. Therefore, it becomes easier for people to identify with my businesses (5th respondent)*

> Another respondent stated that *"If you want a certain message to reach a politician or a CEO, twitter will most probably be a strategic platform as opposed to using WhatsApp or Instagram.". (Fourth* respondent)

Twitter is especially common with the affluent youth, living in the urban areas, who depend on it for real time updates. Organisation s can invest in tools such as follower wonk and twitter analytics which provide an easy way to understand when audiences interact most with an organisation s content, hence understand the best time to tweet.

4.3.5.3 Instagram

Instagram is used to display product offered by the organisation in order to reach wide market and attract many customers, so that the organisation can increase their sales thus improving the annual profit. Instagram also used by many organisation s since it can   put out sponsored posts just like

Facebook. This happens for organisation s which are centered on marketing and customer engagement.

> "With Instagram Stories, my product is more visible because of the adoption rate of users". (Second respondent).

Organisation s whose main clientele are youthful females are more likely to use twitter for marketing and communication.

4.3.5.4 WhatsApp

WhatsApp application essentially are used by the organisation s for internal communication by creating groups, where group administrator manages the group by controlling, regulating, who should access the information. This is done by inviting group members to be part of the WhatsApp group. This groups are basically used to pass information about their products to other WhatsApp groups as well as interested individuals.

> "I use WhatsApp for internal communication within the organisation .in the group
>
> also I have added some important stakeholders who I know have hand in marketing
>
> our products" (research data).

4.3.5.5 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is used to interact with many professionals who share critical information regarding to product promotion, job postings, current treads, and new market policies.

Respondents appreciated the fact that the frequency of use and popularity of a social media channel depends on the goal an organisation intends to achieve in social media communication, and the target audience. Most organisation s that target the young generation are most likely to use LinkedIn and twitter for job postings.

4.3.6 Generic use of social media in corporate communication is quite common but has little value

Social media use could either be generic or strategic. Generic use is whereby the social media pages exist with little content and minimal engagements, while organisation s that strategically use social media have constant engagements, interesting and up to date content and some organisation s even put out sponsored posts to ensure the content has a wider reach.

Strategic use of social media involves having success metrics. These will enable social media managers measure the effectiveness of social media use in the organisation . Some of the metrics commonly used are the number of likes and shares a post receives, number of comments in a post and number of times a tweet is retweeted. Strategic use of social media also involves having a communication goal. Organisation s that have well defined communication goals will employ various tactics to ensure the goal is met. For example, if the goal is excellent service delivery, the social media pages will record constant engagement as the organisation responds to customer's queries.

An analysis of KPLC Facebook and twitter page showed that most interactions are responses to service queries and issuance of notices. An analysis of KCB Facebook and twitter pages showed that interactions combine both promotional messages and responses to issues relating to service as well as inform. KPLC might not have promotional messages as the organisation does not have competition as compared to KCB who are in a very competitive industry, therefore will put out messages with the goal of customer retention.

Organisation s that use social media strategically have budgets allocated for publishing and promoting content to ensure they reach a wide audience, as opposed to those that use social media generically. These do not promote their posts and their content might not reach a wide audience as compared to the sponsored posts.

Strategic use of social media involves content creation for the targeted audience. Organisation s that strategically use social media will post certain content at certain time frames which they consider peak hours. According to (Ellering, 2017), use of twitter analytics provides an easy way for an organisation to understand the best days to tweet according to an organisation s audience engagement with their content. They will also hire content creators to ensure that their content is at par with the competition.

Social media managers that use social media platforms strategically ensure that they are updated on competition content as opposed to generic use of social media which does not pay key attention to competition social media pages. This ensures that the organisation s social media strategy is up to date and competitive. Organisation s should identify employees who have the ability to listen and who care about the chatter online, and those who can create content that is emotionally appropriate for the community (Armano, 2009)

Strategic use of social media involves choosing the right channel to use for the right audience. An organisation that targets the young audience group will maximize on Instagram while an organisation that targets an age group of 35 years and above will maximize on twitter and Facebook. An organisation that generically uses social media might not have segmented their audience to such specifications.

4.3.6.1 Content is the heart of social media communication

All respondents interviewed agreed that content is key. Right content should be given to the right audience. This ensures that information given is relevant and useful to the audience. Content instill knowledge and skills as well as competence to the employees of the organisation therefore improving their quality of output. Creative and interesting content will have a wide reach, and will attract a wider audience. More than half of the respondents agreed that creative content attracts more likes, retweets and a large following for an organisation s social media page.

Content should always be up to date, and one that is clear, has a sense of humor and one that the audience can relate with. An analysis of KCB Facebook page brings out creativity in memes and responses culminating to a large following many likes per post.

> *"Content is everything. It is what makes or breaks communication on social media. Just go through several pages of organisation s with relevant content. You will be amazed at the engagement levels"* Research Data

4.3.6.2 How an organisation interacts an engages its audience is vital in social media communication

Organisation s are embracing the culture of promoting brand enthusiasts, whereby users are encouraging to mention the name of an organisation s brand that they commonly use and tag that organisation , and in turn they get rewards. This is a creative way of marketing products online and encouraging usage.

Organisation s should engage in a way that sparks intrigue and arouses specific reactions. Social media platforms have options for different kinds of reactions such as like, love, sad and share for Facebook and retweet and comments for twitter. When a social media manager expects a certain reaction, they can measure success of a post depending on the kind of reactions and comments gotten.

Social media users appreciate current and up to date content and organisation s are now appreciating this. Respondents noted that organisation s are taking advantage of trending hashtags to ensure their audience relate to current occurrences and encourage engagement. Recently organisation s used *#githeriman* trend to promote their brands and engage the online community with images and memes.

Social media managers should ensure to personalize messages for specific audiences. When social media users feel that a message is created for them, it increases the number of comments, likes and shares.

Most respondents noted that most organisation s do not engage their audiences if a post is not a complaint, which is not right as customers need to be constantly engaged. All posts should be responded to, whether they are negative or positive. Fast responses counter negative trends.

More than half of the respondents agreed that organisation should not put out too much content at a go. An analysis of Airtel Facebook page shows a maximum of two posts daily.

> *"You do not want to give your audience too much such that they do not get time to internalize and digest your content. One or two posts a day is enough. Just make it relevant and interesting" (Research Data).*

4.3.6.3 Analysis of social media pages

An analysis of social media pages of the selected organisation s brought out some common features that show strategic use of social media which include:

4.3.6.3 Interesting and engaging content.

An analysis of KCB twitter and Facebook pages show captivating captions and humorous posts. The responses from the Social media administrator are even more interesting. This has given the page a lot of following and the conversation rate is very high with the posts getting a lot of shares, retweets and likes within a short time of putting out the posts.

Organisation s are also embracing use of hashtags to ensure that their content is visible to more audiences and that it is shared widely.

KCB Group
October 9 at 7:00am · 🌐

Sasa vile tunasemanga KCB Goal Savings Account is a lock savings account, ukiwithdraw savings zako tunaweza sema umetoa lock? 🤔
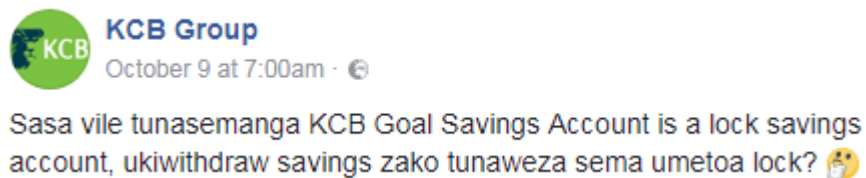
Figure 4.1: Humorous post from KCB Facebook account

Airtel Kenya · · ·
October 12 at 1:00pm · 🌐

The first time I wore Toughees was when I was in class 6! What's your #TBT? ^Caro
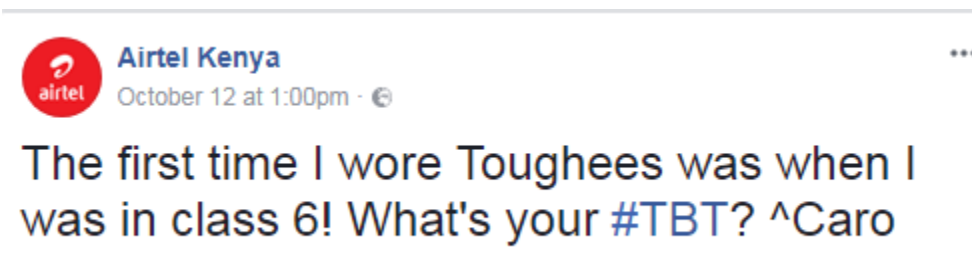
Figure 4.2: Jokey post from Airtel Kenya Facebook

Brian Thuo Toughees zilikuwa za 'mabarbie' na maslay queen, mahustler tulipelekwa mtumba na unaambiwa hiyo kiatu ukiharibu utaona! Ujue utamaliza nayo 8 na sa hizo uko class 5.
Like · Reply · 😂😆 7 · October 12 at 1:05pm

↳ View previous replies

Airtel Kenya ✔ Keep it locked. ^Caro
Like · Reply · October 12 at 8:47pm

↳ View more replies
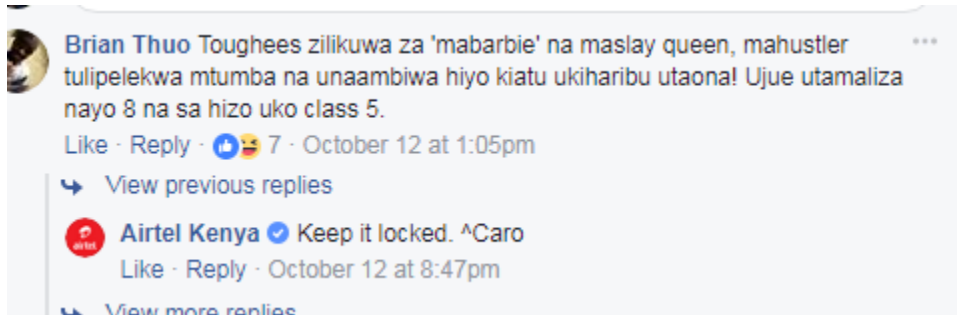
Figure 4.3: A Humorous Facebook reply from Airtel Facebook page

KCB Group
March 22 at 7:00am · 🌐

"Nisharepay loan imebaki tu soo mbili. Hio wanaweza niachia"
CRB:
http://bit.ly/2FTCumc

KCB Group
Finance Company

Send Message

Figure 4.4: A hilarious Facebook post from KCB page
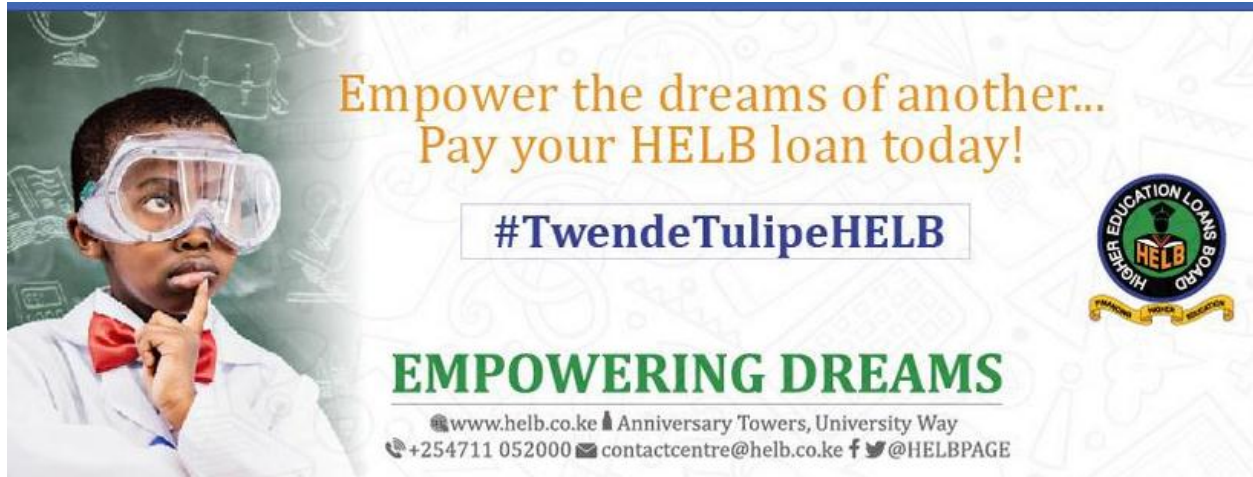
Figure 4.5: An interactive HELB Facebook post

From the analysis, it is also evident that audiences appreciate creative and humorous content, one

that they can relate with. Organisation s can seek to leverage this in growing their online following.

4.3.6.3 Regular updates

All the social media pages analyzed put out regular updates. However, it was noted that they do

not put more than three post in a day. This agrees research data where a respondent argued that

organisation s should not put out too much content at a go, so as to allow maximum consumption

of information from a particular post. Regular updating also enhances consistency and maintains

an organisation 's online presence. This agrees with respondent's feedback who stated that for

optimal use of social media, organisation s must ensure that they maintain their online presence,

regularly update their audiences and continuously engage their audiences.

Organisation s such as Kenya Power that use social media for service delivery constantly engage

their audiences online and give regular updates on their services and encourage customer feedback

on their social media pages, which in turn creates loyalty.

Figure 4.6: An interactive twitter post from Kenya power

Figure 4.7: An interactive facebook page from Helb

Figure 4.8: An interactive Facebook from Airtel Kenya

Airtel Kenya
October 13 at 11:00am · 🌐

Whether staying in this weekend or out and about, Airtel Money is here to ensure you pay your bills with ease and bila transaction charges!
#KuwaSmart
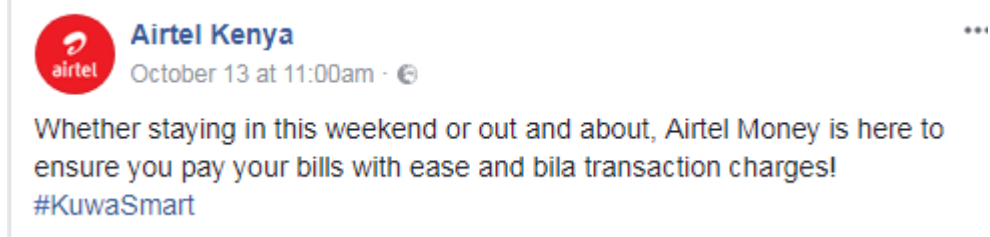
Figure 4.9: A motivational Facebook post from Airtel Kenya page

4.3.6.4 Use of Images and Videos

Almost all social media pages analyzed had videos that showed how a specific product is used, testimonials from Customers or endorsements from celebrities. For example, KCB has contracted *Jeymo ule msee* who does vlogs for the organisation , while Airtel puts out short advertisements in form of videos on their social media pages. Organisation s can track the number of views and shares on a certain video and determine its success. Use of captivating images was also a common trend on all the social media pages analyzed.

Figure 4.10: A hilarious Facebook page from KCB page

Figure 4.11: An interactive Facebook post from Airtel page
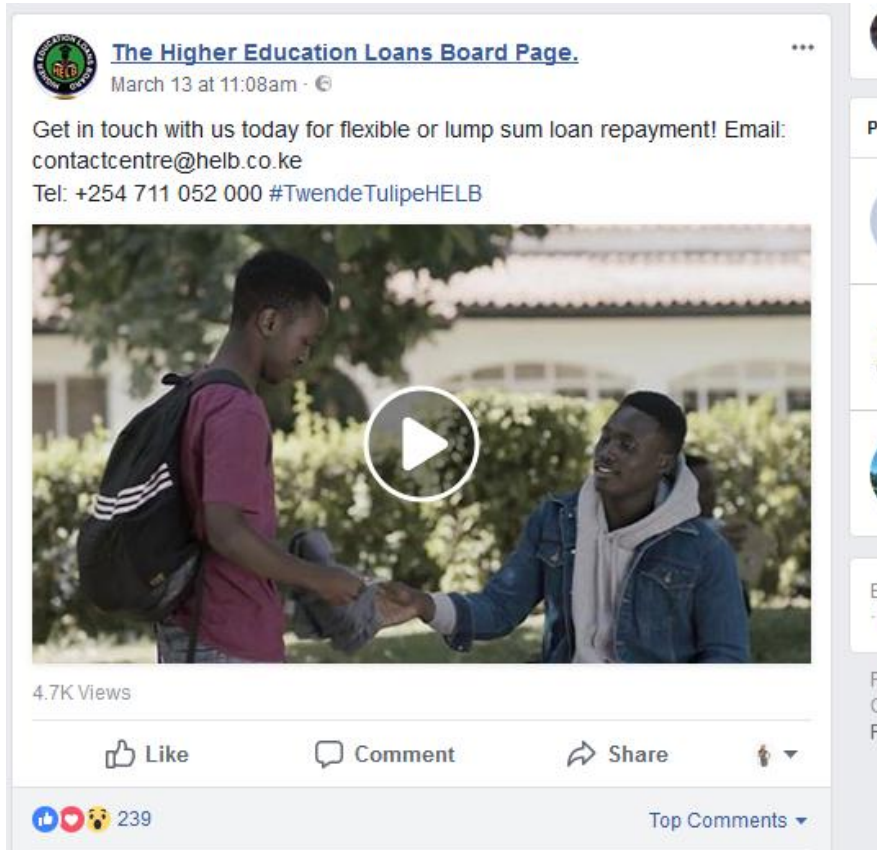
Figure 4:12: An interactive video from HELB Facebook page

Figure 4.13: An interactive video from HELB Facebook page

The post below from the HELB twitter page shows that organisation s have resulted to use of social media for direct engagement with their customers Organisation s have introduced live videos where online audiences can chat directly with top executives, example the CEO. This breaks the bureaucracy in communication as one can get in touch with a CEO of an organisation from the comfort of their home or office, which agrees with responses from the in-depth interviews where a respondent noted that social media has made it easy for customers to communicate with high level managers and get feedback at their convenience.

Figure 4.14: An interactive Facebook post from HELB page

4.3.6.6 Regular Feedback

Social media pages provide a platform for customers to give regular feedback, enhancing service delivery. In all social media pages analyzed, comments from the various posts had feedback from customers. This is a cost effective way of getting constructive feedback that organisation s can use to improve on their service delivery and product offering, to ensure they are at par with the competition.

Figure 4.15: An interactive Facebook post from Antrel Kenya showing feedback

Figure 4.16: An interactive twitter post from Kenya power

It is also evident from the above posts from the Kenya Power that some posts are meant to provide customers with more information about the organisation and their improvements in terms of customer service. This can enable their customers to learn on new methods used by respective companies to get products and services.

Also, from the above posts by Kenya Power, it is evident that the company uses social media to communicate on the inconveniences they are likely to cause to their customers. They give prior notice to their clients before they interrupt their services to make sure that the customers adopt an alternative or get prepared to face the challenge. Such content enables the audience to get information so as not to be caught unaware of the interruption. This also creates an avenue for the concerned customers to engage with the companies in case the notice expires and they fail to get the services back in time.

Figure 4.17: an interactive Facebook post from HELB page
The above post encourages customer engagement and customer feedback, which will be used to maintain loyalty and make online community feel appreciated.

4.3.6.7 Community building

Social media has evolved from just being a marketing and communication platform. Organisation s are now using the platform for community building, empowerment and charitable causes. Organisation s are now using social media to mobilize funds for charitable causes such as KCB Safari Rally and Safaricom Lewa Marathon whose proceeds are channeled towards environmental conservation.

Social media platforms have brought about an emergence of online communities, who are loyal to specific brands and religiously follow the brand activities online. Social media managers should ensure to reward such followers from time to time to create loyalty. Some of the online community are online influencers who could come in handy for the organisation in times of crisis.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECCOMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings of the study, recommendations and a conclusion to the study.

5.2 Summary of the findings

The study was set to assess how organisation s can optimize social media communication channels in corporate communications. It was guided by the following research questions:

i) How are corporates integrating social media in their corporate communication strategy?

ii) What are the critical elements for an effective social media strategy in business organisation s?

iii) What are the most effective social media tactics in corporate communication?

In a bid to answer the above research questions, the researcher used in depth interviews and analysis of social media pages for data collection. Five organisation s were selected for analysis using the social media metrics in appendix 2 which included KCB, Airtel, HELB and Kenya Power. 20 respondents were interviewed using the interview guide attached in appendix 1, who included communication professionals and social media experts.

The findings of the study were as follows:

5.2.1 Corporates integration of social media into communications strategy

The researcher found out that corporates are continuously linking their websites to social media sites, and some have even gone further and introduced live chats on their website, all in a bid to have a wider reach of their audiences.

The researcher found out that corporates are continuously using social media users with a huge online following to be their online brand ambassadors, in a bid to reach their target audience online.

Organisation s are now combining their marketing functions with customer service functions, which in most organisation s were two separate functions, which was causing disconnect and resulting to slow response rates and un uniform responses as each department responded to various queries based on their objective and functionality.

Organisation s are now creating policy guidelines that lay out the best practices in social media communication, the strategies to use and the dos and don'ts that vary from organisation to organisation , which were nonexistent.

Organisation s have started embracing the fact that social media has a great impact on the organisation s communication structure and profitability. We now have budgets allocated for social media communication, whereby corporates are now hiring specialists to manage online communication.

With the evolution of social media communication, organisation s are now embracing messaging apps such as WhatsApp which are becoming as popular as other social media sites such as Facebook and twitter.

The study also revealed that social media can be used to counter bad publicity in institutions in an instant and influence conversations in their favor. Crisis managers are quick to react, admit mistakes and apologizing appropriately. This in turn helps the organisation s in creating a good image to the public.

Further findings reveal that corporations use social media for corporate communication in improving brands loyalty. It was seen that brands who engage on social media channels enjoy higher loyalty from their customers.

5.2.2 Critical elements for an effective social media strategy in business organisation

The researcher found out that creativity is the core of social media communication. Social media audiences are exposed audiences and for any communication to appeal to them, it must be creative and meet their expectations.

Effective social media strategies should have Cleary laid out communication goals. This ensures that organisation s measure the success of a strategy, evaluate its effectiveness and improve on the weaknesses.

The research also brought out the fact that successful social media strategies are use the right channels for the right audiences as they have segmented their audiences, ensuring maximum engagement. Communication should be consistent in a bid to maintain the online presence. This encourages healthy engagement with their audiences. Consistency includes the type of content shared and format of response that an organisation adopts.

5.2.3 Effective social media tactics in corporate communication

The study brought out various tactics that ensure successful social media communication which include: Constant engagement. Customers should always be engaged, regardless of the nature of post. Engagement should be real time to avoid escalation and negative trends.

Right content for the right audience. Organisation s should ensure they know the communication needs of their customers to ensure they have the right messages for them, on the right platform.

Organisation s should always be updated on current trends. Social media is very dynamic, and social media managers should always be up to date with any trends, any new social media channels that come up to keep connecting with their audiences.

Use of hashtags. The researcher found out that social media managers should make maximum use of hashtags to enhance their pages and product visibility. Organisation s should also maintain an online presence by being consistent in their posting and constantly engaging and listening to their online following.

5.3 Conclusion

5.3.1 Effective social media tactics in corporate communication

Organisation s should have communication goals to ensure they optimize social media communication. These goals should be Specific, Measurable, Realistic Attainable and Timely. Finally, social media managers should ensure to build relationships with online opinion shapers and brands with huge following to improve on their visibility.

It is commendable that KCB, Airtel and Kenya power take the effort to engage with their users who use their social media pages to raise concerns. KCB on its side took the game a notch higher by pulling a fast of using vlogging (Use of info videos) to promote their services on social media which went just right attracting a marketing award. Good example is the use of vlogging by KCB, as a tactic in customer engagement. Call to action is also a commonly used tactic to encourage engagement. Example, KCB and Airtel regularly post memes that elicit reactions that lead to discussions on their products.

5.3.2 Critical elements for an effective social media strategy in business organisation

Successful social media strategies involve getting the *right content* for the specific audience. The content must be authentic and reliable. Social media users appreciate transparency and personalized messages.

Budget allocations also determine the success of any social media strategy. With sufficient budget allocations, organisation s can hire the right human resource, put out sponsored posts that will have a wider reach and have the right social media tools for monitoring and evaluation.

For social media communication to be successful, social media managers should avoid lengthy and irrelevant content, ensure consistency and use the right tone during interactions. Communication should be consistent in a bid to maintain the online presence. This encourages healthy engagement with their audiences. Consistency includes the type of content shared and format of response that an organisation adopts.

5.3.3 Corporates integration of social media into communications strategy

Integration of social media platforms in marketing communication strategy contributes to the promotion of the company and its products, reaching a target group, developing business relationships and improvement of corporate image. The integration of social media channels in

marketing strategy should be directed by customers' needs and their presence on social media platforms. The combination of those platforms is not a constant; it can significantly vary from organisation to organisation and should be timely updated. Finally, implication of social media channels in marketing communication contributes careful preparation and requires considerable time, human resources and knowledge.

5.4 Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following to ensure successful social media communication.

i. Make social media a culture as opposed to a department. Once everyone in an organisation understands the power of social media and owns various social media initiatives, it becomes easier for social media managers to communicate to external customers.

ii. Continuously monitor and evaluate. Social media managers should invest in monitoring and evaluation. They should also compare their performance with other organisation s in the same industry and learn.

iii. Organisation s should have sufficient budget allocations for social media departments, mentor and continuously train, and hire the right persons. When hiring, organisation s mostly give interns to handle social media which should not be the case, it should be handled by experienced and well equipped personnel.

iv. Creativity should be among the core skills required for one to be recruited as the social media manager. This will help the organisation in attracting more audience in their pages.

v. Social media managers should strive to build and maintain relationships with online opinion shapers, who help in brand visibility and the kind of information that is shared about an organisation .

vi.   Social media managers should be up to date with competition content and trending hashtags to ensure their content remains relevant and competitive. Organisation s should embrace use of live videos as an emerging trend as it authenticates and personalizes content.

5.5 Suggestion for further research

The research focused on critical elements for a successful social media communication strategy in business organisation s. Content was one of the critical elements. Further research should be carried out on social media content development. Social media uses are moving from just putting up updates to using stories such as Insta-stories on Instagram and live video chats, and research can be done on how to optimize such channels. The researcher also recommends a research on how organisation s can measure Return on Investment on Social media use. This will be useful in budget allocation for the social media arm of organisation s as they will be able to justify the investment in social media. The researcher also recommends further research on cyberbullying on social media as it is an emerging trend.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Guide

i. Do you consider social media a useful/effective platform/tool in corporate communications? Why?

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What are the benefits of integrating social media in an organisation s corporate communication strategy?

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ii. In what ways (to what end) is social media used in corporate communications?

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Given that there are many social media platforms, which ones do you consider to be the most effective for business organisation s and why?

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iii. Kindly mention any organisation that you consider to have been successful and why?

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iv.   What do you consider to be the hallmarks of a successful social media strategy for business organisation s?

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v.   Some organisation s have been successful in using social media while others are not. What distinguishes these organisation s?

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vi.   In your opinion, what are some of the pitfalls associated with use of social media in corporate communications?

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vii.   How can business organisation s optimize social media in corporate communication?

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viii.   Any advice for social media manager's/community managers?

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ix.   How important is engagement is social media communication?

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x.   How do you measure/evaluate success?

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xi.   How important is content as part of your social media strategy?

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xii.   Do you have any training on social media?

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…………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for your time!

Appendix II: Social Media Measurement Metrics

ORGANISATION	METRIC	Content	Engagement	Best practices	Tactics
KCB					
AIRTEL					
KENYA POWER					
HELB					

Appendix III: Certificate of Field Work

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
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SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION

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Kenya

REF: <u>CERTIFICATE OF FIELDWORK</u>

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on <u>26.05.2017</u> in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis Proposal defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project can be allowed to proceed for fieldwork.

Reg. No: <u>K50 / 80893 / 2015</u>

Name: <u>CATHERINE NJORI KAMAU</u>

Title: <u>OPTIMIZING SOCIAL MEDIA IN CORPORATE COMMUNICATION TOOLS TRENDS AND STRATEGIES</u>

SUPERVISOR ___ SIGNATURE ___ DATE 21/06/2018

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR ___ SIGNATURE ___ DATE 21/06/2018

DIRECTOR Dr. Ndeti Ndati ___ SIGNATURE/STAMP ___ DATE 21.6.18

01 NOV 2018
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION

Appendix IV: Originality

Turnitin *Originality Report*

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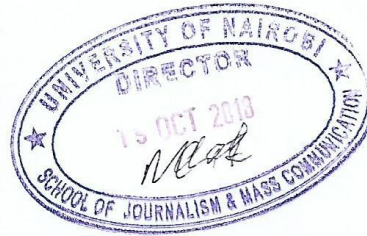Submitted to Daystar University on 2018-08-27

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Appendix V: Certificate of Correction

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
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REF: CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTIONS

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on ___10|06|2018___ in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project/thesis can be allowed to proceed for binding.

Reg. No: K50 | 80893 | 2015

Name: CATHERINE NJOKI KAMAU

Title: OPTIMIZING SOCIAL MEDIA IN CORPORATE COMMUNICATION TRENDS TOOLS AND STRATEGIES

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Dr. Ndeti Ndati
DIRECTOR   SIGNATURE & STAMP   12-11-18 DATE

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