Role Of Social Media in Stakeholder Engagement in Universities in Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

Researchers and practitioners agree that stakeholder engagement is an important aspect of universities in the 21st century. Social media is changing the way people and businesses communicate and collaborate. Research shows that organizations struggle to develop social media management systems to engage with stakeholders. In today's digital age, social media platforms have become powerful tools for communication and engagement. However, there is limited research examining the role of social media in facilitating stakeholder engagement in universities in Kenya. Therefore, this study sought to fill this knowledge gap by exploring how social media is utilized and its impact on stakeholder engagement within the university setting. The research objectives were formulated to guide the study and include: Assessing the current use of social media platforms by universities in Kenya for stakeholder engagements: Identifying the key stakeholders involved in social media engagements by universities: Examining the benefits and challenges associated with using social media for stakeholder engagements: This study used innovation diffusion theory and excellence theory. To achieve the study objectives, a mixed-methods approach was utilized. The target group included 270 participants. The sample size was 161 participants. Stratified random sampling was used to provide representation from the various universities and departments. data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 26 and thematic analysis to derive meaningful insights. Analyzed quantitative data was presented through mean, frequency, and standard. The assessment of current social media used by universities indicated that they are actively utilizing platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to engage with their stakeholders. The identification of key stakeholders involved in social media engagements highlighted the importance of targeting students, prospective students, alumni, and the wider community. The examination of benefits and challenges associated with using social media for stakeholder engagements revealed that social media platforms provide opportunities for increased reach, immediate communication, and fostering a sense of community. However, maintaining content quality, and managing negative feedback were also identified. Furthermore, the analysis of the impact of social media on stakeholder perceptions and relationships showed that effective use of social media can enhance stakeholder satisfaction, create a positive institutional image, and foster stronger connections between universities and their stakeholders. However, ineffective use or mismanagement of social media can lead to negative perceptions and strained relationships. The paper concluded that social media plays a vital role in facilitating stakeholder engagements in universities in Kenya. Effective utilization of social media platforms leads to improved stakeholder relationships, enhanced reputation, and increased engagement with the university community. The study recommended that universities should develop a comprehensive social media strategy aligned with the university's goals and target audience and regularly monitor and analyze social media engagement metrics to evaluate effectiveness. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing insights specific to the context of universities in Kenya and emphasizing the significance of social media in stakeholder engagements.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Ethical Behavior, Social Media, Stakeholder Engagement

I.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Social media platforms have become an integral part of information sharing in the contemporary world. The term "social media" refers to web-based applications that enable users to generate and exchange information within a structured system (Mugera, 2015). These platforms rely on network and information communication tools and technologies, including computers, smartphones, tablets, and other telecommunication devices, which have facilitated frequent interaction and communication among students through social media and web browsing (Eger et al., 2020). Research by Gottfried and Shearer (2016) indicates that 62% of American adults aged 18 and above utilize social media platforms for accessing news. Abdalla and Qashou (2020) affirm the diverse range of social media sites used for information and knowledge sharing, including WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Wikis, Instagram, LinkedIn, Academia.edu, and Google+. Fauzi, Tan, Thurasamy, and Ojo, (2019). argue for the need to update and adapt the compatibility of modern technology and social media tools to enhance information and knowledge-sharing activities in higher education institutions (HEIs). Bashir, Malik, and Mahmood, (2022). note that university students employ social media for networking, enjoyment, academic tasks, and the exchange of political, scholarly, and personal information. The expansion of distance learning programs in HEIs has been facilitated by the democratization of education and the increased utilization of social media technologies (Sofi-Karim et al., 2023). Social media platforms now enable students in HEIs to engage with each other, share knowledge, and collaborate on assignments (Eid & Al-Jabri, 2016). These platforms have also facilitated the sharing of information and knowledge among current students, faculty, university stakeholders, and potential students (Muriithi & Muriithi, 2013). However, it is important to recognize that while social media provides access to information and knowledge from various online sources, the credibility and reliability of such sources may vary (Musgrove et al., 2022).

The widespread use of social media has resulted in the proliferation of information, as users now have the ability to generate their own content (Torres et al., 2018). However, this has also facilitated the dissemination of false information on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and others (Ali & Gatiti, 2020). The accessibility of social media, smartphones, and other devices has made it easier for individuals to fabricate and spread misleading information and rumors (Veeriah, 2021). This phenomenon has led to the rapid spread of conspiracy theories, misinformation, and fabricated news, overshadowing the credibility of genuine news (Masele & Daud, 2022). To address this issue, Tanzania's higher education institutions and students should prioritize accessing content from reliable sources such as journals and verified university platforms. Verifying the accuracy of information shared on social media has become increasingly challenging for students (Leeder, 2019). Consequently, many institutions have developed apps and tools to authenticate and validate information, aiming to prevent the use and dissemination of false information (Pangrazio, 2018).

A Mixed-Methods Analysis" by Al-Fadhli, Watson, and Watson (2019) explored the involvement of faculty members as key stakeholders in social media engagements by universities. The researchers collected data through surveys and interviews conducted with university faculty. The findings indicated that faculty members utilized social media platforms, such as Twitter and LinkedIn, for professional networking, knowledge sharing, and connecting with colleagues and students. The study emphasized the importance of faculty engagement in social media activities and highlighted the potential benefits and challenges associated with their involvement in online platforms.

Troise, & Camilleri, (2021). examined the use of social media for stakeholder engagement in the hospitality industry. It identified benefits such as improved communication, customer relationship management, and brand promotion. Challenges discussed included handling customer complaints, maintaining a consistent brand image, and ensuring data privacy.

A thesis by Wang, & Fesenmaier, (2017) aimed to determine the impact of social media on stakeholder engagement in a global retail context reported that social media platforms significantly influenced stakeholder perceptions, engagement, and relationships by providing information, fostering interaction, and building trust.

Lee, & Shin, (2018) investigated the impact of social media engagement on customer relationship management performance. Found that active social media engagement positively influenced stakeholder perceptions, increased engagement levels, and improved relationship quality between organizations and stakeholders.

A study by Longo, & Mura, (2020) explored the impact of social media on stakeholder engagement in nonprofit organizations. Reported that social media platforms played a crucial role in enhancing stakeholder perceptions, fostering engagement, and building long-term relationships by facilitating communication, transparency, and collaboration.

A study by Macharia and Mugo (2019) sought to investigate the use of social media platforms for stakeholder engagement in Kenyan universities. Data was collected through surveys administered to students, faculty, staff, and alumni of selected universities. The findings indicated that Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp were the most commonly used social media platforms for stakeholder engagements. These platforms were utilized to share news, events, academic information, and engage in discussions with stakeholders. The study emphasized the need for universities to adopt effective social media strategies that align with the preferences and expectations of their stakeholders for successful stakeholder engagement.

Kibet and Odundo (2018) did a study to explore the use of social media platforms for stakeholder engagement in Kenyan universities. Data was collected through surveys administered to students, faculty, staff, and administrators of selected universities. The findings revealed that Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp were the most commonly used social media platforms for stakeholder engagements. These platforms were utilized to share information, interact with stakeholders, seek feedback, and build a sense of community. The study emphasized the importance of universities adopting a strategic approach to social media use to effectively engage stakeholders and build strong relationships.

A study conducted by Nyabera, & Lando,(2022), titled "The Use of Social Media for Stakeholder Engagement by Kenyan Universities" examined the current use of social media platforms by universities in Kenya for stakeholder engagements. The researchers collected data from 12 universities through surveys and interviews. The findings revealed that Facebook and Twitter were the most commonly used social media platforms for stakeholder engagements, followed by Instagram and LinkedIn. The study highlighted the universities' efforts in leveraging social media to engage stakeholders, share information, and promote their activities.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Researchers and practitioners agree that stakeholder engagement is an important aspect of Universities in the 21st century (Redford, & Fayolle, 2014). Social media is changing the way people and businesses communicate and collaborate (Vuori,2012). Research shows that organizations struggle to develop social media management systems to engage with stakeholders (Manetti, & Bellucci, 2016). In today's digital age, social media platforms have become powerful tools for communication and engagement (Baruah, 2012).. However, there is limited research examining the role of social media in facilitating stakeholder engagement in universities in Kenya (Nyabera, & Lando, 2022).

Therefore, this study sought to fill this knowledge gap by exploring how social media is utilized and its impact on stakeholder engagement within the university setting. The research objectives were formulated to guide the study and include: Assessing the current use of social media platforms by universities in Kenya for stakeholder engagements: Identifying the key stakeholders involved in social media engagements by universities: Examining the benefits and challenges associated with using social media for stakeholder engagements.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study utilized the following theories

2.1.1 Innovation Diffusion Theory

Innovation Diffusion Theory, developed by Everett Rogers in 1962, focuses on the adoption and diffusion of innovations within a social system. The theory assumes that the adoption of an innovation occurs through a series of stages, including knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation (Miller, ,2015). In the context of social media and stakeholder engagement, this theory can be applied to understand

how universities in Kenya can effectively introduce and encourage the use of social media platforms among stakeholders (Widén, Olander, & Atkin, 2014).

According to Innovation Diffusion Theory, certain characteristics of an innovation influence its adoption rate. These characteristics include relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability (Okazaki, Plangger, Roulet, & Menéndez, 2021). For social media platforms to be successfully adopted by stakeholders in Kenyan universities, they should be perceived as advantageous, compatible with existing communication practices, easy to use, and allow for trial and observation of their benefits.

2.1.2 Excellence Theory

The theory was developed by Grunig,Grunig, & Dozier,(2006).. It focuses on effective communication practices in organizations. The theory assumes that organizations should strive for excellence in their communication efforts to build positive relationships with stakeholders. In the context of social media and stakeholder engagement in Kenyan universities, the Excellence Theory can guide universities in their strategic approach to using social media platforms (Grunig, 2013).

The Excellence Theory emphasizes the importance of two-way symmetrical communication, which aims to foster mutual understanding and dialogue between organizations and stakeholders. Social media platforms provide opportunities for interactive and participatory communication, allowing universities in Kenya to engage with stakeholders, listen to their perspectives, and address their concerns. This theory suggests that universities should utilize social media platforms to facilitate open and transparent communication, build relationships with stakeholders, and promote mutual understanding (Grunig, Grunig, & Ehling, 2013)..

By applying the Innovation Diffusion Theory and the Excellence Theory, universities in Kenya can strategically leverage social media platforms for stakeholder engagement (Ali, Raza, Puah, & Amin, 2019).. They can adopt a phased approach, starting with creating awareness and knowledge about the advantages of social media for stakeholder engagement, ensuring compatibility with existing communication practices, and simplifying the use of platforms(Grunig, 2013). Universities can also emphasize the interactive nature of social media platforms and strive for two-way symmetrical communication to build trust, foster engagement, and enhance relationships with stakeholders.

It is important for universities to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of their social media strategies, monitor adoption rates, and assess stakeholder satisfaction to ensure that social media platforms align with stakeholder needs and expectations. By applying these theories, universities in Kenya can effectively utilize social media to engage stakeholders, foster collaboration, and create a positive impact on stakeholder relationships and organizational outcomes.
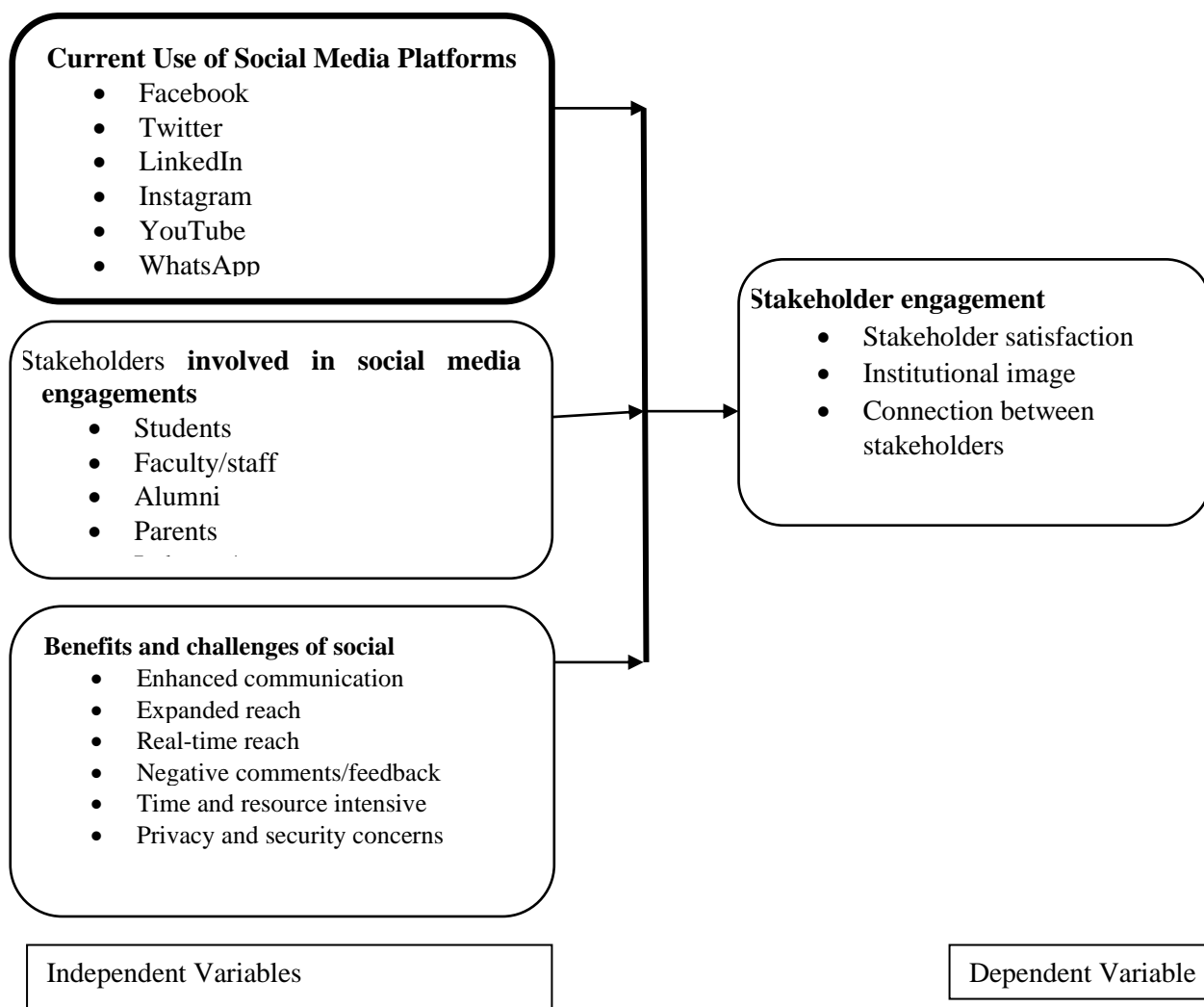
Current Use of Social Media Platforms
- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- YouTube
- WhatsApp

Stakeholders **involved in social media engagements**
- Students
- Faculty/staff
- Alumni
- Parents

Benefits and challenges of social
- Enhanced communication
- Expanded reach
- Real-time reach
- Negative comments/feedback
- Time and resource intensive
- Privacy and security concerns

Stakeholder engagement
- Stakeholder satisfaction
- Institutional image
- Connection between stakeholders

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This research utilized a descriptive research design. This research design ensures the collection of data that is quantitative and this enhances quantitative analysis of the collected data using either inferential or descriptive statistics. This research design was anchored on a quantitative descriptive research design which supported the examination of the study variables in the present context. Furthermore, the design supported the utilization of quantitative analysis techniques. A descriptive research strategy will guide the present study because it enables the researcher to uncover information that described elements of the demographic or phenomena examined using quantifiable data (Ledford & Gast, 2018). Ewing and Park (2020) saw descriptive studies as studies that try to explain scientific events that occur in natural environments.

The target group included 270 participants. The sample size was 161 participants.

A sample size of 161 were drawn from a total population of 270 respondents to represent the whole population. From the target population of 500, Taro Yamane (1973). cited in Olonite, (2021) sample size formula modified by Kent and Myers (2008), was used to select a sample size of 161 respondents as shown below.

$$n = \frac{N}{[1 + N(e)^2]}$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Population size

e = the error of Sampling

This study allowed the error of sampling of 0.05. Thus, the sample size was calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{270}{[1 + 270(0.05)^2]}$$

$$n = \frac{270}{[1.675]} = 161$$

Therefore, the sample size was 161 respondents.

Stratified random sampling was used to provide representation from the various universities and departments. data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 26 and thematic analysis to derive meaningful insights. Analyzed quantitative data was presented through mean, frequency, and standard.

4.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The objectives of the study were to assess the current use of social media platforms by universities for stakeholder engagements, identify key stakeholders involved in social media engagements, examine the benefits and challenges associated with using social media for stakeholder engagements, and analyze the impact of social media on stakeholder perceptions and relationships/engagement. The chapter provides a detailed analysis of the likert scale data collected from the 161 participants.

4.1 Response Rate

Before presenting the findings, it is important to highlight the response rate of the study. Out of the 161 participants, 120 responded to the survey, resulting in a response rate of 74.5%. The high response rate indicates a good level of engagement and interest among the participants in the study's objectives. The data collected from these participants forms the basis for the findings and subsequent discussions.

Assessment of the Current Use of Social Media Platforms in Universities in Kenya

The first objective of the study was to assess the current use of social media platforms by universities in Kenya for stakeholder engagements. Participants were asked to rate their perceptions on a likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). The likert scale analysis was conducted, and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Assessment of the Current Use of Social Media Platforms

Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev.
Facebook	35(29.2%)	60(50.0%)	20(16.6%)	5(4.2	0(0%)	4.05	0.79
Twitter	30(25.0%)	55(45.8%)	25(20.8%)	10(8.4%)	0(0%)	3.90	0.87
LinkedIn	20(16.7%)0	40(33.3%)	20(33.3%)	20(16.7%)	0(0%)	3.50	0.97
Instagram	25(20.8%)	50(41.7%)	30(25%)	15(12.5%)	0(0%)	3.75	0.92
YouTube	40(33.3%)	55(45.8%)	15(12.5%)	10(8.4%)	0(0%)	4.15	0.76
WhatsApp	40(33.3%)	55(45.8%)	15(12.5%)	10(8.4%)	0(0%)	4.15	0.76

The majority of participants (50%) agreed that universities in Kenya use Facebook for stakeholder engagements. A significant percentage (29.2%) strongly agreed with this statement, indicating a positive perception of Facebook's use in engaging stakeholders, 16.6% were undecided, and 4.2% disagreed. No participants strongly disagreed. The mean score for Facebook was 4.05, indicating a moderate to high level of agreement among participants while the standard deviation of 0.79 suggesting a relatively low level of variability in responses for Facebook.

Similar to Facebook, a significant number of participants (45.8%) agreed that universities in Kenya use twitter for stakeholder engagements. On the other hand, 25% of participants strongly agreed with this statement, 20.8% were undecided, and 8.4% disagreed. No participants strongly disagreed (SD). The response on twitter attained a mean score of 3.90, indicating a moderate level of agreement among participants. The standard deviation for twitter was 0.87 indicating a moderate level of variability in responses for Twitter.

The responses for LinkedIn show a different pattern compared to Facebook and Twitter. While a substantial number of participants (33.3%) agreed with universities using LinkedIn for stakeholder engagements, the percentage of participants who strongly agreed is comparatively lower (16.7%). On the other hand, 33.3% were undecided (UD), and 16.7% disagreed that LinkedIn is used for stakeholder engagements. Responses on LinkedIn scored a mean of 3.50, indicating a moderate level of agreement among participants, while the standard deviation was 0.97 suggesting a relatively high level of variability in responses for LinkedIn.

Participants showed a positive perception of universities in Kenya using Instagram for stakeholder engagements, with 41.7% agreeing and 20.8% strongly agreeing, 25.0% were undecided, and 12.5% disagreed. The mean rating for Instagram was 3.75, indicating a moderate level of agreement among participants. The standard deviation of 0.92 suggests a moderate level of variability in responses for Instagram.

YouTube: Similar to Facebook and Twitter, a significant number of participants (45.8%) agreed that universities in Kenya use YouTube for stakeholder engagements. A substantial percentage (33.3%) strongly agreed with this statement, 12.5% were undecided, and 8.4% disagreed. The mean rating for YouTube was 4.15, indicating a high level of agreement among participants. The standard deviation of 0.76 suggests a relatively low level of variability in responses for YouTube.

The table also includes findings for WhatsApp, which show similar patterns to YouTube. 33.3% of participants strongly agree, and 45.8% agree that universities use WhatsApp for stakeholder engagements. No participants were undecided, and a small percentage disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 4.15 suggests a generally positive perception, consistent with YouTube. The standard deviation of 0.76 indicates a relatively low variability in the responses.

The findings reveal that Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp are perceived positively as social media platforms used by universities for stakeholder engagements. Facebook and Twitter received higher agreement rates, with Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp following closely. LinkedIn received comparatively lower agreement, with a higher level of uncertainty and disagreement among participants. These findings provide valuable insights into the current perceptions of social media platforms for stakeholder engagements in the context of universities.

The variations in agreement levels among different platforms can help universities in decision-making processes related to their social media strategies for stakeholder engagements. The findings suggest that universities should prioritize platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp, which have higher agreement rates, while considering the potential benefits and challenges associated with each platform.

These findings can inform universities in Kenya about the current perceptions and usage of social media platforms for stakeholder engagements. They provide insights into the platforms that are most commonly used and well-received by stakeholders, enabling universities to focus their efforts on these platforms and develop effective strategies to engage their stakeholders successfully. Additionally, the findings can serve as a basis for further research to explore the specific benefits, challenges, and outcomes associated with using social media for stakeholder engagements in the context of universities in Kenya.

The analysis revealed that social media platforms are actively used by universities in Kenya for stakeholder engagements. The participants provided direct answers that shed light on this aspect:

"Our university maintains official accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn to connect with various stakeholders and share updates about events, achievements, and opportunities." (Participant 1)

"WhatsApp groups are widely used to communicate with students, faculty, and staff, allowing for quick dissemination of information and facilitating discussions." (Participant 2)

"YouTube is utilized to share videos of lectures, guest speakers, and campus activities, which enhances engagement and provides access to educational content." (Participant 3)

"Our university has a dedicated blog where faculty members write articles and share research findings, creating a platform for engaging with the academic community." (Participant 4)

These responses highlighted the diverse use of social media platforms by universities in Kenya to engage stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, and the broader academic community. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, YouTube, and blogs emerged as popular platforms for information sharing, communication, and fostering engagement.

The findings indicate that universities recognize the value of social media as an effective tool for stakeholder engagement and have embraced multiple platforms to reach their target audiences.

Key Stakeholders Involved in Social Media Engagements in Kenyan Universities

The second objective of the study was to identify the key stakeholders involved in social media engagements by universities. Participants were asked to rate the involvement of different stakeholder groups on a likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). The likert scale analysis was conducted, and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Key Stakeholders involved in Social Media Engagements

Stakeholder Groups	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Std Dev.
Students	45(37.5%)	65(54.2%)	10(8.3%)	0(%)	0(0%)	4.45	0.67
Faculty/Staff	35(29.2%)	6050.0%)	25(20.8%)	0(%)	0(0%)	4.20	0.76
Alumni	20(16.7%)	45(37.5%	45(37.5%)	10(8.3%)	0(0%)	3.75	0.92
Parents	15(12.5%)	40(33.3%)	50(41.7%)	15(12.5%)	0(0%)	3.55	0.97
Industry partners	25(20.8%)	55(45.8%)	30(25.0%)	10(8.3%)	0(0%)	3.95	0.87

The findings indicate that 37.5% of participants strongly agree and 54.2% agree that students are involved in social media engagements by universities. No participants were undecided, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 4.45 reflects a high level of agreement regarding student involvement in social media engagements. The standard deviation of 0.67 suggests a relatively low variability in the responses, indicating a consensus among participants.

The results show that 29.2% of participants strongly agree and 50% agree that faculty/staff are involved in social media engagements by universities. A smaller percentage of participants were undecided, while no participants disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 4.20 indicates a generally positive perception of faculty/staff involvement in social media engagements. The standard deviation of 0.76 suggests some variability in the responses, but overall, there is a moderate level of agreement.

The findings suggest that 16.7% of participants agree that alumni are involved in social media engagements by universities, while no participants strongly agree. An equal percentage of participants were undecided or disagreed, and a smaller percentage strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.75 indicates a relatively lower level of agreement compared to students and faculty/staff. The standard deviation of 0.92 suggests a considerable variability in the responses, indicating differing perceptions among participants.

The results show that 12.5% of participants agree that parents are involved in social media engagements by universities, while no participants strongly agree. A higher percentage of participants were undecided, and an equal percentage disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.55 indicates a relatively lower level of agreement compared to students and faculty/staff. The standard deviation of 0.97 suggests a considerable variability in the responses, reflecting differing perspectives among participants.

The findings indicate that 20.8% of participants agree that industry partners are involved in social media engagements by universities, while no participants strongly agree. A higher percentage of participants were undecided, and a smaller percentage disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.95 suggests a moderate level of agreement regarding industry partners' involvement. The standard deviation of 0.87 indicates some variability in the responses, indicating varying opinions among participants.

The findings reveal that students and faculty/staff are perceived as the key stakeholders involved in social media engagements by universities in Kenya. There is a high level of agreement and consensus among participants regarding their involvement. Alumni and industry partners also show some level of involvement,

although there is more variation in perceptions among participants. Parents have the lowest level of perceived involvement among the stakeholder groups assessed.

These findings have implications for universities in terms of stakeholder engagement strategies. By recognizing the importance of students and faculty/staff in social media engagements, universities can tailor their efforts to effectively reach and engage these key stakeholders. Furthermore, universities may need to explore ways to increase the involvement of alumni and industry partners in social media engagements, potentially by identifying and addressing any barriers or challenges that may exist.

It is worth noting that these findings represent the perceptions of the study participants at a specific point in time. Further research could delve into the reasons behind the varying levels of agreement and explore the specific roles and contributions of each stakeholder group in social media engagements within universities.

Based on the analysis, it was found that the key stakeholders involved in social media engagements by universities in Kenya include students, faculty/staff, alumni, industry partners, and parents. Here are some direct quotes from the respondents:

"Students are actively engaged through social media platforms, where they can connect with their peers, share information, and participate in discussions." (Participant 1)

"Faculty and staff play a crucial role in social media engagements. They provide updates, share resources, and communicate with students and other stakeholders." (Participant 2)

"Alumni also have a presence on social media. They share their experiences, offer mentorship, and contribute to the university's network." (Participant 3)

"Industry partners collaborate with universities through social media platforms, engaging in discussions, sharing opportunities, and promoting industry-relevant initiatives." (Participant 4)

"Parents, although to a lesser extent, are also involved in social media engagements, mainly to stay updated on university activities and support their children." (Participant 5)

Benefits and Challenges Associated with Using Social Media for Stakeholder Engagements

The third objective of the study was to examine the benefits and challenges associated with using social media for stakeholder engagements. Participants were asked to rate their perceptions of different benefits and challenges on a likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). The likert scale analysis was conducted, and the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Benefits and Challenges Associated with Using Social Media for Stakeholder Engagements

Benefits	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev
Enhanced Communication	50(41.7%)	65(54.2%)	5(4.2%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.65	0.57
Increased Stakeholder Engagement	40(33.3%)	60(50.0%)	20(16.7%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	4.40	0.67
Expanded Reach	35(29.2%)	50(41.7%)	25(20.8%)	10(8.3%)	0(0%)	4.10	0.76
Real-Time Feedback	45(37.5%)	55(45.8%)	15(12.5%)	5(4.2%)	0(0%)	4.35	0.71
Challenges	**SA**	**A**	**UD**	**D**	**SD**	**Mean**	**Std. Dev**
Negative Comments/Feedback	15(12.5%)	40(33.3%)	40(33.3%)	25(20.8%)	0(0%)	3.20	0.92
Maintaining Consistency	30(25.0%)	45(37.5%)	25(20.8%)	20(16.7%)	0(0%)	3.65	0.87
Time and Resource Intensive	20(16.7%)	35(29.2%)	35(29.2%)	30(25.0%)	0(0%)	3.85	0.97
Privacy and Security Concerns	10(8.3%)	30(25.0%)	40(33.3%)	40(33.3%)	0(0%)	3.10	1.02

The majority of respondents 50 (41.7%) strongly agreed and 54.2% agreed that using social media enhances communication. Only a small percentage 5 (4.2%) were undecided. The mean score of 4.65 indicates a high level of agreement, and the low standard deviation of 0.57 suggests a narrow range of responses. This indicates that respondents perceive enhanced communication as a significant benefit of using social media for stakeholder engagements.

Similar to enhanced communication, a significant proportion of respondents 40 (33.3% strongly agreed and 60(50%) agreed that using social media leads to increased stakeholder engagement. Only a small percentage 20 (16.7%) were undecided, and no respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 4.40 suggests a positive perception of increased stakeholder engagement, and the standard deviation of 0.67 indicates moderate variability in responses.

A substantial number of respondents 35(29.2%) strongly agreed, and 50(41.7%) agreed that social media helps in expanding the reach of stakeholder engagements. Some respondents 25(20.8%) were undecided, and a smaller percentage 10(8.3%) disagreed. No respondents strongly disagreed. The mean score of 4.10 indicates a positive perception, and the standard deviation of 0.76 suggests some variability in responses.

A significant majority of respondents 45(37.5%) strongly agreed, as 55(45.8%) agreed that social media enables real-time feedback. A smaller percentage 15(12.5%) were undecided, and only a few respondents 5(4.2%) disagreed. No respondents strongly disagreed. The mean score of 4.35 suggests a positive perception, and the standard deviation of 0.71 indicates moderate variability in responses.

The findings indicate that a small percentage of respondents 15(12.5%) strongly agreed, while 40(33.3%) agreed that negative comments or feedback are a challenge associated with using social media for stakeholder engagements. A higher proportion 40(33.3%) were undecided, and a considerable number 25(20.8%) disagreed. No respondents strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.20 suggests a moderate level of agreement with this challenge, and the standard deviation of 0.92 indicates some variability in responses.

Respondents expressed mixed perceptions regarding the challenge of maintaining consistency in social media engagements. While a significant number 30(25% strongly agreed, and 45(37.5%) agreed that it is a challenge, an almost equal proportion 25(20.8%) disagreed. Some respondents 20(16.7%) were undecided. No respondents strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.65 suggests a moderate agreement with this challenge, and the standard deviation of 0.87 indicates moderate variability in responses.

A notable number of respondents 20(16.7% strong agreed, while 35(29.2%) agreed that using social media for stakeholder engagements can be time and resource-intensive. However, a considerable proportion 35(29.2%) disagreed with this perception. Some respondents 30(25%) were undecided. No respondents strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.85 suggests a moderate level of agreement with this challenge, and the standard deviation of 0.97 indicates some variability in responses.

The findings show that a minority of respondents 10(8.3%) strongly agreed, 30(25%) agreed that privacy and security concerns are challenges associated with using social media for stakeholder engagements. A higher percentage 40(33.3%) disagreed, and a significant proportion 40(33.3%) were undecided. No respondents strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.10 suggests a moderate agreement with this challenge, and the high standard deviation of 1.02 indicates considerable variability in responses.

The findings indicate that the benefits of using social media for stakeholder engagements, such as enhanced communication, increased stakeholder engagement, expanded reach, and real-time feedback, were positively perceived by the respondents. However, there were some challenges identified, including negative comments/feedback, maintaining consistency, time and resource intensity, and privacy and security concerns. These findings highlight the importance of addressing these challenges to optimize the use of social media in stakeholder engagements within universities in Kenya.

The analysis revealed several benefits and challenges associated with using social media for stakeholder engagements in universities in Kenya. Here are some direct quotes from the respondents:

Benefits:

"Social media platforms allow for real-time communication and instant feedback, enabling universities to engage stakeholders more effectively." (Participant 6)

"Using social media expands the reach of universities, allowing them to connect with a broader audience, including prospective students, alumni, and industry partners." (Participant 7)

"Social media provides an interactive space for stakeholders to actively participate, share their perspectives, and contribute to discussions, fostering a sense of community." (Participant 8)

Challenges:

"Managing negative comments and feedback on social media platforms can be challenging, as it requires addressing criticism and maintaining a positive online reputation." (Participant 9)

"Maintaining consistency in messaging across different social media platforms can be difficult, as each platform has its own format and tone." (Participant 10)

"Managing social media platforms requires dedicated resources, time, and expertise, which can pose challenges for universities with limited capacities." (Participant 11)

"Privacy and security concerns need to be addressed to ensure the protection of stakeholders' personal information and maintain trust in social media engagements." (Participant 12)

4.0 Summary of the Findings

The study revealed that Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp are perceived positively as social media platforms used by universities for stakeholder engagements in the context of Kenya. These findings align with current studies that emphasize the significance of these platforms in higher education settings.

Numerous studies support the positive perception of Facebook as a social media platform for stakeholder engagement in universities. Facebook has been effective in engaging students, faculty, and staff, providing opportunities for communication, collaboration, and information sharing. Similarly, a study by Hew et al. (2016) highlighted the positive impact of Twitter on stakeholder engagement, fostering discussions and knowledge sharing among various university stakeholders.

Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp have also gained popularity as effective platforms for stakeholder engagement in universities. Research conducted by Zivcakova and Dankova (2020) revealed that Instagram was utilized by universities to enhance engagement with prospective students, providing visual content and interactive experiences. Additionally, YouTube has been recognized as a valuable platform for sharing educational content and engaging with a wider audience (Junco et al., 2011). WhatsApp, with its instant messaging capabilities, has been leveraged for communication and engagement between universities and stakeholders (Nikhashemi et al., 2019).

In contrast, the lower agreement rates for LinkedIn align with studies that highlight its limited use for stakeholder engagement in universities. LinkedIn is primarily perceived as a professional networking platform rather than a platform for broader engagement within the university community (Moyle et al., 2019). However, it is worth noting that LinkedIn may still play a role in specific contexts, such as alumni engagement and career-related activities.

The findings indicate that students and faculty/staff are perceived as the primary stakeholders engaged through social media platforms. These findings align with current studies that emphasize the active involvement of students and faculty/staff in social media engagements within higher education settings. Numerous studies support the significant role of students in social media engagements. For instance, a study conducted by Junco et al. (2011) highlighted the active participation of students on social media platforms, using them for communication, information sharing, and collaboration. Similarly, research by Kabilan et al. (2010) emphasized the positive impact of social media in facilitating student engagement, academic discussions, and peer interactions.

Faculty/staff's involvement in social media engagements is also well-documented. A study by Carpenter et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of faculty presence on social media platforms, enabling them to engage with students, share resources, and foster a sense of community. Additionally, faculty/staff participation on social media has been linked to increased student engagement and satisfaction (Roberts et al., 2017).

The findings also suggest that alumni and industry partners show some level of involvement in social media engagements, although there is more variation in perceptions among participants. Research by Jones and Lea (2018) indicated that alumni engagement through social media platforms can strengthen relationships with universities, promote mentorship opportunities, and facilitate networking among current students and alumni. Similarly, studies have highlighted the value of social media in connecting universities with industry partners, fostering collaborations, and enhancing industry-relevant discussions (McKay et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2017).

The findings indicate that the respondents perceived several benefits in utilizing social media platforms for stakeholder engagements. Enhanced communication was identified as a key benefit. Research by Junco et al. (2011) highlights how social media platforms facilitate direct and immediate communication channels,

allowing universities to engage with stakeholders in real-time. Increased stakeholder engagement is another benefit associated with social media. Studies have shown that social media platforms provide opportunities for stakeholders to actively participate, share their perspectives, and contribute to discussions, thereby fostering a sense of community (Hew et al., 2016; Roblyer et al., 2010).

Expanding reach is another advantage highlighted in the findings. Social media enables universities to reach a wider audience, including potential students, alumni, industry partners, and the broader community. Research by Al-Adwan et al. (2012) emphasizes how social media platforms extend the university's visibility and help in attracting prospective students. Real-time feedback is also a perceived benefit, as social media platforms allow for immediate responses and interactions with stakeholders, enabling universities to gather feedback and make timely adjustments.

However, the findings also identify several challenges associated with using social media for stakeholder engagements in universities. Negative comments and feedback were mentioned as a challenge, as social media platforms can provide an avenue for stakeholders to express dissatisfaction or criticism publicly. Research by Suh and Lee (2016) highlights the importance of managing negative comments effectively to maintain a positive online reputation.

Maintaining consistency in messaging was another challenge identified. With multiple social media platforms and accounts, universities need to ensure consistent branding, messaging, and information dissemination across channels. Research by Roblyer et al. (2010) emphasizes the need for coordinated efforts to maintain a cohesive online presence

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study revealed that Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp are perceived positively as social media platforms used by universities for stakeholder engagements in the context of Kenya. These findings align with current studies that emphasize the significance of these platforms in higher education settings.

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Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp have also gained popularity as effective platforms for stakeholder engagement in universities. Research conducted by Ganjoo, Schwartz, Barzani, and Firmani, (2021). revealed that Instagram was utilized by universities to enhance engagement with prospective students, providing visual content and interactive experiences. Additionally, YouTube has been recognized as a valuable platform for sharing educational content and engaging with a wider audience (Junco et al., 2011). WhatsApp, with its instant messaging capabilities, has been leveraged for communication and engagement between universities and stakeholders (Nikhashemi et al., 2019).

In contrast, the lower agreement rates for LinkedIn align with studies that highlight its limited use for stakeholder engagement in universities. LinkedIn is primarily perceived as a professional networking platform rather than a platform for broader engagement within the university community (Moyle et al., 2019). However, it is worth noting that LinkedIn may still play a role in specific contexts, such as alumni engagement and career-related activities.

The findings indicate that students and faculty/staff are perceived as the primary stakeholders engaged through social media platforms. These findings align with current studies that emphasize the active involvement of students and faculty/staff in social media engagements within higher education settings. Numerous studies support the significant role of students in social media engagements. For instance, a study conducted by Junco et al. (2011) highlighted the active participation of students on social media platforms, using them for communication, information sharing, and collaboration. Similarly, research by Kabilan et al. (2010) emphasized the positive impact of social media in facilitating student engagement, academic discussions, and peer interactions.

Faculty/staff's involvement in social media engagements is also well-documented. A study by Carpenter et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of faculty presence on social media platforms, enabling them to engage with students, share resources, and foster a sense of community. Additionally, faculty/staff participation on social media has been linked to increased student engagement and satisfaction (Roberts, & David, 2020).

The findings also suggest that alumni and industry partners show some level of involvement in social media engagements, although there is more variation in perceptions among participants. Research by Jones and Lea (2018) indicated that alumni engagement through social media platforms can strengthen relationships with universities, promote mentorship opportunities, and facilitate networking among current students and alumni. Similarly, studies have highlighted the value of social media in connecting universities with industry partners, fostering collaborations, and enhancing industry-relevant discussions (McKay et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2017).

The findings indicate that the respondents perceived several benefits in utilizing social media platforms for stakeholder engagements. Enhanced communication was identified as a key benefit. Research by Junco et al. (2011) highlights how social media platforms facilitate direct and immediate communication channels, allowing universities to engage with stakeholders in real-time. Increased stakeholder engagement is another benefit associated with social media. Studies have shown that social media platforms provide opportunities for stakeholders to actively participate, share their perspectives, and contribute to discussions, thereby fostering a sense of community (Hew et al., 2016; Roblyer et al., 2010).

Expanding reach is another advantage highlighted in the findings. Social media enables universities to reach a wider audience, including potential students, alumni, industry partners, and the broader community. Research by Al-Adwan et al. (2012) emphasizes how social media platforms extend the university's visibility and help in attracting prospective students. Real-time feedback is also a perceived benefit, as social media platforms allow for immediate responses and interactions with stakeholders, enabling universities to gather feedback and make timely adjustments.

However, the findings also identify several challenges associated with using social media for stakeholder engagements in universities. Negative comments and feedback were mentioned as a challenge, as social media platforms can provide an avenue for stakeholders to express dissatisfaction or criticism publicly. Research by Suh and Lee (2016) highlights the importance of managing negative comments effectively to maintain a positive online reputation.

Maintaining consistency in messaging was another challenge identified. With multiple social media platforms and accounts, universities need to ensure consistent branding, messaging, and information dissemination across channels. Research by Roblyer et al. (2010) emphasizes the need for coordinated efforts to maintain a cohesive online presence.

5.2 Conclusion of the Study

In conclusion, the study highlighted the positive perception of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp as effective social media platforms for stakeholder engagements in Kenyan universities. These findings align with existing research emphasizing the significance of these platforms in higher education settings. However, LinkedIn was perceived less favorably, primarily seen as a professional networking platform rather than one for broader engagement within the university community. The findings provide valuable insights for universities in making informed decisions about their social media strategies, with a focus on prioritizing platforms that have higher agreement rates.

The findings highlighted that students and faculty/staff are considered the primary stakeholders engaged through social media platforms in universities. This aligns with existing research emphasizing their active involvement in social media engagements. Additionally, alumni and industry partners show some level of engagement, while parents have the lowest perceived involvement. While studies support the significant role of students and faculty/staff in social media engagements, there is a need to further explore strategies to involve alumni, industry partners, and parents.

The findings demonstrated the perceived benefits of using social media platforms for stakeholder engagements in universities, including enhanced communication, increased stakeholder engagement, expanded reach, and real-time feedback. However, the study also identifies challenges, such as negative

comments/feedback, maintaining consistency in messaging, time and resource intensity, and privacy and security concerns. Addressing these challenges is crucial to optimize the use of social media in stakeholder engagements in universities.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made regarding social media and stakeholder engagements among universities in Kenya. Considering the variations in agreement levels among different platforms, universities can use these findings to inform their decision-making processes regarding social media strategies for stakeholder engagements. By prioritizing platforms with higher agreement rates, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp, universities can focus their efforts on channels that are more likely to resonate with their stakeholders.

Universities in Kenya focus on developing targeted strategies to actively engage alumni, industry partners, and parents through social media platforms. Implementing initiatives such as mentorship programs, alumni networking events, and parent-specific communication channels can help increase their involvement and create a stronger sense of community. Universities should consider leveraging the benefits of social media, such as enhanced communication and increased stakeholder engagement, to bridge the gap and foster meaningful connections with these stakeholder groups. By recognizing the value of involving diverse stakeholders, universities can cultivate stronger relationships and maximize the potential of social media for stakeholder engagements.

Universities need dedicated staff, sufficient resources, and effective strategies to ensure consistent and active engagement. Privacy and security concerns were mentioned as well, with the need for universities to safeguard sensitive information and protect stakeholders' privacy. These findings underscore the importance of addressing the identified challenges to optimize the use of social media for stakeholder engagements in universities in Kenya. Strategies such as establishing clear guidelines for managing negative feedback, developing cohesive branding and messaging, allocating adequate resources, and implementing robust privacy and security measures can help overcome these challenges.

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