INFLUENCE OF FACEBOOKON PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY IN UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY OF ST PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

A dissertation presented to the Department of Communication Studies in the School of Computer Science and Communication Studies, St Paul's University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication Studies.

BY

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June, 2024

DECLARATION

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Declaration by Supervisors

This dissertation has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to analyze how use of social media in corporate affairs has influenced how universities create and implement their public relations strategies. . The study used the Technology Acceptance Model and the Adaptive Structuration Theory as the theoretical framework. Mixed research methods were used to get the research data from a total of 361 respondents. The sample size comprised of the Public Relations manager of St. Paul's university, 350 students and 10 lecturers from the Department of Communication Studies in the School of Communication and Computer Studies. An interview guide was used to extract data from the public relations manager while a questionnaire was issued to students and lecturers. The data wasanalyzed using SPSS before presenting findings. The key findings were that use of Facebook had forced the university to create a Public Relations strategy for their social media while various activities like advertising as well as brand positioning were being carried out to help implement the strategy. The platform was also shown to be effective at helping implement the public relations strategy in the present and in the long term. In conclusion, Facebook has influenced the creation of a social media strategy that is incorporated into the overall Public Relations strategy in the university. The study recommends that universities invest in hiring and training personnel to manage their social media accounts.

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ABBREVIATIONS

PR Public Relations

PRO Public Relations Officer

SMS Short Message Service

UGC User Generated Content

CGC Customer Generated Content

EWOM Electronic Word of Mouth/Mouse

SPU St Paul's University

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Social Media: This is a collection of web-based programs that builds on the conceptual and technical underpinnings of Web 2.0 and permits the production and exchange of user-generated content.

Public Relations: This is astrategic management activity that helps create and sustain mutual channels of communication, understanding, acceptance and co-operation between an organization and its publics through the management of complaints, ensuring that management stays informed and responsive to public sentiments and also serving to ensure that management are aware of any changes in the environment their business operates in.

Public Relations Strategy: This is a consciously planned course of action which is a ploy to outwit and out-maneuver competitors following a pattern of actions after carefully analyzing the organizations place or position in an environment and your perception of the world. However, the strategy always differs from organization-to-organization.

Social Media Strategy: This can described as the adoption of a configured set of activities to create value and set one apart from other users on social media.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter highlights the available background information regarding the research study. It introduces the basic concepts regarding the invention and evolution of Facebook as a medium of communication. The integration and use of Facebook in Public Relations was analyzed from a global view to give a better picture of its influence on Public Relations Strategy. The use of Facebook throughout Africa and locally is also highlighted to give a better understanding of how Africans have integrated it in their communications activities. The chapter also highlights the research gap and other objectives the study sought to fulfill in order to complete the research and formulate an objective and realistic assessment on the influence of Facebook on Public Relations Strategy at St Paul's University.

1.1 Background of the Study

Social media has massively influenced the way human beings communicate in the current age. This new technology has gone beyond human-to-human communication on the personal level to a more formal setting. Organizations and institutions have quickly incorporated social media into their overall corporate communication strategy due to its popularity around the world (Men et al., 2013). It has now become easier to communicate and interact with people from all over the globe instantaneously.

According to Smith (2013), social media offers great capacity for interaction and relationship building thus making communicationshorter and frequent. Therefore, platforms that have been regarded as tools for informal communication have been incorporated into the corporate sphere. Public relations professionals have thus been forced to evaluate social media in order

to maximize its effectiveness. Valentini (2014)asserts that public relations professionals must understand how the digital world operates when it comes to collecting and sharing information. Therefore, a well-structured strategy is required.

Effective communication strategy is key to achieving success in any organization or institution. This requires that corporate leaders adapt their thinking and successfully create a plan that requires time and a concerted effort in order to shape the brand and image of the organization in powerful ways (Blakeman, 2014). This strategy is what guides the communication process of an organization including message content and the channels used to disseminate the messages to the target audiences.

Public Relations professionals have adopted social media in their professional life and therefore they must understand that these platforms have both benefits and disadvantages that can greatly influence the success and survival of an organization. With the dangers and benefits in mind, Barker et al. (2013), states that an organization requires a proactive social media strategy which can fulfill its strategic goals. To enhance its effectiveness, the online communication strategy must be established within the general communication strategy of the company.

Online strategy must be designed with the intention of achieving the objectivesof the company. There is a belief among researchers that the combination of communication and technology equips Public Relations professionals with the ability to tailor their overall communication plan in a more strategic direction. By having a clear and a concise strategy, the professionals are able to reap the benefits of social mediated public relations

activities.However, Zerfass et al. (2017), contends that most Public Relations professionals do not maximize the advantages social media offers to the field of Public Relations. This implies thatmajority of them do not understand how social media helps to improve their professional goals and onlyuse social media as another channel for personal engagements.

It appears that there has been a higher rate of social media adaptation in universities by both students and staff. This is because social media is seen as a major source of information in relation to activities within and outside the university set up. This is supported by the existing mobile technologies such as laptops, tablets and smartphones that enable people to remain connected. The capacity of these platforms in allowing interaction between universities and their clients has made it critical to integrate them in their overall communication strategy (Zerfass et al., 2017).

1.1.1 Overview of Social Media

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is a collection of web-based programs that builds on the conceptual and technical underpinnings of Web 2.0 and permits the production and exchange of user-generated content. On the other hand, Hung (2010) defines social media as platforms on the internet that give people and organizations the ability to create and upload information as well as form connections with others.Kent (2013) asserts that social media are the new electronic and internet communication platforms such as podcasts, social networks and other media that allow dialogue.

Social media penetration worldwide has increased over the years. According to a research by GlobalWebIndex.com (2023), currently, 3.96 billion people use social media around the

globe. Social media use has been growing at 12.5% every year since 2015. Regional growth has been led by Asia with +16.98%, Africa +13.92%, South America +8.00%, North America +6.96%, Europe +4.32%, and Australasia +4.9%. Basically, 58.11% of the world's total population regardless of age is on social media with people spending an average time of 2 hours and 25 minutes daily on social media. The research also found that 99% of internet users' access social media through mobile internet and 1.32% access it via desktop. Facebook is the most popular platform with 2.7 billion active users monthly. You Tube has 2 billion, WhatsApp 2 billion, FB Messenger 1.3 billion and WeChat 1.2 billion active users monthly.

Facebookis a platform that offers services that enable users to engage and connect with friends, family and colleagues. As of January 2023, Facebook had 2.74 billion users worldwide making it the largest platform (Statista.com, 2024). This gives Facebook a clear advantage over the other platforms due to the many users. Facebook has taken advantage of this by creating services such as Facebook Business which enable users to interact with their clients and other stakeholders as well as enabling business-to-business communication (Facebook.com,2023).

In Kenya, use of social media has grown considerably over the years with the country now being referred to as the "silicon savannah". Currently there are 17.86 million internet users giving the country an internet penetration rate of 32.7% based on a report by DataReportal.com(2023). The country has 10.5 million active users on social media with 96.1% connected via mobile devices. The most popular social media platforms in the country are WhatsApp being used by 89%, Facebook 81.7%, You Tube 58.4%, FB Messenger 37.4%, Instagram 37.3% and Twitter 34.4%. A study by SIMELab.com (2020) discovered that most

Kenyans use social media platforms to connect and engage with news content, share information, interact with brands and entertain themselves. This has caused the need for organizations and institutions to adopt social media as a tool for public relations activities. According to DataReportal.com (2023), 15.9 million Kenyans interacted with businesses and brands and spent 1.1 billion US Dollars shopping online in 2022. This is an indication that public relations professionals, institutions and organizations cannot ignore the value of incorporating social media in their communication strategy.

1.1.2 Public Relations Strategy

Public relations cover a broad range of functions and activities that all aim to satisfy the goals of the individual or organization. All these functions are interrelated in order to achieve goodwill and understanding from the target publics of the organization. Therefore, a public relations officer (PRO) is tasked with formulating messages and content that is aimed at organization's publics through activities such as marketing and advertising, media relations, customer relations, corporate social responsibility, and internal/employee relations (Zerfass et al., 2017). Although publicity is not the aim, PROs must carry out these activities in a manner that helps create, sustain and improve the image and brand of their organizations.

, The PROs and their organization need a strategy in order to carry out these functions. Mintzberg et al. (1998) defines strategy as a consciously planned course of action which is a ploy to outwit and out-maneuver competitors following a pattern of actions after carefully analyzing the organizations place in an environment and the perception of the world. However, the strategy always differs from organization-to-organization. Chung et al. (2017),

suggests that for a strategy to work, all public relations activities must become well integrated, where themost practical and efficient wayis to design public relations programs based on the analysis of the organization publics and stakeholders.

Social media based public relations have been spearheaded by the fact that billions of individuals around the globe are active on the internet for whatever reason. This has also been pushed on by the global reach and numerous benefits of using social media as a public relations (PR) tool (Camilleri, 2018). This capability to reach millions of people worldwide and to actively interact with stakeholders in real time has made social media a core tool in the corporate world.Public relations activities that were normally carried out through traditional forms of communication have now been transferred to the online sphere hence saving organizations a lot of money. This cost effectiveness of social media and its global reach has made it a popular communication channel in the corporate world (Kemp, 2019).

1.1.3 Social Media and Public Relations in Universities

Amidst the growth and advancement of social media and its applications, institutions of higher education all over the world have been forced to enter this world of social media. In particular, educators have found themselves expected to use social media in their teaching and communication with students and other staff.This need to satisfy the new learners who are social media and tech-savvy has led to a high level of social media usage within universities all around the globe.Menkhoff et al. (2014) argues that the students of the net generation are different from the traditional students. They use the web to learn and network, and traditional methods of teaching do not work anymore due to these differences and the fact

that they want to learn differently. When they join university, existing values on how to acquire knowledge conflict with their modern and contemporary ideas. This new generation does its networking differently and its members work in collaboration in order to carry out and complete several tasks at a go, while also using the web as a source for information and new ideas.

Social media are viewed by some educators as critical in the academic sector (Healy, 2015). Therefore, universities and especially lecturers need to minimize uncertainties by discovering and adapting new techniques to encourage and improve student learning through the use of social media. This is because many of these students rely on social media for information about activities within and outside the university. Therefore, there is a large population of academic instructors that have begun to evaluate how these new technologies can successfully improve the learning experiencein order to help institutions of higher learning in improving social media awareness amongtheir students (Brech et al., 2017).

In Singapore, students in some universities have been using twitter to give themselves a voice and to be more engaged with their peers and instructors through discussions and knowledge sharing. Menkhoff et al. (2014) states that getting feedback from students is one way the instructors in Singapore are using to stay engaged with their students and also to identify knowledge gaps and other challenges they can address on the spot.Apart from the influence of social media on student learning and growth, these platforms can also affect institutional services and operations.According to Mbatha (2014) social media can affect communication and marketing strategies, various support services as well as recruitment andorientation of

students. However, information on how social media actually affects these other activities in universities is quite scarce.

In addition, it is clear that many organizations and institutions use social media for communication with their publics. They explore ways to develop and encourage its use while weighing the advantages and disadvantages.Use of Social media also provides institutions with a whole new set of challenges that they must address before and also while using social media.For instance, Brech et al.(2017) argues that many of the available platforms are not designed with the intent of using them for educational purposes which causes educators to be concerned about their usage to achieve the curriculum objectives. The main causes for these concerns are issues such as online behavior,privacy, and identity theft. It is clear that controlling and owning these platforms is difficult.

With the rise of global university ranking systems, Public Relations Officers (PROs) and institutions can no longer ignore social media especially in their communication and marketing purposes. Social media has therefore come to enable institutions become socially relevant in the global community of universities and other institutions of higher learning. PROsin these institutions have therefore embraced these platforms to increase web presence and create backlinks to their institution's websites. This web traffic constitutes fifty per cent of the scores by Webometric, one of the biggest agencies that rank universities globally.

In Africa, institutes of higher learning have also embraced use of social media in their activities.As Mbatha (2014) states, these new communication mediums are one of the few ways that Africans can bypass the breakdowns in the system that allow the status quo to hold

on. It removes many barriers against engagement and interactions thus allowing everyone to speak up and be heard. This has therefore caused acceptance of social media by the youth all over Africa. This has in turn led to the proliferation of e-learning systems in learning institutions and the acquisition of new skills.However, the application of e-learning and social media in African universities is still at its infancy or even non-existent in some universities.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The invention of social media has offered Public Relations officers multiple mediums to communicate and keep in touch with their audiences without too much reliance on traditional media forms. Stakeholders can now receive real time updates on organizational activities in addition to getting their queries dealt with in a timely manner. Institutions of higher learning have also been forced to invest in this new technology that has become essential in both formal and informal communication and which have radically altered the existing institutional philosophies and educational practices (Taylor, 2017). Universities have created accounts on platforms such as Facebook and some have made attempts to help lecturers and students transition into this new technological trend (Kuzma et al., 2013).However, the integration of social media in African universities is still at its infancy because many universities are stuck in their traditional ways and would like to adopt these new technologies on their own terms (Owusu-Acheaw et al., 2015).It is against this backdrop that the research paper sought to find out how universities were implementing their public relations strategy on Facebook.

1.3Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The main objective of the study was to investigate the influence of Facebook on Public Relations Strategy at St Paul's University.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To find out how Facebook message content influences publicity of programmes atSt Paul's University.
2. To investigate how Facebook messaging frequency influences information dissemination at St Paul's University.
3. To analyze how Facebook friend-to-friend communication influences interactivity at St Paul's University.
4. To assess how feedback analysisinfluences brand positioning at St Paul's University.

1.3.3 Research Questions

1. How does the message content posted on Facebook influence the publicity of programmes offered at St. Paul's University?
2. How does the university's frequency of posting on Facebook influence information dissemination at St. Paul's University?
3. How doesFacebook's friend-to-friend communication influence interactivity at St Paul's university?

4. How does feedback analysis on Facebook influence brand positioning at St Paul's university?

1.4 Justification of the Study

The purpose of this study wasto add new information and contribute to the development of further research in this field while highlighting how Facebook can influence Public Relations Strategy.In addition, the aim of the study was to fill the information gap that exists between Public Relations Officers and their organizations onintegration and use of Facebook to interact with stakeholders such as students, staff, the administration, and other external stakeholders.

The study also intended to enlighten Public Relations officers working in the higher learning sector on the advantages of using social media to boost their university's global ranking and reputation in order to propel them to build a global network and brand similar to those of their international counterparts. Further, the study was to enlighten University administrators on the value of investing in these new media as part of their communication strategy. It was to help the administrators and management of universities understand the advantages of training their public relations officers and other staff as well as providing the necessary tools and infrastructure to fully utilize this new technology.

1.5 Scopeof the Study

The aim of this study was to ascertain how universities engage and interact with their stakeholders through Facebook. The studyfocused on how Facebook has influenced Public

Relations Strategy in universities. To achieve the set objectives, a case studyof St Paul's University was conducted. The university was selected since it would show a clear picture of how hard universities that do not rely on government support such as student placement and capitation, have to work to attract and communicate with their stakeholders. The sample population was derived from the Department of Communication Studies in the School of Communication and Computer Studies and the Public Relations Office. The university's Facebook accountwas also analyzed.

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

The study proceeded with the assumption that respondents would be cooperative while also being truthful with the information they provide. The sample size was expected to paint a picture on how Facebook influences Public Relations Strategies of universities within the urban setting in Kenya and Africa.

1.7 Summary of the Chapter

The purpose of the chapter was to highlight background information on the concepts of the study by highlighting existing information globally and within the African context. The existing literature was able to highlight the research gaps that the study intended to fill through answering various research questions.The chapter also highlights the scope, justification and challenges the study expected to encounter during the research process. The study was also able to highlight a number of assumptions made during the research process.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that guided the study. The section presents an in depth analysis of two theories and how they related and benefited the study based on the available literature. Further, the chapter also presents a discussion of empirical literature in relation to the variables of the study.

2.1 Theoretical Review

Malewski (2017) defines a theory as an unconfirmed or unprovenhypothesis on speculation based onreality, which is not yet known to be so but it provides a systematic structure for dealing with problems. This study was anchored on the Adaptive Structuration Theory (AST) and theTechnology Acceptance Model (TAM)

2.1.1 Adaptive Structuration Theory (AST)

AST originated from the Structuration Theory by Anthony Giddens (1984). Giddens (1984) argues that people do notentirely actrandomly but are usually influenced by internal and external factors based within the societal context. DeSanctisand Poole (1994) further add to this idea by examining how the process technology is implemented in declaring that people will either use technology as the original design intended or manipulate its use in order to fit their social structure or needs.

DeSanctis and Poole (1994)proposed AST as a tool to facilitate researchers and scholars to analyze the part advanced information technologies can play in the change and evolution of any organization. The main idea and strength of AST is that it expands on how the interaction

processes of advanced information technologies and their application are affected by social structures around them. AST categorizes and investigates the change process through two dimensions: the various kinds of structures that develop as a result of advanced technologies and the systems they create as people put these technologies in use (DeSanctis et al., 1994).Scialdoneet al. (2013) argues that researchers are in agreement that the effects of advanced technologies have more to do with the way individuals interact with the technologiesthan about the particular technologies themselves. Therefore, what people experience while using these technologies might differ with the actual intended use of technology.

Orlikowski (1992) argues that the adaptation of advancing information technologies by organizations is a key factor in achieving organizational change and therefore AST acts as a framework to help study the variations that occur within the organization during the integration and utilization of these technologies. The study and analysis of the effects of communication technologies on the changes within an organization is approached from to main viewpoints. The first viewpoint is from the decision making school. This concept is based on conducting progressive and optimistic research and claims that progressive and strategic decisions are the buildingblocksof an organizationand the idea that the technology must consist of data and decision models that have the capacity to eliminate human shortcomings and when put to use they result in overall gratification to all those involved in the organizations(DeSanctis et al., 1994). Furthermore, the institutional viewpoint, posits that the integration of new technology is a chance to implement new ideas instead of being a passive agent of change. Although the institutional school of thought is more focused on the

social evolution within human institutions rather than those within advancing technology, the two schools of thought concur that when conducting research on new technology and how it brings about organizational change, one should always analyze all interactions and consider the existing social norms and cultural changes (Scialdone et al., 2013).

A study on global virtual teams with AST applied as a guide was conducted byMaznevskiet al., (2000)and found that there was an increase in benefits for an organization when advanced information technologies were implemented as the needs of the organization became more complex.This study argues that the global virtual team's most productive utilization of communication technologies wasmostly influenced by its activities and its environment while the organization of the team was altered due to the integration and use of these new technologies (Scialdone et al., 2013).Based onMaznevski et al., (2000), the theory showcased the use of digital communication systems and their adoption by the virtual team as they used it collaboratively. The theory also showed how the available contextual factors influenced the process of interaction without limiting the engagement to a single design. Based on this study, the theory is showed to be the most effective with the analysis of how organizations adoptand use technology than any other theory.

Adaptive Structuration Theory enabled the study to analyze how universities and institutions of higher learning use Facebook to engage their stakeholders. Although people around the globebegun incorporating social media in their lives to stay in contact with each other, businesses and institutions realized their potential within the corporate world and they have evolved their designs to satisfy the new market demand offered by organizations globally. With AST's two key arguments being that: 1) new technology affects organizational

structures and 2) organizational structures affect new technology, the study concluded that the theory would help highlight how new communication technologies like Facebook have influenced the universities public relations strategy. In summary, AST was therefore crucial to the study because it helped investigate and understandtheinfluence of Facebook on Public Relations Strategyat St. Paul's University.

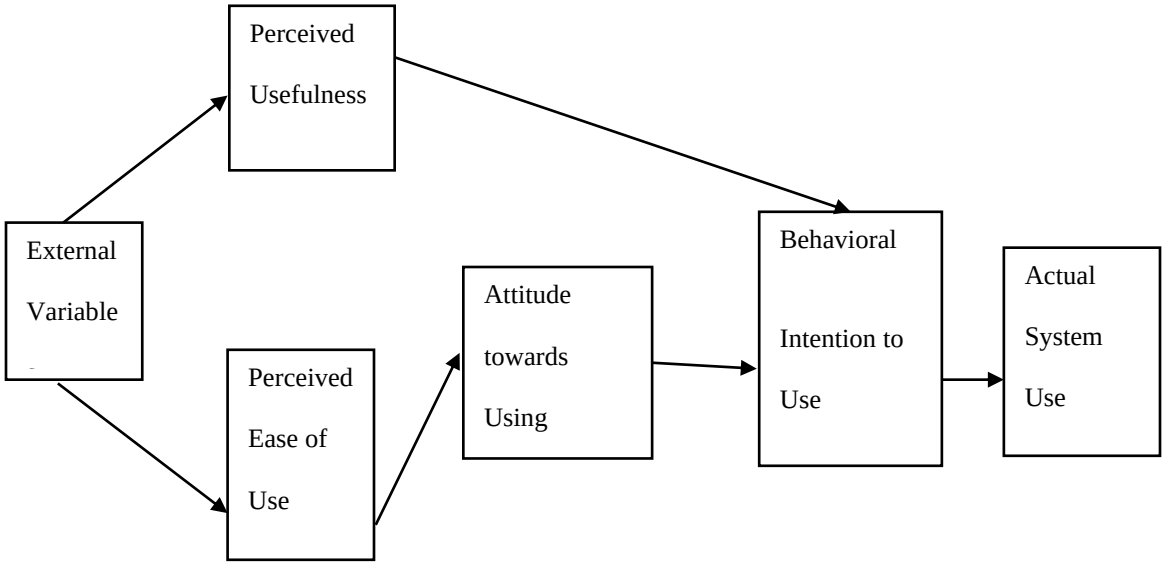
2.1.2 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technological Acceptance Model (TAM) is a theory that illustrates how users adapt to and make use of new technology. TAM was developed from the Theory of Reasoned Action by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and establishes a framework for tracking how external factors influence the belief, attitude and intention to use new technology. As stated byDavis et al. (1989)], the perceived advantages and benefits of using a certain system and how easy it is to use the system are the major determining factors onwhether a user will adopt a system or not.

The leading concept of the TAM is that individuals are inclined to incorporate or reject new technology based on whether they believe and assumeit has benefits to them and that learning to use the technology will not be difficult at all (Fishbein et al., 1975). Basically, for one to build effective technology utilization models, they must consider how easy it is to use the system, the expected usefulness of the system, the desire of individuals to use the system, and their personal opinions of the system (Davis et al., 1989). Therefore the model can use the two variables, perceived usefulness and perceived use of the system to predict the behavior of individuals and organizations. Through this model, it is understood that whenever an individual believes that using a certain technology will play a part in improving productivity

or will benefit the organization, the individual will be eager to adopt it and if at the same instance, the new technology is believed to be easy to implement, individuals will not hesitate to accept it. The model helps highlight how institutions of higher learning like universities view, adopt, and integrate new technologies in their various corporate activities and other operations within the university. It also highlights how various factors such as how easy it is to use new technology and other external factors like target audience influence the adoption and use of these new technologies like Facebook.

Figure 1 Technology Acceptance Model



Despite having several uses and advantages, the theory has also been admonished for being minimalistic in the way it analyzes and predicts matters and is seen to have taken theattention of researchers from other important and valuable research matters and has helped create a false sense of advancement in the field (Chuttur, 2009). Application of theory for this research is important in highlighting the adaptation of Facebook as amedium forexecuting Public

Relations strategies in universities. Most importantly the theory establishes a framework to help understand the perceived usefulness and ease of use of social media technologies by universities.

2.1.3 Relevance of the Theories to the Study

The theories describe the framework under which organizations and institutions adopt and apply social media during their public relations activities. They seek to highlight the connections between universities, social media users and stakeholders involved in the PR practices. They demonstrate how social dynamics, both internal and external, affect PROs and their companies' decision-making processes when it comes to using social media.

2.2General Literature Review

2.2.1 Overview of Social Media

According to Kaplan et al. (2010), social media is a collection of web-based programs that builds on the conceptual and technical underpinnings of Web 2.0 and permits the production and exchange of user-generated content. On the other hand, Hung (2010) defines social media as web-based platforms that let individuals and groups engage with one another while also creating and sharing content. According to Kent (2013) definition, social media are the latest electronic and web-based venues for communication, including social networks, podcasts, blogs, chat rooms, and webpages.

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are internet channels for creating social relationships or online communities between individuals by having common desires or hobbies.On social

networking sites, individuals build communities and relationships by compiling a list of other users with whom they have connections or shared interests. The strongest connections on Facebook are friendships. On Twitter, social networks are built through following connections, which are essentially subscriptions to other people's tweets. What makes SNS so unique is their ability to connect strangers from all over the globe in an instant thus resulting in the creation of relationships between individuals that wouldnormally never happen(Camilleri, 2018).

Blogsare online journals where individuals or organizations can upload a record of activities, thoughts or beliefs Edelman et al.(2005). A blog can also be thought of as a quickly created, individual website that acts as a forum for commentary, opinion, and an unedited, unfiltered source of information on a variety of subjects.Personal opinion blogs are the most common type where individuals use them to comment on various topics such as food and weather. To create a blog however, one needs to use the available blog hosting sites like Wordpress.com and Blogger.com.

Content generating and sharing sites are simply used as informational resources for a range of subjects. They involve users creating content and then sharing it on these online platforms to their specific audiences or the general online community. The content created ranges from words, pictures, audio and videos. Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, YouTube and Instagram are the most popular content generating and sharing sites available in the market.In essence, these platforms provide free information and data to all their users with people being able to search for different types of content, download and use it for free.

User appraisal sites are platforms for commentaries and reviews of different kinds of products and services. Platforms like“www.pagalguy.com” facilitate customers to share their personal opinions on various products and services they have come into contact with. These sites therefore help create a platform for consumers to make the most appealing and beneficial decisions before purchasingproducts and services based on the available information posted by other members.

With social media channels being used for business by 40% of internet users globally, it is clear why professionals and organizations worldwide are incorporating these platforms as official communication channels. Camilleri (2018), stated that social media has the capability to offer business advantages for organizations by reaching a global audience at very low costs. This advantage is a reason for any organization or institution to at least consider incorporating social media into their general communication strategy.

In conclusion, all these types of social media are accessible through various platforms that enable users to interact with their family, friends, community, organizations and the entire world. Facebook isthe platform which was discussed in detail to highlight its features and how it influences communication especially within organizations and their audiences.

2.2.2 Facebook

Facebook is a platform that offers services that enable people to communicate with friends, family and their colleagues. As of January 2023, Facebook had 2.74 billion users worldwide making it the largest platform (Statista.com, 2024). This gives Facebook a clear advantage over the other platforms due to the many users. Like Twitter, Facebook has taken advantage

of this by creating services like Facebook Business which facilitate users to engage with their clients and other stakeholders as well as business-to-business communication (www.facebook.com, 2023).

Users on Facebook are able to create communities in which they congregate to discuss, critic, review, commend or question an organization. This democratization of the online space triggers the exchange of information while also forcing brands and organizations to behave appropriately (Mbatha, 2014).The best approach to conducting public relations on Facebook requires one to understand the concepts of 1) message content, 2) friend-to-friend communication, 3) messaging frequency and 4) feedback analysis (Scott, 2022).

2.2.3 Message Content

Messagecontent can be defined as all materials including photos, text and videos that an individual or organization uploads on their social media accounts (Khan, 2017). The content can be created from scratch by the users or re-shared from other sources. Various social media platforms are able to support different kinds of content while some only focus on specific content (Kaplan et al., 2010). For instance, a user on YouTube or TikTok can only upload videos while on a platform like Facebook, the user can upload videos, audio, text and pictures. Users can share a variety of social media content on their profiles, including user-generated content, images and videos, live streams, polls and quizzes, competitions and contests, influencer partnerships, and product posts.

2.2.4 Friend-to-Friend Communication

Friend-to-friend communication on Facebook requires the creation of personal profiles that other users can befriend or follow in order to make interaction possible. Users basically describe themselves and add information that they think is relevant to their publics (Scott, 2022). This could also be accompanied by photos and physical addresses. These profiles are applicable for both individual and company accounts on Facebook and make it easier for friends, fans and clients to find you for interaction.

2.2.5 Messaging Frequency

According to DeMers (2015), an organizations social media pages generates 32% of its web traffic with people visiting Facebook mostly for up to date information. This makes frequency of messaging critical for any organization. The target audiences have a desire for up to date information in a timely and consistent manner. This high level and consistent interaction on Facebook enables individuals and organizations to create brand identities and brand communities. This brand positioning therefore needs to be reinforced by consistent messaging in order to incentivize the target audiences to visit the pages more frequently.

2.2.6 Feedback Analysis

By interacting with their publics on Facebook, organizations are able to learn about their customer segments and receive feedback about their products and services. This further allows organizations to analyze this feedback and make improvements where necessary. According to Jang et al. (2015) suggestions and criticisms from customers and even non-

customers should be taken seriously as they could help the organization position itself in accordance to the real needs of its publics.

2.3 Empirical Review

This section presents the studies related to the research topic. Available studies in the area of social media and public relations were analyzed and synthesized to extract data that is relevant to the research topic.

A studybyAgha (2017) on the influence of social media on public relations practices in universities in South-East Nigeria,the researcher discovered that the institutions were not using social media as frequently as they should nor did they have trained personnel. By analyzing data collected from eight public relations managers from eight universities in the region, it was found that even though the use of social media had changed communication there was an underutilization of these new technologies within the university sector.This study therefore clearly helps paint a picture of the situation on social media usage in universities and how these new media such as Facebook has influenced public relations strategy.

Achor et al. (2015) in their study where they evaluated the impact of social media on information management in public relations practice,discovered that PRO's were benefitting by using these platforms for personal as well as official activities. A survey of 225 registered public relations practitioners in Nigeria was done.The study found out that these new media platforms had enhanced how PR activities were being executed with Facebook and Twitter being the favorite platforms for most of the respondents. The study however did not highlight

the extent to which the platforms had influenced or had been integrated into the overall public relations strategy.

The concerns on integration of social media into the overall public relations strategy in Achor et al. (2015) were addressed by findings of Raj et al. (2015) in their study on the usage of social media for corporate communication in the Indian city of Bengaluru. By surveying 125 corporate communication professionals across the city, it wasfound that PRO's used social media for customer relations, employee communication, media relations and maintaining relationships with the general public. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn were also found to be the most preferred platforms for corporate communication by the PRO's. This is similar to the findings of Cao et al.(2016) in their study on how social media influenced employee performance at work.The results showed that when employees share networks and values, it helps in information sharing and exchange of knowledge.By surveying 379 Chinese public relations professionals, it was found that by incorporating social media in internal communication, it helps breed togetherness and trust thus creating a shared vision and improving performance.

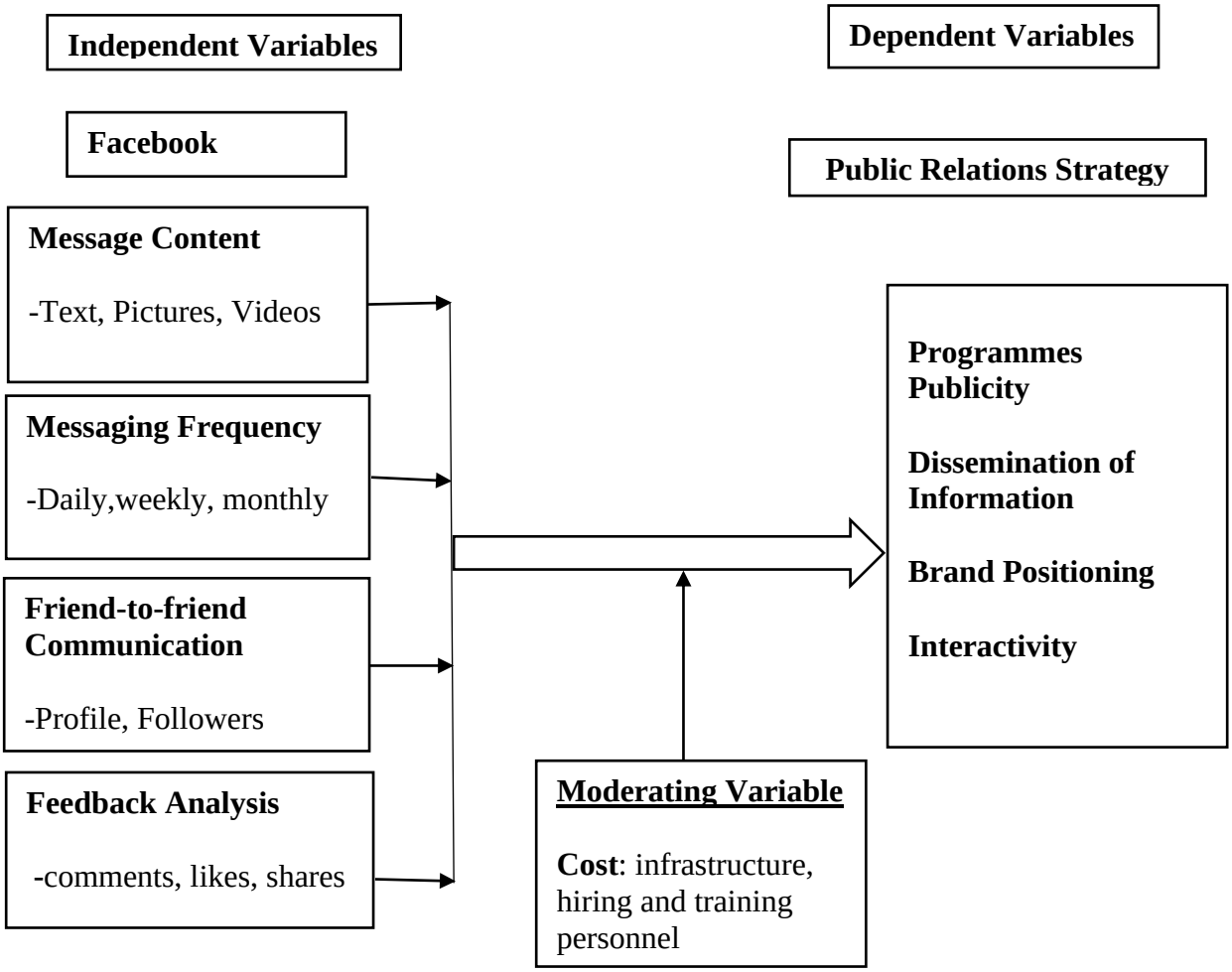
The ability of social media to influence almost all corporate communication activities within universities and organizations makes it impossible for PRO's to ignore it. As Smith et al. (2017) in their study on understanding how engagement on social media affects the user's sense of influence,posits that building credibility with the online audience was a strategy PRO's could not ignore as this could affect their organizations overall performance. By interviewing 19 millnnials and professionals in the United States, they found that user's sense of influence was based on how professional or knowledgeable one was in whatever they were

communicating on these platforms. This in return has caused the riseof influencers and brand ambassadors that help organizations in brand building, marketing and advertising and also social corporate responsibility activities. Smith et al. (2017) concurs that with social media putting organizations on the defensive because of lack of control in the platforms, brand ambassadors, influencers and other online activities could in theory help the organization take charge of the narrative.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2 below illustrates the relationshipbetween independent and dependent variables in this particular study.

Figure 2 Conceptual Framework



From theconceptual framework (Figure 2), the dependent variable is public relations strategy. Public relations strategy can only be actualized when challenges that hamper full implementation of the strategy are addressed. The utilization of a platform such as Facebook to implement this strategy is due to the cost and advantages of integrating it. The ease of using this platform to create and disseminate unique content and information to specific audiences is another mitigating factor in the implementation of public relations strategy via Facebook.

Therefore, the moderating variables have a strong effect on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. If there are challenges integrating these platforms into the public relations strategy, PRO's and their organizations might be slow or entirely refrain from incorporating these new technologies. These challenges range from the high cost of infrastructure such as work spaces, computers, and internet fees to issues of employing and training qualified personnel to manage and handle these platforms.

2.5Emerging Gaps

Findings from various scholars indicate that social media is rapidly transforming how people and organizations communicate. The available research indicates that this new technology has forced public relations officers and their organizations to continually review their communication strategies. However, most of this research does not target the higher learning sector, particularly how these institutions are incorporating social media into their communication strategy.

It is also clear that even though the world is becoming more technologically reliant especially for communications, universities have been slow to invest in new media technologies. This

slow adoption has also led to institutions being slow to come up with the appropriate social media communication strategies while others have none at all.

2.6Chapter Summary

The intention of the chapter was to lay out a theoretical framework and analyze the existing literature and empirical evidence within the area of study. At the same time, the chapter highlighted the conceptual framework as the variables relate to each other. The literature analyzed was able to show a clear relationship between public relations practices and social media. Several researchers are able to show the emergence and need for social media in the corporate sector. The studies also noted the need for institutions of higher learning to continually grow their understanding on how Facebook influence Public Relations Strategy.

However, someissues were identified in relation to how universities use Facebook. The scholars discovered that many institutions were slow to adopt social media and they also lacked the required skillset and other resources to lower the risks while maximizing the advantages of using social media.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology that was employed to find out the influence of Facebook on Public Relations Strategy at St Paul's University. The study presents a detailed description of the methods employed in acquiring of both primary and secondary data.

3.1 Research Design

Research design refers tothe developing of an investigative strategy or plan aimed at highlighting the relationships between variables for the intention of acquiring data to allow the investigator to test hypothesis or answer the research questions by providing guidelines for carrying out research activities (Okaja, 2003). As a result, it serves as a framework that the researcher can use to address the issue raised by the research. This study adopted mixed-methods to gather the necessary data.

A mixed-methodsresearch design wasbeneficial in this study since it provided an opportunity to gather and analyze qualitative and quantitative information without manipulating the variables used in the study. This design also allows deductive reasoning making it possible to generalize the study findings to other areas beyond the scope of study. It also helps in solving a practical problem through collection and collation of suitable information (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

3.2 Population of the Study

The study was conducted at St Paul's University. The university was chosen in order to highlight the extent universities that do not rely on government support such as capitation and

studentsplacements have to go to in order to keep up with the competition. The strategies these universities employ in their public relations are inherently different and therefore this study establishes how they are implemented. The campus's location close to an urban center such as the capital city, Nairobi, also made it likely that social media had been integrated into its overall communication strategy due to the urban setting and population.It was expected that students and staff at the campus were most likely social media users.

The population was derived from the Public Relations Department which has four employees. Another targeted population was the lecturers in the Departmentof Communication Studies, School of Communication and Computer Studies, who currently total to 10. Finally students from the Departmentof Communication Studies, School of Communication and Computer Studies which has a total population of 4019 students (Source; St Paul's University Registry, 2023). The study expected that this department would provide the relevant data due to their in-depth knowledge of its population since the researcher is a student within the department. The department also has a large number of students as confirmed by the University Registry, thus offering a large and dynamic population to choose from and the results can be therefore generalized to the rest of the university.

Secondary data wasextracted from the university's official Facebook accounts. Press releases, advertisements, public announcements posted on these social media networks were analyzed to portray a better picture of the university's use of Facebook.

3.2.1 Sample Size

The sample size of the study was derived from the Public Relations department and the Department of Communication Studies, School of Communication and Computer Studies. From the Public Relations department, the communications manager was purposively chosen due to their insider knowledge on the university's communication strategy. From the student population of 4019, a sample of 350 students was targeted. A census was conducted on the entire population of 10 lecturers in the department of communication studies. The student sample size was calculated at a 95% confidence level, a 50% standard deviation and a ±5% margin of error. This gave the researcher a total of 361 respondents.

$$sample\ size\ = \mathrm{Z}^2 \times \mathrm{P}(1-\mathrm{P})/\mathrm{e}^2\ \div 1 + [\mathrm{Z}^2\ \times \mathrm{P}(1-\mathrm{P})/\mathrm{e}^2\mathrm{N}]$$

Z score (Z) = 1.96 (confidence level: 95%)

Population Size (N) = 4019 students

Standard Deviation (P) = 0.05

Margin of Error (e) = 0.5

3.2.2 Sampling Technique

The number of respondents was determined using Stratified Random Sampling, Simple Random Sampling, and Purposive Sampling. According to Etikan et al., (2016) purposive sampling is the act of intentionally choosing participants in accordance with the qualities they have. This non-probability sampling procedure gave the studyan opportunity to interview

individuals with an in-depth understanding of the subject. Public relations officers in the university have unique positions which enable them to provide the required data.

The university's public relations department has a total of four employees and therefore purposive sampling was used to select the public relations manager to represent the entire department. The technique wasconsidered applicable because the public relations officers are the individuals tasked with formulating and implementing the university's social media and overall communications strategy. It was therefore, necessary for the studyto only target those that can offer expert opinion on the topic.

Table 1 Sampling Technique

Students	Stratified Sampling (Groups)	Simple Random Sampling
Lecturers	Census	
Public Relations Office	Purposive Sampling	

Stratified Random Sampling and Simple Random Sampling were used to acquire the appropriate respondents from the student population at the Department of Communication Studies, School of Communication and Computer Studies. The students were broken down into clusters based on the level and year of their study. Simple random sampling enabled the researcher to minimize extreme samples and only target those likely to provide the desired data while ensuring all parts of the target population are represented.The students were divided into various strata as illustrated in the table below:

Table 2 Students Sample

Strata	**Simple Random Sample Size**	**Sample %**
1st Year	70	20%
2nd Year	70	20%
3rd Year	70	20%
4th Year	70	20%
Postgraduate	70	20%
	350	**100%**

3.3 Research Instruments

Primary data was collected directly from the respondents targeted by the study using questionnaires and interviews. Written questionnaires were used in the collection of data from the students and lecturers involved in the study. The questionnaires consisted of a Likert Scale that was used to analyze the different variables. Mugenda et al., (2003)describes a questionnaire as a tool that collectsdata from a massive sample with an aim to breakdown the objectives of the study into specific questions and answers in order to allow each question to generate answers and data used in testing the hypothesis. A total of 360 students and lecturers from the Departmentof Communication Studies, School of Communication and Computer Studies were targeted to provide the desired information. The questionnaires sought to gather information based on the students and lecturers perception on the use of social media within the university.

An in-depth interview was used to obtain information on the study from the university's public relations manager who has insider knowledge on the university's usage of Facebook and its influence on Public Relations Strategies. This was done through a face to face semi-structured interview process and note taking. This allowed the respondent to speak their mind and offer information that wasnot publicly available.

Secondary data was collected from official university social media account on Facebook in order to analyze how it was used and what information was broadcast. The study analyzed social media postings by the university to extract data such as press releases, advertisements, public announcements, and interactions with their social media audiences via the responses and feedback they offer.

3.3.1 Validity of the Instruments

The validity of any research instrument is their capability to measure exactly what it is intended to measure. It is the accuracy and quality of information and data that is derived from the outcome of the research (Mugenda et al., 2003). Therefore, validity is the extentto which the outcome of the data analysis represents the variables which are being studied. In this study, the instrument used wasauthenticated based on the validity of collected content. This content based technique was used to analyze the extent to which the questions relate to the variables in the studyThe instruments were analyzed by experts in the field, such as the researcher's supervisors in order to ascertain whether the instruments are valid.

3.3.2 Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability of a research instrument is its ability to collect and measure data over time in a consistent manner (Mugenda et al., 2003). Therefore, it is the ability of an instrument to yield consistent results after being subjected to repeated trials by researchers in the field.

A pilot study was conducted to determine its consistency and to also make any necessary corrections that maybe needed. Ten respondents from the university were randomly selected to test the instruments capability and reliability. The analysis enabledthe researcher to redesign the research instruments and tailor make them to fit the research objectives in order to get the best results possible.

3.4 Data Analysis and Presentation

Neuman (2006) asserts that qualitative analysis requires the researcher to read and reflect on the collected data in order to make comparisons based on logical judgment. This helps in maintaining a neutral position between the researcher's viewpoint and the data collected in order for personal views not to affect the results.

Content analysis was done to extract data from Facebook. Posts made by the university on Facebook were analyzed to determine their message content as well as the interactions and feedback from the audiences.The elaborate thematic analysis involved the following valuable steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2012);

Familiarize with the data: The researcher transcribed the data, readand analyzed the posts and conversations on Facebook while noting down emerging codes.

Producing initial codes: The codes were derived from posts and conversations relating to how the university posts on Facebook.

Search for the key themes: The identifiable codes were interpreted as potential themes in the qualitative research.

Reviewing the themes: The key themes were reviewed in line with the coded extracts for the entire dataset and generate a thematic map.

Definition and naming of themes: The step entails refinement of the established themes and assigning clear names.

Generating the final report: The final report was generated after selecting the appropriate themes from the data extracted from Facebook. The report comprises results discussion, relating the findings to the existing literature, and conclusions.

After fieldwork, the quantitative data from the structured questionnaires was enteredinto the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for a thorough analysis. After the analysis, the researcher made interpretation or meaning of the data collected.Descriptive statistics were subsequently used to present the examined data.

Interview-based qualitative data was examined by classifying and recording the recurring themes and patterns as well as their similarities. Tables and figures were then used to present the results.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The purpose of ethics is to make sure that nobody is injured or suffers any kind of negative consequences during research activities. The study ensured that the respondents understood that the research is purely for academic purposes. The respondents also retained the right to remain anonymous and also opt out of the process whenever they felt unwilling to continue.

Following the approval byInstitutional Scientific and Ethical Review Committee (ISERC) of St. Paul's university, an introduction letter to permit collection of data was granted. The letter helped validate the research and assist in gaining the trust of the respondents. A permit was also obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) for ethics approval purposes.

The Covid-19 guidelines set up by the Ministry of Health to ensure personal safety and the safety of the respondents for the entire process of data collection and interaction were complied with. Finally, the respondents were assured of their privacy and confidentiality where their personal details would not be disclosed to any other sources.In addition, the information they provided was purely used for academic purposes to investigate the influence of Facebook on public relations strategies by universities.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the emerging patterns and themes from collected data. The main objective of this study was to find out how the use of Facebook had influenced Public Relations strategy at St Paul's University. The data analyzed was acquired from various respondents using questionnaires and interviews. The data was interpreted as per the objectives of the study. The findings of the study were presented using frequency tables and percentages.

4.1 Response Rate

The sample size of the study was 361 respondents. The respondents were however categorized into three groups; 10 lecturers, 350 students and the university's Public Relations officer. These particular respondents were targeted due to their unique relationship with the university thus making them capable of commenting on some of its operations. From the student's sample, 281 questionnaires were duly filled-in and returned. From the lecturers' sample, 7 questionnaires were duly filled-in and returned. The interview with the PR officer was also successfully conducted. Therefore there wasa successful response rate of 80%. A 50% and above response rate is sufficient for statistical analysis (Mugenda et al., 1999).

4.2 Key Informant Interview

The researcher carried out a 30 minutes face-to-face interview with the Public Relations officer at St Paul's University in order to ascertain how the university implements its social media communication strategy. One of the major duties of the Public Relations Department

was to establish and maintain the university's overall communication strategy as well as the social media strategy. Therefore the PR manager was in the position to offer first-hand information on the university's social media strategy.

The interview revealed that the university sees social media as a game-changer in the communication sector. Facebook is seen as a progressive channel that enablesinteraction with a wide range of publics especially those that do not access traditional forms of media. For instance, the manager believes that young people who rarely interact with traditional forms of media like TV and Newspapers can be easily found through various social media platforms. This is huge since they can target potential clients directly and in real time. As Kelly (2014) notes, social media has become extremely popular and is only expected to grow even further. Therefore institutions have to keep up with the trend as young people are their target audience.

The study also revealed that the university has a well-planned social media strategy executed either on a weekly or monthly basis depending on the required objective.The events are planned in the form of a calendar before being carried out. The manager revealed that:

"We plan on how to execute our objectives based on the platform we will use. We also tailor messages for specific platforms based on their characters and what they offer us. The reason we do not mix the messages is mainly because each platform sometimes has its own unique characteristics and users. Ignoring such factors would render the objective unachievable" (Research Data, 2023).

In order to share this content with various users, it was found that the university had made its Facebook account accessible and visible to the entire public by taking advantage offriend-to-friend communication. The profile is branded with official St Paul's University logo and colors for ease of identification to anyone who searched for it or accidentally comes across it. The page also indicates the university contact details and other social media pages. Users can follow the page and interact with the various content and links available. This has greatly improved how the university interacts with its stakeholders as they can easily find and contact the university through Facebook. The manager revealed that this was a level of interactivity they could not achieve with other mediums of communication.

The manager also stated that the message content is then packaged into various forms such as videos, pictures or audiovisuals and many others depending on the objective as well as the unique characteristics of the platform of choice. These messages were aimed at publicizingprogrammes and services offered at the university. Stageman and Berg (2013) concurs that it is very beneficial for a social media messaging to appeal to the specific needs of the target audience in order to create a unique and personalized relationship with the audience. The manager revealed that the publicity of programmes offered at the university was a major area of focus:

"Our adverts are mainly to market our services as an institution to potential clients and other interested publics. With many young people using social media on a daily basis it is important that we do not only focus our advertising on mainstream media but also on social media. Facebook is our most active page because we upload a lot of content there to interact with the young people. We also use the space to highlight the Christian values of

the university as well as our excellent facilities and other student activities that do not interfere with these values" (Research Data, 2023***).***

The social media team also creates and posts content on Facebook at least once daily in order to keep the audience engaged and informed on a regular basis. This messaging frequencyis deemed critical in disseminating the relevant university information to stakeholders in an accurate and timely manner. As the manager and the university's Facebook page revealed, information about course enrollment, academic events, sporting events, graduation and other services offered at the university is posted on a regular basis.The study found that the university was also targeting trending topics on social media to use them as opportunities to help the university trend and promote its brand. This is done through creating hashtags and links to direct the audience to the university social media pages. These hashtags help the university to gain more views and interactions on Facebook and its other platforms.

The study also revealed that the university was actively trying to engage students in the integration and use of social media in order to improve the university'sbrand positioning. The students are identified as "digital warriors" and their main job is to promote the university on Facebook. The students post about various activities or any other material the social media team provides to them. They also make use of the hashtag #WeAreSPU to help the university trend online especially when events like sports and graduations are going on. As the manager revealed:

"We use a special group of students we refer to as digital warriors to promote the university's online presence. This particular kind of brand positioning is critical because

potential clients see the vibrant students on our messages, pictures and videos as the best way to get to know the university and its culture. These students are the only ones that can express that effectively as it is they who have helped create and nurture this culture"(Research Data, 2023).

The manager also revealed that feedback analysis was done in order to improve their application and use of Facebook to implement branding objectives:

"After the posts have been made we make sure to analyze what is happening. For instance some of the users will simply like, comment or share them. We analyze these interactions in order to better gauge the needs of our publics especially based on the comments they make. You can easily avert a crisis by observing the negative comments and quickly handling the issues before they spiral out of control.

It was howeverfound that the university has been slow to integrate the use of Facebook for employee and staff relations:

"So far the university has mainly focused on Email as the main form of official communication among the various staff we have. This means that our capacity to communicate though these platforms is underutilized but we will keep on improving as our social media team grows" (Research Data, 2023).

However, it was noted that even though there was an under-utilization of Facebook for employee relations, the university has engaged its various staff to record promotional

messages discussing various topics. For instance, some lecturers have been able to record videos in respect to their departments or student welfare.

The interview highlighted the university's desire to keep up its social media presence in order to improve its image as well as its global ranking. The use of various #hashtags is also employed to increase engagement with online audiences in order to portray the university in a good way. The "digital warriors" have been key in growing the university's online presence as well as its image to the global digital world.

The manager also revealed that the integration of Facebook as well as other social media for corporate communication has its advantages:

"The use of these new tools like Facebook has been crucial due to their effectiveness in reaching a large diverse group of people. Their main advantage over traditional media is how fast the information can get to the audience and also how personalized this message is. On traditional media like TV, you simply broadcast to everyone and hope for the best. Social media also allows you to measure engagement through things like shares, retweets, comments and likes. The immediacy of the feedback is also extremely valuable. This allows the communications officer to react to situations as they unfold" (Research Data, 2023***)***.

However, it was also discovered that using these new media like Facebook has its disadvantages as well:

"First disadvantage is the team needs to be trained on how to handle these platforms. If the capacity to train is not there then you have to hire more people to handle the media

accounts the institutions operates. In this regard, the university's corporate affairs and social media management team is still growing. Another disadvantage is the fact that you have to create content that resonates with your audience. This mostly leads to extra costs in order to create appropriate content and extra care not to upset the conservative and religious culture within the university. Cyber-crime is also a major issue as you cannot predict what criminals online will do. This means the university has to go to extra lengths to protect itself and the people we interact with online" (Research Data, 2023).

The manager also revealed that the creation of a long term strategy to help further integrate Facebook in Public Relations strategy was possible as evidenced by the university's existing social media strategy as well as their desire to grow and expand the social media management team.

"Social media are a game-changer without doubt. More and more people around the globe depend on them for various reasons. The communication sector has had no choice but to adopt these new tools and employ them to their own benefits. The university has already created a strategy to enable us take advantage of these new platforms and there are plans to expand our team so as to allow as to manage them better and also maximize their uses and advantages. Even though challenges are there, I believe they will be solved as people understand the online space much better and therefore with this growth in understanding, I expect social media to continue playing a key role in all Public Relations activities for the university and the corporate world in general" (Research Data, 2023).

4.3 Lecturers Data

The study collected data from lecturers in the Department of Communication Studies in order to bring out views on the use of Facebook as a tool to communicate within and with the university.

4.3.1 Demographics

The study sought to find out the gender of the respondents as well as their duration of stay at the university.

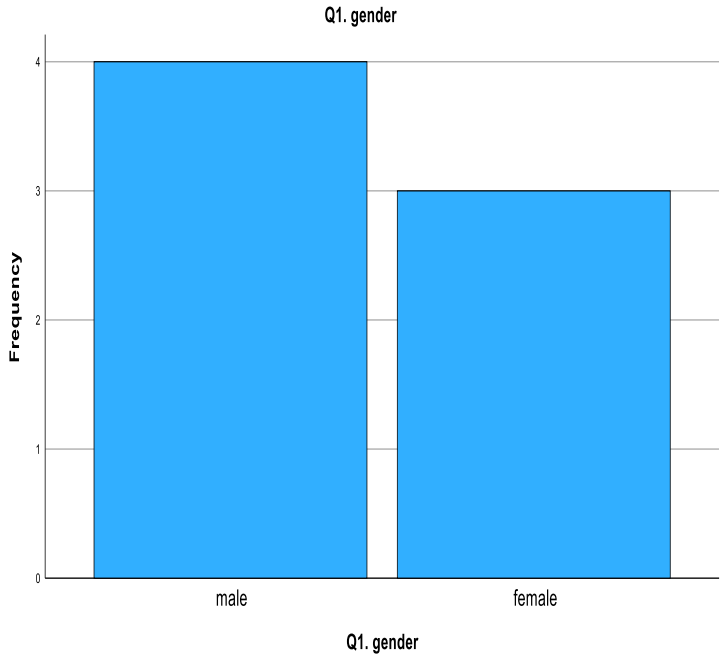
4.3.1.1 Gender of Respondents

Table 3 Gender of Respondents

Q1. gender

	N	%
male	4	57.1%
female	3	42.9%

Figure 3 Gender of Respondents



As illustrated by figure 3, a majority of the lecturers were male. This represents 57.1% of the population. The female lecturers amounted to 42.9% of the total population of 7 lecturers who filled and returned their questionnaires. This indicates that a majority of the respondents were male.

4.3.1.2 Duration at the University

The study sought to know how long the respondents had been working at the university.

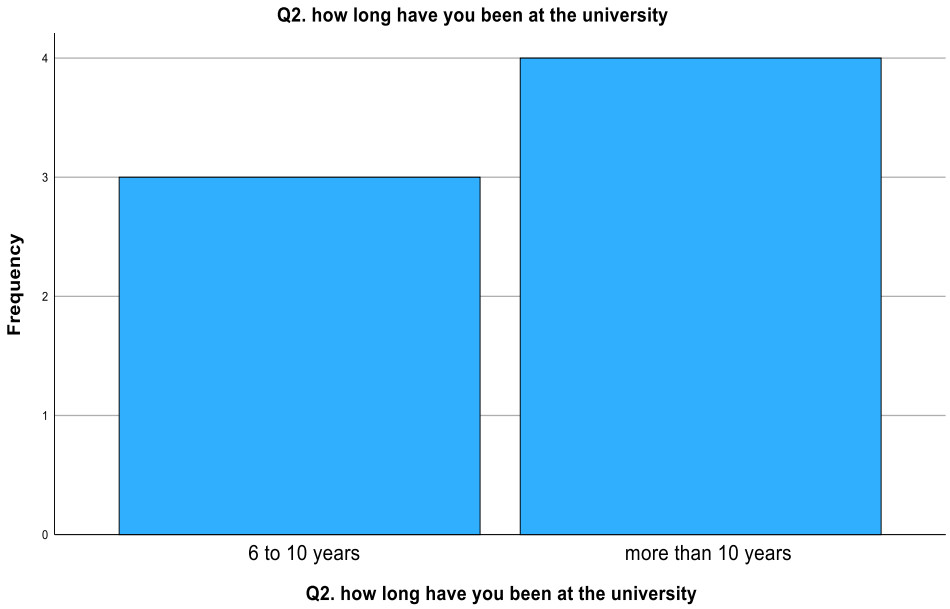
Table 4Duration at University

Q2. how long have you been at the university

	N	%
6 to 10 years	3	42.9%
more than 10	4	57.1%

years		

Figure 4 Duration at University



As illustrated by figure 4, a majority of the respondents have worked at the university for more than 10 years. This represents 57.1% of the population. By the time of data collection, the other respondents had worked at the university for a period between 6 to 10 years.. This represents 42.9% of the population. This clearly shows that the respondents have been at the university long enough to know how it mainly operates.

4.3.2 Social Media Usage

The study sought to find out whether the respondents owned social media accounts and if they did how frequently they used them.

Table 5 Ownership of Social Media

Q3. do you have a social media account	N	%
yes	7	100.0%

As illustrated by the table 5, the entire population (100%) of respondents agreed that they had access to a social media account.

The study also wanted to figure out whether the respondents had access to Facebook.

Table 6 Facebook

Q3B. If yes, are you on fb	N	%
No	2	28.6%
Yes	5	71.4%

As illustratedon table 6, a majority of respondents were using Facebook. This represents 71.4% of the population. 28.6% of the respondents did not have it has their preferred platform.

4.3.2.1 Rate of Social Media Usage

The study also sought to find out how regularly the respondents accessed their social media accounts.

Table 7 Frequency

Q4. how frequently do you use social media	N	%
monthly user	1	14.3%
weekly user	3	42.9%
daily user	3	42.9%

As shown by table 7, there was an even share of those that used their social media daily and those that used it on weekly basis. This is represented by 42.9% for daily user and 42.9% for weekly user. Those who used their social media on a monthly basis stand at 14.3% of the population. This is a clear indicator that a majority of the respondents accessed their social media accounts on a regular basis.

4.3.3 Access to St Paul's University Facebook

The study also sought to find out whether any or all of the respondents had accessed the university's official Facebook page.

Table 8 Access to University Social Media

If yes, have you accessed the university's fb	N	%
No	2	28.6%
Yes	5	71.4%

As shown on table 8, a majority of respondents had access to the University's Facebook page. This represents 71.4% of the population.

4.3.4 Purpose to use Social Media within the University

The study sought to find out the main reason as to why the respondents used their social media platforms while within the university.

Table 9 Purpose

Q6. what is your purpose of using social media within the university

	N	%
to communicate with colleagues	1	14.3%
to communicate with students	2	28.6%
to read news	4	57.1%

As illustrated bytable 9, most of the respondents, 57.1%, accessed their Facebook accounts to read news. 28.6% of the respondents however said they used it to communicate with students while another 14.3% indicated that they used it to communicate with colleagues.

4.3.5 Integration of Facebook for Employee Relations

The study sought to find out whether the university had put in place any measures to assist in the use of Facebook for employee relations.

Table 10 Employee Relations

Q7. has the university helped with integration of social media for employee relations

	N	%

no	7	100.0%

As illustrated bytable 10, the respondents all agreed that the university had not been helpful in the integration of Facebook for employee relations.

4.3.6 Quality of Information found on the University Facebook page

The study sought to find out whether the respondents found the content posted by the university on its Facebook page useful or not.

Table 11Quality of Information

Q8. how useful is the information on the university's fb

	N	%
very useful	1	14.3%
somewhat useful	5	71.4%
useful	1	14.3%

As illustrated by Table 11, the respondents agreed that the information posted on the university's Facebook page is of value. 71.4% note that they found it somewhat useful, while 14.3% of the respondents found it useful and another 14.3% found it to be very useful.

4.3.6.1 Frequency of Interactions

The study also sought to find out how frequently the respondents interacted with information that the university had posted on Facebook.

Table 12 Frequency of Interactions

Q9. your frequency of interaction with information posted by the university on fb	N	%
weekly	6	85.7%
monthly	1	14.3%

as illustrated by table 12, 85.7% of the respondents interacted with information posted by the university of Facebook on a weekly basis while 14.3% did it on a monthly basis.

4.3.7 Access to Customer Related Information

The study sought to find out whether the respondents had come across content targeting customers of the university.

Table 13 Customer Content

Q10. have you interacted with customer related information on fb	N	%
yes	7	100.0%

Table 13 shows that, 100% of the respondents agreed that they had come across content targeting customers on the university's Facebook page.

4.3.7.1 Frequency of Interactions with Customer Related Content

After ascertaining the respondents' interaction with customer relations content, the study sought to figure out how frequently they interacted with said content.

Table 14 Frequency of Interactions

Q10B. If yes how frequently do you interact with customer related information	N	%
yearly	1	14.3%
monthly	3	42.9%
weekly	3	42.9%

As shown by table 14, 14.3% of the respondents came across such information on a yearly basis while 42.9% came across on a monthly basis and finally, another 42.9% of respondents came across it on a weekly basis.

4.3.7.2 Quality of Customer Related Information

The study also sought to find out how the respondents viewed the content they came across and whether they found it useful or not.

Table 15 Quality of Information

Q11. how do you rate the quality of customer related information	N	%

somewhat useful	2	28.6%
useful	5	71.4%

As table 15 illustrates, 71.4% of the respondents found the information to be useful while another 28% found it to be somewhat useful.

4.3.7.3 Response to Customers on Facebook

The study sought to find out whether the respondents had replied to university customers via Facebook.

Table 16 Response to Customers

Q12. have you responded to customers on fb

	N	%
no	7	100.0%

As illustrated by table 16, 100% of the respondents agreed that they had never responded to university customers via Facebook.

4.3.7.4 Engagement by the University to Assist in Customer Relations

The study also tried to ascertain whether the respondents had been approached by the university to assist with customer relations through Facebook.

Table 17 Engagement

Q13. have you been

engaged by the university to assist in customer relations	N	%
no	7	100.0%

As illustrated by table 17, 100% of the respondents denied being approached by the university to assist with customer relations on Facebook.

4.3.8 View on the Future of Facebook in Public Relations

The study also sought the respondent's opinion on the future of Facebook in Public Relations sector.

Table 18 View on Future

Q14. what is your view on the future of fb	N	%
they are excellent tools for both personal and official communication	3	42.9%
institutes of higher learning need to do more to help integrate social media for official use	4	57.1%

As illustrated by table 18, 57.1% of the respondents feel that institutionsof higher learning need help to integrate social media for official use. On the other hand, 42.9% of the respondents believe that social media are excellent tools for both personal and official communication.

4.4 Students Data

The study also sought to acquire data from students within the Communications Department. A total of 281 respondents participated in the exercise.

4.4.1 Demographics

The study sought to find out the gender and year of study of the respondents.

4.4.1.1 Gender

Table 19 Students Gender

Q1. gender

	N	%
male	128	45.6%
female	153	54.4%

Table 19 shows that there was a higher response rate from female students, representing 54.4% of the respondents. The male response rate stood at 45.6% of the respondents.

4.4.1.2 Year of Study

The study also sought to find out which year of study the students were at the time of data collection.

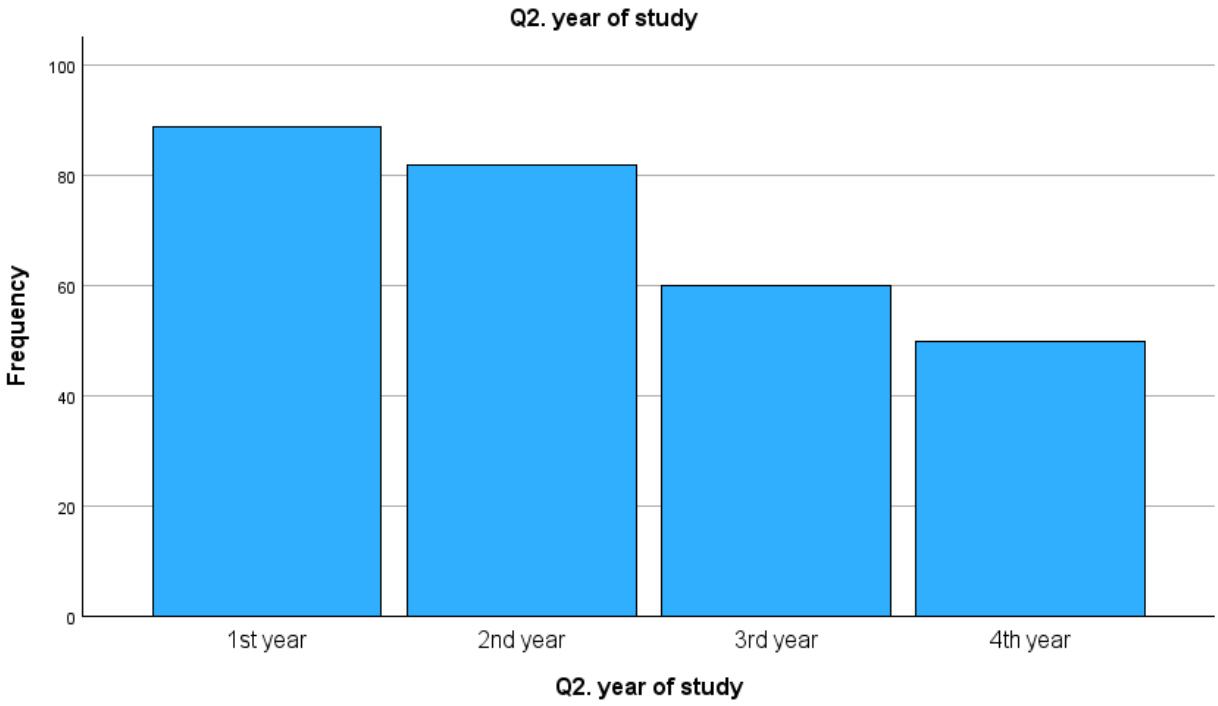
Table 20 Year of Study

Q2. year of study

	N	%
1st year	89	31.7%

2nd year	82	29.2%
3rd year	60	21.4%
4th year	50	17.8%

Figure 5 Year of Study



As illustrated by figure 5, there was a higher response rate among first year students and second year students compared to the third and fourth year students. The first year represent 31.7% of the population, the second year represent 29.2%, third year 21.4% and the fourth years represent 17.4%.

4.4.2 Social Media Usage

The study sought to find out whether the respondents had access to social media platforms and how frequently they used them.

Table 21 Social Media Account

Q3. do you have a social media account	N	%
yes	281	100.0%

As illustrated by table 21, all respondents confirmed that they had access to a social media account.

4.4.2.1 Are you on Facebook?

With respondents confirming that they had access to social media, the study sought to find out whether they used Facebook.

Table 22 Facebook Users

Q3B. If yes, are you on Facebook	N	%
Yes	179	63.7%
No	102	36.3%

As illustrated by table 22, 63.7% of respondents are on Facebook while 3.3% did not use it.

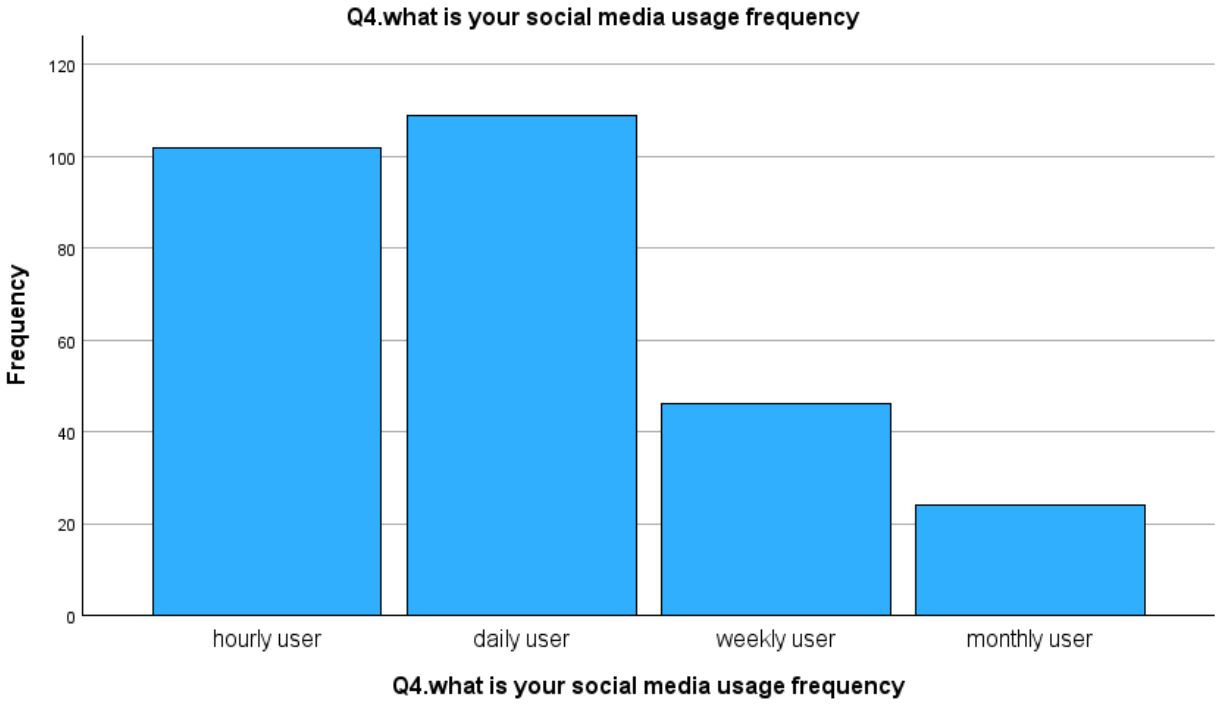
4.4.2.2 Frequency of Using Social Media

Table 23 Usage Frequency

Q4.what is your social media usage frequency	N	%
hourly user	102	36.3%

daily user	109	38.8%
weekly user	46	16.4%
monthly user	24	8.5%

Figure 6 Usage Frequency



As illustrated by figure 6, students who used social media on hourly basis represent 36.3% of the respondents, daily users represent 38.8%, and weekly users are 16.4% while only 8.5% use it on a monthly basis.

4.4.2.3 Interaction within the University through Facebook

The study also sought to ascertain whether the respondents were using their social media platforms to interact while within the university.

Table 24 Interaction Within University

Q5. Do you use social media for interaction within university	N	%
yes	281	100.0%

As illustrated by table24, all respondents agreed to have used their social media to interact within the university.

4.4.2.4 Frequency of Interactions within the University via Facebook

The respondents were also asked to highlight how frequently they used their Facebook account to interact while within the university.

Table 25 Frequency of Interactions

Q5B. if yes, what is the frequency of interactions within university through social media	N	%
daily	130	46.3%
weekly	130	46.3%
monthly	21	7.5%

As table 25 illustrates, daily interactions represent 46.3% of the population, with weekly interactions also representing 46.3% and monthly interactions stand at 7.5%.

4.4.2.5 Purpose of using Social Media to interact with the University

The respondents were asked to highlight the main reason as to why they interacted with the university through Facebook.

Table 26 Purpose

Q6. what is your purpose of interaction with the university through Facebook

	N	%
to access news and information about the university	281	100.0%

As illustrated by table 26, all respondents agreed that their main reason tio interact with the university through Facebook was to access news and information about the university.

4.4.3 University's help in the Integration of Facebook to Communicate with Students

The study sought to establish whether the university had put any measures in place to ensure that Facebook was integrated in its communication with students.

Table 27 University Integration

Q7. has the university facilitated integration of fb to communicate with students

	N	%
yes	39	13.9%
no	242	86.1%

As illustrated by table 27, 86.1% of the respondents did not feel the university had done enough to help integrate Facebook when communicating with students. On the other hand, 13.9% of the respondents noted that the university had been helpful in integrating Facebook in the communications with students.

4.4.3.1 How helpful has the University been in the Integration of Facebook in Communication with Students?

After establishing whether the university had been supportive in this endeavor, the study sought to establish the extent of the help offered.

Table 28 Extent of Help

Q7B. if yes, how helpful has the university been in integration of fb

	N	%
not helpful	242	86.1%
helpful	15	5.3%
somewhat helpful	24	8.5%

Figure 7 Extent of Help

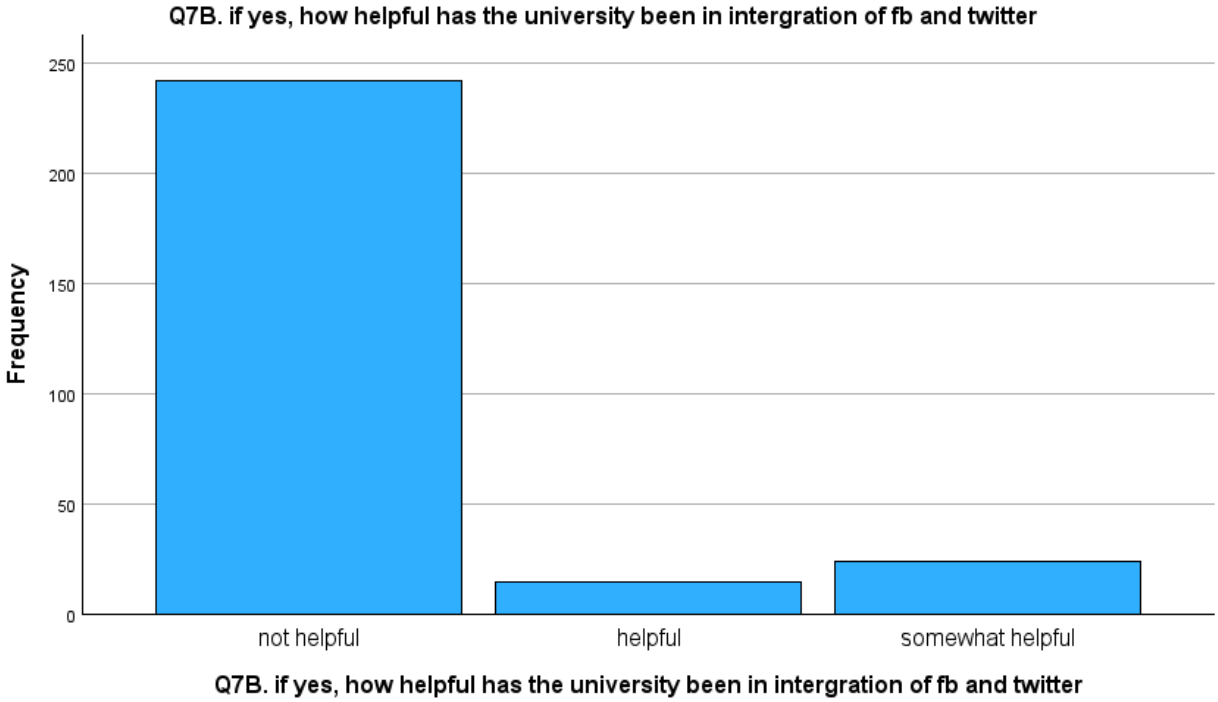


Figure 7shows that a majority of respondents (86.1%) felt that the university had not been helpful at all. At the same time, 5.3% of the respondents felt the university had been helpful while 8.5% felt the university had somewhat been helpful in integrating Facebook in student communications.

4.4.4 Quality of Information on the University's Facebook account

The study sought to find out how the respondents rated the information they interacted with on the university's Facebook page.

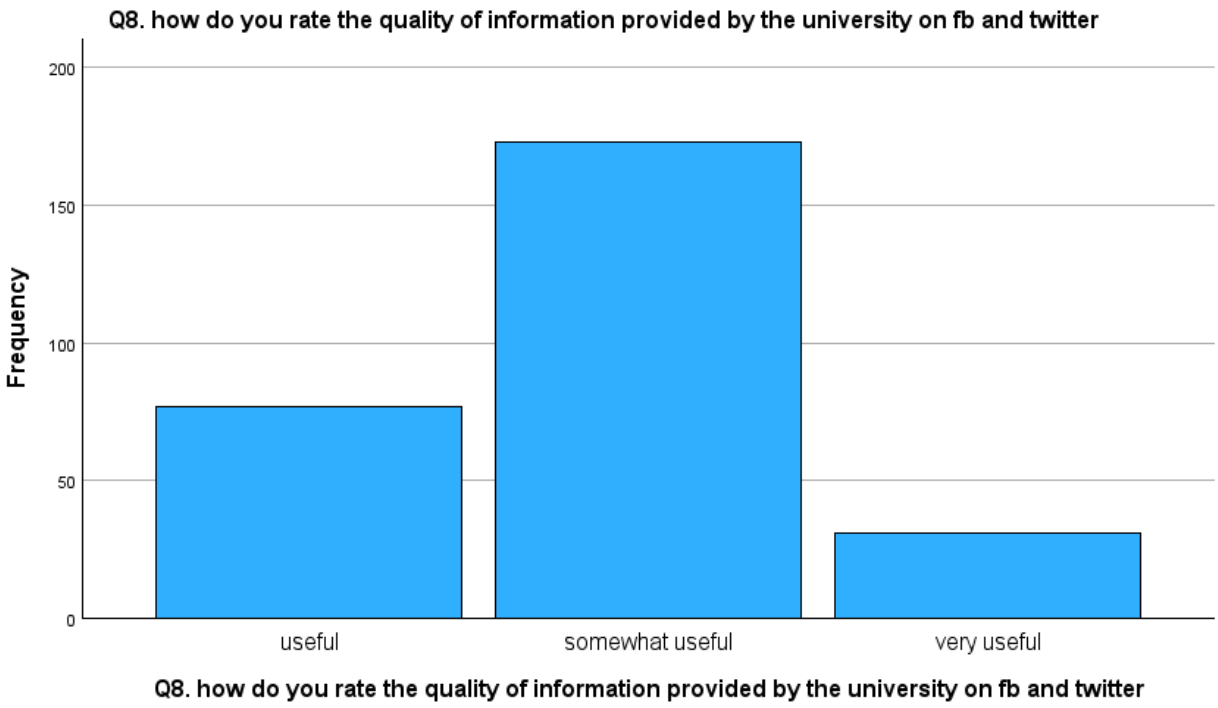
Table 29 Quality of Information

Q8. how do you rate the quality of information provided

by the university on fb

	N	%
useful	77	27.4%
somewhat useful	173	61.6%
very useful	31	11.0%

Figure 8 Quality of Information

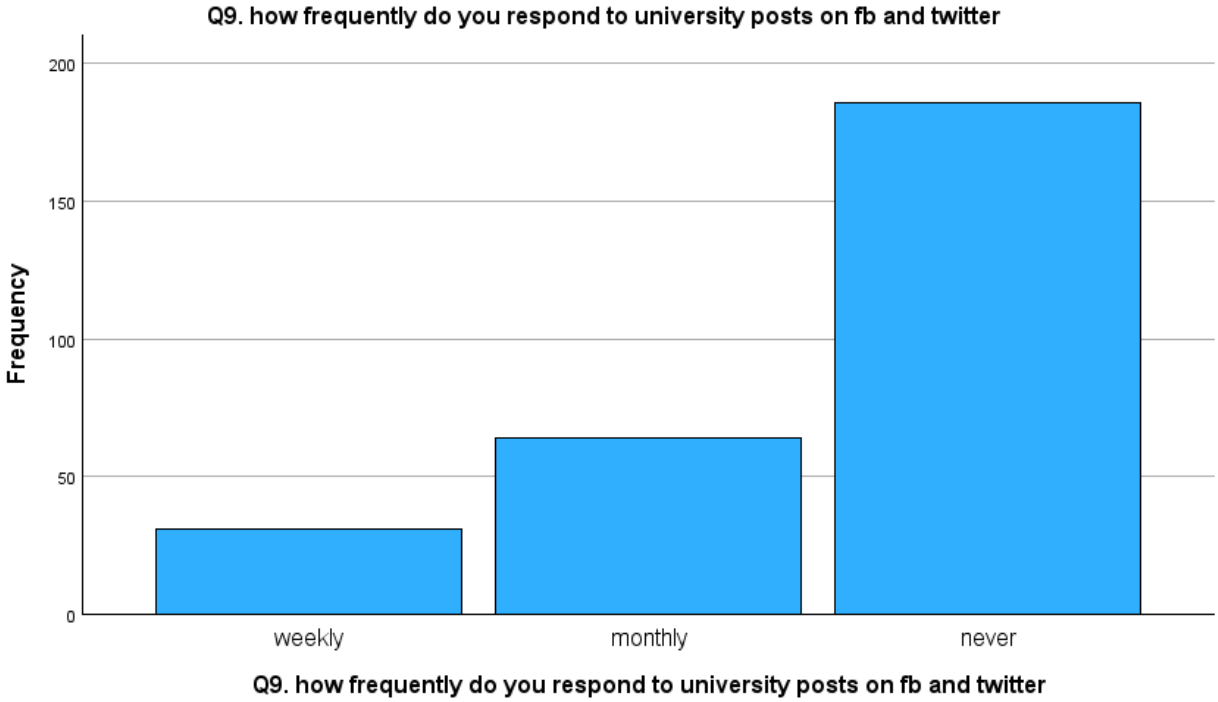


As figure 8 shows, 27.4% of respondents found the information on the university's Facebook pages to be useful, while 61.6% found it somewhat useful and 11.0% find it to be very useful.

4.4.4.1 Frequency of Responding to the University's Posts on Facebook

The study sought to discover how frequently the respondents replied to posts on the university's Facebook page.

Figure 9 Frequency of Interactions

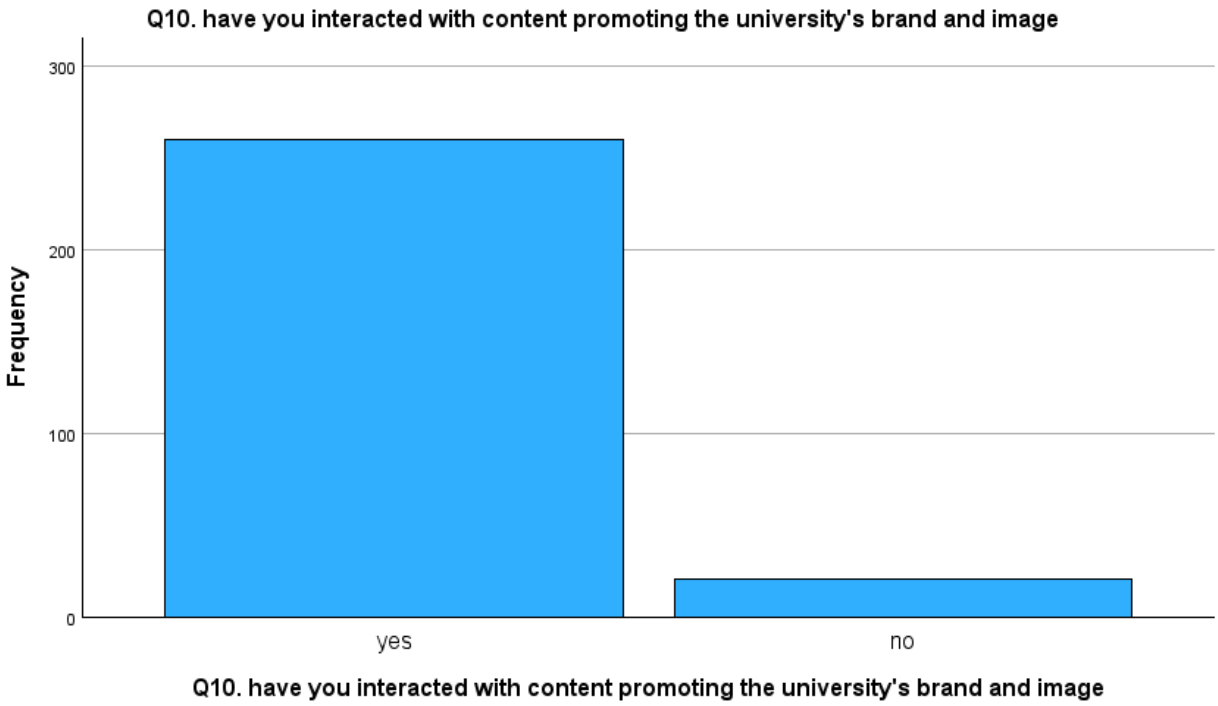


As illustrated by figure 9, 66.2% of the respondents said they had never responded to Facebook posts from the university. 22.8% of the respondents said they responded on a monthly basis while 11.0% said they responded on a weekly basis.

4.4.5 Interaction with Content Promoting the Image and Brand of the University

The study sought to figure out whether the respondents had interacted with content promoting the university's brand and image on Facebook.

Figure 10 Brand and Image Content



As illustrated by figure 10, 92.5% of the respondents agreed to having interacted with information promoting the university's Brand and Image on Facebook.

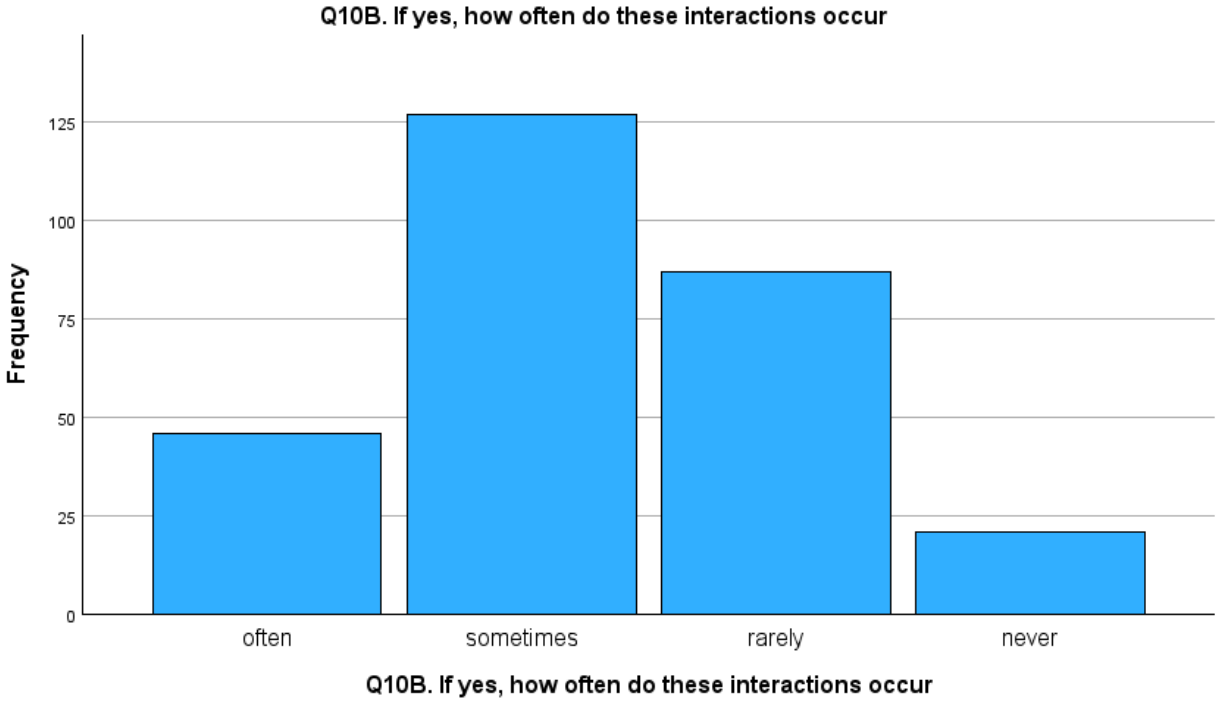
4.4.5.1 Frequency of Interaction with Brand and Image Content

Table 30 Frequency of Interaction

Q10B. If yes, how often do these interactions occur

	N	%
often	46	16.4%
sometimes	127	45.2%
rarely	87	31.0%
never	21	7.5%

Figure 11 Quality of Information



As figure 11 illustrates, 16% of respondents indicated that they often interact with brand and image content on Facebook, 45.2% statedthat they interact with this information sometimes, 31.0% rarely interact with information while 7.5% never interact with it at all.

4.4.5.2 Quality of Brand and Image Content

The study sought to discover whether the respondents found the brand and image content they interacted with on the university's Facebook page was meaningful.

Table 31 Quality of Information

Q11. do you think brand information posted on fb

is meaningful	N	%
agree	250	89.0%
disagree	31	11.0%

As table 31illustrates, 89.0% of the respondents were in agreement that the brand and image content posted on the university's Facebook page was meaningful while 11.0% disagreed.

4.4.5.3 Posting Content to Promote the University's Brand and Image

The study sought to find out whether the respondents were actively promoting the university's brand and image by posting on Facebook.

Table 32 Posting Brand Content

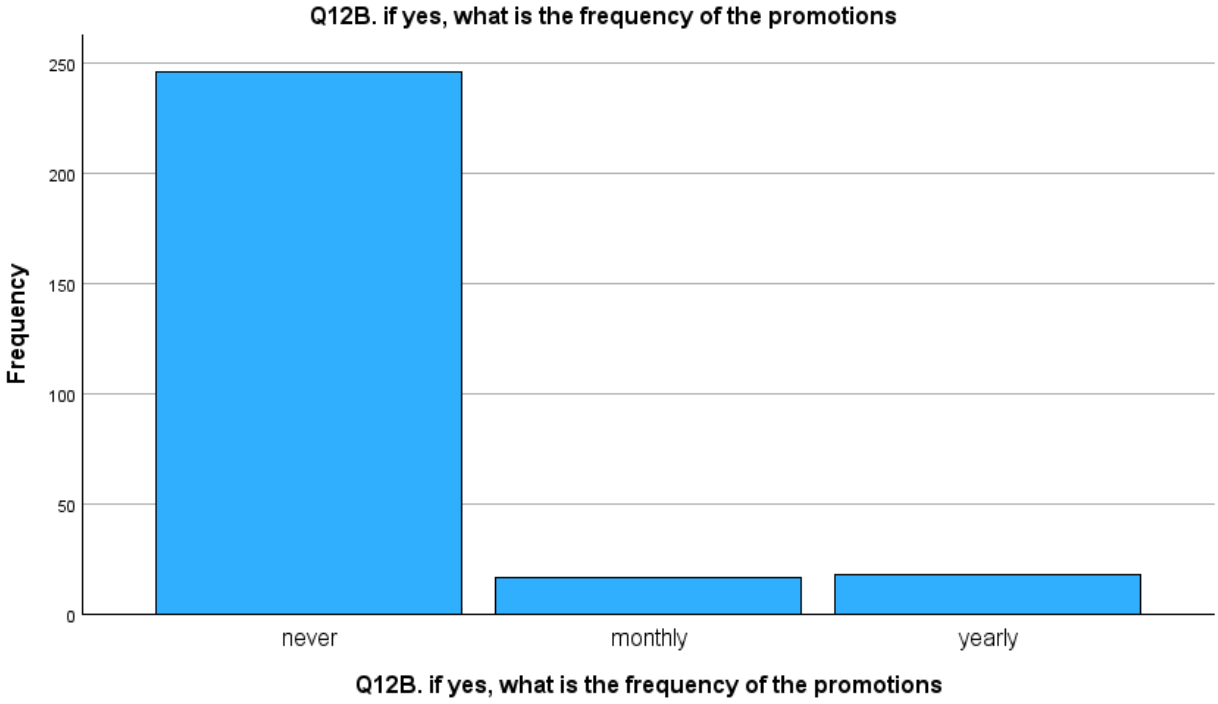
Q12. do you post content to promote the university's brand on fb	N	%
yes	35	12.5%
no	246	87.5%

As table 32 illustrates, 87.5% of respondents noted that they did not post any content to promote the university's brand and image. The other 12.5% noted that they did post content to enhance the university's brand and image.

4.4.5.4 Frequency of Posting Brand and Image Promoting Content

After establishing whether the respondents posted on Facebook to promote the university's brand, the study sought to highlight how frequently the respondents uploaded this content.

Figure 12 Frequency of Promotions

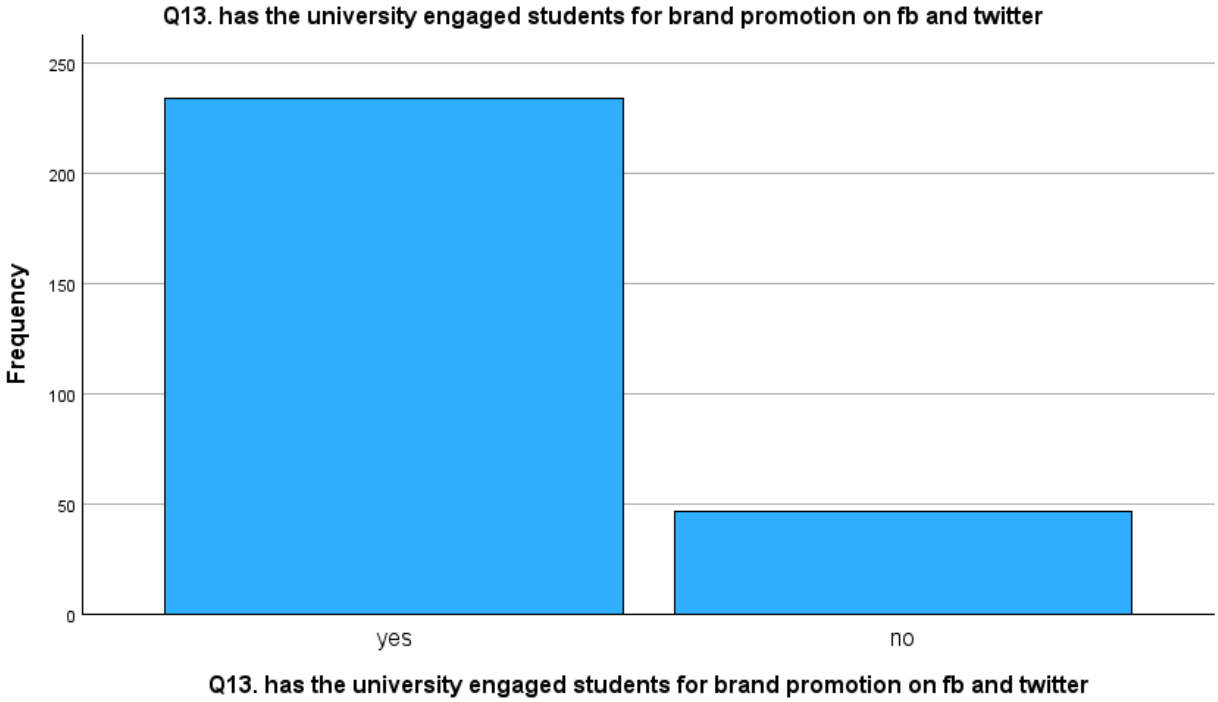


As illustrated by figure 12, 87.5% said they never promoted the university at all, while 6.0% said they did it on a monthly basis and 6.4% promoted the university on Facebook and on a yearly basis.

4.4.5.5 University Engagement with Students for Brand and Image Promotion

The study sought to find out whether the university had engaged students in an attempt to have them assist in brand and image promotion on Facebook.

Figure 13 University and Students



As illustrated by figure 13, 83.3% of the respondents felt that the university had engaged students in Brand and Image promotion on Facebook. On the other hand, 16.7% of respondents indicated that the university had not engaged students in this endeavor.

4.4.6 Advertising and Publicizing Programmeson Facebook

The study sought to find out whether the respondents had come across material advertising and publicizing the services offered at the university.

Table 33 Adverts

Q14. does the university post adverts on fb		
	N	%

yes	281	100.0%

As indicated in table 33, all respondents agreed to have come into contact with advertisements posted by the university on Facebook.

4.4.6.1 Quality of Programme Publicity on Facebook

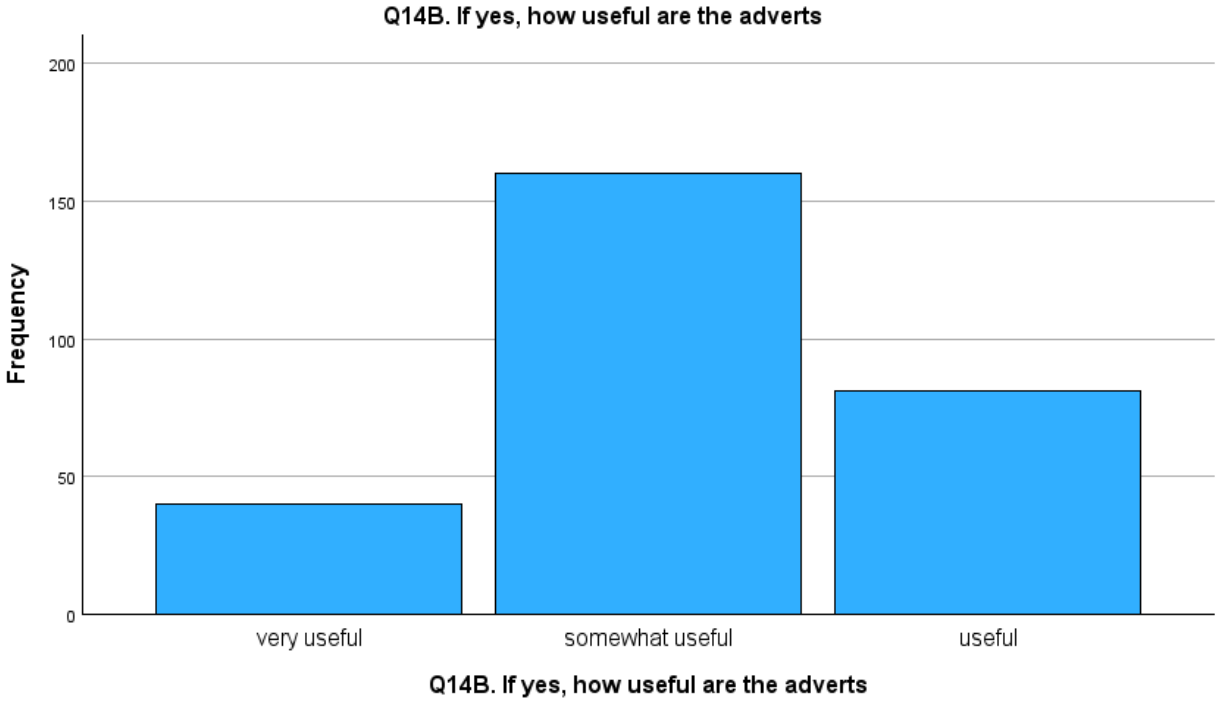
The study sought to find out how useful the information on advertising programmes at the university was.

Table 34 Quality of Adverts

Q14B. If yes, how useful are the adverts

	N	%
very useful	40	14.2%
somewhat useful	160	56.9%
useful	81	28.8%

Figure 14 Quality of Adverts



As showcased in figure14, 14.2% of the respondents found the adverts to be very useful, 56.9% found them somewhat useful and 28.8% found the adverts to be useful.

4.4.6.2 Interaction with Programme Publicity Content on Facebook

The study sought to find out if the respondents had interacted with content advertising and publicizing programmeson the official Facebook page of the university.

Table 35 Interaction with Adverts

Q15. have you interacted with advertising content posted by the university

	N	%
yes	281	100.0%

As illustrated by table 35, all respondents have come into contact with publicity and advertising content the university has posted on its Facebook page.

4.4.6.3 Frequency of interactions with publicity and advertising content

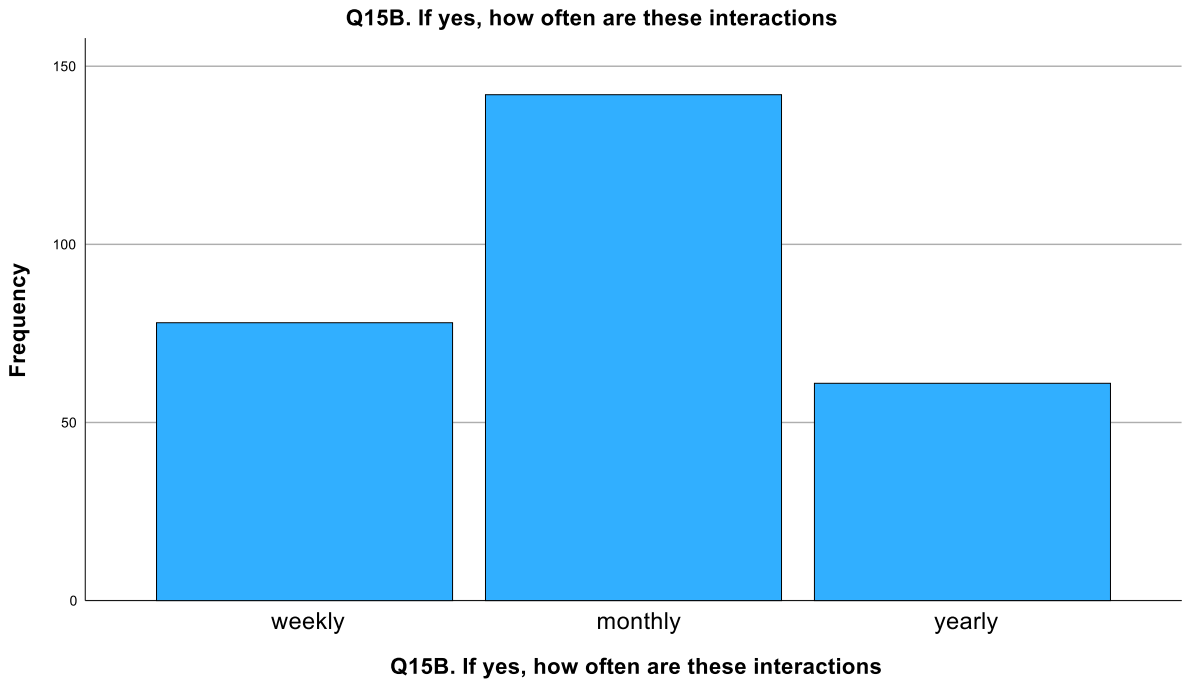
The respondents were asked to state how frequently they interacted with publicity and advertising content on the university's Facebook page.

Table 36 Frequency of Interactions

Q15B. If yes, how often are these interactions

	N	%
weekly	78	27.8%
monthly	142	50.5%
yearly	61	21.7%

Figure 15 Frequency of Interactions



As illustrated by figure 15, 27.8% of respondents interact with publicity and advertising information on a weekly basis, while 50.5% are on a monthly basis and 21.7% do it on a yearly basis.

4.4.6.4 Is the Publicity and Advertising Content Targeted at the Right Audience?

The study sought to find out whetherthe respondents felt that the information on publicity and advertising that the university posted was targeted at the right audience.

Table 37 Target Audience

Q1. do you think advertising information is targeted to the right audience

	N	%
yes	279	99.3%
no	2	0.7%

As illustrated by Table 37, 99.3% of the respondents felt that the publicity and advertising content posted by the university on Facebook was targeted at the right audience while 0.7% disagreed with this opinion.

4.4.6.5 Has the University Engaged Students in Publicity and Advertising Activities?

The study sought to establish whether the respondents felt that the university had engaged students for publicity and advertising purposes on Facebook.

Table 38 Student Engagement

Q17. has the university engaged students for publicity purposes

	N	%
yes	281	100.0%

As illustrated by table 38, all respondents felt that the university had engaged students in its advertising and publicity purposes.

4.5Findings

The findings of the study showed that majority of individuals within the university have access to social media especially Facebook. It was also clear that the university has an existing social media strategy that they clearly try their best to actualize. According to Raj et

al. (2015),public relations officers in the Indian city of Bengaluru had been compelled to integrate social media in their public relations strategy. Facebook and Twitter were found to be the most popular platforms with PRO's using them to communicate with employees, customer relations and posting marketing content as well as other announcements pertaining to on-goings within their organizations. Participants in this study proved that to be correct by acknowledging that they had interacted with the university on its Facebook account.

Even though the respondents felt that the university had not done much to integrate the use of Facebook for official communication with both students and staff, it was evident that the strategy employed by the university tries to incorporate as many stakeholders as possible. As the PR manager alluded, the university had a small corporate affairs team which was steadily growing and would be able to carry out the social media strategy even more effectively. The fact is thatthe largest audience targeted by the strategy - was young and social media savvywhich is different from the traditional audiences in the way they consume information and communicate with others (Menkhoff et al., 2014). This makes it even more imperative for the university to keep up with the changing times and needs of their Facebook audiences.

The university's social media presence indicates it is very active on Facebook which has over 41 thousand followers and over 39 thousand likes (@SPUKenya.Facebook.com, 2023). The revelation by the PR manager that the university would expand its capacity to handle its social media pages is evident that these platforms are indeed becoming more integral to the university.

The findings also showed that most of the social media users were actively using their platforms on either hourly, daily or on a weekly basis. As a study conducted by the GlobalWebIndex.com (2023) revealed, individuals around the world regardless of their age spent an average of 2 hours on social media daily. This means that there is a huge audience available to the university through their various social media platforms. The university's presence on various platforms like Facebook indicates that this fact has not escaped them. This is supported by the assertions of the PR manager that they frequently tailor make and post content based on the platform they intend to use. The use of specific content type i.e. videos, text, audio and pictures, clearly indicates a desire by the university to strengthen its presence on social media. This is supported by the study of Axel et al. (2013) who note that audiences are now based on factors such as age, income level, education and location thus making it imperative for the content to meet their specific needs. It is clear that the university could gain more by helping their various audiences, especially within the school to integrate Facebook for official communication as it is clear that both staff and students are active on their platforms.

It was also found that the university understands the value of brand positioning on the online sphere. The use of students such as digital warriors and other staff to record promotional messages is one of the strategies the university has to maintain its image on a global standing. By uploading content showing students in various activities within and outside the universityenables the institution to showcase its values, programs, amenities and other important student and staff activities. As Knoll et al. (2017) argues that partnership with the

opinion leaders and influencers has the capacity to greatly enhance the brand and image of an organization.

The university's advertising and publicity strategy also takes advantage of social media to promote the university to a global audience. As argued by Tuten et al. (2014), marketing and advertising on social media requires a strategy in order to make it successful. The creation of content advertising various programs and activities enables the university to convert potential clients into clients. Short and precise messages are drafted in order to have maximum effect. The university has a #hashtag to promote the values, culture and vibe of St Paul's University. #KaribuSPU is commonly used to welcome new students as well as advertising to potential clients. It is through these viral communications that organizations can reach their stakeholders as well as potential customers (Jara et al., 2014). From the analysis it was also clear that most of the respondents find the information on these adverts to have valuable content. They feel that the data they interact with can benefit them or others who may come across it.

The use of Facebook has been advantageous to the university. As the manager revealed, the university can now target a large audience from all over the globe and in real-time. This is a massive advantage as the messages can be tailor made to fit the needs of the specific audience. Engaging in conversations with stakeholders via these platforms allows the organizations to create unique relationships as well as brand loyalty through customer relationship management (Malthouse et al., 2013). The audience can be given exactly what they need without the PR manager having to send generalized content and hoping for the best. Social media has also offered an opportunity to the officers to monitor the effectiveness of

their strategy from the feedback they get. The feedback also being mostly instant, allows the manager to respond quickly and also deal with problems before they become major crises. As Malthouse et al. (2013) argue, the audience are no longer passive but have become active consumers through sharing, liking, commenting on content posted thus creating electronic word of mouse/mouth.

Regardless of the benefits of social media, the findings indicate that there are constraints users have to deal with. As Brech et al. (2017) argues many of the social media tools were not made for use within the corporate sector or institutions of higher learning thus making it difficult to use them safely and appropriately. The PR manager revealed that one of the major issues is cyber security. There is a lack of control on who can interact with what you post online which makes malicious actors more likely to exploit the users (Brech et al., 2017). Hackers and other malicious actors make the work of social media managers and users extremely hard. This is because, as the PR manager revealed, the team has to constantly monitor their platforms as well as the content they upload and that which others share on the university's pages. This is in order to maintain the safety of the university and that of its audiences. The need to have a large and well trained team is another challenge that was highlighted. This leads to financial constraints that the institution has no choice but to cover. This is due to the fact that to handle social media efficiently, a professional team is required to handle all the social media pages.

On the future of Facebook in PR, many of the respondents are optimistic. There is an understanding that the integration and use of social media will continue to grow within the corporate sector. It is also clear that institutions of higher learning are trying to integrate

social media into the overall communication strategy. As Kuzma et al. (2013) states, universities have created social media accounts while others have offered some level of training to their staff.However as found out by Owusu-Acheaw (2015), universities in Ghana were slow to adopt and integrate the use of social media even though most of their students were social media users. For instance, many of the respondents interviewed are active social media users but the university has still not done much to assist in the integration of these mediums into all kinds of communication inside and outside campus. Even though students (Digital Warriors)at the University are actively part of its Social Media Strategy, it has not integrated platforms like Facebook in communicating with them.

4.6 Summary

This chapter looked at the main issues that emerged during the data collection and analysis process. Thestudy was carried out to analyze how Facebook wasinfluencing Public Relations strategy in universities. A case study was conducted at St Paul's University to give a sense of how the Public Relations strategy had been affected by this new media. A total of 361 respondents was initially targeted but only 289 (281 students, 7 lecturers and 1 PR Officer) respondents participated in the process thus giving the researcher an 80% response rate which wasdeemed sufficient enough for statistical analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study on the Influence of Facebook on Public Relations strategy in Universities: a case study of St Paul's university. Suggestions, recommendations and other areas of research are also presented.

5.1 Summary of the Findings

The main objective of the study was to ascertain the influence of Facebook on Public Relations Strategy at St Paul's University. The specific objectives of the study were,to find out how Facebook message content influenced publicity of university programmes, to investigate how the frequency of posting on Facebook influenced dissemination of information, to analyze how Facebook friend-to-friend communication influences interactivity and to assess how feedback analysis influences brand positioning at St Paul's University. The findings of the study were based on the analysis and interpretation of data collected through an interview, questionnaire and secondary data from the university's official Facebook page. The target population was derived from the Department of Communication Studies in the School of Business and Communication Studies and the Public Relations Office. Out of a sample size of 361 respondents, 289 respondents participated in the study, which is an 80% response rate and thus sufficient enough for statistical analysis. The following were the key findings from the four research objectives:

5.1.1 To find out how Facebook message content influences publicity of programmes at St Paul's University

From the findings, it was discovered that the university has had to change its strategy in order to keep up with the ever growing social media sector. This is supported by the fact that 100% of the respondents acknowledged that they were on social media with over 50% of the respondents being active on Facebook. The Public Relations manager alluded to the fact that, unlike the content they broadcast on traditional media, content on social media has to be highly personalized and unique to the needs of all their audiences. As noted by the PR Manager, the university ensured that message content was customized to meet the needs of their audiences as well as fulfilling organizational goals.

Programmes, activities, events and other services offered at the university are publicized through creative messages that are precise and easy to consume.The university has used a team of digital warriors made up of students that they use to help make the university trend especially when events are being marketed. Facebook has also been used to assist the university in Brand positioning and promotion. Use of highly unique content and hashtags like **#KaribuSPU** and **#WeAreSPU** have allowed the university to spread word about various activities like graduations, student enrollment and other major events within the university.

However, the university still uses its publics as models and props for their campaigns. This is supported by the fact that a majority of the respondents felt that the university had not been integral in adopting and encouraging its publics to use Facebook more for official

communication within the university. 86.1% of the student respondents felt the university had not been integral at incorporating the use of Facebook within the university.

5.1.2 To investigate how Facebook messaging frequency influences the dissemination of information at St Paul's University

The study found that with the university designing their social media strategy based on a calendar, they uploaded new content on their Facebook account at an average of a posting every day. The PR manager revealed that this allowed the university to disseminate information to their target audiences in a regular and timely manner. This was backed up by data from the respondents who admitted to using and interacting with various publics on social media mostly on a regular basis. This was evident since 42.9% of the lecturers used social media on either a daily or weekly basis, 38.8% of students used it on a daily basis, 36.3% on an hourly basis, and just 8.5% on a monthly basis. This therefore represents a huge audience with a high demand for information that the university's social media team had to satisfy on a regular basis.The manager revealed that they also uploaded content in real time to remind their audiences of events that were going on at the university. As this post,https://www.facebook.com/reel/796098935606968 (Facebook.com/SPUkenya, 2023), shows the university updating its audiences of an ongoing event within the university through its official Facebook account.

5.1.3To analyze how Facebook friend-to-friend communication influences interactivity at St Paul's University.

The effectiveness of Facebook was highlighted by the PR manager who noted that social media was a game-changer in the Public relations sector. However,it was noted that one had to be visible to their target audience. This was achieved by leveraging Facebook's friend-to-friend communication. The university created a profile that is clearly branded with its official logo and colors. Contact details such as phone numbers, E-mail and links to their other social media platforms had been included in the profile to make the page distinguishable from others. This enabled the university to amass a following of over 41 thousand followers and 39 thousand likes on Facebook as of November, 2023. Notably,100% of the respondents had interacted with the university on social media. This was further backed by 11% of the student population that found the information on the university's Facebook platform to be very useful, another 61.7%found it somewhat useful while 27.4% found it useful.

The university also improved interactivity by utilizing social media influencers such as students and other staff to create and post content promoting programmes and other activities at the university. This was supported by the use of "Digital Warriors" who were used to help the university trend through #hashtags like #WeareSPU and #KaribuSPU. It was noted that interactivity was further improved by replying to inbox messages and comments from the followers in a timely manner regardless of whether the messages were positive or negative. In this regard, the audiences were kept engaged and further improved the university's image and credibility online.

5.1.4 To assess how feedback analysis on Facebook influences brand positioning at St Paul's University

With Facebook enabling the university to interact with a wide range of audiences, it was revealed that taking note of any feedback was extremely important in order to help the university improve its image and brand. In fact as the data revealed, 100% of the respondents had access to social media with 42.9% of the lecturers using social media on either daily or weekly basis while 38.8% of students used social media on daily basis, 36.3% on an hourly basis and just 8.5% on a monthly basis. 100% of the respondents also acknowledged that these platforms had long term implications for both personal and corporate communication needs. Therefore, this implies that the university has to interact and satisfy the needs of all their audiences without fail.

It was noted that feedback analysis was done by reviewing the number of likes, comments, shares and direct messages from followers. This helpsto gauge the level and frequency of interactions between the university and their audiences. Negative comments and messages also helped the university improve where necessary. By being proactive through engagement with their followers and feedback analysis the university was trying to improve its brand positioning in the higher education sector.

5.2 Conclusions

From the findings, it can be deduced that institutions of higher learning have incorporated social media in their communications strategy. On the other hand, other stakeholders and

publics of the university also view social media as a powerful tool for both personal and official communication needs.

The use of Facebook has enhanced the university's capacity to reach new audiences and untapped markets. The findings also indicate that the university did not just use social media to advertise its services alone, but it also announced various programs and activities like sporting events, cultural events and other academic events. Advertising and marketing campaigns have also enabled the university to create a presence on Facebook and other social media in general.

The university is also active on its Facebook page posting frequently on daily basis to keep up with the needs of their audience. Frequent posting about the university and its values increased its credibility and presence on social media. The university also regularly post about academic courses, social responsibility events, sports events and their graduation events which therefore make them visible to existing and potential customers and other interested parties.

By creating a unique and well branded profile on Facebook, the university was able to leverage on friend-to-friend communication to make it visible to users who searched for their profile or came across it by chance all over the globe. This has also enabled them to amass a massive following of over 41 thousand followers and 39 thousand likes as of November, 2023. This has improved interactivity by enabling stakeholders to connect and communicate with the university directly through their feedback on posts and direct messages.

The data revealed that the university was using Facebook for brand positioning, advertising and other various announcements. Thecapacity to communicate in real time on Facebook also allows the university to measure the effects of its campaigns through comments, likes, retweets and shares. The analysis of feedback from the audiences has helped the university adapt and better position it brand as top Christian university as well as interact better with their audiences.The use of “digital warriors” has also been incorporated to help paint the university in a positive image to its audiences on social media.This has enabled them to work with students and other staff to create and disseminate information on key programmes such as academic courses offered by the university, ongoing intakes and other events such as sports.

However, a few challenges relating to cost of integrating Facebook into the overall strategy, cost of other infrastructure and employee hiring and training and cyber security issues were found to be affecting the speed of how this platform was being integrated in the public relations sector.Even with these challenges, it was discovered that majority of respondents felt that Facebook had long term applications in both formal and informal communication. The public relations manager asserted that the university felt the same way and would continue to invest in expanding its application of these platforms in public relations strategy by expanding and training the social media team.

5.3 Recommendations

In view of the findings, the study recommends that institutions of higher learning need to evaluate the various social media and choose those that work best for their needs as an

organization as well as those that serve their publics efficiently. This requires proper research in the sector and creation of a workable strategy.

Universities should also employ trained personnel dedicated to managing and handling the platforms in order to improve the speed of integration as well as maximizing their benefits for their various public relations activities.

On the other hand, stakeholders should ensure that they interact more with their institutions social media pages in order to help social media managers get a better view of their specific needs which can then help adjust and improve their strategy appropriately.

5.4 Suggestions for further Research

With the research limited to a small scope, it is imperative that a larger study involving more institutions and their stakeholders be conducted in order to give a better idea of how Facebook has influenced Public Relations strategy within the various institutions in the country.

Further studies on stakeholder preferences on Facebook should be conducted in order to help PR managers create strategies that are in line with the needs of their stakeholders.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title:

"INFLUENCE OF FACEBOOK ON PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY IN UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY OF ST PAUL'S UNIVERSITY"

AIM: to assess the influence Facebook has on Public Relations Strategy at St Paul's University.

Dear Participant, I wish to inform you that this study is voluntary and completely confidential and you are free to opt out at any moment during the process. Please note that your identity will not be revealed to any other parties and your responses will be only used for academic purposes.Your effort to respond accurately will be highly appreciated.

Thank you for your time and effort.

Name of researcher: Michael Kimathi Bariu

Sign …….. Date …….

Statement to be signed by participant.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the information provided by the researcher and I willingly agree to participate in this study.

Sign …….. Date ……..

APPENDIX 2: CONTENT ANALYSIS CODE SHEET

Social Media Platform	Facebook
Number of negative comments	
Number of positive comments	
Response by St Paul's University to negative comments	
Response by St Paul's university to positive comments	
Type of response	
Programme Publicity	
Brand positioning	

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

I am a student pursuing a Masters of Arts in Communication Studies at St Paul's University conducting a study titled; 'INFLUENCE OF FACEBOOK ON PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY BY UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY OF ST PAUL'S UNIVERSITY'. The purpose of this interview is to collect key information on the university's social media policy and how it has influenced public relations strategy. Your participation in this process is voluntary and can be terminated at any moment if you so wish. Your anonymity will also be maintained throughout and after the study is completed.

Verbal Consent

1. Would you like to participate in this interview?

Background Information Overview:

2. As the public relations manager at the university can you confirm whether the university has a social media communication strategy and how it integrates with the overall communication strategy?

Social Media and Public Relations

3. How has the emergence of Facebook influenced the university's Public Relations strategy?

4. What steps have you taken to facilitate friend-to-friend communication in order to boost interactivity with your publics on Facebook?
5. What type of message content do you upload on Facebook to publicize programmes and services offered at the university?
6. How does the university implement its brand and image building strategy through Facebook?
7. How does feedback analysis on Facebook help boost your brand and image?
8. How frequently do you disseminate information through your posts on Facebook?
9. So far what are the benefits and challenges the university faces when integrating Facebook as part of the public relations strategy?
10. Lastly, how do you think some of these challenges can be solved and what is the future of Facebook in public relations?

APPENDIX 4: STUDENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS

I am a student pursuing a Masters of Arts in Communication Studies at St Paul's University. As part of my course requirement, I am conducting a research study titled; 'INFLUENCE OF FACEBOOK ON PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY BY UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY OF ST PAUL'S UNIVERSITY'. The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect key information on the university's social media policy and how it has influenced public relations activities. Your participation in this process is voluntary and can be terminated at any moment if you so wish. Your anonymity will also be maintained throughout and after the study is completed.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What is your gender?

   Male Female

   ( ) ( )

2. What is your year of study?

   1st year 2nd year 3rd year 4th year

   ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

SECTION B: SOCIAL MEDIA USE

1. Have you created a social media account?

   Yes No

   ( ) ( )

   b. If yes, are you on Facebook?

YesNo

( ) ( )

2. How frequently do you use social media?

Never	Monthly User	Weekly User	Daily User	Hourly User

3. Do you use social media to interact within the University?

   Yes No

( ) ( )

b. If yes, how often do these interactions occur?

Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Never

4. What is your main reason for interacting with the university on social media?

To write requests to administrators	
To communicate with lecturers	
To communicate with other students	
To access news and information about the university	
To make suggestions and share ideas	
Others	

5. Do you feel the university has done enough to facilitate the use of Facebook to communicate with students?

Yes ( ) No ( )

b. If yes, how helpful has the university been?

Very Helpful ( ) Somewhat Helpful ( ) Helpful ( ) Not Helpful ( )

6. How do you rate the quality of information provided by the university to students through Facebook?

Very Useful	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Not Useful
( )	( )	( )	( )

7. How frequently do you respond to postingson the university's Facebook page?

Hourly	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never
( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

SECTION C: BRAND POSITIONING

1. Have you come across content promoting the university's brand and image on Facebook?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

   b. If yes, how often do you interact with such content?

   Very Often ( ) Often ( ) Sometimes ( ) Rarely ( ) Never ( )

2. Do you agreeor disagree brand and image promotion content posted on Facebook by the university is meaningful?

   Strongly Agree ( ) Agree ( ) Disagree ( ) Strongly Disagree ( )

3. Do you post content on Facebook to boost the brand and image of the university?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

b. If yes, how often do you post?

Yearly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Never
( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

4. To the best of your knowledge, has the university engaged students directly to assist in brand and image promotion on Facebook?

Yes	No
( )	( )

SECTION D: ADVERTISING AND PUBLICITY

1. To the best of your knowledge, does the university post content publicizing its programmeson Facebook?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

   b. If yes, how effective do you find this content to be?

   Very Useful ( ) Somewhat Useful ( ) Useful ( ) Not Useful ( )

2. Do you interact withprogramme publicity content posted by the university on Facebook?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

b. If yes, how often do you make these interactions?

Hourly ( ) Daily ( ) Weekly ( ) Monthly ( ) Yearly ( )

3. Do you agree or disagree that the information is targeted at the right audience?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

4. To the best of your knowledge, has the university engaged students directly in their advertising and publicity strategy on Facebook?

Yes	No
( )	( )

Thanks for your time and feedback.

APPENDIX 5: LECTURERS QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS

I am a student pursuing a Masters of Arts in Communication Studies at St Paul's University conducting a study titled; 'INFLUENCE OF FACEBOOK ON PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY BY UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY OF ST PAUL'S UNIVERSITY'. The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect key information on the university's social media policy and how it has influenced public relations activities. Your participation in this process is voluntary and can be terminated at any moment if you so wish. Your anonymity will also be maintained throughout and after the study is completed.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What is your gender?

   Male ( ) Female ( )

2. How long have you been at the university?

   Less than a year ( ) 1 – 5 years ( ) 6 – 10 years ( ) More than 10 years ( )

SECTION B: SOCIAL MEDIA USE

1. Do you have social media account(s)?

Yes ( ) No ( )

b. If yes, are you on Facebook?

Yes ( ) No ( )

2. How frequently do you use social media?

Never Used	Monthly User	Weekly User	Daily User	Hourly User

3. Have you accessed the university's Facebook page in the recent past?

Yes ( ) No ( )

4. What is your main purpose for using social media to interact within the university?

To communicate with colleagues	
To communicate with students	
To interact with administrators	
To read news/information	
To share ideas and suggestions	

5. To the best of your knowledge, has the university been helpful in the integration of Facebook for public relations?

Yes ( ) No ( )

b. If yes, how helpful has it been?

Very Helpful ( ) Somewhat Helpful ( ) Helpful ( ) Not helpful ( )

6. How useful has the information postedon the university's Facebook page been?

Very Useful ( ) Somewhat Useful ( ) Useful ( ) Not Useful ( )

7. How frequently do you interact with information posted on Facebook by the university?

Hourly ( ) Daily ( ) Weekly ( ) Monthly ( ) Never ( )

SECTION C: PUBLICITY AND ADVERTISING

1. Have you interacted with information relating to programme publicity posted by the university on Facebook?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

   b. If yes, how frequently?

   Yearly ( ) Monthly ( ) Weekly ( ) Daily ( ) Hourly ( )

2. How would you rate the quality of programme publicity related information you have interacted with posted by the university on Facebook?

   Very Useful ( ) Somewhat Useful ( ) Useful ( ) Not Useful ( )

3. Have you responded to publicity and advertising content posted on the university's Facebookaccount?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

   b. If yes, how often do you respond?

   Very Often ( ) Often ( ) Sometimes ( ) Never ( )

4. To the best of your knowledge, has the university engaged you or your colleagues to assist in publicity and advertising on Facebook?

   Yes ( ) No ( )

   b. If yes, how frequently?

   Rarely ( ) Monthly ( ) Weekly ( ) Daily ( ) Never ( )

5. Which of the following statements best describes your opinion on the future of Facebook in Public Relations?

It is an excellent tool for both personal and official communication	
It has no future in the Public Relations sector	
Institutes of higher learning need to do more to help integrate social media for official use	
Prefer not to comment	

Thank you for your time and feedback

APPENDIX 6: NACOSTI PERMIT

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **297155**

Date of Issue: **23/August/2023**

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This is to Certify that Mr.. Michael Kimathi of St Paul's Cathedral, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: THE INFLUENCE OF FACEBOOK AND TWITTER O PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY IN UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY OF ST PAULS UNIVERSITY for the period ending : 23/August/2024.

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APPENDIX 7: SPUISERC APPROVAL LETTER

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(0) 736-424440

REF: SPU/77/2023 **Date: 7th August 2023**

TO: Michal Kimathi
St. Paul's University

Dear Michael,

REF: The Influence of Twitter and Facebook on Public Relations Strategy in Universities: A Case Study of St. Paul's University

Greetings,

This is to inform you that SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee has reviewed the above-named research proposal. **Your ERB approval number is 86, for the period between 7th August 2023 – 7th August 2024.**

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments) will be used.
ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee.
iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee within 72 hours of notification
iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *SPU- Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Committee* within 72 hours

APPENDIX 8: POSTGRADUATE LETTER

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

Private Bag 00217 LIMURU, KENYA
Email: office@spu.ac.ke
Website: www.spu.ac.ke

Tel Office: +254 (0) 20-2020505/10
Mobile: +254 (0) 728 - 669000
(0) 736 - 424440

BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

14th August, 2023

National Commission for Science and Technology,
P.O. BOX 30623-00100,
Nairobi.

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RECOMMENDATION FOR MICHAEL KIMATHI BARIU MACSNRB837219 –TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This letter confirms the above-named person is a student in the Master of Arts in Communication Studies Program at St. Paul's University.

The second year consists of a major research work leading to a Thesis. The student's selected topic is:

"The Influence of Twitter and Facebook on Public Relations Strategy in Universities: A Case Study of St. Paul's University."

Kindly grant this student the required permit.

Yours Faithfully,

DIRECTOR POSTGRADUATE STUDIES ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY
14 AUG 2023
TEL: 020-2020505/2020519 P.O. PRIVATE BAG - 00217, LIMURU

Dr. John Muthee
Director, Board of Postgraduate Studies

APPENDIX 9: PLAGIARISM REPORT

THE INFLUENCE OF TWITTER AND FACEBOOK ON PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY IN UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY OF ST PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

ORIGINALITY REPORT

14%	13%	5%	%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	profiles.uonbi.ac.ke Internet Source	1%
2	ir.jkuat.ac.ke Internet Source	1%
3	erepository.uonbi.ac.ke Internet Source	1%
4	ir-library.ku.ac.ke Internet Source	1%
5	inba.info Internet Source	<1%
6	ir.mu.ac.ke:8080 Internet Source	<1%
7	erepository.uoeld.ac.ke Internet Source	<1%
8	ir.kabarak.ac.ke Internet Source	<1%

erepository.uonbi.ac.ke:8080