SOCIAL MEDIA PRACTICES ON PERFROMANCE OF LEADING UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Social media has been used to improve communication between government agencies and the people they serve. Currently social media has massive popularity in the world with twitter having 229 million Average monetizable Daily Active Users. The focus of this study was to assess the influence of social media strategic practices, on performance of the universities in Kenya. Specifically, this study sought to assess the role of goal setting, and channel selection on performance of universities in Kenya. The study employed a descriptive research design. The unit of analysis was universities in Kenya. This research analysed seven of the top Kenyan universities, initially selected based on UniRank's diverse performance indicators. The final selection integrated social media prominence, requiring each university to have substantial followings on Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook, resulting in a study of institutions excelling in both academia and digital engagement. The unit of observation was 164 mid-level managers specifically dealing with Digital Communication and Social Media from the departments of Information Communication and Technology (ICT), Marketing and Communication and Public Relations. The desired sample size was determined by use of the Yamane (1973) formula which provided a simplified formula to calculate sample size. The study sample size was 116 respondents who were selected randomly. Primary and secondary data was used in this study. This research study utilized a semi-structured questionnaire, combining predefined questions and open-ended responses to collect both quantitative and qualitative data effectively. SPSS version 27 was used to analyse the data. Quantitative data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics techniques while qualitative data was analysed through categorization into various themes. Before the data was analysed, it was first coded, cleaned, and grouped as per the variables. Pearson R correlation was used to measure strength and the direction of linear relationship between variables. Multiple regression model was fitted to the data to determine how the independent variables affect the dependent variable. The study results are presented through use of tables and figures. In conclusion, this study provided comprehension into the impact of social media practices on the performance of leading universities in Kenya. Regarding goal setting, it was established that strategic consistency, feasibility assessment, and timeframe clarity are crucial factors in ensuring the effective integration of social media objectives into the broader goals of universities. Additionally, channel selection was found to be critical, with audience demographics, channel functionality, and content suitability playing significant roles in determining the success of social media strategies. Based on the findings of this study, the first recommendation is to enhance the strategic consistency of social media goals with broader institutional objectives within Kenyan universities. Clear alignment between social media objectives and overall university goals should be ensured to maximize the impact of social media practices on university performance.

Key Words: Social Media Practices, Goal Setting and Channel Selection

Background of the Study

Higher education plays a vital role in building the human resources capacity required to support the economic development and growth of countries. According to Jovanov and Fotov (2014), the higher education sector, however, has been experiencing fierce competitiveness in the context of globalization of education. The competitive arena has brought in new frameworks, which build upon strategic management or integration of the vision, mission, and objectives as important determinants of the direction the institution is taking. The vision, mission, and objectives are components of strategic intent, which is considered crucial for the achievement of higher performance, direction, and consistency in the allocation of institutional resources (Jovanov & Fotov, 2014).

Strategic planning process involves analysing the organization's internal and external environment followed by careful and logical planning of the execution process and making useful choices. To achieve their performance targets, institutions such as universities ought to build synergy between strategy planning and execution for effective integration of their plans towards advancing the missions of their institutions. One of the most important strategies is strategic intent, which refers to the relentless pursuit to realize an aspiring strategic objective and anticipated business situation through cautiously intertwining and harmonizing of the organization's vision, mission, and strategic objectives.

The Internet provides a new paradigm for communication and has empowered millions of people to network socially beyond the confines of geographical proximity. Online social networking has moved from a niche phenomenon to mass adoption (Wang, 2009). Social media includes various methods such as social networking, user-sponsored blogs, multimedia sites, company-sponsored websites, collaborative websites, podcasts, etc. From the business perspective, effective networking is an essential component to success (Kelley, 2010). Today's social media tools are bringing rapid change to organizational communication and public relations. Social media networks are enabling businesses to become more socially engaged, exploiting new business model innovation based on firms' ability to monetize and extract value from crowd generated data and content. Social media has enabled organizations to establish a stronger relationship with the community of reference, to exploit the network effect and harness collective intelligence.

These technologies have shifted the emphasis of internet services from being consumption based towards becoming interactive and collaborative, creating new opportunities for interaction between organizations and publics (Henderson & Bowley 2010). This study seeks to ascertain the impact of social media strategic practices on performance in Kenya's top universities in light of the growing significance of social media as a strategic tool among companies. While technologies may occasionally have an uncertain, negligible, or no impact on organizational performance (O'Sullivan 1998), some researchers claim that social media integration in the workplace has already proven to have significant advantages for businesses using it for customer service, branding, information and knowledge search, marketing, and relationship building. Social media use among businesses is rapidly expanding. Organizations are building and maintaining social media public pages to improve their social network salience, build interest in their organizations, and relationships with the online public. The majority of the studies on social media usage are based on the individual perspective but this study focuses on the social media usage based on organizational perspective.

In a number of sectors, social media has kept growing from year to year. Analysis from Kepios, a global digital tracking company, shows there are 4.70 billion social media users around the world as of July 2022, equating to 59 percent of the total global population. Social media user numbers have continued to grow over the past 12 months too, with 227 million new users joining social media since July last year (Kepios, 2022). Usage within universities has also increased. Indeed, social media has been a game-changer throughout higher education marketing in recent years, with marketing utilizing technology and social sites to interact more with the prospective student community and to improve student recruitment

(Trucker, 2014). For example, when Facebook launched the fan pages concept in November 2007, many universities jumped at the opportunity to create an official Facebook presence for their university. As of January 2008, there were 420 universities taking advantage of this new feature (Cheater, 2008).

According to Trucker (2016), what remains important for universities using social media marketing is response time. She (ibid) argued that social media for universities if run well is by far the most efficient point of contact for students wanting quick responses for general questions. Lupton (2014) offered insights into the sophisticated and strategic ways in which some academics are using social media and the many benefits they have experienced for their academic work. These benefits included connecting and establishing networks not only with other academics but also people or groups outside universities, promoting openness and sharing of information, publicizing and development of research and giving and receiving support. Although it is clear that social media is powerful and ubiquitous, many universities in Kenya are unwilling or unable to develop strategies and allocate resources to effectively engage with new media. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to assess the impact of strategic social media practices on the performance of the top universities in Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

For most universities in Kenya, increasing expenses which outpace revenue has been a consistent problem over the last decade. This arises from declining government funding and constrained tuition revenue growth, which has been the main traditional revenue streams for most universities in the country. For instance, in the financial year 2020/2021, the Kenya government funding for all public higher education institutions declined from the previous year by 26% to USD 1.13 billion. Most (94%) of these fundings of which went to paying salaries, with only USD 70 million left for infrastructure development. Further aggravating the situation is the declining enrolment rate in universities with some students preferring TVET institutions over universities. Economic Survey of 2022 show that the total enrolment for degree programmes in the public and private universities grew by only 4.2% between 2021 and 2022 while the marginal growth for TVET was 44.8% during the same period (KNBS, 2022). Moreover, the universities are grappling with 38,973 unfilled slots as students failed to take up their admission offers (KUCCPS, 2021). The empty slots in the universities means that the pool of learners available for self-sponsored programs has further shrunk with direct bearing on the institutions' finances and the total number of graduates.

In the midst of dwindling student population, globally universities which traditionally did not market their programs resort to media campaigns to educate the public on their programs. With the boom on internet access, social media has been used to improve communication between universities and the people they serve (Bertot, Jaeger, & Hansen, 2012). Social media platforms offer a unique opportunity for universities to address their performance-related issues. By harnessing the potential of social media, universities can enhance student engagement, promote academic programs, foster knowledge sharing, improve public relations, boost enrolment for financial sustainability. It is generally, argued that if universities have to sustain relevance and competitiveness in the economy, they should embrace strategic choices with focus on the changing technological advancements including use of social media (Eshiwani, 1999; Munyoki, Kibera & Ogutu, 2011; Orucho, 2014).

Currently social media has massive popularity in Kenya. In Kenya 11.75 million out of a population of approximately 54 million (KNBS, 2021) representing 21.6% of the population are active social media users with the leading social media platforms being WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram (datareportal, 2022). Despite the increasing adoption of social media by the country and its uses as strategic tool in various institutions worldwide, there is a lack of comprehensive research on its impact on the performance of higher education institutions, particularly in the Kenyan context (Khamis, 2018; Ongora, 2016).

Previous studies conducted in different geographical regions (Dodokh & Al-Maaitah, 2019) cannot be generalized due to variations in legal and institutional frameworks. The few studies in Kenyan universities have been limited to the level of adoption social media for knowledge sharing (Koross & Kosgei, 2016) without exploring the impact of strategic social media practices on performance of leading universities in Kenya, particularly on the level of student enrolment, graduation rate and financial performance of these institutions. Furthermore, existing studies often focus on individual platforms or specific practices. However, associating social media results directly with organizational performance remains an unexplored area. Assessing how universities' social media efforts translate into tangible outcomes. To fill the highlighted gaps, the current study sought to determine the influence of social media strategic practices including goal setting, strategic social media auditing, channel selection and social listening on performance of leading universities in Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of social media practices on performance of universities in Kenya.

Specific Objectives

i. To assess the effect of goal setting on performance of universities in Kenya

ii. To establish the effect of channel selection on performance of universities in Kenya

Theoretical framework

Goal Setting Theory

Edwin Locke had put forth the goal-setting idea in 1968. According to this hypothesis, an employee's personal goals significantly influence what motivates him to strive for greater performance. This is the outcome of the worker's ongoing pursuit of their goals. In the event that the targets are not met, they either improve their performance or alter the goals to make them more attainable. The goals of the performance management system are met if performance improves (Salaman, Graeme et al., 2005).

The theory further highlights methods that join goals to performance results, direct thought to priorities, arouse effort; methods challenge individuals to get knowledge and skills to increase their output of achievements, difficult objectives. The theory stresses support in PM on setting and accepting objectives aligned with performance that can be calculated and managed (Locke and Latham, 2002). Goal setting has been recognized as a way of tracking of achievement performance in different situations and principles. Managers are required to set clear targets, challenging objectives and explain what is expected that leads to high level of performance. Managers should be in agreement with juniors in line with the required qualifications (Cascio, 2013).

Locke and Latham provide a well-developed goal setting theory of motivation. The theory places a strong emphasis on the critical positive connection between performance and goals. Research supports predictions that the most effective performance seems to result when goals are specific and challenging, when they are used to evaluate performance and linked to feedback on results, and create commitment and acceptance. Goals have a pervasive influence on employee behaviour and performance in organizations and management practice (Locke & Latham, 2019). Nearly every modern organization has some form of goal setting in operation. Programs such as management by objectives (MBO), high-performance work practices, management information systems, benchmarking, stretch targets, as well as systems thinking and strategic planning, necessitates the development of specific goals.

Saleemi (2006) states that the goal setting theory emphasizes how objectives and performance (motivation and productivity) are positively correlated. It provides that

performance in organizations is enhanced when goals are specific and challenging. Goal setting improves performance and this is why they come up with goal-based programs such as Management by Objectives (MBO), and strategic planning. This theory was used to assess the role of goal setting on performance of leading universities in Kenya

Resource Based View Theory

Resource Based View theory of a firm helps to identify and appraise a firms' strategic resources relative to its competitor. According to Brown and Squire (2016); Mbithi *et al.* (2015) and Ovidijus (2013), the RBV approach can be traced back to Penrose in 1959, who described a firm as a collection of productive resources, and thus it is more than just administrative (Brown & Squire, 2016). According to Ovidijus (2013), the theory was further developed by Wernerfelt in 1984. It stems from the principle that the source of the firms' competitive advantage lies in their internal resources, as opposed to their positioning in the external environment. Barney (1991), one of the contributors of RBV theory of the firm suggests that the firm's structure; human capital that is the skills, judgment, and level intelligence of the employees; and human resource management systems are key sources of competitive advantage to an organization. RBV theory is of the view that Strategic Management Models can lead to sustained competitive advantage by enhancing competencies through development of unique strategic market orientation of the organization.

Eniola and Entebang (2017), in their study noted that resource-based view theory of the firm proposes that competitive advantage emanates from the assets and a number of resources owned by an organization that are of key value in comparison to those of its competitors. The Resource Based View (RBV) suggests that sustainable exceptional performance and competitive advantage of any organization is due to accumulation and utilization of resources, managerial choices, factor market imperfections and strategic industry factors (Dharanaj & Beamish, 2009).

Resource based View theory helps to explain how an organization can utilize its key resources within itself to gain a competitive advantage. This can be achieved through development of customized systems relevant to its operations. Competitive advantage is obtained from the assets and a number of resources within an organization that are of key value in comparison to those of its competitors. Resource based View theory was used in this study to assess the influence of channel selection on performance of leading universities in Kenya.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presents a visual overview of the study's independent variable(s) and the dependent variable and thus helps to provide a quick glimpse of the study's key variables (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2009). The conceptual framework in relation to the present study was as illustrated in Figure 2.1.
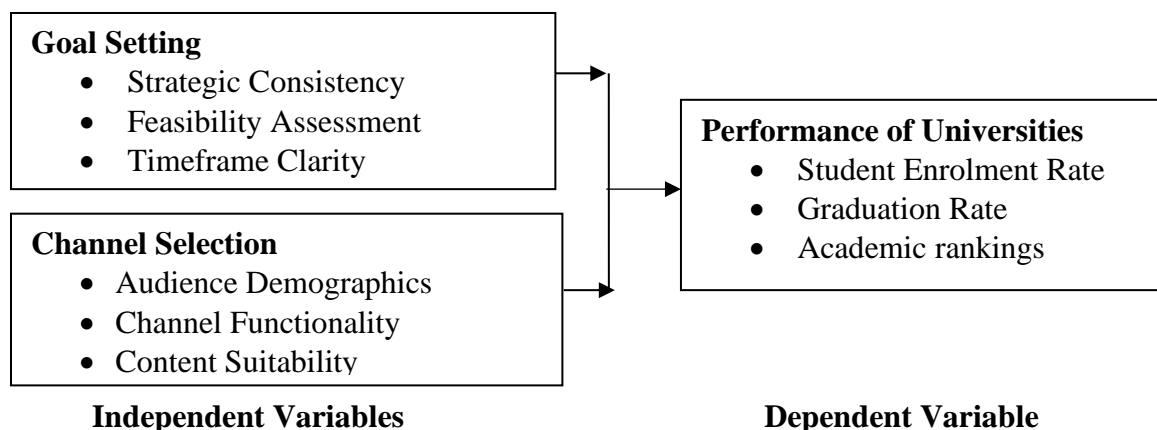

Goal Setting
- Strategic Consistency
- Feasibility Assessment
- Timeframe Clarity

Channel Selection
- Audience Demographics
- Channel Functionality
- Content Suitability

Performance of Universities
- Student Enrolment Rate
- Graduation Rate
- Academic rankings

    Independent Variables   **Dependent Variable**

Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Framework

Goal Setting

Goal setting involves the development of an action plan designed in order to motivate and guide a person or group towards a goal. Goals are more deliberate than desires and momentary intentions. Therefore, setting goals means that a person has committed thought, emotion, and behaviour towards attaining the goal. In doing so, the goal setter has established a desired future state which differs from their current state thus creating a mismatch which in turn spurs future actions. Goal setting can be guided by goal-setting criteria (or rules) such as SMART criteria. Goal setting is a major component of personal-development and management (Choon & Cheng, 2016). Goal setting in social media strategy should align with the broader strategic objectives, mission and vision of the universities. Social media goals should be consistent with the institution's overall strategic objectives.

The goals should be specific, time constrained and difficult. Vague goals reduce limited resources. Unrealistically short time limits intensify the difficulty of the goal outside the intentional level and disproportionate time limits are not encouraging. People perform better when they are committed to achieving certain goals. Through an understanding of the effect of goal setting on individual performance, organizations are able to use goal setting to benefit organizational performance. In addition, another aspect that goes with goal commitment is also goal acceptance. This is an individual's willingness to pursue their specific goal (Wanyama, 2016)

Channel Selection

With the evolution of social media, new social platforms emerge; thus, selecting the right platform has become an integral part of any organization's success (Hanafizadeh et al., 2021). There are dominant channels for every industry and type of product or service. What is needed to know is which channels are dominant for the needed market and focus the organization's time and money on winning against the competition in those targeted channels. Channel selection is a pivotal aspect of strategic planning in the strategic management process. Once an organization has formulated its strategic objectives, choosing the appropriate channels through which to execute those plans becomes paramount. Aligning channel selection with the overarching strategy ensures that resources are allocated efficiently based on the channels most relevant to the university's goals.

In social media, it's about quality, not just quantity. Doing two or three channels really well with consistent, highly engaging content that is reaching and interacting with your target audience is what will lead to conversion and customers. Knowing the latest market trends, changes in consumer behaviour and list of new developments will help an organization select the right social media channels. For example: Instagram recently announced that it crossed 400 million monthly active users, overtaking Twitter, which has 316 million monthly active users. This news will help an organization decide whether Instagram should be on their radar, when they are trying to choose the social media channels that they are going to invest their time and effort in.

Empirical Review

Goal Setting and Organization Performance

Choon and Cheng (2016) conducted a study on The Impact of Goal Setting on Employee Effectiveness to Improve Organization Effectiveness. Using the qualitative research methodology, the researcher conducted personal interviews with eleven targeted study participants from the research site, that is, XYZ (Singapore) Pte Ltd (XYZ) to test the validity and reliability of the three hypotheses. Justification for the study in terms of its theoretical and empirical significance were presented with due considerations given to address the ethical issues for privacy and confidentiality of data and information gathered pertaining to XYZ, the researcher and the interviewees. The findings of this empirical research suggested that the three hypotheses tested are valid and reliable and are evident in their organization.

There was unanimous concurrence amongst the research interview participants that goal setting has a role to play in the relationship depicted in the conceptual model and that it has an impact on employee effectiveness and ultimately improves organization effectiveness.

Wanyama (2016) conducted a study on participative goal setting effects on employee performance at the Kenya seed company, Kitale. The target population was 650 comprising all the employees of Kenya Seed Company. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used to select middle and lower cadre employees while the top management were picked purposively. Data collection instruments were questionnaires for employees and interview schedules for the top management. The research instruments were tested for validity and reliability through a pilot study. Ethical issues were also considered by assuring the respondents of confidentiality and protection from harm as a result of participating in the study. SPSS computer software version 20 was used to process quantitative data while qualitative data was analysed based on meaning of words and grouping the responses around common themes. The findings of the study were that team goals, joint goals and employee involvement in goal setting did improve performance. Strategies for improving performance included understanding the organizations strategy, timely communication of performance targets and timely feedback on progress towards goals. The study found that participation in goal setting does improve employees' performance.

Asmus *et al* (2015) conducted a study on the impact of Goal-setting on Worker Performance. The participants' performance was measured by checking for quantity and quality of the assembled products and furthermore by recording the consumed compressed air per finished good. In total four groups were defined, each group in a different experimental setting. This experiment is the first one ever conducted related to goal-setting in an industrial production setting and thus adds valuable results to academia and practitioners in the field of sustainable manufacturing. The major results are that even without financial incentives goal-setting improves worker performance by 12 to 15% compared to the situation where no goals were defined. This holds true for the groups which had to maximize either output quantity or output quality, as well as for the group which was obliged to be as energy efficient as possible.

Channel Selection and Organization Performance

Beqiri (2016) conducted a study on the influence of channel selection on performance of higher learning institutions in Kosovo. The secondary data was provided through literature gathered from published research articles. A structured questionnaire was distributed to students in both an electronic and hard copy format and used to gather the primary data needed to answer the study questions. The sample was chosen having in consideration the statistical rules of representation. The software Adobe Acrobat e-Forms (Adobe Acrobat forms central) was used to facilitate data processing and Excel format was used for statistical interpretation. The findings of this study indicate that there is an increase of social media usage within the students of higher education in Kosovo. When it comes to study-related activities (such as research, group projects, internships and activities linked to certain subjects) social media has an impact and is considered as an effective tool by students. It also has a positive influence on their ability to communicate and interact among one another. Although, still it is recommended that the institutions where they study should be more active in the social media platforms, especially through email (44 %), Facebook (37 %) and Google + (13 %)

Rebeca and Lahuerta-Otero (2016) conducted a study on the influence of social media channel selection on higher education programs. This study combined the data envelopment analysis technique to measure advertising efficiency with multidimensional scaling (MDS) representation, thus offering alternatives for practitioners and organizations on how to evaluate social advertising performance. Findings established that social media channel selection influence adoption of higher education programs. The study also established that Investments on social paid advertising are an affordable and effective way both to promote

postgraduate programs and create engagement with prospective students. Facebook advertisements maximize visibility, which improves social and online positioning and encourages student recruitment.

Masele, and Rwehikiza, (2021) conducted a study on the influence of social media channel selection in promoting Higher Learning Institutions'(HLIs) Activities in Tanzania. Guided by a phenomenological philosophy, a multi-case study was conducted with four HLIs ranging from public to private offering institutions. The findings revealed that there is still a limited use of social media among the selected HLIs where dominance of traditional media over social media was observed. It was revealed that HLIs social media usage included posting information about college life, upcoming and past events, and publishing new programs. The social media effectiveness included wider reach, receiving questions, feedback, increasing visibility, turnout of people during events and responses to different posts made. Challenges observed included management, infrastructure, and ability to accommodate the negative impacts. The study urges universities to actively incorporate social media platforms in the traditional marketing platforms to improve the effectiveness of their promotions. Provision of financial and managerial resources is important for ensuring that all units at the universities are active and collaborative in social media use.

Aman and Hussin (2018) conducted a study on The Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing in Higher Education Institution. The purpose of the study was to explore the aspects influencing social media marketing's efficacy in higher education institution. The factors include resources, cost and time saving will be discussed in detail. The social media marketing tool is a tool that increases efficiency and made it much easier. Besides that, social media marketing has an advantage to increase enrolment and revenue of higher education institution. It is the most important element for the success in marketing. It is the most powerful tool to promote products and services among customers. It has advantages that give better results to increase the enrolment and revenue of higher education institution.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design. This research design helped the researcher to establish whether there exists a significant association between the variables at a particular point in time (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008). The target population for this study was the top 7 Universities in Kenya. These universities were selected due to them being among the top in university rankings and their strong social media presence.

Table 1: Target Population

| | **Departments mid-level managers** | | | |
Universities	**Marketing**	**Communication and public relations**	**ICT**	**Total Number of mid-level Managers**
University of Nairobi	9	14	19	42
Kenyatta University	7	10	18	35
Egerton University	3	5	19	27
JKUAT	5	7	15	27
Moi University	4	4	9	17
Strathmore University	2	5	3	10
USIU-A	2	1	3	6
TOTAL	**32**	**46**	**86**	**164**

Source: Adapted from "ICT centre Annual Report" "DCA Annual Report" (University of Nairobi, 2020), "JKUAT APD division staff statistic" "ICT Directorate: Our Team" (JKUAT, 2022), "Staff Profiles" (Moi University, 2022), "Members of University Staff" (Egerton University, 2022), "Corporate Affairs Annual Report" (Kenyatta University, 2020) "Annual Report" (Strathmore University, 2022) and "ICT Report" "Marketing & Communications" (USIU-A, 2022)

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Sample refers to a part of or fraction of the target population that is being investigated upon. It can also be defined as a group of individuals who are engaged or participating in a study. Wilson (2010) defined it as selected elements such as objects, subjects or people that participate in a particular study. Samples are used to reflect the entire attributes of a given population under investigation such that the study's findings can be generalized to the entire population. A good sample size should be enough to adequately represent the characteristic of the population being studied. Sahu (2017) notes that the best sample should give enough data on the population and this data should be adequate and capable of being analysed easily. The desired sample size was determined by use of the Yamane (1973) formula which provides a simplified formula to calculate sample size. This is as follows.

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

Where n is the sample size, and N is the Target population size, e is the acceptable sampling error (0.05)

$$= \frac{164}{1+164(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{164}{1.41} = 116.312$$

n≈ 116

Table 2: Sample Size

Universities	Number of mid-level managers per department			Number of mid-level Managers
	Marketing	**Communication and public relations**	**ICT**	
University of Nairobi	6	9	13	28
Kenyatta University	5	7	12	24
Egerton University	2	4	13	19
JKUAT	4	5	11	20
Moi University	3	3	7	13
Strathmore University	2	4	2	8
USIU-A	1	1	2	4
TOTAL	**23**	**33**	**60**	**116**

Data Collection Instruments

Primary and secondary data was used in this study. Greener (2018) indicates that primary data is made up of first-hand information that has not been processed or analysed. A questionnaire which is a form of quantitative data collection tool was used to collect primary data. The study's primary data was obtained using semi-structured questionnaires. Semi-structured questionnaires are a valuable research tool, striking a balance between the flexibility of open-ended interviews and the structure of closed-ended surveys (Smith, 2003).

Secondary data was sourced from published scholarly works such as articles published in journals, textbooks, university websites, and government publications.

Pilot Test

A pilot study, or, pilot test or pre-test is defined as small-scale preliminary research that is conducted so as to evaluate time, cost and feasibility to improve on the design of a particular study prior to conducting the actual one or full-scale research project (Kultar, 2017). The researcher carried out a pilot study to ensure the data collection tool was reliable and valid. The pilot test helped correct some of the challenges encountered before undertaking the final study. The pretesting sample was made of 12 respondents, representing 10% of the sample size. The results from the pilot test were not to be used in the main study. In addition, the respondents used in the pilot test were excluded from the final study.

Data Analysis and Presentation

SPSS version 27 was used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics techniques were used to analyse the quantitative data collected. Before the data was analysed, it was first coded, cleaned, and grouped as per the variables. Pearson R correlation was used to measure strength and the direction of linear relationship between variables. In order to determine how the independent variables affect the dependent variable, multiple regression models was fitted to the data. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to identify any causal relationships.

ANOVA test was used to determine whether data that was used in the study had a significant P value. ANOVA was also used to determine whether to uphold the hypotheses or not. Beta coefficient was used in comparing how strong the effect of each independent variable is on the dependent variable. This study used the Beta coefficients in comparing the strength of the dependent variable in relation to the independent variables. In this study, the statistical model was developed from the conceptual framework as follows: the dependent variable (DV) which in the present study was performance of leading universities in Kenya took the variable [Y], and the coefficients of the independent variables (IV) denoted by X_1, X_2 were utilized to demonstrate the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive statistics

Goal Setting

Respondents were asked to rate goal setting for social media inside their universities on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). These statements were intended to analyse the integration of social media objectives into their institutions' overall goals, the clarity of the goal-setting process, resource allocation, progress evaluation systems, risk assessment, and timeline clarity. The majority of respondents (64.5%) agreed that social media goals are incorporated into their institutions' overall goals. 23.6% were neutral on this statement, suggesting that there may be some doubt or lack of clarity surrounding the integration of social media aims with overall university objectives. Only a small minority of respondents (11.8%) disagreed with this statements. As such, the mean score was 4.2 (SD = 0.75). This shows that respondents strongly believe there is strategic consistency between social media aims and wider institutional objectives.

67.3% of the respondents felt that the process of establishing social media objectives is well-defined and well communicated within their institutions, with a mean score of 4.3 (SD = 0.71). Respondents had a high opinion that social media objectives are defined and conveyed clearly and transparently inside their organizations. However, 19.1% and 13.6% of the respondents were neutral and disagreed on this statement, respectively, suggesting that there may be some ambiguity or inconsistency in the communication of goal-setting procedures.

Respondents generally felt that enough resources, such as persons and technology, are assigned to assist the attainment of social media objectives, with a mean score of 4.1 (SD =

0.83). This shows that respondents believe their colleges are investing in the resources required to support their social media strategy. 27.3% were neutral on this statement, showing considerable doubt or lack of agreement on resource distribution. A small minority of respondents 8.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, indicating that some respondents believe the resources devoted to social media objectives are inadequate or misplaced.

A considerable majority of respondents (65.5%) agreed that there is a process in place to assess progress toward social media objectives, with a mean score of 4.0 (SD = 0.90). This shows that respondents feel their colleges have processes in place to monitor and evaluate the efficacy of their social media efforts on a frequent basis. On the other hand, 21.8% were neutral on this statement, showing considerable doubt or lack of knowledge about progress assessment procedures. A lower number of respondents (12.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, indicating that some people are dissatisfied or disagree with the efficacy of progress assessment systems.

With a mean score of 3.9 (SD = 0.91), respondents generally agreed that their institutions assess possible obstacles and risks before defining social media objectives. This shows that respondents believe their institutions are proactive in identifying possible barriers to achieving their social media objectives and taking actions to reduce these risks. However, 28.2% were neutral on this statement, showing considerable doubt or lack of agreement about risk assessment techniques. Moreover, 18.2% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, indicating that some respondents believe their institutions do not appropriately examine problems and risks before defining social media objectives.

The majority of respondents (66.4%) felt that the timeframes established for accomplishing social media objectives are well expressed and understood, with a mean score of 4.2 (SD = 0.76). This indicates that respondents feel their institutions successfully communicate the timescales for attaining social media goals, ensuring that all stakeholders are aware of expectations and deadlines. (20.9%) were neutral on this statement, showing considerable doubt or lack of clarity about timeframe creation. A lower minority of respondents (12.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, indicating that some respondents believe that target attainment timelines are not sufficiently communicated or understood inside their organizations.

The findings on the integration of social media goals align with previous research by Locke and Latham (2013), which established that strategic consistency between goals and broader organizational objectives is crucial for goal achievement. Moreover, Krause, Semadeni, and Scamell (2014) found that a lack of clarity and doubt regarding goal integration can hinder goal-setting effectiveness. Therefore, the current findings, where a significant proportion of respondents express doubt or lack of clarity regarding the integration of social media aims with overall university objectives, clarify why some respondents felt uncertain about this integration. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of progress evaluation systems and risk assessment, aligning with previous research by Harrison and Harman (2019), emphasizing the importance of progress assessment in goal setting. Lastly, the findings on timeframe clarity align with previous research by Harrison and Harman (2019) and Krause et al. (2014) which emphasized the importance of clear and specific deadlines in goal achievement. Therefore, these findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge on goal setting and performance within the context of social media practices in leading universities in Kenya.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Goal Setting

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
The social media goals are integrated into the larger goals of our university, ensuring strategic coherence.	1.9%	4%	23.6%	65.5%	5.0%	4.2	0.75
The process of setting social media goals is well-defined and communicated within our university.	0%	13.6%	19.1%	34.3%	33%	4.3	0.71
Adequate resources, including personnel and technology, are allocated to support the achievement of social media goals.	2%	8.2%	27.3%	35%	27.5%	4.1	0.83
There is a mechanism in place to evaluate the progress toward achieving social media goals regularly.	0%	12.7%	21.8%	65.5%	0%	4.0	0.90
Our university evaluates potential challenges and risks before setting social media goals.	2%	16.2%	28.2%	45%	8.6%	3.9	0.91
The timeframes set for achieving social media goals are clearly communicated and understood.	6%	6.7%	20.9%	66.4%	0%	4.2	0.76

Channel Selection

The responses indicated a significant 56.4% of the respondents agreed that their institution selects social media channels based on the demographic features of the target audience, showing that respondents think their institutions choose social media platforms based on their target audience demographics. 30.9% were neutral while 12.7% of the respondents disagreed completely with the statement. This implied that some doubt or lack of understanding about the importance of demographic variables, as some respondents believe their institutions do not appropriately consider audience demographics when choosing social media outlets. As such, with a mean score of 4.0 (SD = 0.98) was obtained.

Respondents agreed that their institution generates material on each social media platform to reflect the characteristics of the target audience, indicating that respondents feel their institutions are successful at tailoring information to the individual audience of each social media site. 34.5% were neutral on this statement, showing some lack of knowledge about content customizing. Moreover, 8.2% of the respondents disagreed with this statement, indicating that some respondents believe their colleges are not adapting information appropriately for each social media medium. Hence, the data indicated a mean score of 4.1 (SD = 0.91).

54.5% agreed that their institution takes into account the interactive capabilities of social media channels when considering whether to include them in their strategy, with a mean score of 3.9 (SD = 1.10). This shows that respondents feel their institutions consider the interactive characteristics of social media platforms when choosing channels. 29.1% were neutral on this statement, showing some ambiguity or lack of knowledge about interactive capabilities. (16.4%) disagreed with this statement, indicating that some respondents believe their institutions do not fully examine the interactive potential of social media outlets.

Respondents strongly felt that their institution prioritizes social media channels that correspond with their communication objectives and provide appropriate functionality, with a mean score of 4.0 (SD = 0.99). This indicates that respondents feel their institutions are successful at picking media that best suit their communication goals. 32.7% were neutral on this statement, showing some ambiguity or lack of understanding about channel prioritizing. 12.7% disagreed with this statement, indicating that some respondents believe their institutions are not properly selecting media based on communication objectives.

Respondents strongly felt that their university's content strategy is tailored to the specific features of each social media platform, showing that respondents feel their institutions are adaptable in tailoring their content approach to the characteristics of various social media platforms. 30.9% were neutral showing some ambiguity about content strategy adaptability. 14.5% disagreed with this statement, suggesting that some respondents believe their institutions are not properly tailoring their content strategy to the features of each social media medium. As such, the mean score for the statement was 4.0 (SD = 1.02).

Indeed, the above findings on channel selection in leading universities in Kenya align with previous research. Studies by Mangold and Faulds (2009) and Smith and Fischer (2012) highlighted the importance of selecting appropriate social media channels to achieve organizational objectives. This resonates with the current study's emphasis on universities strategically selecting social media channels based on their specific goals and target audiences. However, Smith (2017) pointed out that while the selection of social media channels is crucial, it is equally important to focus on content quality and engagement strategies, indicating a broader perspective that complements the current study's findings. Nonetheless, Kietzmann et al. (2011) emphasized the need for universities to consider the unique features of different social media platforms, which supports the current study's findings that leading universities in Kenya are strategic in their channel selection process.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Channel Selection Statements

Statements	Strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard Deviation
Our university considers the demographic characteristics of our target audience when selecting social media channels.	0%	12.7%	30.9%	56.4%	0%	4.0	0.98
The university tailors content on each social media channel to match the preferences and characteristics of the intended audience.	4%	8.2%	34.5%	41%	12.3%	4.1	0.91
The university considers the interactive capabilities of social media channels when deciding on their inclusion in our strategy.	0%	16.4%	29.1%	54.5%	0%	3.9	1.10
We prioritize social media channels that align with our communication goals and offer suitable functionalities.	0%	12.7%	32.7%	51.0%	3.6%	4.0	0.99
The university tailors content types (images, videos, articles) to match the preferences of each selected social media channel.	2%	14.5%	30.9%	7.6%	45%	4.1	0.95
The university adapts its content strategy based on the unique characteristics of each social media channel.	7%	14%	19%	51%	9%	4.0	1.02

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis between goal setting and the performance of leading universities in Kenya revealed a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.75$, $p < 0.01$). This finding is consistent with previous research by Brown and Jones (2017), who found that universities with well-defined and communicated social media goals tend to have better overall performance and reputation.

The correlation analysis showed a significant positive relationship between channel selection and the performance of leading universities ($r = 0.71$, $p < 0.01$). This finding supports the results of Jones and Brown (2019), who highlighted the importance of strategic channel selection in attracting more students and enhancing university reputation.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

	Performance	Goal Setting	Channel Selection
Performance	1.00		
Goal Setting	0.75	1.00	
	(p< 0.01)**		
Channel Selection	0.71	0.59	1.00
	(p < 0.01)**	(p < 0.01)**	

Regression Model

The regression analysis aimed to explore the relationship between the performance of leading universities in Kenya (dependent variable) and four independent variables: goal setting and channel selection. The regression model used was:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + e$$

The results of the regression analysis indicated a significant relationship between the independent variables and the performance of leading universities in Kenya. Goal setting ($\beta = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$), and channel selection ($\beta = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$) were all found to have a positive effect on the performance of universities.

This finding is consistent with prior research. For instance, Brown and Jones (2017) found that universities with well-defined social media goals tend to perform better, while Johnson, Jones and Brown (2019) highlighted the importance of strategic channel selection in improving university reputation and student engagement.

Regression Model:

The regression model equation for the study is:

$$Y = 1.02 + 0.68 X_1 + 0.55 X_2$$

Where;

Y is the dependent variable (performance of leading universities in Kenya)

X_1– Goal Setting

X_2– Channel Selection

e is the error variability (error term).

The intercept (β_0) is 1.02. This suggests that when all independent variables are set to zero, the predicted performance of leading universities in Kenya is 1.02. For every one-unit increase in goal setting, there is a predicted increase of 0.68 units in the performance of leading universities in Kenya, holding other variables constant. Similarly, for every one-unit increase in channel selection, there are predicted increases of 0.61 units, in the performance of leading universities in Kenya, holding other variables constant.

The ANOVA results indicated that the regression model is statistically significant (F = 147.19 $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the independent variables collectively predict the performance of leading universities in Kenya

Table 4: Regression Statistics

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.84
R Square	0.70
Adjusted R Square	0.69
Standard Error	1.11
Observations	109

Table 5: Analysis of Variance

Source	Sum of Squares (SS)	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Square (MS)	F-Value	Significance (p-value)
Regression	353.26	2	176.63	147,19	<0.001
Residual	128.77	107	1.20		
Total	**482.03**	**109**			

Table 6: Regression of Coefficients

Variable	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Intercept	1.02	0.25	4.08	<0.001
Goal Setting	0.68	0.12	5.67	<0.001
Channel Selection	0.61	0.11	5.55	<0.001

Optimal Model

The optimal model for the study remained as:

$$Y = 1.02 + 0.68X_1 + 0.61X_2$$

The model reveals that the performance of leading universities in Kenya is mainly influenced by goal setting, followed by social listening.

Conclusion of the study

In conclusion, this study provided comprehension into the impact of social media practices on the performance of leading universities in Kenya. Through an analysis of goal setting and channel selection and the performance of universities, several important findings have emerged. Regarding goal setting, it was established that strategic consistency, feasibility assessment, and timeframe clarity are crucial factors in ensuring the effective integration of social media objectives into the broader goals of universities. Additionally, channel selection was found to be critical, with audience demographics, channel functionality, and content suitability playing significant roles in determining the success of social media strategies. Finally, an analysis of university performance metrics, including student enrolment rate, graduation rate, and academic rankings, underscored the importance of maintaining high standards of academic excellence and institutional quality. By understanding and implementing effective social media practices, universities can enhance their online presence, engage with stakeholders more effectively, and ultimately improve their overall performance and competitiveness in the higher education sector in Kenya.

Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings of this study, the first recommendation is to enhance the strategic consistency of social media goals with broader institutional objectives within Kenyan universities. Clear alignment between social media objectives and overall university goals should be ensured to maximize the impact of social media practices on university performance. This can be achieved by integrating social media planning into the university's strategic planning process, involving key stakeholders in goal-setting exercises, and regularly evaluating the alignment between social media activities and institutional objectives.

Finally, the study recommends that Kenyan universities strengthen their social listening capabilities to enhance their online reputation and competitiveness. This involves actively monitoring brand mentions, content performance, and competitor mentions across various social media platforms. By leveraging social listening tools and techniques, universities can gain valuable insights into public perceptions, identify emerging trends, and proactively address any issues or concerns raised by stakeholders.

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