

A USES AND GRATIFICATION APPROACH TO THE USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR
PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGEMENT AT KENYA PLANT HEALTH
INSPECTORATE SERVICES (KEPHIS)

by

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A thesis presented to the School of Communication.

of

Daystar University
Nairobi, Kenya

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in Communication

November 2024

APPROVAL

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DECLARATION

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PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGEMENT AT KEPHIS

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All thanks to God for the wisdom, understanding and strength to do this thesis. His guidance has enabled me to undertake this thesis towards its completion.

Completion of this thesis would not have been ideal without the inspiration drawn from my supervisors, Dr. Rosemary Nyaole K'owuor and Ms Winnie Mbatha to whom I am highly indebted. 'You two are my ideal thesis supervisors whose steadfast support is greatly appreciated as I continue this journey.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my immediate family; My husband Rev. Ezekiel Kimosop; my children, Brenda, Phillip, Samuel and Mary for believing in me and giving me humble time to undertake this study. God bless you more abundantly for your support and prayers.

Lastly, I sincerely appreciate my friends who have also held my hand from Daystar University thesis mentorship Hub led by Dr. Rosemary Nyaole K'owuor, Mr. Francis Wachira and Mapesa Okumu Nelson, and the rest of the mentorship Hub team for the guidance I received especially during mock defenses. Thank you very much team and continue the spirit of mentorship since it has helped many of us in that cohort. I will not forget to thank the AIC Neema Wilson Airport church Nairobi, more so Women leadership who prayed with me during my thesis journey more so standing with during my absence as their chairlady of the women leadership. May God continue to uphold you in all ways as you continue to serve Him.

ABSTRACT

The study examined a uses and gratification approach to the usage of social media for public relations management with a particular emphasis on Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIs). From literature review, it is evident that corporate organizations that are taking advantage of technological advancements to design and use social media to attain and maintain good public relationships management and service delivery remain flexible amid the changes in the business environment. Therefore, long term benefits are only gained when the established strategy aligns with the new technological changes to ensure that the strategy is adopted and implemented within the required period as well as the proper timing of the market shift. As such, the study objectives were; to examine the motive of using social media for public relations management at KEPHIs, to find out the main gratification of using social media among KEPHI's publics as a public relations management tool and, to establish the challenges associated with usage of social media (Facebook and Twitter) for public relations management at KEPHIs. The study reviewed relevant literature from previous studies done on social media usage and strategies and what their findings were in regard to organizational public relations management and users' gratification. For this study, the users and gratification theory was used as the appropriate theory because it incorporates the three main attributes of technological adoption processes in an organization's public relations management with regard to users' approach of such technologies. These attributes are first, that media user is motivated and goal oriented, second, users select media based on their expectations that it will meet specific needs, third, media use is driven by individual social and psychological factors and lastly that media competes with other forms of communication for selection and use. This research used mixed methods to examine a user's and gratification approach to the usage of social media for public relations management. This method was appropriate because its design gave room to the presentation of larger spectrum of divergent views and the mixed method approach allows for stronger interpretations based on the findings. The examination adopted a descriptive research design where data was collected using questionnaires and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented using frequency tables. The descriptive research design was also used because the problem was specific and well defined. Questionnaires were used to obtain quantitative data on the subject with the aim of having facts on the situation. Interview of key informants in social media usage and gratification, public relations management and stakeholder communication were also carried out to get more information from authorities in the field. Analysis of social media pages including Facebook and Twitter at KEPHIs was used to determine public relations and dissemination of the content including feedback processes and engagements. In conclusion, advancement of technology especially in the areas of information access has opened a window of opportunity for organizations by providing an endless array of potential interactions with publics as well as management for relations. This gives a vital reason for corporate organizations to explore and understand how such social media platforms satisfies the informational needs of the users which is the reason for further studies regarding users and gratification on use of social media strategies for public relations management.

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ABREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

EDI	Electronic Data Interchange
FGD	Focused Group Discussions
GSM	Global System for Mobile Communications
GoK	Government of Kenya
KEPHIs	Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Services
SNS	Social Networking Sites
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

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