EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ADVERTISING UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMES AND RECRUITMENT OF NEW STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY.

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BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

- Social media has become a game changer in how recruitment and advertising is carried out by universities in Kenya.

- Many organizations today use social media in marketing their products and for public relations and communications with their clients (Evans &McKee 2010).

- Social media are the collaborative technologies that now define contemporary market places(Evans &McKee 2010).

- This are the set of tools that make it easy for people to create and publish content, to share ideas, to vote on them, and to recommend things to others—the well-established norms of business marketing have been undergoing a forced change.

- Facebook is the most popularly used among social media

- No longer satisfied with advertising and promotional information as a sole source for learning about new products and services, consumers have taken to the Social Web in an effort to share among themselves their own direct experiences with brands, products, and services to provide a more "real" view of their research experience.

- At the same time, consumers are leveraging the experiences of others, before they actually make a purchase themselves. The impact on marketing has been significant, to say the least. Organizations and consumers have turned to social media in a bid to source for information that enables them to make smart choices (Evans &McKee 2010).

- Social media have become an integral aspect in integrated marketing campaigns programs of organizations.

- Through social media, there has been open access to information.
- Information that was previously available to only select or privileged few is now accessed by all.

- This social media is mostly accessed and used by the youths. Universities and institutions of higher learning target the youths with their advertising and promotional messages thus there needs to be a nexus necessitated by the existence of social media platforms of communication.

- This provides a background to this study that Universities as institutions of higher learning need to embrace and quantify the benefits of using social media in their internal and external communication purposes well as for advertising and marketing purposes.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- Social media have become game changers in the field of public relations practice.

- Many organizations have embraced social media as part of their official channels of communicating and reaching out to their publics. However, most organizations have not reached a realization on how much more social media can help them have direct interactions with their clients.

- Universities are made up of young people enrolled for various programs. youths consume a lot of information disseminated mainly through social media channels as their key source of information.

- However, universities have not fully embraced the use of these media as key modes of reaching out to the students as well as find out the impact of advertising university programs using social media channels.

- The Study therefore set out to find out the effectiveness of social media in advertising university programs and recruitment of new students.

OBJECTIVES

- The following were the study objectives.
- To investigate how universities use social media in advertising their programmes

- To investigate the effectiveness of social media as a medium for advertising of academic programs

- To evaluate the use of social media as a mode of collecting feedback from university students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- The study was guided by the following research questions:

- How do universities use social media in advertising their programs?

- What is the effectiveness of social media as a medium for advertising of academic programs?

- How can university management use social media as a mode of collecting feedback from university students?

CONCEPTUAL/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- The study adopted the Hunt and Gruinig theory of public relations. The theory asserts that for a public relations campaign to be most effective, it needs to adopt a certain format of interactions among its members.

- The two way symmetrical model of public relations is where the information from the organization and the feedback it receives from the environment are treated with equality.

- University administration are always pinning up notices and sending out lots of information to the students, but on the contrary the students do not give back as much feedback to the management in return.

GRUINIG AND HUNT TWO WAY SYMMETRICAL MODELOF PUBLIC RELATIONS

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| STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY | ⬅ TWO WAY SYMMETRICAL COMMUNICATION ➡ | UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT |

LITERATURE REVIEW

- LITERATURE WAS REVIEWED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES ADRESSING SOCIAL MEDIA, DIFFERENT TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA, ADVERTISING AND MARKETING CAMPAIGNS, INTRODUCTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN THE MARKETING MIX

RESEARCH DESIGN

- The study adopted the case study design. The researcher focused on how universities use social media to reach out to new students.

- The main focus for this study was particularly Facebook pages and the interactions held via the medium.

- The case study design was best suited for the study because the researcher was interested in obtaining a wealth of information about the research topic by studying particular entities in detail.

- This design also afforded the researcher the ability to deal with a wide spectrum of evidence and provide a critical analysis.

- St. Paul's university was conveniently selected by the researchers as a case for study.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE OF THE STUDY.

- The students targeted for the study were those enrolled in the January semester 2015 in Nairobi campus.

- The students were 458 in number for the campus enrolled for degree, diploma and certificate programs.

- Stratified sampling and simple random sampling methods were used in order to get a sample of 160 students that were used as a sample for the study.

- The study sought subjects from the degree program, diploma program and certificate program. Degree students were 72 since they were highest in the population enrolled, diploma were 63 and then certificate students were 25 in the sample. The subjects were drawn from both the regular and the evening programs of study as offered in the university.

TABLE SHOWING ENROLLED STUDENTS

PROGRAM	MODE OF STUDY	POPULATION	SAMPLE	
DEGREE	REGULAR	92	32	
	EVENING	115	40	
DIPLOMA	REGULAR	102	36	
	EVENING	78	27	
CERTIFICATE	REGULAR	42	15	
	EVENING	29	10	
		TOTAL= 458	160	

INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION

- The study adopted questionnaires as the main tool for data collection from the students.

- However, some staff in the public relations and marketing department were interviewed too as part of the data collection.

- Content analysis for the conversations on Facebook

- This was also to help triangulate the data. The questions addressed the key aspects in the research questions.

KEY FINDINGS

- **The use of social media by universities in advertising their programs**

- To answer regarding to this objective, the study targeted staff of the public relations and marketing department that it tasked with recruitment of new students to the university.

- The university has a Facebook account with about 27,000 users in its name maintained by the department. It also has a twitter account.

- The page is managed on a daily basis. Students and prospective students connect and are able to access various kinds of information

- Various intakes are advertised through Facebook

- Social media has been actively integrated into the marketing mix
- Social media has given the university online presence and is helpful in marketing. Student intake has been steadily incresing the past five years.
- The medium is used six hours or more in a week to interact with the clients.
- The top two benefits of social media marketing in the University are increasing exposure and increasing traffic.
- The public relations officer indicated that their social media efforts have generated more exposure for the university. It has resulted to increased traffic of clients to the organization. It has also helped the department to be abreast with what the client's needs are and be able to tailor-make the programs to suit their needs

The effectiveness of social media as a medium for advertising of academic programs

- The specific question to answer this was asked by the question of how the students got to know about the various courses they were enrolled for.

- The university public relations and marketing department had carried out advertisements in various media of communication in December 2014. The advertisements were mainly through Television commercials, newspaper advertisements and Facebook pages information.

- Of the 160 students sampled, 160 students sampled, 34% referrals from students already enrolled at the institution, 28% on television, 19% local dailies advertising and 15% through Facebook and 4% through information disseminated in church where the marketers visit to market the university

The use of social media as a mode of collecting feedback from university students

- Through Facebook The students were able to ask questions on when the intake would be and the various modes of study that they could access when enrolled in the university.

- Facebook unlike the other traditional media of communication provided a chance for interaction between the prospective student and the university.

- Facebook was the best when students were seeking further the information on what they had seen through the traditional media of communication. It promoted the interactivity nature of the medium.

- Compared with the other media that were used for advertising of university programs, Facebook was the only one with interactivity

CONCLUSIONS

- Social advertising is the promise of a known, engaged audience in a fragmented media landscape.
- A consensus seems to be forming around in-stream advertising as the most promising social advertising format.
- Mobile will play a substantial role in social advertising as sites capitalize on usage habit shifts.
- Social media if well exploited can help in two way interaction between students and university administration to ensure collection of timely feedback.
- Facebook is effective as a medium of advertising university programs used in conjunction with traditional media
- Universities need to embrace social media in advertising and active interaction with students and prospective students.