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## Exploring the Use of Instagram by Government Public Relations Practitioners in Facilitating Communication Engagement with the Public. A Case Study of TANESCO, TCRA, and TRA Dar es Salaam

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### ABSTRACT

*The efficient use of social media is essential in today's world, as it leads to faster and quicker communication which provides feedback to and from the public. The study explored the use of Instagram, to build good relations, and brand, enhancing PR practices and revealing how Instagram is being used by the public relations practitioners in government institutions of TANESCO, TCRA, and TRA in Dar es Salaam in facilitating communication engagement with the public. The study analyzed the type of information disseminated to the target audience, understood how public relations practitioners handle followers' feedback, comments, and responses, and determined the impact of using Instagram by TANESCO, TCRA, and TRA PR practitioners. The key findings showed that all three organizations use Instagram to disseminate educational, informational, awareness, and promotional content. They all focus on updates relevant to their services and have dedicated teams for managing social media pages. They respond publicly and privately, ensuring that queries are addressed promptly, and they all said that Instagram has a positive impact on communication engagement, as they can reach large audiences quickly and receive immediate feedback. Based on a qualitative approach, and an exploratory case study research design, data was collected through observation and in-depth interviews, Data collection tools of observation and interview guide were used and data was presented thematically. The study is a very crucial tool for PR practitioners in facilitating communication engagement with the public, and the emergence of SM like IG has changed the way how their organizations communicate. The study recommends the Communication Units of government institutions make more efforts to use Instagram as it minimizes the cost of running press conferences and reaches a large audience that will help them get feedback from the public more easily and faster.*

**Keywords:** Instagram, Government, Public Relations Practitioners, Communication Engagement, Public

### INTRODUCTION

With the digital transformation process, rapid developments are observed in many areas. It is essential to follow the innovations to keep up with the times and stay caught up. Public relations are a field that must adapt to this rapid development. In particular, the fact that communication is an indispensable element shows that the discipline of public relations should always be open to development and should determine strategies and tactics for this (Peltekoglu & Askeroglu, 2019). Significant advantages are provided by digitization to organizations together with heads of certain organizations such as managers, heads of units and departments in interpreting and distributing the existing data and outputs to facilitate access to information by putting technology at the center (Cataldas & Ozgen, 2023).

Every communication development also concerns public relations and shapes public relations tools and methods. For this purpose, with the continuation of the traditional meaning of public relations over time, it has started to turn to digital. While the widespread use of digital communication enables the addition of digital methods to public relations strategies, it also allows the integration of existing processes into the digital environment (Peltekoglu & Askeroglu, 2019). Communication facilitators (the PRO's) act as liaisons, mediators, facilitators between and organization and its surrounded community.

They do facilitate exchange and maintain the two-way communication by removing obstacles and barriers in relationships by controlling and making the communication channels available and open. The main aim remains to provide information to both public and management in the process of making decision on mutual interest. A number of organizations and public relations practitioners recognize the importance and benefits of using social media, and communicating online through various digital platforms is becoming more crucial for the organizations, also they are quickly incorporating this mode into their communication and operating plans (Taylor & Doerfel, 2003). So, the public relations practitioners are important bridge and links between the people and the government. In terms of communication, public relations had to keep up with the new and advanced communication technologies. Apart from the communication tools, public relations practices and consumer behaviors changed. A new world and a new medium for all, online public relations brought new features together with new areas of activities (Ozgen et al.,2022). Due to that, the processes of certain shift, changes and adaptations with regards to practitioners of profession were needed within the frameworks of both, public relations practices and public relations. Public Relations, as a process where businesses bind with bloggers and journalists in order to spread information about their services or products; it also helps to manage the reputation of a company. So, the higher the publicity, the greater the reputation of the brand (Brogden, 2002). Public relations is very relevant in organizations today since it has become the most powerful tool to express the image of an organization to the public. It is key strategic enablers in today's highly competitive business environment. Well-articulated public relations strategies will always provide a good working strategy aimed at improving the company's image to the public (Otieno et al.,2015). Nowadays social media play a very important role within the Public Relations units, between the institution and its target audience. It not only ensures that the target audience is informed about the institution but also undertakes important duties in providing information to the institution about the target audience and providing mutual understanding by making suggestions about what can be done. In this respect, public relations should plan their actions and be aware of their responsibilities, such as providing motivation and education. The study focuses on how Instagram is used by government public relations practitioners in facilitating communication engagement with the public in the three selected government institutions of TANESCO, TCRA, and TRA in Dar es salaam.

Government institutions in Tanzania, such as TANESCO, TCRA, and TRA, have increasingly adopted Instagram to facilitate communication with the public. However, despite the growing presence of these organizations on social media, public engagement on their Instagram platforms remains low. Many users are unaware of the intended purpose of these pages, leading to limited interaction with posts, comments, and disseminated content. This gap in engagement raises questions about the effectiveness of public relations (PR) practitioners on using Instagram to foster meaningful communication with their audience, even though there are challenges that PR practitioners are facing such as negative comments and criticism from the public. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the use of Instagram by government public relations practitioners in facilitating communication engagement with the public. Despite the use of Instagram by the Public Relations Practitioners in the government organizations, little is known as the impact is still very low on how Public Relations Practitioners are engaging with the public in facilitating communication via their Instagram pages on their daily posts, customers comments and on the disseminated information on various topics and issues raised by the organization to the public. As a result, the public seems to be not so much aware on the reason of establishment of the pages and not well engaged as part of organizations' audience. Therefore, this study will explore the use of Instagram by government public relations practitioners in facilitating communication engagement with the public in the three selected government institutions of TANESCO, TCRA, and TRA Dar es salaam.

This study was guided by Social Media Engagement Theory, and According to an online resource for academic theories of Theory Hub, the theory refers to the concept that individuals engage with content on social media platform through active participation and interaction. This includes views, likes, comments, shares and other forms of engagement that will allow and give chance to social media users to express their opinions and reactions about certain content shared or posted by a certain organization. And it's a wide range of interactions, including but not limited to liking, saving, sharing and commenting on the content. Social Media Engagement Theory played an important role in understanding the dynamics of how government (PR) practitioners use platforms like Instagram to facilitate communication engagement with its publics. By applying principles of content strategy, interactivity, and relationship building, government institutions can effectively leverage Instagram to bring up meaningful communication interactions and engage citizens in dialogue on public issues (Di Gangi, &Wasko, 2016)

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Public Relations and Communication

Public Relations carry out an important task in an organization, it includes all types of communication that occur between organizations and the Public (Mahendra, 2020). And it is known for being a unit in an organization that perform crucial roles, and carries out all means of communication, including written such as press releases, letters, oral such as doing campaigns, talking to the customers, and visual such as communicating with the public through photos and so on.

According to Grunig (2013), Public Relations is very influential where by the PRO's convince a large number of audiences in order to do promotion concerning a certain idea or products and services. Grunig added that, people who are involved in PR are known as narrators and story tellers, who specifically creates narratives to advance their agenda, and pictures and other images are used most of the time to make a story attractive. PR is a practice of communication adopted by an institution or an organization in order to build and manage their relationship with the general public. It represents a core aspect of day-to-day activities of an organization. Effective PR on communicating with the public can lead to importance such as, satisfying the customers, increasing number of customers, awareness and approval on institutional brand and finally financial rewards. If PR is poorly managed by a certain organization it will result into damaging the brand and image of an organization, and lead to the negative reputation of that organization.

Digital public relations consist of public relations processes that are done and directed in the digital media, by using new information technologies, which include activities related to public relations done in the web and on mobile applications, specific computers and other digital tools (Dogan &Oze 2018).

So, there is a major impact of technological advancement on how Public Relations operates and interacts within the society. All Institutions big and small, governmental and non-governmental, famous and non-famous have agreed to shift to social media in digital Public Relations, which relies heavily on digital platforms.

## **Government Public Relations**

The diversity of technical expertise, public activities and organizational or institutional goals of the functions of government public affairs is greater than the practice of traditional public relations. The difference is that the public advocacy role that is exercised must master the art and good communication skills and must thoroughly understand the organization's culture, policies, practices and constituents. Accurate and abundant information is available and is used by democratic governments to maintain responsive relationship with constituents, based on mutual understanding and continuous two-way communication (Cutlip et. al, 2000)

### **The declaration of communication and Government Public Relations in Tanzania**

The declaration of communication in Tanzania with a focus on reducing communication costs among government offices emphasizes the strategic use of digital platforms and modern communication technologies to streamline information dissemination, enhance efficiency, and cut down costs traditionally associated with communication processes. This shift has been largely driven by government initiatives aimed at improving transparency, accessibility, and public engagement while minimizing operational expenditures.

The Key Aspects of the Declaration on Reducing Communication Costs were;

Adoption of Digital Platforms, the government encourages the widespread use of social media platforms (such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook), websites, and mobile communication technologies to communicate with the public. This allows institutions to reach broader audiences without the high costs associated with traditional media like print, television, or radio. Government offices, like TANESCO, TCRA, and TRA, are increasingly using SM as an affordable and efficient way to provide real-time updates, disseminate important public notices, and engage with citizens directly.

Minimizing Traditional Media Costs, this is another key aspect mentioned in the declaration, the Press conferences, printed media, and TV/radio ads were previously the dominant communication channels, which incurred significant costs for the government. The declaration promotes reducing reliance on these forms of communication and transitioning to digital press releases and online announcements as more affordable alternatives.

E-Government Services, the government's focus on e-government platforms has further helped reduce communication costs. With the digitalization of many services, Tanzanian citizens can now access important services and information online, reducing the need for in-person visits or costly physical communication campaigns.

Improving Internal Communication, within government offices, the implementation of intranet systems, email platforms, and cloud-based communication tools has allowed for more efficient internal communication at reduced costs. The use of digital project management and communication platforms helps reduce the need for travel or face-to-face meetings, further minimizing operational expenses.

Training and Capacity Building, as part of the cost-reduction strategy, government communication officers are being trained on how to effectively use digital tools to manage public relations. This includes the use of social media for public engagement, understanding data analytics to measure communication effectiveness, and using online platforms to manage campaigns at lower costs.

Collaboration and Resource Sharing, Government offices are encouraged to collaborate and share resources in terms of communication tools, platforms, and strategies to avoid duplication of efforts and resources. This cooperative approach reduces overall costs across multiple departments and agencies.

Public Feedback and Engagement, the declaration also highlights the importance of two-way communication with the public through social media and digital platforms. By receiving real-time feedback from citizens and responding promptly, government offices can reduce the costs associated with conducting large-scale surveys or public consultations (Tanzania Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 2022)

So, the declaration brought impact on Government Communication in Tanzania, such as the reduction of communication costs has enabled government offices to focus their resources on other critical areas, such as improving service delivery. Increased use of digital platforms has enhanced public engagement and transparency, allowing citizens to interact with government institutions more efficiently and cost-effectively. The strategy aligns with Tanzania's broader digital transformation agenda, promoting the use of technology to foster more efficient and inclusive governance.

The declaration reflects Tanzania's commitment to leveraging digital tools to streamline government communication processes, engage with the public more effectively, and significantly reduce communication-related expenses. This transition is a key part of modernizing public administration and enhancing service delivery to Tanzanian citizens.

The government public relations focus mainly on the dissemination of information that is clear to all external and internal publics. Government public relations is said to assist the government to accomplish its goals and objectives by disseminating activities and programs based on two-way symmetrical communications. And most of the time the government communication refers to the way of directing information to the large public through public meetings, press releases, PR campaigns and press conferences (Lee, 2008). Lee added that; Public relations in the government has been regarded as the most crucial instrument in advancing the operations of public services to influence behaviors of the public and outlined some of the functions of public relations in the government ; excellent responsiveness to the public queries being number one function, but also building excellent media relations, increasing the utilization of public information campaigns, practicing excellent public reporting and seeking voluntary public compliance with laws and regulations and increasing support from the public.

The diversity of technical expertise, public activities and organizational or institutional goals of the functions of government public affairs is greater than the practice of traditional public relations. The difference is that the public advocacy role that is exercised must master the art and good communication skills and must thoroughly understand the organization's culture, policies, practices and constituents. Accurate and abundant information is available and is used by democratic governments to maintain responsive relationship with constituents, based on mutual understanding and continuous two-way communication (Cutlip et. al, 2000)

## **Public Relations Eras**

Public Relations have also undergone an evolution from the traditional to the digital era. This evolution occurs in public relations' roles, functions and tasks from the 1.0 to 4.0 era (Arief,2019)



1. **Traditional PR**, in this era printed media has become a mainstay in the distribution of information; this requires public relations to monitor ten printed media every day. The form of communication in the era of public relations 1.0 is a one-way (vertical) communication from one source to many targets (one to many) so that public relations activities can be described as broadcaster-like
2. **The era of the birth of online media**, in this era the form of public relations communication is horizontal communication or interconnected (many to many), in this era, public relations acts as a liaison or a connector, the era was marked by the beginning of the transition of printed media (news) to digital platforms
3. **The era of social media**, in this era the social media was born, social media is the most media used, most liked, and most trusted by the public. Citizen journalism, corporate journalism, and even employee journalism has emerged in higher percent in this era. Public Relations monitors not only offline and online news media but also social media.
4. **Era of AI and big data**, Public relations does not only compete with Public relations across countries or organizations, in this era Public relations competes with robots that are not only able to write releases and schedule upload of materials but are also able to predict what strategic steps an institution/organization needs to take regarding the issue that is happening (Arief,2019)

### **Digitalization and Public Relations**

Digital Public Relations, The term 'Digital' came up during the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. And it is defined as the process of switching from analogue to digital forms. On the other hand, is the adoption or increased use of digital or computer technologies by an organization (Ozgen & Saydam ,2022). The first quarter of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century emerged as an era in which the important developments were experienced in information and communication technologies compared to previous centuries, the new communication channels in a digitalized world have emerged and become an essential and important part of daily lives of new generations (Mc Luhan, 1994). Digital Public Relations includes publishing online newsletters, benefiting from the power of journalism, or presenting information through the Internet to inform and notify users about the services in an organization or the updates covering these services (Gifford, 2010). On the other words, Digital Public Relations is a public relations activity that uses online digital media to manage and at the same time to increase the reputation and understanding of an organization, the online platforms used were quite varied from websites, you tube channels, social media (such as Facebook, twitter, Instagram) to podcasts. Digital public relations, expressed as the realization of the Internet and digital communication tools on public relations applications, has become important in establishing communication with the target audience. Considering the spread rate, area, and level of influence of digital platforms, it emerges as an area that should be managed by public relations (Sirzad and Turanci, 2019). Public relations, which has evolved towards digitalization, has expanded beyond the traditional understanding, and its responsibilities have increased.

Public relations activities which are carried out in the digital environment have provided significant facilities to those working in the field of public relations in conducting research, collecting and storing information about customers, media, competitors, and the sector they are in as soon as possible. In other words, it is possible to say that digital transformation reduces the psychological distance between the institution and its target audience (Karsak et al. 2018). Accordingly, it is very important to analyze and follow the approaches of the target audience, which are actively involved in digital platforms. Instant content is shared on social media and as well as in many platforms based on the internet. Content and messages are shared by platform users around the world very quickly through social media, and it is almost impossible to keep up with and follow this speed of the target audience with traditional methods (Cataldas et.al, 2021).

### **Social Media and Public Relations**

It is an understatement to suggest that social media have had a huge impact on the practice of public relations since the first blogs or web blogs, appeared than more than a dozen years ago. Since then, social media have developed into a number of different forms including text, audios, images and videos through the development of forums, message boards, photo sharing, podcasts, video sharing, wikis, social networks, micro blogging sites and professional networks (Wright & Hinson, 2009). SM has been largely perceived as an effective mechanism that contributes to the marketing strategies and aims of any organizations, especially in the aspects related to communication, customer's involvement, customer relationship and management of customers. Social media has a feature of its own; there is nothing that can be assumed or taken for granted. There are certain aspects of managing and handling social media that apply to everyone, but they can at best be termed as guidelines or best practices. On the other hand, social media management is a learning process. It all boils down to understanding the social media, gathering relevant information and then analyzing it to tweak your activity, whether it is online or offline (Kanwar & Taprial,2017) social media has had an amazingly influence on the practice of public relations since the first blogs and weblogs, appeared more than ten years ago. It has continued and increased as social media is developing into a number of different forms such as images, audios, videos and texts through the development of forums, photo sharing, podcasts RSS (really simple syndication), message boards, video sharing, wikis, social networks and micro blogging sites (Wright &Hinson, 2009) Televisions have been replaced by the social Medias as the main source of news. Since the first appearing of social media, the social media networking sites have been increased and become more famous and popular each year (Elgan, 2009). And this is very true, nowadays the social media blogs and channels become so much faster compared to televisions, radios and even print medias. People tend to get information earlier through social media than from the traditional medias.

### **Instagram**

Instagram is a form of social media application which allow people to do networking and it relies on picture publishing. Instagram is able to take photos, edit, and publish a moment by its users. Instagram can also be interpreted as a medium for taking photos and sending them faster and quickly (Sari, 2017). And according to Atmoko,2012, Instagram has five (5) main menus, which are; Homepage,

This is the main page that contains photos or videos from other users who have been followed. How to see it by sliding the screen towards and down.

Comments,

Photos or videos that have been uploaded on Instagram can be commented on by other users in the comment's section/column provided.

Explore,

This is a collection of famous and popular photos or videos that get many likes

Profile,

All user information can be found through the profile

News feeds,

The news feed is a feature that contains notifications of various activities done by Instagram users.

As far as Atmoko is concerned, on Instagram page there are sections that need to be filled in so that uploaded photos to be more meaningful, those sections include; Title, this is commonly called the caption; it speaks on the message you want to convey through the photos, Hashtags, these are the hash symbols (#), the hashtags make easier for the Instagram users to find videos or photos on IG with certain categories. Location, this feature displays the location where the user is taking a photo, and on IG is called a photo sharing service.

Instagram is also said to be a social network because through Instagram the user can interact with other users. There are number of activities that are carried out on Instagram which include;

Follow- Instagram users can be friends or follow with other users by following each other's IG accounts.

Comment-It is an activity of giving opinions, thoughts through long or short phrases/sentences.

Mentions- this feature is used to mark other users by adding the arroba sign (@) in front of the IG account name of that user.

Likes- it is an icon where IG users can like photos or videos that have been uploaded, through by pressing the like button at the bottom of the photo description next to the comment's column, or by double tapping on the photo, or video.

Instagram stories- this feature allows users to upload photos or videos which will disappear after 24 hours.

### **Online Engagements**

It can be defined as a psychological state of the user that is categorized by the interactive, co-creative experience of the user with an agent and an object (Bonson & Ratkai, 2013). Engagement itself is an interaction between two or more people about a particular service or product on social media. In operating online engagement on the Instagram platform, the like, tag and comment features can be used to represent online engagement (Almeida et.al, 2016). A post (photo or video) with many likes can indicate that a content posted is interesting, and it increases the possibility to be liked by many people and finally leads to the dissemination of information from a brand to potential customers (McElroy and Moore, 2012). In addition to that, the large number of comments on a post represents the level of success or impact because comments make users take the time to express their opinions and views. On the other hand, likes and comments have been widely used as a measure of the impact of a certain post or publication. An online engagement is very important because the more online engagement certain institutions achieve on their IG page the more likely a brand will be known. It is also important because it can show good relations with consumers and have an impact on consumer loyalty (Carter, 2015)

### **RESEARCH GAP**

The specific research gap that this study aims to fill is centered on the use of Instagram (IG) by Public Relations Officers (PROs) in government institutions in Tanzania, particularly focusing on public engagement. While several studies have explored the use of social media in PR, most have been conducted in other global contexts, or they have generally examined social media usage broadly, without specifically focusing on Instagram. Furthermore, limited research exists on the specific practices and impact of Instagram usage by PROs in Tanzanian government institutions, particularly in Dar es Salaam.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study based on qualitative approach, A Qualitative approach was used because it reinforces an understanding and interpretation of meaning as well as intentions underlying (Creswell, 2014).

and used an exploratory case study research design, data was collected through observation and in-depth interview, . An exploratory case study design is a research design that aims to gain a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon, and enable the researcher to obtain in depth information, it allows collection of data from multiple sources, such as interviews, survey and observation (Ogawa & Malen, 1991). It is an approach that investigates research questions that have not previously been studied in depth, it is often qualitative. Data collection tools of observation and interview guide were used, The study relied on observation and in-depth interview to collect relevant data from the field, because the observation method provides firsthand insights into actual practices and helped to identify differences between reported behavior and observed behavior, contributing to a richer understanding of engagement on SM. Data was presented thematically in form of themes and comparative analysis method was used in analyzing qualitative data obtained, that involved comparing one criterion (interview) and others in order to achieve the needed results. Based on the respondents from the three (3) Institutions respectively.

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

A very important issue emerging from these findings is that; all the three (3) institutions are service providers, providing services to their customers. And the followers following a certain institutions majority of them are the main users of a particular service provided by those institutions, even though there are some followers who are also following their IG pages and are not the customers of the certain institutions. In contrast to that, TANESCO receive more messages and comments, followed by TRA and TCRA. Regardless that all the institutions are service providers, but TANESCO receives more comments, likes and messages (DM's) because the service that are providing is basic and most of the people are using Hydro Electric Power (H.E.P) as it is the commonly used source of power in many areas in Dar es salaam city compared to other sources of power like solar. Coming to TRA IG page many comments are based on tax issues as far as the nature and the role of TRA is concerned.

Comments and questions on comment session are on returns, EFD machines, tax revenues, deadlines of submitting returns, VAT, license issues and many more based on TRA roles specifically.

TCRA IG page has few comments, and maybe it is because the institution is not based on individuals one by one, or it does not deal with public directly as more cases and comments are on money stolen cases, fraud issues especially online fraud. But again, through TCRA Instagram page, number of campaigns are done by the PR practitioners so as to eradicate online fraud by giving people education and awareness on fraud issues. And this help the followers of TCRA IG page to be aware of online fraud and to take extra care while receiving messages and phone calls that want them to send amount of money to someone. TCRA during their interview conducted by the researcher, they said that, they are also branding their organization and educate the society about their roles in order public to understand the roles of TCRA and this is said to reduce the comments commented and questions asked on their page that are supposed to be commented or asked on other institutions.

In Social Media Usage and Strategy, TANESCO effectively uses Instagram and other social media platforms for effective communication to communicate and engaging their audience, and they post in their Instagram page up to four times daily. In Public Engagement and Feedback, Engagement in TANESCO is managed by dedicated personnel who respond to comments and DMs. Feedback is used to measure public understanding and response. The Challenges that TANESCO is facing, is Negative comments from the Public, especially during crisis, whereby Managing positive public perception tend to be very important in their institution. On benefits, For TANESCO Instagram provides a quick and broad reach, with sponsored ads enhancing visibility.

On Target Audience and Reach, TCRA targets youth (18-34 years) and has achieved significant reach and impressions through Instagram. In Communication Efficiency, Instagram enables faster information dissemination and immediate feedback compared to traditional media. Challenges that TCRA is facing through using Instagram is; Security issues and negative public thinking, feeling or point of view are significant challenges as according to TCRA. Benefits of using Instagram in Facilitating Communication Engagement with the Public, is; it increases brand reach and engagement, and with sponsored ads further boost and expand the message to reach to many people.

In Communication and Engagement; TRA uses Instagram to educate taxpayers and to post public notices on important matters, with frequent posts to maintain public engagement. In Feedback and Response Handling, A dedicated team at TRA handles public feedback, responding both public and private questions and messages as needed. The Challenges they are facing; include Off-topic and abusive comments, as well as false information, are the most common challenges. On benefits, Instagram positively impacts taxpayer compliance and education, leading to TRA increasing registrations, revenues as well as improving public relation.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the responses from TANESCO, TCRA, and TRA, Instagram is a crucial tool for public relations practitioners in facilitating communication and engagement with the public. Each organization uses Instagram to disseminate a variety of information types, handle audience feedback efficiently, and leverage the platform's wide reach for positive impact. However, there are challenges of using social media to communicate with the public, the respondents mentioned and explained those challenges such as managing negative feedback, misinformation, the problem of inappropriate comments and information that is unnecessary written by followers on the comments, they also mentioned about the institution to be exposed to institution's image risk due to the news that are not filtered as far as the transparent nature of the media is concerned and security concerns must be continuously addressed to maintain effective communication. Referring to the findings, the respondents supported that; The advantages of using Instagram in public relations practices, include enhanced speed, reduced costs, customization and direct contact with the internal publics. However, it has some challenges to them such as the eruption of crisis due to the globalized networking on the internet and the difficulty in keeping up to date with the constantly evolving internet world. Also, findings declared that; nowadays PR practitioners are facing a problem of a changing media environment that is significantly more complex, dynamic and diverse than the traditional media sphere and also it requires them to share news and information in a more transparent and interactive way than ever before.

Therefore conclusively, the study answered and revealed that; all selected government institutions on this study use Instagram to communicate with the audience, and the Government PRO's engagement with the public on their Instagram pages is present, meaning that the public are actively engaged in organization's communication as their questions, doubts and concerns are being answered and taken into consideration as well. Instagram has reshaped the role of PR practitioners in Tanzania by enhancing audience engagement through interactive, visual, and personalized content. The platform's two-way communication, ability to promote user-generated content, real-time feedback mechanisms, and collaboration with influencers have created new opportunities for PR professionals to connect with their audiences in meaningful ways. This shift is leading to more dynamic, participatory, and responsive PR practices in Tanzania, aligning with global trends in digital public relations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the Communication Units of government institutions to add more efforts on using Instagram as it minimizes cost for running the press conference and it reaches large audience, but also, it's a two-way form of communication as it will help them to get feedback from the public easier and faster, and allow them to engage on discussions with their audience. The Instagram account admins must continue to maintain quality by being more creative and innovative through by paying attention to suggestions and input comments from the followers and public in general.

The Instagram account operators must maintain the good interactive communication through engaging with the public and concentrate on creating quality contents by being more creative and innovative in creating content through by participating in skills training on how a best content is created, as well as customer care and service skills, on how to treat and engage with customers on Instagram.

Developing a Social Media Policy, each organization should develop a comprehensive social media policy that outlines how to handle negative comments, abusive language, and misinformation. This policy should include guidelines for moderating comments and engaging with users constructively.

Implementing Training Programs, Regular training sessions for PR practitioners and social media managers on crisis communication, audience engagement, and sentiment analysis could enhance their ability to navigate challenges effectively.



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## INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What is your name and your position in the Institution?
2. How many Public Relations practitioners are in your Institution?
3. Is your Institution using social media (Instagram) to communicate with the Public/audience?
4. What made your Institution to adopt using social media (Instagram) to communicate with the audience?
5. What type of information is disseminated to the public by the Public Relations practitioners of your Institution?
6. How are the Public Relations practitioners in your Institution handle Audience's feedback, comments and response on your Institution Instagram page?
7. How frequent the content is posted on your Instagram page weekly?
8. How do you know that the information posted on your Instagram page is understood by the audience?
9. Are you responding timely on feedbacks, audience's responses, comments and direct messages? (Can you rate on a 1-10 scale?)
10. Do you take time to answer audience's questions on comments session on your Instagram page?
11. Do you respond privately and give your audience more clarification on an issue if it is not well understood on your Instagram page?
12. Which benefits do you get by using social media for the effectiveness of your office?
13. What are the risks and challenges of using social media to disseminate information?
14. What is the impact of using Instagram to disseminate information in your Institution?