
Social media marketing platforms use and effectiveness of marketing communication in the Tanzania's telecommunication industry: evidence from Vodacom Company

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Abstract

This paper shares the findings of a study that examined the role of social media marketing platforms in fostering the effectiveness of marketing communication in Tanzania's telecommunication industry. Specifically, it ascertains the extent to which people's awareness, attitude and skills facilitate the social media marketing platforms influence on the effectiveness of marketing communication. The study was conducted in the Tanzania's largest city of Dar es Salaam using Vodacom Company as a case study. Self-administered questionnaires were administered with 390 respondents and they yielded a response rate of 93.6% as 365 respondents returned the filled-out research tools. The resultant quantitative data were subjected to multiple regression analysis. The study established that, all the three independent variables had a positive influence but only two—the users' attitude and skills—were strong predictors of effectiveness of marketing communication with a coefficient of less than 1%. These findings imply that, the organisation's management and policy efforts have to capitalise on enhanced people's skills and attitude towards social media platforms, as failure to do so might lead to organisational failure in realising the desired outcome from marketing efforts and hence, invite irrecoverable monetary cost. The research findings will be useful for both academics and managers who are interested in understanding and further committing to better use of the social media to enhance marketing communication practices.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing Platforms, Marketing Communication, Telecommunication Industry

INTRODUCTION

The significance of the marketing institution within a given company in the era of intense competition has changed the direction of the business whereby the core focus lies in the final user instead of the manufacturer (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; Baines, Fill, Rosengren, & Antonetti, (2017). Besides, the advanced technological world at least through ascending internet use has indubitably left people with no option but to remain dull as marketing has taken over that science of organising the need and want of the customers as determinants of the coming product (Mueller, Hutter, Fueller, & Matzler, 2011). Lamberton, and Stephen, (2016) opine that over the past 15 years, digital media platforms have revolutionized marketing, offering new ways to reach, inform, engage, sell to, learn about, and provide service to customers. According to Tiago and Veríssimo, (2014), the second generation of Internet-based applications enhances marketing efforts by allowing firms to implement innovative forms of communication and co-create content with their customers. In fact, internet development generates the various options for marketers to



market their products and services since people are increasingly using digital/social media platforms to communicate on what they offer (ibid). Moreover, for not taking people for granted as target recipients for marketing requires interaction on social media platforms. Globally, the total number of social media users is estimated to grow to 2.95 billion by 2020 (Rehman, Baharun, & Salleh (2020) and 3.29 billion users in 2022, which will be 42.3% of the world's population (eMarketer, 2018).

On the other hand, for consumer the internet has given them more leeway and control when accessing information on products and services that attract them by the pull effect for online content. The inescapable fact is that consumers are the ones who decide when, where, what, and how much commercial content they wish to view (Lim, 2011). Thus, consumers play a crucial and active role in searching for information online with some goal in mind; this goal can influence individual behaviours and responses to online information and advertisements (Smith, 2002). Currently, internet marketing uses digital platforms which are a powerful tool that gives people new advantage of interacting in social networks via the internet. Indeed, digital marketing that overlaps social media has transformed how businesses and other organisations communicate with their audiences, hence proving to be a competitive complement to traditional marketing practices (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2019).

Connections and content developed by different users are from different types of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Periscope. Essentially, Social Media involves the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactive dialogue. According to Baruah (2012), social media assumes many forms such as Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, and podcasts. With the world social media revolution, social media extensively serves the communication purpose in previously unimaginable but novel ways. The general availability of the Internet has given people in organisations the ability to use social media to connect with clients without a need of physical contact or meeting (Gruen, Osmonbekov & Czaplewski, 2006). Nevertheless, for companies, social media represents a new challenge while providing an opportunity to achieve their strategic goals such as creating a positive image, enhancing brand awareness and fostering quality interactions with their actual or potential consumers (MatićŠošić, 2019). As such, users can access different sources of information and communication means because other users can recommend and advance their response via same communication means (Mueller et al., 2011). Thus technology has facilitated and expedited two-way communication of information (Senecal & Natel, 2004). This feat is crucial in marketing dynamism as effective customers' involvement has become a priority issue in business conduct and innovation (Park, Lee, & Han, 2007; Saldanha, Mithas, & Krishnan, 2017). After all, all organisations ought to have effective online presence to prosper or, possibly, even survive by ensuring they do not have only a sustainable presence but also a competitive edge. The key question for firms is not just whether to deploy technology, as doing so has become the companies' Hobson's choice, but to stay competitive and ahead of the rivals. Thus, the question remains: How do they deploy the social media technology in marketing communication to boost their fortunes?

According to Chen, Xu and Whinston (2011), social network can present different advantages for creating the brand's awareness and loyalty in addition to gaining valuable customer insights, boosting sales and engendering customer retention. In addition, social networking is a two-way channel that accords business owners an opportunity to build relationships with their customers and create value propositions that translate into a positive impact on the much needed trust (Wu, Chen & Chung, 2010). Because of the development of the internet and the existence of social

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media, Evans (2012) revealed the nature of social media based on personal oppression, as it may be perceived to be so since individuality tends to be compromised through the development of technology. Clients may discuss various issues from economic, technological, social and political arena through social media. Consistently, marketing is done via the Word of Mouth Marketing (WOMM) or competing through profession. Through social media, users depend on mobile and web based technologies to create highly interesting platforms that allow individuals, communities and organisations to introduce, search for, update, co-innovate, dialogue, modify and evaluate user-generated shared posts.

Appels, Grewal, Hadi and Stephen (2019) point out that, social marketing platforms play a vital role in the growth of business. As such, it is critical for companies to grasp the marketing environment for interacting with clients and revenue growth; however, there are some factors that enhance the companies' anxiousness on using social media platforms in marketing. These may be conceived in terms of inadequacy of awareness and experience, trust and privacy concerns, acceptability of information, the nature of social networks that cannot be controlled, and fear of receiving bad reviews and/or comments on their services. In Tanzania, like in any other part of the world, social networking has become increasingly popular among both older and younger generations and has gradually undermined the hitherto traditionally-authoritative voices of the radio and television broadcasting. Inevitably, firms have now embraced social media platforms as a marketing place since they can create strong personal connections with their prospective customers. This development has also shifted the advertising strategies from traditional media communication means, which are usually expensive and time consuming, to two-way communications via social media sites which are not only user-friendly but also cost-effective (Han & Windsor, 2011). Today most of the people, especially youngsters, are hooked on to different social media to keep in touch with their peer partly for social interaction and partly as a means to business ends.

Internet marketing has revolutionised how business owners and consumers interact to do business. Previously, the number of brands and businesses for different companies had prioritised traditional marketing, which they utilised more extensively than marketing through the Internet (Hogarth-Scott, Watson and Wilson, 1996). In comparison with advertising, social networks platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp can be personalised based on the profiles and behaviours of the targeted customers. This manoeuvrability provides customers with more value proposition than what they had anticipated. Moreover, it gives insights into different types of products and services they need and seek. Hence, these platforms can be utilised in marketing by both big firms, and Small and Medium Enterprises (Brown & Wyatt, 2010). In fact, many organisations treat digital and social media platforms as a new experience for use in different business industries.

Telecommunication companies (that tend to offer similar services) in particular operate in an extremely competitive industry where they are in a constant bidding war over who offers the best coverage for the best price. Providing a service that is widely used by consumers requires direct, real-time access to customers in order to stay one step ahead of competition. Social media is, without a doubt, the most effective way of making a real and meaningful connection with customers. According to Turban, Bolloju and Liang (2011) clear effectiveness in social media exists; however, companies usually lack competent personnel to capitalise on the opportunities that social media avail. Such competent and skilled workers are a prerequisite for effective marketing through social media platforms, given their advantages versus traditional media. However, according to the Cisco System (2010), only 1-in-7 companies has an official procedure



for using social digital platforms in their businesses and only 1-in-5 firms has developed a policy on the utilisation of digital platforms. Inadequate formalized attention is unfortunately considering the risks and negative effects on business that are involved with social media. The extant literature of consumer behavior treated perceived risk as a multidimensional concept which is composed of social, time, financial, physical, performance, and psychological risks which have innate negative consequences concerning consumer behavior (Rehman et al., 2020). Moreover, using social media for marketing has brought about negative effects on organisations such as the burden of the marketing shift due to personal engagement with customers, increased customer power, tracking of negative or misleading statements, unauthorised employees speak on the company's behalf and accidental release of confidential information. Appel et al., (2019) in their article *'the future of social media in marketing'* argue that despite what academics and practitioners have studied and learned over the last 15–20 years on this topic, due to the fast-paced and ever-changing nature of social media—and how consumers use it—the future of social media in marketing might not be merely a continuation of what we have already seen. In this regard, this paper examines the role of social media marketing in fostering the effectiveness of marketing communication in the Tanzania's Telecommunication industry using evidence from Vodacom. Specifically, the paper focuses on the extent to which a triad of the customers' *awareness, customers' attitude* and *skills* related to social media platforms influence on the effectiveness of marketing communication.

Theoretical literature review

Digital platforms and social media marketing interface

The digital world from which social media marketing networks are informed is embedded in hundreds of digital several platforms, which are accessible and viewable globally. Some of the platforms available on the internet are Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, Myspace, Pinterest, LinkedIn, google+, Live journal, SlideShare, Orkut, meetup, and WhatsApp (Brown, 2008). Implicitly, marketing through digital platforms has recourse to various numbers of channels. However, the core purpose of this paper is to look for proper patterns that result in good marketing communication and a better overall return on investment for a given brand. In this regard, these sites offer platforms for finding influential partners in business, whether organisation is looking for distributors, providers, or other parties of interest to it. They are a meeting point and often create negotiation mechanism for suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers, retailers and are likely to be within a well-defined area which is facilitated by the internet (Ba & Pavlou, 2002). All these aspects are achievable through Social media which is defined by Appels et al. (2019) as a collection of software-based digital technologies—usually presented as apps and websites—that provide users with digital environments in which they can send and receive digital content or information over some type of online social network. In this sense, we can think of social media as encompassing the major platforms and their features, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Social media can as well be regarded as a type of digital marketing channel that marketers can use to communicate with consumers through advertising (*Ibid*). Baruah et al (2012) quote Kaplan and Haenlein who classify six different types of social media: collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), blogs and microblogs (e.g. Twitter), content communities (e.g. Youtube), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft)

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and virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life). Hersant (2011) stretches further by considering Social networks as a wide spectrum of web-based and mobile applications that facilitate social interaction across geographical boundaries mainly through user-developed content

Appels et al. (2019) assert that the current social media landscape has two key aspects to it. First are the platforms that provide the underlying technologies and business models making up the industry and ecosystem; Second are the use cases; i.e., how various kinds of people and organizations are using these technologies and for what purposes. Recently, there has been an exponential growth not only in the number of social media networks but also in the socio-demographic attributes of their user base. Shet (2018) reveals that social media use is not limited to the youth as 72 % of all the internet users are now active on social media; 89% of people aged 18 - 29 years use social media whereas 82% of people aged 30 - 49 are active on social media. On the other hand, 65% of those aged 50-64 use social media whereas 49% of those aged above 65 are active social media users. Marketers use social networks for improving conversation rates through the interaction with new, recent and old customers. Shared blog posts, videos, images or comments on varied social media, for example, allow followers to react, visit the company website and become customers (Online Marketing Trend, 2012).

On the other hand, Smith (2009) delineate social media marketing as tactics that embrace social networks and platforms to initiate capacity-building on the company brand alongside with promoting products or services. Usually, social media marketing campaigns centre on initiating a social media appearance on significant platforms, developing suitable content and advertisement and acquiring customer inputs throughout the campaign using surveys and contests. Akhtar (2011) contends that social media marketing refers to the process of receiving attention through social platform sites, hence requiring a lot of efforts to convince customers online via various platforms that products or services from a certain company are valuable. Usually, a more targeted type of advertising can be very effective in developing brand awareness (*ibid.*).

Effective marketing communication

Effective marketing refers to the relationship between work input such as monetary inputs in expenditure on an advertising campaign and the desired outcome in terms of heightened sales and revenue (SocialBakers, 2011). In marketing, for a new brand that is trying to grow, it is vital to strike a balance between the cost and the results. The goal is to maximise returns on investment, by looking for and executing effective strategies for the least amount of money (Aljifri, Pons & Collins, 2003). This is where digital and social media marketing generates competitive advantages in communicating. Social media marketing has simplified the marketing tools and made them more affordable than ever before, hence making both large and small businesses exploit them to their own advantage.

As a matter of fact, the use of effective social marketing tools allows businesses to realise effective time management by reaching more customers and broadening the customer base within a short time and even limited resources. In essence, despite perceived risks social media helps business ventures reach huge number of customers from all over the world, as the presence on the social media sites of one's choice creates unlimited potential for reaching influential clients. In particular, Facebook can potentially reach clients from all walks of life at low cost in addition to reaching local clients of special interest to the company (Ba & Pavlou, 2002). Recently, Facebook, reported having 2.38 billion monthly active users and 1.56 billion daily active users as of March



31, 2019 (Facebook 2019). Similarly, YouTube, LinkedIn, MySpace, Flickr and Digg have international users that can be targeted and reached without additional work or incurring extra expenses.

Empirical literature review

Extant literature shares empirical studies that are related to digital platforms use in varied environments and outcomes. Howe (2006) conducted a study in the US on the role of social media and found that digital platforms served as marketing communication tools that allow people to share the companies' news by informing consumers about the company's products and services they offer. It also helps to provide identity about the company's products and services they offer. Han and Windsor (2011) study in the US on the user's willingness to pay on social network sites revealed that, customers were willing to participate in sharing and conversation on the social media sites at any cost. Gutiérrez Flórez, Correa Escoba, Henao Restrepo, Arango Botero, and Valencia Arias (2017) study in Columbia assessed the factors influencing purchasing decisions on social media. The findings indicate a growth in social marketing adoption that influence information consumers' purchasing decisions. Indeed, social media can shape customers' behaviour with a view to changing their purchasing attitude.

A study by Bartoletti, (2013) on social media's contribution to the marketing of sport events in Vienna underscored the importance of social media in the pursuit of an unquestionable high social desire for users to feel to belong and be an integral part of the group, which simplified their interaction. Bala (2014), on the other hand, conducted a study on social media and changing communication patterns. The study established that, social media is going to be the next big challenge for different aspects of customers' social and personal lives. After all, Social media is creating a new kind of social order and strengthening social network but weakening inter-personal relations (ibid.). Appel et al. (2019) contend that social media allows people to freely interact with others and offer multiple ways for marketers to reach and engage with consumers. Considering the numerous ways social media affects individuals and businesses alike, the authors focus drawing on academic research, discussions with industry leaders, and popular discourse, identify nine themes, organized by predicted imminence (i.e., the immediate, near, and far futures), that they believe will meaningfully shape the future of social media through three lenses: consumer, industry, and public policy. Within each theme, the authors identify relevant future research directions for academics and practitioners.

Rauniar et al. (2014) his study examines individual adoption behavior of the most popular social networking site Facebook amongst a group of students from US-based universities.. It dwelt on the influences on the intention of using social networking based on individual's perceived ease of use (EU), the user's critical mass (CM), social networking site capability (CP), perceived playfulness (PP), trustworthiness (TW), and perceived usefulness (PU) was empirically examined with a primary data set of 398 users of Facebook gathered from a web-based questionnaire survey. It was found that there are many variables in the behavioral theories that need to be investigated to improve the prediction of social media acceptance and usage behavior suggested by our revised TAM model.

Another study by Clark (2014) examined the role of social media in Tanzanian's hip-hop production. The findings revealed that social media helps to spread information. Though social media sites have become main stream, there remains a problem of visibility of information posted

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on social media as users tend to be bombarded by massive information daily. In addition, Pfeiffer, Kleeb, Mbelwa and Ahorlu, (2014) who conducted a study on use of social media among adolescents in Dar es Salaam and Mtwara regions, Tanzania, found that social network sites are continually changing in terms of popularity and functionality and, hence, require high flexibility by practitioners and organisations in general. The study also highlighted that, the use of the internet and social media, especially on the mobile phones among a sample of school-going, Tanzanian urban youth is generally high. Abraham (2018) assessed factors influencing adoption of digital marketing in the commercial banks, Tanzania. This quantitative based study revealed that, individual organizational and social factors were strong predictors of adoption of digital marketing at ($P < 0.05$). Furthermore, the study found that bank managers and employees agree mostly that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness were factors for adopting digital marketing. A synthesis of the findings of these studies suggests that, despite recognising the contribution of social media to enhancing marketing activities by organisations, limited studies have been conducted to ascertain what it takes on the social media platforms to have effective influence on marketing activities, particularly in the developing world's and particularised context of Tanzania. Van Laar, Van Deursen, Van Dijk, and De Haan (2017) infer that Innovation in digital marketing starts with people, making the human capital within the workforce decisive. Although such skills are seen as crucial, the digital aspect integrated with 21st-century skills is not yet sufficiently defined this triggers a need to examine the extent to which awareness, attitude and skills on digital platforms influence effective marketing in the context of Tanzania.

Theoretical perspectives

This article is informed by adopted McLuhan's Media Theory by McLuhan (1995) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989). McLuhan's (1995) Media Theory argues that, apart from the uploaded content in the social media, users can be changed by the medium itself. According to McLuhan's (1995) content that users exchange will not vary from the existing media but interaction with new communication channels can convert the user's behaviour forever. Apart from the content developed, social media has high impact on the society. McLuhan divided media into *hot* and *cold*. The former ("hot") requires users to allocate a lot of effort in understanding the content within such media whereas the later ("cold") refers to media that influence one's sense, so the users do not need to exert many efforts, such as in films, radio, and photography. Hence, both developed content and pattern of communication in social media may change the user's conduct for the better if it is properly applied.

In business, managers and consumers are supposed to understand behavioural change and how it aligns with the usage of the existing social media and embrace changing attitude, for example, by accepting technology change. Despite of this understanding, Contractor (2009) suggests that, more studies are needed on data mining and data modelling on the web with a focus on behavioural frameworks. Accordingly, this should be through capturing generated social media and existing data information on current social media websites, such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Acquiring several social media networks analyses in studying online social and knowledge networks could result in more deep understanding of the society and inform social media marketing conduct for businesses. This theory supports the paper's thrust because organisations ought to focus on the development of appropriate contents that can be understood by the targeted users of information regarding a particular brand. Moreover, the organisation



ought to be sensitive to a chosen platform while taking into account the strengths of the 'Hot' and 'Cold' media in a bid to enhance the effectiveness of marketing communication. Furthermore, it is important to communicate desired content by taking into account the users' awareness, attitude and skills in accessing the desired appropriate social media platforms.

Additionally, to predict, explain and understand the customers' acceptance or rejection of certain information systems, researchers need to initiate and use TAM for understanding the social media user's acceptability of the information systems, hence the adoption of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). TAM is one of the most popular research models for predicting the use and acceptance of information systems and technology by individuals. TAM was developed by Davis (1986) to theorize the usage behaviour of computer technology. The TAM was adopted from another popular theory called theory of reasoned action (TRA) by Fishbein and Ajzen, (1975) which explains a person's behaviour through their intentions. Intention in turn is determined by two constructs: individual attitudes toward the behaviour and social norms or the belief that specific individuals or a specific group would approve or disapprove of the behavior. Various scholars refer to the model in unveiling factors that affect the user's motivation in accepting and acquiring a new information system (Ali, 2011) or rejecting it. The model posits that the users' adoption of a given technology for normal use depends on its perceived usefulness (i.e., enhances task performance) and perceived ease-of-use (i.e. extent to which a technology requires effort).

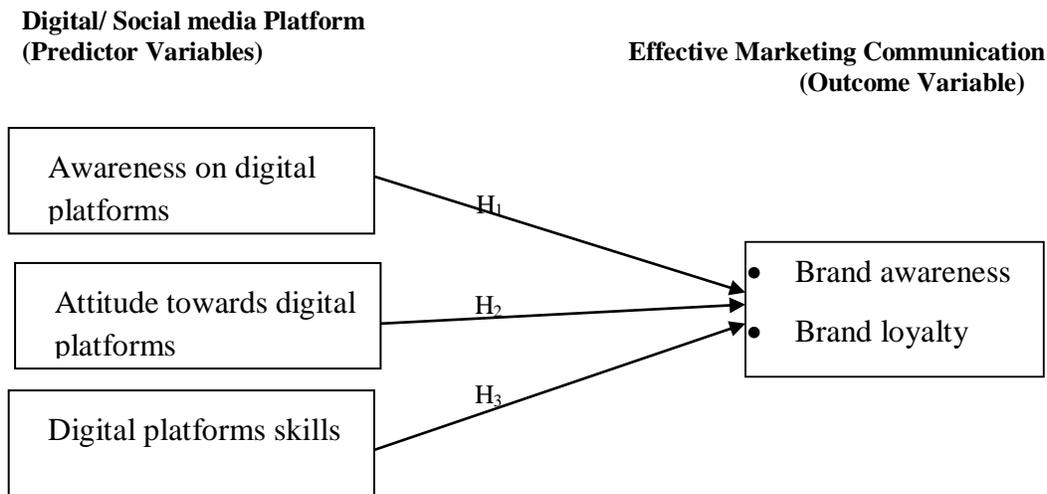
TAM was applied to evaluate the role of social media platforms in inducing customers' intention to use digital and social media platforms with a purpose of creating opportunity for the Telecommunication industry to adopt or use social media platforms for marketing their products or services. Given the widespread popularity of social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, Google+, and LinkedIn, parallel to this study, Rauniar, Rawski, Yang and Johnson (2014) used TAM for theorizing and understanding the user attitude and usage behavior of social media site in developing future understandings and deployment of these new technologies

Conceptual framework of the paper

Figure 1 conceptualises the concept of this paper on the role of digital/social media platforms in fostering the effectiveness of marketing communication in Tanzania's telecommunication industry using Vodacom Company as a case study: The conceptual framework behind this study focuses on the three independent variables: People's skills, Awareness, and Attitude towards digital platforms as they are conceived to have a bearing on effective communication as the dependent variable. Alhaddad (2015) argues that internet and hence social media advertising has taken new forms which have more advantages over the traditional mediums like print media, TV and radio. Marketing communication is becoming precise, personal, interesting, interactive and social. However, Awareness of social media becomes the first step for any move toward a successful market strategy. On the other hand a study by Chung and Austria (2010) revealed that attitudes toward social media marketing messages are strongly related to social media interaction and information gratifications, but are not related to entertainment gratification. Perceived Ease of use of social media as inferred by TAM implies that a highly skilled person other things being constant will tend to perceive use of social media platforms easier.

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Source: Synthesised from the Literature

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

For the telecommunication industries to have effective marketing communication, the organisation should adopt new information and communications technology by looking at the *skills, awareness and attitude* that people have pertaining to social media marketing instead of traditional marketing or analogue systems. Digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and You Tube have an advantage of having a wide coverage and capacity of directly engaging with customers, product or service. Moreover, they facilitate two-way conversation. Effective communication engendered by using digital platforms saves costs and time to reach a huge mass population of customers. All of these features lead to increased brand awareness and brand loyalty, which are indicators of effective marketing communication. It was, therefore, hypothesized that:

H₁: Awareness of social medial platforms has a positive influence on the effectiveness of marketing communication

H₂: The attitude of social media platform users has a positive relationship with the effectiveness of marketing communication

H₃: Skills of people for social media platforms use have a positive influence on the effectiveness of marketing communication

Methodology

The study was conducted at Vodacom Tanzania PLC Headquarters in Dar es Salaam located in Kinondoni District. Vodacom was chosen primarily because it is a giant and leading telecommunication company in Tanzania with vast experience in marketing and sales using both traditional and new media, including social media. The customers of Vodacom were respondents of this study. Because, it was not practical to consider all the customers, a convenience sampling technique was used to select 390 customers. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (1996), a rule of thumb given by $N \geq 104 + M$ (Where N is the sample size and M is the number of independent

variables) can be used to determine the sample size. Given our three independent variables, the minimum acceptable sample size was determined to be 107. Moreover, Sivo et al. (2006) propose a critical sample size of 200 respondents. Since a large sample size is generally good for controlling bias, a sample of 390 was settled on in this study.

Out of 390 questionnaires distributed to the respondents; 365 questionnaires were properly filled out and returned; 15 incomplete questionnaires were returned; and 10 questionnaires were not returned at all. In other words, the study registered a return rate of 93.6%, which is acceptable for continuing with data analysis. According to Beard, (2018) contacting wrong participants and not gaining co-operation from the right participants can result in low response rate. This current study was, however, freed from this anomaly. The study mainly used primary data, which were collected using structured questionnaires. The measures of the questions were based on a 5-point Likert scale. After all, structured questionnaires require lower cognitive load on the part of respondents and, thus, reduces the amount of thinking that a respondent needs to undertake to complete the task. This generally translates into higher response and more accurate data, as was the case in this study.

To ensure content validity of the data collection instrument it was deemed appropriate to pilot the research instrument using 10 users (not taking part in the actual study) to establish, especially, the representativeness and suitability of the questions and, subsequently, revise some questions in the structured questionnaire (Royse, 1995; Hair, et al., 2003) for enhanced clarity, accuracy and robustness in measurement. Some few corrections were made based on the responses to improve clarity of the instrument before it was finally vetted by one expert for final administration in the field. Coefficient of reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. Al-Eqab and Adel (2013) reveal that, the most favourable way of measuring internal consistency and data collection tool is through Cronbach's Alpha. To be acceptable, the scale should be 0.7 and above (Gutiérrez et al., 2017). Variables used in the study showed that they are all reliable since the results of Cronbach Alpha are at least 0.7 as Table 1 illustrates:

Table 1: Variables Cronbach Alpha

| Variable Description | Cronbach Alpha |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Marketing communication effectiveness | 0.789 |
| Awareness | 0.737 |
| Attitude | 0.716 |
| Skills | 0.879 |

Data were analysed using descriptive and multiple regression analyses. Specifically, the study used descriptive statistics to summarise the profile of the respondents. Furthermore, Chenhall (2003) suggests that, regression analysis makes it possible to access the advantage and strength of variables in a non-random relationship.

Study results

Profiles of the respondents

The profiles of the respondents were examined using the demographic characteristics of age, gender and education. The results on age groups revealed that most of the respondents were youth aged *Social media marketing platforms use and effectiveness of marketing communication in the Tanzania's telecommunication industry: evidence from Vodacom Company*

between 18 and 25 years as they were 139(38.1%) of the respondents. Moreover, 64(17.5%) of the respondents were aged between 26 and 36 years, 87(23.8%) of the respondents were aged 37 – 47, 43(11.9%) of respondents were age 48 – 58, and 32(8.7%) respondents were aged above 58 years. These findings reflect the social media use trend in the world as per age categories (Shet, 2018).

With regards to gender, the results show that 156(42.7%) of the respondents were males and 209 (57.3%) were females. In other words, females were more accessible for the study than males. Guadagno (2018) contends that social media platforms are gendered depending on the options in use: Men and women engage in different types of social media and also use and consume different types of social media along gender lines. A study by Kasahara et al. (2019) established that, gender differences occur in social media usage and sites; however, gender differences are not consistent across studies. In their study, snapchat and Instagram both had more females using those sites than their male counterparts.

Digital platforms and effectiveness of marketing communication

The objective of the study was to assess the role of digital platforms in fostering the effectiveness of marketing communication. The findings are presented through a model summary, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis.

Model summary

The model summary provides information on the regression line’s ability to account for the total variation in the dependent variable. Table 2 provides a model summary:

Table 2: Model summary

| Mode | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .523 ^a | .274 | .246 | .29095 |

- a) Predictors: (Constant), Awareness, Attitude, Skills.
- b) Dependent Variable: Effectiveness MC

The results presented in the model summary of Table 2 shows the overall influence of all the three variables on the effectiveness of marketing communication. To measure the strength of the relationship between digital platforms and the effectiveness of marketing communications, Pallant (2010) suggested the use of R squared, which always varies between 0 to 100%. In this study, the model indicates R squared to be 0.274, which signifies that a 27.4% variation in the effectiveness of marketing communication is explained by the variation in indicators of digital platforms and the remaining 72.6% is explained by other variables not included in this study.

Furthermore, the study results suggest the use of adjusted R square to measure the strength of the model, because it considered different predictors which are in between 1 and R square. As per the model summary, the adjusted R square is 0.246, which means that, awareness, attitudes and skills pertaining to digital platforms explain the variation in the effectiveness of marketing communication by 24.6%. Apart from the adjusted R square, the regression analysis model summary reveals the accuracy of the sample in representing the population of the study through the standard error of estimate. Moreover, as the estimation of standard error gets smaller, the population representation of the study becomes higher. Table 2 also reveals that the standard



error of estimate to be 0.2909 which is small and shows that, the sample of the population represents the population of the study (Pallant, 2020).

Correlation

Correlation helps to quantify the association between two continuous variables (e.g., between an independent and a dependent variable or between two independent variables. Cohen (1988) and Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010), proffer that; the relationship amongst the variables of a given assessment is determined using Pearson’s correlation. Any correlation at 0.01 levels implies that at 99% assurance, correlation amongst the variables is not random:

Table 3: Pearson’s Correlation Coefficients

| Correlation | | MC Effectiveness | Awareness | Attitude | Skills |
|------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------|----------|--------|
| MC Effectiveness | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .469** | .878** | .283* |
| Awareness | Pearson Correlation | .469** | 1 | .426** | .269* |
| Attitude | Pearson Correlation | .878** | .426** | 1 | .537* |
| Skills | Pearson Correlation | .283** | .269** | .537** | 1 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 reveals that, all the study variables were significant at 0.01. These findings signal that there was multicollinearity problem, which was solved using multiple regression analysis that allowed for the variance inflation factor to be computed.

Hypothesis testing

This part tests the hypotheses related to the three (3) constructs relating to the digital platforms and the marketing communication variable. The regression results are as presented in Table 4:

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|------------|-----------------------------|------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 1.310 | .215 | | 6.09 | .00 |
| Awareness | .116 | .041 | .130 | 2.81 | 0.0 |
| Attitude | .859 | .047 | .968 | 18.40 | .00 |
| Skills | .371 | .068 | .271 | 5.48 | .00 |

Dependent Variable: Effectiveness Marketing Communication (MC)

The Multiple Regression results presented in Table 4 above show the coefficient values of independent variables. Specifically, the coefficients show the direction of the relationships together with the contribution of unit change for individual variables to the change in marketing communication constructs. The first hypothesis states that *awareness of digital platforms has a positive impact on the effectiveness of marketing communication*. The results show that, there is a positive but insignificant relationship between awareness of the social media platform and the

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effectiveness of marketing communication at the $P \geq 0.05$ level of significance. This indicates that, there is enough evidence to reject the hypothesis (H_1), that awareness of social media platforms does not significantly influence the effectiveness of marketing communication even at 95% level of confidence since the $P \geq 0.05$.

The second hypothesis states that *attitude of social media platform users have a positive relationship with the effectiveness of marketing communication*. The results reveal that, attitudes of users towards social media platforms have a positive and significant relationship with the effectiveness of marketing communication at significance level of 95%. These results indicate that, the attitude of social media platform's users, as an independent variable, has a positive and significant bearing on the effectiveness of the Marketing Communication (MC) since $P \leq 0.05$. For the third and final hypothesis, the study established that *skills pertaining to digital platform users have a positive relationship with the effectiveness of marketing communication*. In other words, social media platform skills among users have a positive and significant relationship with effective Marketing Communication, since $P \leq 0.05$.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of the study revealed that, the users' awareness of social media platforms has a positive but insignificant relationship with the effectiveness of marketing communication. In fact, companies are increasing as Howe (2006) aptly points out; digital platforms are effective tools for an identity, which worked when the customers were aware of the media. Furthermore, contrary to the findings of the study of Han and Windsor, 2011; Celine (2012) and Clark (2014), the current study has established that the users' awareness of digital platforms have a positive relationship with the effectiveness of marketing communication.

With regard to theories that informed the study, McLuhan's Media Theory' shot-cool media dichotomy contends that apart from the uploaded content on social media, the users can be changed by the media itself. It seems that the nature of the media matters in enhancing the awareness of social platform users and, therefore, the usability of the media in question. Also, the content that users exchange will not vary from the existing media. Nevertheless, the interaction of new communication channels can alter the user's behaviour forever (McLuhan, 1995). In other words, so long as users are aware of the presence of the media, media such as digital platforms transform the whole communication structure including the effectiveness of the marketing communication in place.

Furthermore, the current study found that, the user's attitude towards digital platforms, have a positive and significant relationship with effectiveness of marketing communication. This is similar to what Insight Express (2004) revealed, that, the attitude of digital platform users toward the media are key to determining the effectiveness of marketing communication. In other words, if their attitude is positive towards that digital platform, then, it will also bring about positive results on the effectiveness of MC, as they will be interested in using that medium. In fact, Highley (2010) and Bala (2014) indicate that, customers are setting the pace in this race and are willing to participate in sharing and conversing on the social media sites at any cost. Implicitly, this translates into the view that, a company with marketing strategies that can keep up with the customer base will share the winners' circles so long as the users have positive attitude towards that digital platforms, other factors are not that much important. Put differently, attitude will bring about positive results pertaining to the effectiveness of marketing



communication. TAM works on the assumption that, apart from other external variables, perceived usefulness and perceived ease-of-use determines the attitude (which translate into attitude and skills respectively) of the users towards the digital and or social media platform. In turn, the attitude of users towards the systems determines their readiness to use the digital/ social media platform provided. This means, the positive attitude of the users towards digital platform provides marketers with a better channel for communicating and fulfilling their marketing needs. Hence, the users' attitude towards digital platforms and the attendant effectiveness marketing communication are positively connected as the findings from this study and TAM reveals.

Furthermore, the study also found that, the skills of users pertaining to the use of digital platform have a positive and strong relationship with the effectiveness of marketing communication. This concurs with the findings by Howe (2006) and Highley (2010), which revealed that, without the users' skills on how to use the digital platform available, any marketing communication efforts would not yield the expected results. Indeed, for effective marketing communication to materialise, skills pertaining to how to use digital platforms constitute a crucial. Nevertheless, for gaining of such skills among the social platform users largely depend on their attitude towards that digital platform. In this regard, Han and Windsor (2011), Clark (2014) and Bala (2014) found that, education and training on how to use the digital platform available is positively linked to the effectiveness of marketing communication. Indeed, training and educating users on the digital platform available makes develop a positive attitude towards that digital platform. Moreover, they facilitate the marketers' job of effectively communicating their marketing efforts. In this regard, McLuhan's Media theory portends that, apart from the media being the message, skills on how to use the media available are essential to optimise the results. Corollary to this, the TAM theory suggests that, the ease-of-use represents the skills of using the digital platform provided. If the digital platform is not easy to learn and develop skills on using it, the users' attitude towards that system will be negative and, hence, lead to a failure for marketers to communicate their marketing needs and stratagems.

Conclusions and recommendations

This study assessed the role of Social media platform use in fostering the effectiveness of marketing communication in Tanzania's telecommunication industry using a case of Vodacom Tanzania PLC. This flows from the contention that digital/social media platforms play an important role in disseminating marketing related information to users of such information. The study findings show that all the independent factors have been hypothesised to have positive influence on the effectiveness of marketing communication. Findings indicate that specifically, the users' awareness on the digital platform has a positive but insignificant bearing on the effectiveness of marketing communication, which fulfils the first objective of the study. On the other hand, the second objective of the study sought to establish the extent to which the attitude of customers on digital platforms influences the effectiveness of marketing communication. In this regard, the study found that, the attitude of the users of digital platforms had a strong and significant positive influence on the effectiveness of marketing communications. Likewise, with regards to the users' skills the study found strong and positive significant relationship to the effectiveness marketing communications.

Based on these conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations. To begin with, it underscores that the importance of the effectiveness of marketing communication in any organisation cannot be undermined. The organisation's management has to optimise the *Social media marketing platforms use and effectiveness of marketing communication in the Tanzania's telecommunication industry: evidence from Vodacom Company*

exploitation of this aspect; otherwise, failure to do so could lead to failure in fruitfully employing marketing efforts and could cost the organisation in monetary terms. Second, it notes that, without the users' skills on how to use the digital platform available, any marketing communication efforts would be unable to yield the expected results. For effective marketing communication, skills on how to use digital platforms are important. However, the acquisition of such a skill by any user largely depends on his or her attitude towards that digital platform. Thus, it is up to Telecommunication Company such as Vodacom to use traditional media in the mean time to communicate and sensitise the target audience on the need to develop a positive attitude towards the use of digital platforms and the attendant benefits. Moreover, these digital platforms have been changing every day and speedy of change is the competitive advantage in this contemporary world. Thus, managements need to be awake and embrace these changes, as lagging behind would leave them out of touch with the reality on the ground. Furthermore, to enhance effective operations in business settings, marketers have to exploit the opportunities available on digital platforms. The digital company's management should do best by capitalising on the people's skills and attitude to enhance effectiveness in marketing communication.

Policy implications

This paper has policy implications for the government of Tanzania to develop, enhance and provide appropriate national policy initiatives to encourage the presence of good technology infrastructure and to build trust in the use of social media. This will stimulate increased use of digital or social media marketing. Policy should among others promote a positive attitude and skill developments amongst potential users (customers inclusive) of social media in areas that will boost positive behavioral inclination towards the use of social media marketing.

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