

Efficacy of Social Media Platforms in Fostering Access to Information on Water Utility Services in Tanzania

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Abstract

This paper reports the findings of a study that investigated the efficacy of social media platforms in fostering access to information on water utility services in Tanzania particularly on Dar es Salaam Water and Sewerage Authority (DAWASA). The study specifically sought to determine the frequency at which customers access information through DAWASA's Instagram and Facebook platforms; examine the kind of information customers access; assess the customers' perception on the messages they access; evaluate the customers' perception on the promptness of DAWASA's responses to questions, comments and complaints. The study adopted a quantitative approach and specifically a descriptive research design. The study was conducted on DAWASA customers using standardised structured questionnaires which included Likert-scale questions to gather their views on interactions with the DAWASA Instagram and Facebook platforms. In all, 136 active followers of the two platforms were randomly selected and sent the questionnaires to complete and return but only 118 respondents returned their questionnaires. The Statistical Package for Service Solutions (SPSS) version 20 facilitated data analysis. The study found that most respondents accessed daily information on water allocation schedule, meter reading, bill payments and reminders, and DAWASA staff communication contacts. However, such information is not promptly responded to by DAWASA via these platforms, an anomaly that needs fixing. As such, DAWASA should optimise the use of the social media to further improve access to information by promptly responding to questions, comments, and complaints from customers on both Facebook and Instagram platforms.

Keywords: Efficacy, water utility services, social media platforms, access to information
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Introduction

Since 2002, the Tanzania National Water Policy has been in force in a bid to ensure effective water utility services in the East African country. In fact, the government of Tanzania used the policy to herald an era of sustainable, effective, and efficient development and management of water supply services in the country. The water utility services in Tanzania generally aim to ensure that every Tanzanian hypothetically has access to efficient, effective, and sustainable water supply and services (Sanga, 2022). This thrust also demands proper water utilities' engagement with relevant publics, particularly their customer base, to avoid their becoming disgruntled with the services and ensure they offer acceptable services. In this engagement, water utilities varyingly employ media channels. Traditionally, water utilities relied heavily on the mainstream media such as the newspapers, radio, TV, and magazines to communicate with their key publics (Eckl *et al.*, 2017). However, such traditional



communication means were largely one-way, with limited opportunities for immediate feedback and interaction. The rise of Web 2.0 has given businesses a great deal more options for communication (Mangold *et al.*, 2009), and it has also given consumers access to additional information sources and opportunities for interaction with businesses and other consumers (Tiago *et al.*, 2014; Berthon *et al.*, 2008). Indeed, the advent of social media platforms has revolutionised the landscape of public relations practice among water utilities and proven to be a game-changer often at relatively and comparatively lower costs than in legacy media. Indeed, the platforms have transformed the practice of public relations into a more interactive and two-way communication process between water utilities firms, for example, and their key publics.

In Tanzania, the Dar es Salaam Water and Sewerage Authority (DAWASA) is one such water utility, which communicates information on utility to their key publics and maintaining positive relationships with them (DAWASA, 2020). In line with technological changes, the DAWASA Department of Public Relations has embraced social media as a communication medium for disseminating and receiving information from their publics or clients. Sallaku, *et al.*, (2017) contend that water utilities can use social media to communicate information on water treatment plants, water service interruptions, public engagement, and water reuse among other issues. Since social media platforms are interactive, using them as a means of communication could lead to solutions for problems and concerns that people raise with the water utilities. Yet, recent studies on the efficacy of social media use in improving access to information on water utility services, particularly in the developing country's context of Tanzania and Dar es Salaam—the sprawling metropole and most populous city in the nation has largely been lacking despite various water utilities using such social media to communicate with customers.

In general, the data that is currently available indicates that public utilities continue to utilise social media platforms at a lower rate than other industries, even with the rise in social media use among individuals and businesses (statista.com). Furthermore, literature search tends to confirm a dearth of recent studies on water utilities use of social media platforms in Tanzania despite such usage being in vogue. Significantly, the use of social media by water utilities is not well covered in the literature, as Sallaku, *et al.*, (2017) have already pointed out. Though many studies have looked at the function of social media for companies operating in competitive marketplaces and a smaller number on the role of social media in public services' communication strategies (Martin, 2016), this gap still exists in Tanzania today. Thus, this study aimed to gather salient information on how users treat these platforms and the advantages they engender particularly on matters relating to accessing information on water utility services.

Problem and Context

DAWASA has been varyingly using social media platforms as part of its efforts to improve service delivery and customer engagement. Its use of social media for customer engagement is premised on the numerous advantages that these platforms can provide for public relations practitioners in water utilities. However, little has been done to analyse how customers perceive the instantaneous and reachability features of the platforms in conveying DAWASA's messages to the relevant publics, particularly in the context of Tanzania. After all, as Sallaku, *et al.*, (2017) aptly observe in their study conducted in Italy one of the first studies to address social media communication in the water utility industry, water utilities can

utilise social media to communicate information on wastewater treatment plants, water service disruptions, public engagement, and reuse of water, for example.

DAWASA, as a public utility institution, has some of the largest customer bases that require optimised communication, including online platforms. Though the public utility company has been using online platforms to engage with customers, the effectiveness of such usage has largely remained unclear. A literature search shows that little has been researched on social media use in utilities, particularly with a focus on DAWASA. Thus, this study aimed to evaluate the perceptions of DAWASA's social media platforms' effectiveness in providing customers with relevant information and promoting two-way communication. Social media has proven to quickly disseminate information and prompt responses, and DAWASA's use of such platforms to engage with customers requires investigation to determine its effectiveness in facilitating communication with customers particularly in the areas of information availability to customers on the platforms as well as promptness in responding to customers' questions, comments and complaints via the platforms hence this study.

The main objective of this study was to investigate the efficacy of social media platforms in fostering access to information on water utility services in Tanzania. Specifically, the study sought to: determine the frequency at which customers access information through DAWASA's Instagram and Facebook platforms; examine the kind of information customers access through DAWASA's Instagram and Facebook platforms, assess the customers' perception on the messages they access, and evaluate customers' perception on the promptness of DAWASA's responses questions comments and complaints related to the use of the two web-based platforms. To achieve its specific objectives, the study was informed by the following research questions: i) What is the frequency at which customers access information through DAWASA's Instagram and Facebook platforms? ii) What kind of information do customers access through DAWASA's Instagram and Facebook platforms? iii) What are the customers' perception on the messages they access through DAWASA's Instagram and Facebook platforms? And iv) What are the customers' perception on the promptness of DAWASA's responses questions comments and complaints?

Theoretical Framework

This section of the literature review examines the theoretical framework that informed the current study, that is, the Uses and Gratifications Theory and some elements of instant gratification. It summarises the key constructs of the theory and provides a rationale for its usage in this study.

Uses and Gratifications Theory, Technology and Instant Gratification

Although this theory has been used mostly to study print and electronic media and looks outdated, the emergence of social media gives it a new lease of life (Musa, *et al.*, 2015). The UGT has been applied to mass media like television and electronic bulletins to explain prolonged use. Swanson's (1987) research highlights the importance of message content in UGT research, revealing that audience members seek various gratifications within media content, influencing their consumption patterns. Media consumption is always done for a purpose, even if it is only for amusement or habit. People choose media because they believe it will fulfil certain needs and desires. However, interest in the UGT, which focuses on the physical and mental enjoyment also stems from its close ties to instant gratification. Businesses are constantly seeking the perfect marketing solution to attract and retain



customers. Instant gratification is a key element contributing to such customer satisfaction, fostering engagement, loyalty, and impacting purchasing decisions. Understanding and leveraging this psychology, therefore, can make a difference between positive customer encounters and lukewarm responses. The integration of technology and customisation can lead to personalised customer experience, facilitated by chatbots and even AI-powered product suggestions that respond promptly to queries. In fact, these days, the instant gratification offered by social media platforms may make someone look for instant pleasure and get upset if they fail to attain it (Shepherd & Mullane, 2010).

Because of its solid theoretical foundation, the UGT is suitable to contemporary interactive technologies, particularly social media. When compared to traditional media forms, the theory's central tenet that users actively engage and are motivated by their requirements in picking communication media becomes increasingly pertinent given the elevated expectations for user participation Dolan (2015). Musa, *et al.*, (2015), Chen (2011) claim that UGT is an appropriate research tradition for studying the internet and social media, emphasising the importance of consumer choice in media channels.

Previous studies have used reasons for using social media to predict users' behaviours on social media platforms, based on the concepts of UGT (Back, *et al.*, 2011; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). In recent research, the concepts of engagement, amusement, information seeking and sharing, and reward or compensation—all of which are rooted in UGT's theoretical underpinnings have been extensively studied in relation to consumer decisions in online and social media. The 1940s saw the introduction of the uses and gratifications hypothesis, which aims to explain why individuals use media kinds, as well as their wants and the satisfactions they derive from them. It assumes that viewers are more conscious of their choices and engage with the media actively. According to the idea, media selection is based on user requirements, consumption is goal-oriented, and psychological variables determine how media affects behaviour. It recognises that the media has a significant impact on people and competes with other forms of communication. According to the idea, needs are divided into five categories: integrative, personal, emotive, cognitive, and tension-free (Katz, *et al.*, 1973), with people having significant control over how the media affects them depending on their wants and needs.

Consequently, according to Malthouse *et al.*, (2013), marketers seek to attract audiences on social media by offering content that is valuable and satisfying. They suggest that content should be carefully crafted to provide value to specific users, encouraging greater engagement and facilitating positive outcomes. Additionally, Dolan (2015) divides social media material into four primary categories of relational, remunerative, entertaining, and informational features from a UGT standpoint. However, this paper focuses on two specific categories of social media uses and gratifications: information and social interaction. The goal of using these two categories is to understand the information customers of DAWASA seek and receive through Instagram and Facebook, and how it interacts with its customers. Additionally, it aims to explore how customers feel gratified by the information and interactions they experience through these platforms.

Information

In the online social realm, educational advertising and content have become increasingly important, especially in online brand communities where consumers go to learn about brands (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Ulusu, 2010). The desire to obtain

information directly from brands induces consumer participation on social networking platforms (Dholakia, *et al.*, 2004; Lin & Lu, 2011). Factors such as information seeking, knowledge acquisition, and learning, predict consumers' internet use habits, attitudes towards websites and brands, purchase intention, and interaction behaviours are all predicted by content gratifications including information searching, knowledge acquisition, and learning (Stafford *et al.*, 2004; Ko *et al.*, 2005). Research indicates that informational demands drive customers to engage with brands on social media, a type of "human-message interaction" that differs from active engagement, which involves commenting and participating in online communities, and involves passive interactions like clicking on links and using multimedia features (Ko *et al.*, 2005). Effective deployment of social media platforms by organisations to engage with clients can significantly lead to the clients' satisfaction. It is argued that the social media platforms are capable of facilitating quick information dissemination and prompt interaction between an organization and the relevant publics especially the customers who patronize their products and services (Hake, 2020).

Social Media Interaction and Problem-Solving

The customers' social media interactive demands—such as the need for the provision of relevant information for their benefits and the satisfaction of their information needs are strongly linked to their reasons for using the Internet including the social media (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). The need for information support, the need for a sense of access to information, communicating with customers, and substituting virtual connections for in-person ones are some of the sub-motivations associated with social media use particularly by organizations and relevant publics (Muntinga *et al.*, 2011). Their social identity significantly influences the users' contributions to social media platforms (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). The advantages of social engagement among others include establishing a framework for discussions and fostering relationships with relevant persons and publics (McQuail, 1983).

Customer incentives for producing user-generated content online have been connected to the desire for social contact. According to Leung (2009), people find using the internet to communicate with people, exchange ideas and experiences, and keep loved ones informed about current affairs pleasant. Users that create material online can network with other users, learn about the world, receive recognised for their abilities, and find amusement (Leung, 2009). Such socialisation is one of the main reasons individuals join Facebook groups; others include peer support, meeting new people, feeling like you belong, having chats, and keeping in touch with old friends (Park *et al.*, 2009). 'Socialising' is a sub-process of customer participation in virtual brand communities, involving two-way, non-functional interactions whereby customers form attitudes, conventions, and community language (Brodie *et al.*, 2013). Also, studies on social media engagement and Twitter use suggest that people who want to interact or develop informal friendships are more likely to utilise the platform more frequently (Chen, 2011). In a similar vein, customers with a strong desire for social connection are more likely to communicate with other people in person by offering remarks, feedback, private information to marketers, and taking part in online forums or debates (Ko *et al.*, 2005). When taken as a whole, Brodie *et al.*, (2013), Chen, (2011) and Ko *et al.*, (2005) underscore the importance of social satisfaction as a major determinant of Social Networking Site (SNS) use.

Review of Empirical Literature

Frank and Great's (2021) study on the use of social media to communicate issues on water supply in Namibia focused on users' perception of the availability of water supply related information on social media. The study that had used a survey design and applied a questionnaire survey collect data found that the respondents were satisfied with the quality of information they received via social media on water-related issues. Implicitly, social media can bring about customer satisfaction, especially when the customers properly engage with relevant information via the platforms. Similarly, Issa's (2021) study on the utilisation of social media in disseminating information on water supply in Ghana that had focused on the residents of Accra and used a questionnaire for data collection underscored the potency of social media in ensuring satisfaction among respondents.

Lang's (2018) study on the effectiveness of social media utilisation in residents' engagements on water supply in Las Vegas had adopted the quantitative research approach as well as the descriptive research design. Using questionnaire to collect data from respondents selected using simple random sampling, the study found that people utilise social media platforms to effectively engage with residents by promptly responding to their questions and complaints via these platforms. In other words, of social media has the capacity to facilitate communication between water supply operators and beneficiaries of such services. Overall, social media can facilitate effectively such interaction only when properly utilised.

Methods

The study's target population was customers of DAWASA following Instagram and Facebook platforms of the organisation. As a leading water utility in the country and serves about 430,072 customers from Dar es Salaam city and the towns of Bagamoyo and Kibaha of the Coast region (DAWASA 2024 website statistics), it is the country's biggest water utility entity, hence ideal for the research of this nature. The researcher selected 46 Facebook followers as well as 90 Instagram followers for the study, making a total of 136 active followers. This sample was purposively selected based on the criterion of their being active followers of the two DAWASA social media platforms; as such, they can sufficiently provide valid responses of value to the study. Data was gathered in August and November of 2021 during which DAWASA officials had declared a water deficit. As a result, data gathered during this period helped to determine how users of DAWASA's social media platforms felt about using them during the water scarcity period to interact with DAWASA.

The study was conducted on DAWASA customers using standardized structured questionnaires for data collection. The questionnaires included Likert-scale questions designed to get the views of the customers on their interaction with DAWASA via their Instagram and Facebook platforms. Out of the 136 active followers of the two platforms who received questionnaires, 118 respondents completed and returned them. Soft copies of the questionnaire were distributed to them via direct message (DM), which they completed and returned via the same channel. Only questionnaires were used in this because the data collected via questionnaires sufficiently addressed the research questions. The Statistical Package for Service Solutions (SPSS) version 20 facilitated quantitative data analysis. The study harnessed this tool to generate descriptive statistics, whose tabular presentation has been coupled with narration in accordance with the objectives of the study.

Results and Discussion

The study found that most of the respondents accessed information on the platforms every day. Moreover, the majority of the respondents frequently sought information on water allocation schedule, how to read the water meters properly, how to pay water bills, water bill payment reminders, and communication contacts for specific DAWASA personnel that could attend to tailored customer needs. However, the study found that such information was not promptly responded to by DAWASA through the platforms. The subsequent sub-sections detail the findings.

Duration of being customers of DAWASA

The customers' duration of being DAWASA clients was vital in this study since it reveals familiarity with the utility company's operations in their diverse forms. Kolter (2008) contends that knowing the duration of a person's usage of a service provides valuable insights into prospect of customer retention, service improvement, marketing strategies and overall business planning. Moreover, such information helps companies build stronger ties with their customers, adapt to changing customer needs, and make data-driven decisions to enhance their services. Table 1 presents the results:

Table 1: Duration of being a DAWASA customer

Number of Years	Instagram n = 46		Facebook n = 72	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Below 5 years	27	58.7%	32	44.4%
6 -10 years	12	26.1%	30	41.7%
11 – 20 years	7	15.2%	7	9.7%
21 and above years	0	0	3	4.2%
Total	46	100	72	100

Source: Field Data (2021)

As Table 1 illustrates, 27 (58.7%) on the Instagram platform had been DAWASA -customers for less than five years, indicating a relatively recent association with either the company or use of their online platform. Moreover, 12 (26.1%) had been customers for six and 10 years, suggesting a smaller group of customers with a medium duration of association. Furthermore, seven (15.2%) had been customers for 11 - 20 years, indicating another smaller group of long-term customers. None of the respondents on this platform had been customers for 21 and more years, suggesting a lack of customers with an extremely long association with DAWASA on social media platforms. On the Facebook platform, 32 (44.4%) had been DAWASA clients for less than five years, indicating a relatively recent association similar to the Instagram platform. Most of the respondents, 30 (41.7%), had been customers for 6 - 10 years, indicating a significant number of loyal customers in this duration. On the other hand, seven (9.7%) had been customers for 11 - 20 years, implying that a smaller group of long-term customers and three respondents (4.2%) of the respondents had been customers for 21 or more years, representing a relatively small segment of long-standing loyal customers.

As Table 1 further illustrates, DAWASA has a varied consumer base with different lengths of affiliation on Facebook and Instagram. Most respondents had been with DAWASA for less than 10 years, indicating a relatively recent customer base. To engage effectively with these clients, DAWASA should focus on community building, prompt service, and education.



Long-term initiatives should include loyalty and participation in company goals discussions. A sophisticated approach to language, tone, and platform-specific tactics is necessary.

Table 2: Frequency of accessing information via DAWASA social media platforms

	DAWASA Instagram n = 46		Facebook n = 70	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Weekly	8	17.4	8	11.1
Daily	29	63.0	34	47.2
Monthly	1	2.2	8	11.1
Not sure	8	17.4	22	30.6
Total	46	100.0	72	100.0

Source: Field Data (2021)

Data in Table 2 shows the frequency of respondents accessing information on DAWASA Instagram and Facebook platforms. Most of the respondents indicated that they access information on the platforms every day. Specifically, 29 respondents (63%) access information on DAWASA social media platforms on a daily basis. Impliedly, the information posted by DAWASA on the platform has the potential of –highly engaging customers. In other words, social media platforms can improve access to information on water utility services in Tanzania. Besides the majority of the respondents accessing the platforms daily, eight others respondents (17.4%) access information on the platforms on weekly basis, one (2.2%) did so on monthly basis and eight (17.4%) were uncertain about their frequency of accessing the platform. These results suggest that different DAWASA followers varying utilise the Facebook network, indicating a wide range of usage patterns on both platforms. Apparently, it emerged that they use these platforms intentionally to satiate their information needs. Analysing such data, therefore, can allow DAWASA to better understand their followers’ web platform engagement patterns and adjust their communication and content strategy accordingly.

Table 3: Kind of information clients access on DAWASA Instagram and Facebook platforms

Information accessed by customers	Instagram n = 46				Facebook n = 72			
	Accessed		Not accessed		Accessed		Not accessed	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Water allocation schedule	31	67%	15	33%	54	75%	18	25%
Information on proper use of water	19	41%	27	59%	11	15%	61	84%
Information on how to read water meters	29	63%	17	37%	40	56%	32	44%
Information on the maintenance of DAWASA infrastructure	33	72%	13	28%	60	83%	12	17%
Information on how to pay water bills	32	70%	14	30%	46	64%	26	36%
Reminder on water bill payment	33	72%	13	28%	51	71%	21	29%
Communication contacts with DAWASA	24	52%	22	48%	33	46%	39	54%
Information on DAWASA’s projects and officials	44	96%	2	4%	49	68%	23	32%

Source: Field Data (2021)

Results in Table 3 show that 67 percent of the respondents on the DAWASA Instagram and Facebook platforms accessed information on the water allocation timetable, which is crucial for customers. Additionally, 63 percent of the respondents sought knowledge on how to read

water meters, use water appropriately, and maintenance of DAWASA’s infrastructure. A significant portion of the respondents also accessed information on the utility company’s programmes and officials, water bill payment reminders, and instructions on how to pay water bills. On the Facebook platform, 75 percent of the respondents obtained information on the water allocation timetable whereas 56 percent on water meters, 15 percent on water usage, and 83 percent on infrastructure maintenance. Additionally, they also accessed information on how to pay water bills, reminders, communication with DAWASA, and details on its projects and officials just as on Instagram. Implicitly, the DAWASA clients accessed information they had not previously searched for, with many finding substantial information on DAWASA’s projects, officials, and infrastructural maintenance.

The study results further signal that DAWASA's social media platforms—Instagram and Facebook—are crucial for providing users with a wide range of information, including water allocation schedules, meter reading instructions, infrastructure maintenance updates, bill payment procedures, reminders, contact details, ongoing projects, and access to officials. In other words, social media are essential for enhancing transparency and open government practices, as highlighted by scholars in government social media (see, for example, Khan, 2017). To keep citizens informed about government activities, agencies should proactively share beneficial information, which is significantly aided by organisations having a clear understanding of their audience’s information needs (Sherman *et al.*, 2013).

Table 4a: Clients’ Perceptions on Information Accessed through DAWASA Instagram

Perception of DAWASA’s customers	Instagram			
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total
DAWASA Instagram platform brings services closer to me.	20 (43%)	21 (46%)	5 (11%)	46
Instagram platform is important for DAWASA.	21 (46%)	14 (30%)	11 (24%)	46
I get enough information about DAWASA via Instagram.	18 (39%)	20 (43%)	8 (17%)	46
DAWASA provides information about its services through its Instagram page.	33 (82%)	10 (14%)	3 (4%)	46
When I get information from DAWASA, I usually send it to other people through other social media platforms.	21 (46%)	14 (30%)	11 (24%)	46
DAWASA responds promptly to complaints via its Instagram page.	18 (39%)	20 (43%)	8 (17%)	46
I am satisfied with the answers as well as the service I receive through DAWASA Instagram page.	19 (41%)	20 (43%)	7 (15%)	46
DAWASA Instagram page helps to build and maintain relationship with clients.	24 (52%)	18 (39%)	4 (13%)	46

Source: Field Data (2021)

Table 4a presents results on the customers’ evaluation of the effectiveness of the messages accessed through DAWASA’s Instagram platform. Specifically, 43 percent of the respondents reported that the platform improves accessibility and proximity of DAWASA services whereas 11 percent indicated otherwise. Another significant portion (46%) expressed uncertainty or uncertainty about the platform’s effectiveness. Meanwhile, 46 percent believe the platform is essential whereas 24 percent disagreed, and 30 percent were non-committal. On the other hand, 24 percent disagreed with the statement, suggesting a difference in views on the platform's effectiveness and, by extension, significance. The survey found that 39 percent (n=18) of the respondents reported receiving adequate information about DAWASA from Instagram whereas 17 percent (n=8) indicated otherwise. The remaining 43 percent



(n=20) were undecided. On the other hand, an overwhelming majority of the respondents (82%, n= 33) agreed that DAWASA provides information about its services on its Instagram profile, with only three (4%) dissenting percent disagreed, and 10 (14%) were uncertain.

Furthermore, the study found that 46 percent of DAWASA users (n=21) typically disseminate information through other social media channels, with 24 percent (n=disagreeing. A significant portion (30%) expressed neither agreement nor disagreement. DAWASA’s responsiveness to complaints attracted 39 percent of agreement responses (n=18) with 17 percent (n=8) dissenting, with 43 percent others (n=20) non-committal. Furthermore, 41 percent (n=19) were satisfied with the information and services provided by DAWASA’s Instagram page whereas 43 percent (n=20) were uncertain. Regarding the platform’s ability to build and maintain client relationships, 52 percent agreed (n=24), with only 13 percent (n=4) disagreeing and 39 percent (n=18) others were non-committal.

Table 4b: Clients’ Perceptions on Information Accessed through DAWASA Facebook

Perception of DAWASA’s Facebook customers	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total
DAWA SA Facebook platform brings services closer to me	56 (78%)	14 (19%)	2 (3%)	72
Facebook platform is important for DAWASA	61 (85%)	9 (13%)	2 (3%)	72
I get enough information about DAWASA via Facebook	31 (43%)	21 (29%)	20 (28%)	72
DAWASA provides information about its services through its Facebook page.	60 (83%)	10 (14%)	2 (3%)	72
When I get information from DAWASA, I usually send it to other people through other social media platforms.	33 (46%)	8 (11%)	31 (43%)	72
DAWASA responds promptly to complaints via its Facebook page.	26 (36%)	15 (21%)	31 (43%)	72
I am satisfied with the answers as well as the service I receive through DAWASA Facebook page.	27 (38%)	14 (19%)	31 (43%)	72
DAWASA Facebook page helps to build and maintain relationship with its clients.	36 (50%)	16 (22%)	20 (28%)	72

Source: Field Data (2021)

Table 4b shows that most (78%, n=56) of the respondents believe the DAWASA Facebook platform helps to bring services closer to them, indicating its potential for improved accessibility, with only two (3%) disagreeing. Another 19 percent (n=14) of the respondents were indifferent or non-committal. Meanwhile, 85 percent (n=61) treated the platform’s significance vital. Only a minute percentage (3%, n=2) rejected the platform’s importance, indicating high sense of agreement among the respondents. Another 13 percent (n=9) were uncertain. Overall, the data suggests that DAWASA’s Facebook platform is well-received by its target audience. The survey also revealed that 43 percent (n=31) believed they received adequate information on DAWASA through Facebook whereas 28 percent of others (n=20) indicated otherwise, and another 29 percent (n=21) were undecided. Implicitly, there is a

need for DAWASA to up the ante and bolster the information available on the platform in terms of both volume and diversity.

Regarding whether DAWASA provides information on its services on its Facebook platform, 83 percent (n=60) of the respondents agreed it does so with only three percent (n=2) disagreeing, and the other 14 percent (10) non-committal. Whereas 46 percent (n=33) agreed that they typically communicate information from DAWASA through other social media channels, another significant percentage of 43 (n=31) indicated otherwise, suggesting a slight decrease in the propensity to disseminate information via other platforms. A few others (11%, n= 8) were non-committal. The findings suggest that DAWASA’s Facebook page is a useful information source despite some variations in responses.

The study reveals that 36 percent of respondents (n=26) agreed that the DAWASA Facebook page’s responses to complaints were prompt whereas 43 percent (n=31) disapproved of such swiftness. A significant portion (21%, n=15) expressed uncertainty. Implicitly, there is an overriding need for DAWASA to boost their responses by providing instant answers, and where possible automated message with immediate contact by real people. Another 38 percent were satisfied with the answers and services the DAWASA Facebook page provides whereas 43 percent indicated otherwise. In other words, there were more dissatisfied respondents on this aspect than those who were. A few others (19%, n=14) were undecided. Also, half (50%, n=36) of the respondents agreed that the DAWASA Facebook page helps build and maintain client relationships whereas 28 percent (n=20) indicated otherwise, and another 22 percent (n=16) were uncommitted on this aspect. Overall, the data suggests that users of the DAWASA Facebook platforms indicated that it was difficult for the water utility company to respond to customer complaints on time and promptly. In this regard, Khan *et al.*, (2017, p. 25) and Sherman *et al.*, (2013) emphasise the value of the two-way communication in social media and the importance of businesses actively listening to their clients, regardless of the type of criticism they receive, and responding promptly and accordingly. Where possible such responses should be in real time.

Table 5: Customers’ perception on the promptness of DAWASA’s responses to questions, comments and complaints via Instagram and Facebook platforms

Responses to Questions, Comments and Complaints	Instagram N = 46				Facebook N = 72			
	Yes F	%	No F	%	Yes F	%	No F	%
DAWASA promptly responds to my questions	13	28%	33	72%	12	17%	60	83%
DAWASA promptly responds to my comments	12	26%	34	74%	12	17%	60	83%
DAWASA promptly responds to my complaints	17	37%	29	63%	34	47%	38	53%

Source: Field Data (2021)

Table 5 shows that DAWASA does not necessarily promptly respond to questions, comments and complaints of customers on the two platforms. Specifically, it was revealed that 72 percent and 80 percent said DAWASA does not promptly respond to their questions on Facebook and Instagram respectively. More so, 74 percent and 80 percent also indicated that their comments on the platforms are not promptly responded to my DAWASA. On the issue of prompt response to complaints, 63 percent and 53 percent of the respondents said their complaints were not promptly responded by DAWASA. Implicitly, there is an apparent lack



of efficient utilisation of social media by DAWASA to improve access to information on its water utility services.

Conclusion

This paper has investigated the customers' perceptions on the efficacy of social media platforms in fostering access to information on water utility services in Tanzania. Despite the abundance of content on the DAWASA's social media platforms, some customers still perceive them to come up short in terms of substance on the actual utility. As such, DAWASA ought to use its social media channels wisely to discuss a range of subjects, including the visits of public authorities and updates on its leaders and initiatives. Moreover, DAWASA should promptly respond to questions, comments, and complaints from customers on Facebook and Instagram through a two-way interactive mechanism that actively encourages customers and deals with their concerns and queries immediately and swiftly. DAWASA may enhance customer satisfaction, fortify connections, and boost service efficacy by putting these enhancements into practice and embracing a comprehensive engagement strategy.

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