

**HOW EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION HAS IMPACTED THE PUBLIC
RELATIONS PERFORMANCE OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY,
MUKONO**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM, MEDIA AND
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December, 2025



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DECLARATION

I, **RUKUNDO QUEEN LORRAINE**, declare that this dissertation is my own original work and it has not been submitted to any institution of learning or website for publication and award for any degree or qualifications.

Signed

Date



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rukundo Queen Lorraine', written over a horizontal line.

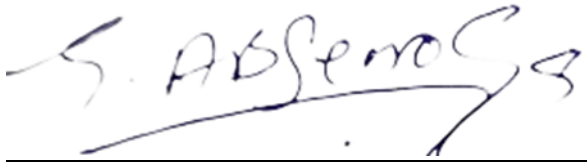
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APPROVAL

This dissertation is submitted to the School of Journalism, Media and Communication with my approval as the supervisor.

Signature

Date



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. ABSENOS", written over a horizontal line.

18th December /2025

Mr. Ssenoga Geoffrey Abraham Bakiraasa

Supervisor.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Rukundo, friends, lecturers and my dear supervisor, Mr. Ssenoga Geoffrey Abraham Bakiraasa for the support and guidance rendered to me through this journey.

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First and foremost, I give thanks to God for the strength, wisdom and endurance that enabled me to complete this research.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

A - Answer.

PR - Public Relations.

PRO - Public Relations Officer.

Q - Question.

Qtn - Question.

R - Respondent

UCU - Uganda Christian University.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how effective communication has impacted the public relations performance of Uganda Christian University (UCU), Mukono. Effective communication is central to reputation management, stakeholder engagement and institutional credibility, functions that are at the core of university public relations. Drawing on theoretical perspectives such as the Two-Way Symmetrical model and Excellence Theory, the research examines the communication strategies employed by UCU's Public Relations Office, evaluates how these strategies affect image and stakeholder relations, identifies barriers to communication effectiveness and proposes practical measures for improvement.

The study follows a mixed-methods approach guided by a descriptive design. Primary data were collected from the PRO, administrators, lecturers and students using structured interviews and questionnaires. Secondary sources included institutional communication materials and prior scholarly works relevant to communication and PR in higher education. Key findings indicate that clarity, timeliness, feedback mechanisms and channel integration significantly influence PR performance. Nevertheless, constraints such as limited resources, inconsistent messaging across departments, and optimal use of digital platforms reduce communication effectiveness.

The research concludes that strengthening two-way communication, investing in digital competencies, codifying communication protocols and institutionalizing feedback mechanisms will improve PR performance at UCU. Recommendations are offered to guide university management and the Public Relations Office toward a more strategic, participatory, and technology-enabled communication practice.

Keywords: Effective communication, public relations, stakeholder engagement, institutional reputation, Uganda Christian University.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. 1 Background to the Study

Communication is an essential pillar for every organization that seeks to build and maintain positive and productive relationships with its stakeholders. It is the foundation upon which Public Relations (PR) operates and through which institutions create understanding, trust and mutual respect with their publics. Effective communication enables organizations to shape their identity, convey strategic messages, manage crises, and maintain a good reputation within and beyond their operational environments.

In higher education, communication plays a central role in the day-to-day functioning of universities. Universities depend on communication to connect with their internal and external publics such as students, lecturers, administrative staff, alumni, government agencies, donors and the community at large. Through structured communication processes, universities can promote their programs, engage stakeholders, attract partnerships and uphold institutional credibility.

Uganda Christian University (UCU), Mukono, stands as one of Uganda's leading faith-based private institutions, founded on Christian values of integrity, stewardship, and excellence. As a learning institution, UCU's vision is not only to provide holistic education but also to model ethical leadership and effective communication in all its operations. The university's Public Relations Department is mandated to coordinate communication efforts,

manage institutional image, handle media relations and ensure positive engagement between the university and its diverse audiences.

However, despite the presence of a functional PR office and established communication channels such as newsletters, social media platforms, press statements, and the university website, UCU continues to face notable communication challenges. These include delayed information flow, limited feedback mechanisms, inconsistent use of digital tool, and weak coordination among departments. Such issues sometimes result in stakeholder dissatisfaction, misinformation, or reduced institutional credibility (Nabirye, 2021).

In the era of digital transformation, universities globally are shifting toward interactive and technology-driven communication to strengthen their public engagement and reputation management. Yet, in the Ugandan context, communication practices in higher education institutions remain unevenly developed. While some universities have embraced modern communication technologies, others continue to struggle with internal bureaucracy, poor feedback systems, and fragmented messaging (Mukasa, 2020).

Given these realities, it becomes imperative to assess how effective communication impacts the public relations performance of Uganda Christian University. This assessment provides insight into how the university's communication systems influence its ability to manage relationships, maintain transparency and project a positive institutional image inline with its values.

1.2 Problem Statement

Uganda Christian University prides itself on strong moral, ethical and professional standards, which are central to its identity as a faith-based institution. Nevertheless, recent observations and stakeholder feedback reveal gaps in communication processes that may hinder its PR performance.

Complaints about slow administrative feedback, limited responsiveness on social media and inconsistent internal messaging suggest weaknesses in communication effectiveness (Nabirye, 2021). Although the university's PR department works to manage media relations and promote institutional programs, challenges such as fragmented communication structures and limited inter-departmental coordination have occasionally undermined these efforts.

Several studies (Mukasa, 2020; Nambalirwa, 2019) have examined communication in Ugandan organizations, yet few have explored how effective communication directly impacts PR performance in the context of higher education institutions, especially private faith-based universities. The absence of such focused research creates a gap in understanding how communication practices at UCU affect its image and relationships with internal and external publics.

This study, therefore, seeks to bridge this gap by analyzing how effective communication influences the public relations performance of Uganda Christian University, Mukono, identifying key challenges, and proposing solutions to enhance communication effectiveness.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess how effective communication has impacted the public relations performance of Uganda Christian University, Mukono.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

Main Objective:

To assess how effective communication has impacted the public relations performance of Uganda Christian University, Mukono.

Specific Objectives:

1. To examine the role of effective communication in enhancing UCU's image and reputation.
2. To identify the communication strategies used by the Public Relations Department at UCU.
3. To assess the challenges faced in implementing effective communication at UCU.
4. To suggest possible ways of improving communication to boost public relations performance.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How does effective communication influence the public relations performance of UCU?
2. What communication strategies are used by the PR department at UCU?

3. What challenges hinder effective communication at UCU?

4. What measures can be taken to improve communication for better PR performance?

1.6 Scope of the Study

Geographical Scope

The study is confined to Uganda Christian University, Mukono Campus, which houses the main administration offices, academic departments and the Public Relations Department responsible for institutional communication and media relations.

Content Scope

The research focuses on communication strategies, practices and effectiveness as they relate to public relations functions. It covers both internal communication (among management, staff, and students) and external communication (between the university and external publics such as alumni, government agencies and media organizations).

Time Scope

The study focuses on communication and PR activities carried out between 2020 and 2025, a period that captures post-COVID-19 transformations in institutional communication and the expansion of digital engagement in higher education.

1.7 Justification of the Study

Effective communication remains a vital determinant of organizational success. For universities, it serves as a tool for visibility, transparency and engagement with diverse publics. Understanding how communication practices at UCU shape its PR performance is therefore essential for improving institutional governance, service delivery, and stakeholder relations.

This study is justified on three grounds:

1. **Practical relevance:** It provides insights that can guide UCU leadership in developing robust communication policies and protocols to enhance public perception and trust.
2. **Theoretical contribution:** It adds to the growing academic literature on the relationship between communication and PR in Uganda's higher education context.
3. **Strategic improvement:** It identifies existing gaps and proposes actionable strategies for strengthening UCU's PR and communication framework.

1.8 Significance of the Study

- **To the University Administration:** The study helps management understand how communication effectiveness influences the institution's image, thereby informing decision-making and policy development.
- **To the Public Relations Department:** It offers a detailed evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses in existing communication strategies, helping refine future PR initiatives.

- **To Academicians and Researchers:** The findings contribute to scholarship on communication and PR, providing a reference point for future studies on higher education institutions in Uganda.
- **To Students and Staff:** The research promotes awareness of the importance of clear and timely communication in shaping institutional reputation.
- **To Policy Makers:** It serves as evidence for developing national guidelines that enhance communication governance in universities.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two major theoretical perspectives that explain the relationship between communication and PR performance:

Excellence Theory (Grunig & Hunt, 1984)

The Excellence Theory of Public Relations suggests that organizations achieve greater effectiveness when they practice two-way symmetrical communication, which fosters dialogue, understanding and mutual respect between the institution and its publics. This model emphasizes feedback, transparency and ethical engagement, principles that align closely with UCU's Christian values of truth and integrity. The theory underscores that public relations is not just about information dissemination but about relationship building.

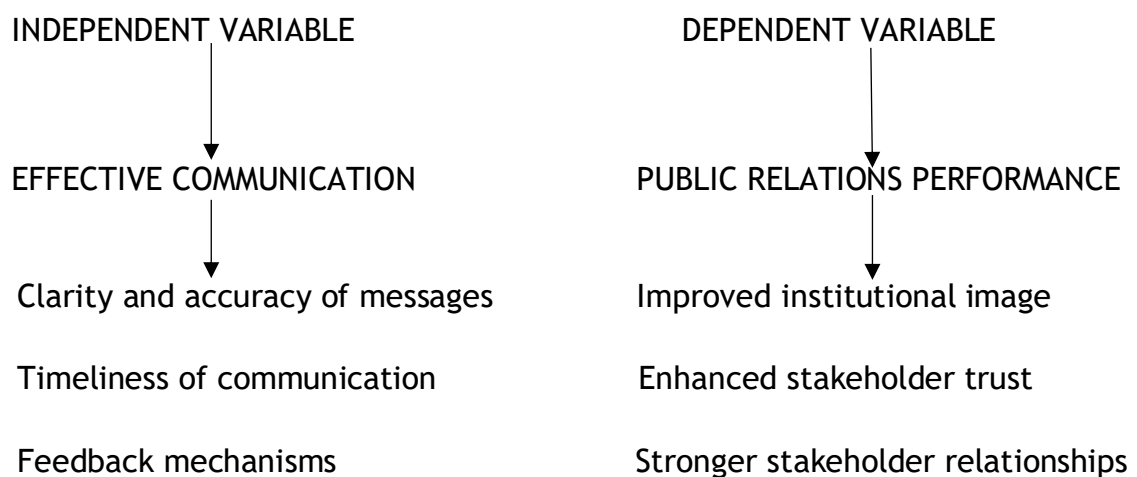
Shannon and Weaver Model (1949)

The Shannon and Weaver Model of Communication highlights the importance of clear message transmission and feedback while minimizing noise and distortion. In the context of UCU, this model explains how breakdowns in channels, unclear messages, or delayed feedback can negatively affect PR outcomes. It supports the need for structured communication channels and digital integration to ensure efficiency.

Conceptual Link

The theoretical framework guides this study by illustrating that effective communication, characterized by clarity, timeliness, feedback and channel coordination – leads to improved PR performance manifested through stakeholder satisfaction, trust and positive institutional image.

1.10 Conceptual Framework



This study presents two key variables. Effective communication (independent variable) and Public Relations Performance (dependent variable). It demonstrates how the quality and structure of communication processes within the institution directly influence the effectiveness of its public relations performance.

Effective communication at UCU is characterized by clarity and accuracy of messages, timeliness in delivering information, the presence of functional feedback mechanisms, and the strategic use of both digital and traditional communication channels. When communication is clear and accurate, stakeholders are able to easily understand institutional messages, reducing misunderstandings and misinformation. Timely communication ensures that relevant information reaches stakeholders at the appropriate moment, which strengthens credibility and institutional reliability. Feedback mechanisms promote two-way communication, allowing the university to listen, respond, and adjust its strategies based on stakeholder concerns. Additionally, the use of multiple communication channels broadens outreach and ensures inclusivity across different stakeholder groups.

These communication elements significantly influence public relations performance. When communication is managed effectively, it leads to an improved institutional image, enhanced stakeholder trust, stronger relationships with internal and external publics, and increased reputation and visibility. As stakeholders feel informed, valued, and engaged, their loyalty and confidence in the institution grow stronger.

Therefore, the framework establishes that there is a direct and positive relationship between effective communication and public relations performance.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature relevant to the study. The review is anchored entirely on the Excellence Theory of Public Relations, which provides the conceptual foundation for analyzing the relationship between communication effectiveness and organizational performance. The literature is organized around the study's objectives.

2.2 Overview of the Excellence Theory of Public Relations

The Excellence Theory of Public Relations was developed by James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt (1984) and later expanded through the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Excellence Study in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The theory was designed to determine what makes public relations excellent and how communication contributes to organizational effectiveness.

The central argument of the Excellence Theory is that organizations are more effective when they establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with their publics through ethical, two-way and symmetrical communication. In other words, communication is not simply about disseminating information but about building understanding, trust and cooperation between the organization and its stakeholders (Grunig, 2006).

The theory defines excellent public relations as communication that:

- Is strategic rather than reactive.
- Is symmetrical, meaning it involves dialogue, negotiation and feedback.
- Promotes ethical relationships based on honesty, transparency and mutual respect.
- Contributes to the long-term effectiveness and reputation of the organization.

Applied to Uganda Christian University (UCU), the theory suggests that the effectiveness of its communication directly influences how well it achieves its mission, builds its reputation and maintains trust with its stakeholders—including students, staff, alumni and the public.

2.3 Key Components of the Excellence Theory

According to Grunig (1992), the Excellence Theory consists of several interrelated components that explain how communication supports organizational success. These components include strategic management, symmetrical communication, empowerment of public relations, ethics and transparency, and relationship building.

Strategic Management of Communication

Strategic communication ensures that public relations is involved in organizational decision-making rather than being a mere tool for publicity. In excellent organizations, PR professionals participate in the management process, helping to shape policies, identify stakeholder expectations and prevent potential conflicts (Grunig, 2006).

For a university like UCU, this means the Public Relations Office should not only handle information dissemination but also advise management on communication implications of decisions. When PR is positioned strategically, communication becomes proactive, timely and aligned with institutional goals.

Grunig (1992) asserts that effective PR planning enhances an organization's adaptability to environmental changes and stakeholder needs. Thus, strategic communication contributes to institutional stability, credibility and public trust.

Symmetrical Communication

Symmetrical communication is the core principle of the Excellence Theory. It emphasizes two-way interaction, listening as much as speaking. Rather than manipulating publics to accept the organization's position, symmetrical communication involves dialogue, mutual understanding and negotiation.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) contrasted symmetrical communication with asymmetrical communication. **Asymmetrical communication** is one-way, aiming to persuade or control while **Symmetrical communication** is two-way, promoting collaboration and shared understanding.

In the UCU context, symmetrical communication would involve management actively engaging students, faculty and other stakeholders in decision-making processes. This may take the form of open forums, student consultation meetings and feedback systems that ensure voices from different groups influence institutional communication and policy.

According to Dozier, L. A., (1995), two-way symmetrical communication enhances relationships, reduces conflict and builds legitimacy, key outcomes for an educational institution dependent on reputation and trust.

Empowerment of Public Relations Function

Another key component of the Excellence Theory is the empowerment of the public relations function within the organizational hierarchy.

For PR to be excellent, it must occupy a strategic management role rather than serving as a mere technical support unit. Grunig and Dozier (2002) argue that when PR is empowered, it gains direct access to top management and contributes to policy formulation, risk management and stakeholder relations.

In UCU's case, empowering the PR department means ensuring it has adequate resources, professional autonomy and participation in administrative meetings. This enables communication professionals to represent stakeholder interests effectively and enhance transparency.

Without such empowerment, communication may become inconsistent, thereby weakening public confidence and institutional image.

Ethics, Transparency and Integrity

The Excellence Theory emphasizes that ethical communication is foundational to effective public relations. Grunig (2006) stresses that honest and transparent communication builds trust and reduces organizational vulnerability.

Ethics in communication involves truthfulness, respect and fairness toward all stakeholders. When organizations communicate ethically, they foster credibility and moral legitimacy in the eyes of their publics.

For UCU, this aspect resonates strongly with its Christian values, truth, service and stewardship. Effective communication grounded in integrity not only promotes its spiritual mission but also distinguishes it as a university that upholds accountability and professionalism in all its engagements.

Unethical or opaque communication, on the other hand, leads to misinformation, mistrust and reputational damage, all of which undermine PR performance.

Relationship Building and Maintenance

The Excellence Theory identifies relationship building as the ultimate goal of effective public relations. Grunig (2002) notes that organizations exist within a web of relationships and their long-term success depends on maintaining mutual understanding with key publics. Public relations, therefore, is not just about media visibility but about nurturing sustainable relationships based on communication, feedback and responsiveness.

According to Hon and Grunig (1999), effective organizational relationships are characterized by trust, control mutuality, commitment and satisfaction.

In the UCU setting, maintaining healthy relationships with students, alumni, parents, staff and regulators ensures continued support, positive reputation and long-term institutional success. Each communication initiative, whether

a press release, newsletter or student forum should aim to strengthen these relationships.

2.4 Application of the Excellence Theory to Educational Institutions

The Excellence Theory has been widely applied in educational settings to explain how effective communication enhances institutional performance and reputation.

Communication and Institutional Effectiveness

According to Ki and Hon (2007), universities that practice symmetrical and strategic communication tend to achieve higher levels of stakeholder satisfaction, improved student retention and positive public image. Effective communication ensures that institutional policies are understood, valued and supported by all members.

Similarly, Ledingham (2003) argues that relationship management, a derivative of the Excellence Theory, is particularly crucial for educational institutions because they rely on continuous interaction with diverse publics.

In the Ugandan context, higher education institutions such as UCU face increased public scrutiny; thus, communication excellence becomes an essential component of institutional credibility and competitiveness.

Communication and Public Relations Performance

Public relations performance refers to how well an organization builds and maintains relationships with its stakeholders. Under the Excellence Theory,

performance is measured by the quality of relationships, not just by media visibility (Grunig, 2006).

Universities that communicate transparently, involve stakeholders in dialogue and respond promptly to concerns tend to have stronger reputations. Effective communication also enhances community relations and brand positioning.

For Uganda Christian University, excellence in communication directly influences how it is perceived by the public as a trustworthy, responsive and ethical Christian institution.

Communication and Institutional Image

A positive institutional image stems from consistent and credible communication (Balmer & Greyser, 2003). The Excellence Theory asserts that symmetrical communication fosters a shared understanding between an organization and its public, which strengthens its image and reputation (Grunig, 2006).

In universities, communication that highlights achievements, values and service contributes to public goodwill. Conversely, unclear or delayed communication breeds misinformation, eroding institutional credibility.

Therefore, UCU's communication must embody the principles of openness, consistency and professionalism to sustain its image as a center of academic and moral excellence.

2.5 Challenges to Achieving Communication Excellence

Despite its advantages, several challenges hinder the implementation of Excellence Theory principles in organizations.

1. **Hierarchical Structures:** Many institutions operate under rigid hierarchies that delay information flow and discourage feedback (Kibe, 2014).
2. **Limited Resources:** Budget constraints often prevent PR departments from adopting modern communication tools or hiring trained professionals (McQuail, 2010).
3. **Resistance to Feedback:** Some management teams prefer one-way communication, which contradicts the symmetrical ideal (Men & Tsai, 2014).
4. **Technological Gaps:** Inadequate digital infrastructure can limit engagement and transparency.

For UCU, addressing these challenges would require leadership commitment to participatory communication, investment in digital tools and capacity building for PR staff.

2.6 Relevance of the Excellence Theory to the Current Study

The Excellence Theory provides the conceptual foundation for understanding how effective communication enhances public relations performance at Uganda Christian University. It aligns perfectly with UCU's mission of equipping students for productive, holistic lives of Christian faith and service, since it promotes truth, dialogue and mutual understanding, all rooted in Christian ethics.

By applying this theory, the study assesses whether UCU's communication practices reflect strategic management of information, two-way symmetrical engagement, ethical transparency and relationship maintenance with stakeholders.

The theory thus serves as both a lens for evaluating current communication practices and a guide for proposing improvements to enhance the university's PR effectiveness.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology that was employed in conducting the study. It presents the research design, study population, target population, study site, sampling procedure, data collection tools, validity and reliability considerations, data analysis procedures and ethical issues observed during the study.

Since this study seeks to understand experiences, perceptions and practices surrounding communication and public relations at Uganda Christian University (UCU), a qualitative research approach was adopted. The qualitative method was appropriate for this research because it allows for an in-depth exploration of respondents lived experiences, meanings and interpretations rather than numerical measurements.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design. According to Creswell (2014), a qualitative design is used when the researcher seeks to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The design enabled the gathering of rich, detailed and contextual data on how communication practices at UCU influence its public relations performance.

The descriptive aspect of the design helped in presenting participants' experiences and institutional practices as they occur naturally, without manipulation of variables. This approach was ideal because the study aimed to capture insights about communication effectiveness, challenges and PR outcomes in the university environment through interviews, observations and document review.

3.3 Population

The study population consisted of individuals within Uganda Christian University, Mukono, who are directly or indirectly involved in or affected by the university's communication processes. These included administrative staff, academic staff (lecturers), non-teaching staff, students and staff in the Public Relations Office.

This population was appropriate because each of these groups interacts with the communication systems of the university in different ways, either as senders, intermediaries or receivers of information. Their experiences and opinions provided a holistic understanding of how effective communication influences public relations performance.

3.4 Target Population

The target population specifically included key informants with firsthand experience and expertise in communication and public relations at UCU.

These comprised:

- The Public Relations Officer and Assistant Officers in the PR Department.

- Administrators and Heads of Departments responsible for internal communication.
- Lecturers and support staff who interact with institutional communication systems.
- Selected students who engage with the university's communication platforms.

This population was considered sufficient to provide reliable and diverse perspectives on the topic under study.

3.5 Study Area

The research was conducted at Uganda Christian University, Mukono Main Campus, located along Bishop Tucker Road, Mukono District, Uganda. The site was chosen because it houses the main administrative offices, the Public Relations Department, and the largest concentration of staff and students. The campus also serves as the central point for the university's communication activities, making it ideal for the study's focus on institutional communication and PR performance.

3.6 Sampling Procedures

The study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability technique commonly used in qualitative research and random sampling for the students and non-teaching staff. According to Patton (2002), purposive sampling involves selecting information-rich participants who can provide detailed insights into the phenomenon being studied.

Participants were selected based on their knowledge, experience and involvement in communication and PR-related activities at UCU. The sample included individuals who could provide both administrative and user-level perspectives on the effectiveness of communication within the institution.

A total of 20 participants were selected, distributed as follows:

Category	Number of Participants	Sampling Technique
PR Department Staff	4	Purposive
University Administrators	4	Purposive
Academic Staff	4	Purposive
Non-teaching Staff	4	Random
Students	4	Random
Total	20	

3.7 Data Collection Methods

The study used primary and secondary qualitative data collection methods.

Primary Data

The primary method of data collection was semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with key informants such as PR staff, administrators, and lecturers. Interviews allowed for flexibility, enabling the researcher to probe further into participants' experiences and perceptions. The questions focused on:

- Communication strategies used by UCU.
- How communication influences the university's PR performance.
- Challenges affecting communication effectiveness.
- Suggested improvements.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were obtained through document review. Relevant materials such as newsletters, website posts, media releases and social media updates were reviewed to understand the nature, tone and frequency of institutional communication.

This method complemented primary data by providing tangible evidence of the university's communication practices and PR activities.

3.8 Data Collection Tools

An interview guide was developed to facilitate the collection of qualitative data. To collect the data, the researcher sought authorization from the PR department by submitting an introduction letter from the Uganda Christian University School of Journalism and Communication and obtaining approval from the National and Uganda Christian University Research Ethics Committees.

Additionally, the researcher obtained informed consent from the study participants.

The guide contained open-ended questions categorized under the following themes:

- Nature and channels of communication at UCU.
- Effectiveness and clarity of communication.
- Impact of communication on stakeholder relationships.
- Challenges and areas for improvement.

Document Review Checklist

A checklist was used to examine official communication documents such as newsletters, press releases and website announcements. The checklist focused on message clarity, consistency, tone, frequency and responsiveness.

3.9 Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data were analyzed using **thematic analysis**, which is a common method in qualitative research. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data.

The analysis followed six systematic steps:

1. **Data Familiarization:** Transcribing and reading through interview notes to gain an overview.
2. **Coding:** Labeling key phrases, sentences and ideas that related to communication and PR performance.
3. **Theme Development:** Grouping codes into broader categories such as “communication clarity,” “feedback mechanisms,” and “PR challenges.”
4. **Reviewing Themes:** Refining and confirming themes that accurately represented participants’ perspectives.

5. **Interpreting Themes:** Relating themes to research questions and literature.
6. **Reporting Findings:** Presenting findings in narrative form supported by direct quotations from participants where relevant.

3.10 Validity and Reliability of Research Tools

In qualitative research, the concepts of validity and reliability are often replaced by trustworthiness, which includes credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interview guide was reviewed with the research supervisor, peers and selected lecturers to confirm the questions aligned with the study objectives and were clearly formulated. The research instruments were developed using straightforward language. Their feedback was valuable in refining the research tools. Researchers identified patterns throughout the data collection process. This qualitative study examined non-numerical information gathered through in-depth interviews and audio recordings. The interview data was analyzed using a five-step inductive analysis procedure, which included planning, organizing, evaluating, coding and refining themes. Finally, the refined themes and their findings were presented in a coherent and cohesive manner.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was maintained throughout the research process as guided by the Uganda Christian University Research Ethics Policy.

The following ethical principles were observed:

Informed Consent: All participants were informed of the study's purpose, methods, and their right to withdraw at any time. Written or verbal consent was obtained before data collection.

Confidentiality: Participants' identities and responses were kept confidential. Data were stored securely and used solely for academic purposes.

Anonymity: Names and identifying details were omitted from transcripts and reports to protect participant identity.

Voluntary Participation: No participant was coerced or financially induced to participate.

Integrity and Honesty: All sources were acknowledged through proper citations, and data were analyzed and presented truthfully.

3.12 Limitations of the Study

Time Constraints: Limited time affected the breadth of data collection. However, our lecturers adjusted our timetable in order to create more time hence the success of this dissertation.

Participant Availability: Some administrators and PR officers had tight schedules, which delayed interviews. This was however solved through using other channels of communication such as WhatsApp.

Subjectivity: As a qualitative study, the researcher relied heavily on participants' perceptions, which may carry personal biases.

Access to Internal Documents: Some institutional communication documents were confidential and not available for review. However, the available documents still provided sufficient information for the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the study on how effective communication has impacted the Public Relations (PR) performance of Uganda Christian University (UCU), Mukono. Data was collected using questionnaires administered to 14 stakeholders including students, lecturers and administrators and a key informant interview with a communications officer from the Public Relations Office. The findings are presented thematically in line with the study objectives and research questions.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study involved 14 respondents, comprising 7 males and 7 females, indicating gender balance. The majority of respondents (10) were aged 18-25 years, reflecting a predominantly student population. In terms of roles, 9 were students, 3 administrators and 2 lecturers. Most respondents (10) had spent 1-3 years at UCU, suggesting that participants had adequate experience with the university's communication systems.

4.3 Communication Strategies and Channels Used at UCU

Findings revealed that UCU employs multiple communication channels. The most commonly cited channels were WhatsApp (6 responses), X/Twitter (5), Email (4), Memos (3), with limited mention of press releases and websites (1

each). Communication frequency varied, with daily communication being the most common.

The interview confirmed these findings, with the communications officer stating that UCU uses social media, newspapers such as New Vision and Daily Monitor, radio stations, intranet email systems, WhatsApp platforms, the official website and a semesterly newsletter.

Regarding clarity, most respondents rated UCU's communication as very clear (5) or clear (4). Respondents identified email as professional and reliable, WhatsApp as convenient and widely used and social media as accessible and engaging.

4.4 Effectiveness of Communication and PR Performance

The majority of respondents rated UCU's communication as effective (6) or very effective (3). Respondents noted that effective communication positively influences the university's image by reinforcing Christian values, transparency and professionalism.

The interview reinforced this perception. The communications officer emphasized that timely, accurate and high-quality communication ensures a consistent brand identity and protects the institution from misinformation. The respondent explained that standardised formats and timely responses help stakeholders distinguish authentic UCU communication from fake or misleading content.

4.5 Communication and Institutional Reputation

Survey data showed that respondents believed communication significantly affects UCU's reputation. While many reported positive impacts, three respondents cited situations where poor communication harmed UCU's image, including:

- Delays in releasing students' coursework marks.
- Confusion during the introduction of new graduation gowns.
- Registration challenges at the beginning of semesters.

These concerns point to gaps in timeliness and coordination.

From the interview, a key example of effective crisis communication was highlighted. In 2023, UCU was incorrectly listed by Daily Monitor as having expired academic programs. The university responded immediately with a factual memo from the Vice Chancellor's office, which was shared across official platforms. This timely response restored stakeholder confidence and protected the university's reputation.

4.6 Challenges Affecting Effective Communication at UCU

Respondents identified several challenges:

- Hierarchical barriers (7 responses)
- Delayed feedback (6)
- Poor coordination between departments (4)
- Inadequate staff training (2)

These challenges were said to negatively affect PR performance by causing miscommunication, frustration and reduced transparency.

The interview further identified fast-changing technology, budgetary constraints and administrative dynamics as major obstacles. The communications officer noted that emerging technologies such as AI create both opportunities and risks, including misinformation and impersonation of the university online.

4.7 Suggestions for Improving Communication and PR Performance

Respondents suggested:

- Improved listening to stakeholder feedback
- Timely and transparent communication
- Use of multiple platforms
- Staff training
- Reduction of bureaucracy

They also recommended regular social media updates, showcasing achievements, community engagement and creating suggestion boxes to strengthen public image.

The interview strongly emphasized data-driven communication, where communication strategies are guided by stakeholder data and platform analytics. The respondent also advocated for embedding artificial intelligence tools across university systems to enhance efficiency and modernize UCU's image.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in relation to the research questions and the Excellence Theory of Public Relations. The discussion integrates responses from questionnaires and the key informant interview to explain how effective communication has influenced the Public Relations (PR) performance of Uganda Christian University (UCU), Mukono. The Excellence Theory emphasizes two-way symmetrical communication, stakeholder engagement, credibility and strategic management of communication, which form the basis of this discussion.

5.2 Influence of Effective Communication on Public Relations Performance at UCU

The first research question sought to establish how effective communication influences the Public Relations performance of UCU. Findings from the questionnaire showed that the majority of respondents rated UCU's communication as effective or very effective. Respondents indicated that clear, timely and consistent communication enhances the university's image by reinforcing trust, professionalism and Christian values.

According to the Excellence Theory, organizations that practice effective, symmetrical communication are more likely to build mutual understanding and positive relationships with stakeholders. The respondents' views align

with this theory, as they associated effective communication with improved institutional reputation and stakeholder confidence. For instance, respondents noted that when communication is clear and timely, stakeholders develop trust in the university and perceive it as transparent and accountable.

The communications officer further supported the argument explaining that high-quality and timely communication allows UCU to present an accurate and consistent brand identity. This reflects the Excellence Theory's emphasis on strategic communication that protects organizational credibility and fosters long-term relationships rather than short-term persuasion.

5.3 Communication Strategies Used and Their Alignment with Excellence Theory

The second research question examined the communication strategies used by the Public Relations Office at UCU. Findings revealed that UCU uses multiple communication channels, including email, WhatsApp, social media platforms, memos, newsletters and traditional media such as newspapers and radio.

The Excellence Theory advocates for the use of appropriate channels to facilitate dialogue and understanding between an organization and its publics. Respondents identified email and WhatsApp as effective because they allow faster feedback and interaction, which supports two-way communication. Social media platforms were also viewed as accessible and engaging, enabling the university to reach diverse stakeholder groups.

The interview data further showed that messages are tailored according to stakeholder needs, such as using WhatsApp and Instagram for students, Facebook and bulk SMS for parents, and LinkedIn for employers. This strategic audience-based approach reflects the Excellence Theory's principle that effective PR involves understanding stakeholders and communicating in ways that meet their informational needs.

5.4 Communication, Stakeholder Engagement and Institutional Reputation

The third research question explored how communication affects UCU's public image and reputation. Survey findings indicated that respondents believe effective communication positively influences the university's reputation, while poor communication can harm it. Respondents cited specific situations, such as delayed release of coursework marks and confusion during registration periods, where ineffective communication led to dissatisfaction and reputational strain.

From the perspective of the Excellence Theory, reputation is built through consistent, honest and responsive communication that values stakeholder feedback. The interview provided a strong example of this during the 2023 incident involving incorrect media reports about expired academic programmes. The communications officer explained that UCU issued a timely and factual response, which reassured stakeholders and restored confidence in the institution. This demonstrates two-way symmetrical communication, where the organization listens to public concerns and responds with accurate information.

These findings confirm the Excellence Theory's assertion that proactive and transparent communication enhances organizational legitimacy and protects reputation during crises.

5.5 Challenges to Effective Communication and Their Implications for Excellence Theory

The fourth research question focused on challenges that hinder effective communication at UCU. Respondents identified hierarchical barriers, delayed feedback, poor coordination and inadequate training as major obstacles. These challenges were perceived to negatively affect PR performance by limiting stakeholder participation and creating frustration.

According to the Excellence Theory, effective public relations requires open communication structures that encourage dialogue and participation. The presence of hierarchical barriers and delayed responses at UCU suggests a deviation from the ideal two-way symmetrical model. When communication is overly top-down, stakeholders feel excluded from decision-making, weakening mutual understanding and trust.

The interview findings further revealed challenges related to fast-changing technology, budgetary constraints and administrative dynamics. These constraints limit the ability of the PR office to fully implement symmetrical communication strategies, as recommended by the Excellence Theory.

5.6 Stakeholder Feedback and Two-Way Communication

Findings from the questionnaire showed that stakeholder involvement in communication and decision-making occurs only to some extent. Some respondents reported that feedback is sometimes ignored or delayed. This indicates that while feedback channels exist, they are not always effectively utilised.

The Excellence Theory emphasizes the importance of listening to stakeholders and incorporating their feedback into organizational decisions. The limited stakeholder participation reported by respondents suggests the need for UCU to strengthen its feedback mechanisms to achieve true two-way symmetrical communication. The interview respondent also emphasized data-driven communication, which aligns with the Excellence Theory's focus on research-based decision-making in PR practice.

5.7 Discussion Summary

In summary, the findings demonstrate that effective communication has a significant positive impact on the Public Relations performance of Uganda Christian University. Clear, timely and audience-focused communication supports mutual understanding, strengthens reputation and enhances stakeholder trust. However, challenges such as hierarchical barriers, delayed feedback and limited stakeholder involvement hinder the full application of the Excellence Theory.

CHAPTER SIX

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents recommendations drawn from the study findings and the discussion in Chapter Five. The recommendations are informed by the responses of the study participants and guided by the Excellence Theory of Public Relations, which emphasizes two-way symmetrical communication, stakeholder engagement, credibility and strategic management of communication. The chapter also provides the conclusion of the study.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 Strengthen Two-Way Symmetrical Communication

The study found that although UCU has several communication channels, stakeholder involvement in decision-making and feedback processes remains limited. Some respondents reported delayed responses or lack of follow-up after raising concerns. In line with the Excellence Theory, UCU should strengthen two-way communication by creating structured and responsive feedback mechanisms.

The university should institutionalize regular stakeholder engagement forums such as student dialogues, staff forums and online feedback platforms where concerns are acknowledged and addressed within a defined time frame. This will enhance mutual understanding and trust between the university and its stakeholders, thereby improving public relations performance.

6.2.3 Improve Timeliness and Consistency of Communication

Findings revealed that delays in communication, particularly regarding academic processes such as release of marks and registration procedures, negatively affected UCU's image. Timely communication was shown to play a key role in protecting the university's reputation, especially during crisis situations.

It is therefore recommended that UCU establishes clear communication timelines and approval procedures to ensure that accurate information is released promptly. Consistent formats, language and branding across all communication platforms should be maintained to reinforce credibility and reduce confusion among stakeholders.

6.2.4 Enhance Coordination Between the PR Office and University Management

Hierarchical barriers and administrative dynamics were identified as major challenges to effective communication. These challenges limit the ability of the Public Relations Office to operate strategically and respond swiftly to emerging issues.

The university should improve coordination between the PR Office and top management by involving communication professionals in decision-making processes. This aligns with the Excellence Theory, which emphasizes the strategic role of public relations within organisational management. Enhanced coordination will enable the PR Office to anticipate communication needs and manage the university's image more effectively.

6.2.5 Adopt Data-Driven Communication Practices

Both survey and interview findings highlighted the need for communication strategies that are informed by stakeholder data and engagement analytics. Respondents emphasized that understanding where stakeholders are most active enables more effective message delivery.

UCU should invest in regular stakeholder research and digital analytics to guide communication planning. Data-driven communication will allow the university to allocate resources to the most effective platforms and tailor messages to stakeholder needs, thereby strengthening public relations outcomes in line with the Excellence Theory's emphasis on research-based communication.

6.2.6 Build Capacity of Communication and PR Staff

The study identified inadequate training and fast-changing technology as obstacles to effective communication. To maintain excellence in public relations, UCU should continuously build the capacity of its communication staff through training in digital communication, crisis communication and emerging technologies.

Strengthening staff competence will enhance professionalism, responsiveness and innovation in communication practices, ultimately improving the university's public image and stakeholder relationships.

6.2.7 Integrate Emerging Technologies Responsibly

The findings indicated that emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, present both opportunities and risks for institutional communication. While such technologies can enhance efficiency and reach, they also increase the risk of misinformation if not properly managed.

UCU should develop clear policies to guide the responsible use of emerging technologies in communication. Integrating these technologies strategically will position the university as a modern and forward-looking institution while safeguarding credibility and trust.

6.3 Conclusion

This study examined how effective communication has impacted the Public Relations performance of Uganda Christian University, Mukono. The findings revealed that effective communication plays a crucial role in enhancing the university's image, reputation and stakeholder trust. Clear, timely and consistent communication was found to support positive public relations outcomes, while delayed feedback, hierarchical barriers and limited stakeholder engagement weakened PR performance.

Guided by the Excellence Theory, the study concludes that UCU's public relations performance can be significantly improved through strengthened two-way symmetrical communication, greater stakeholder involvement, strategic coordination and data-driven communication practices. By addressing the identified challenges and implementing the proposed recommendations, UCU will be better positioned to achieve excellence in public relations and sustain positive relationships with its stakeholders.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Guide

Consent form

Title of study: How Effective Communication Has Impacted the Public Relations Performance of Uganda Christian University, Mukono

Researcher: Rukundo Queen Lorraine, Uganda Christian University

Purpose: To explore how communication practices at UCU influence its public relations performance.

Participation: Voluntary. You may decline to answer any question or stop at any time.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be kept confidential. Quotes may be used in the report but will be anonymized (no real names).

Recording: I would like to audio-record this interview to ensure accuracy. The recording will be used only for this research and then destroyed. Do you agree to be recorded? (Yes / No)

Consent: I have read the information above. I agree to participate.

Participant name (optional): _____

A. Interview guide – Public Relations Officers & Administrators (Key Informants)

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. This research explores how communication at UCU affects PR performance. There are no right or wrong answers. Your responses will be confidential. May I record this interview?

Section 1: Background information

1.1 What is your current position and role at UCU?

1.2 How long have you worked at UCU in this role or in communication/PR roles?

Section 2: Communication strategies and practices.

2.1 Describe the communication strategies and channels the Public Relations Office (PRO) uses at UCU (internal and external).

- Probe: Which channels (press releases, newsletters, website, social media, noticeboards, internal memos, town halls) are used most and why?

2.2 How is communication planned at UCU? Are there documented communication plans, calendars or protocols?

- Probe: Who is responsible for drafting, approving and disseminating messages?

2.3 How do you tailor messages to different stakeholder groups (students, staff, alumni, community, media)?

- Probe: Examples of recent campaigns or messages and their objectives.

Section 3: Communication effectiveness & PR outcomes.

3.1 In your view, how does the quality/timeliness/consistency of UCU's communication affect the university's public image and reputation?

- Probe: Can you give examples where communication improved or damaged the university's image?

3.2 How do you measure whether a message or campaign was effective?

- Probe: Metrics used (engagement, attendance, media coverage, feedback, surveys).

3.3 What role does internal communication (management → staff/students) play in external PR performance?

- Probe: Instances where internal miscommunication had external consequences.

Section 4: Feedback, participation and two-way communication

4.1 What mechanisms exist for stakeholders to give feedback to the university (students, staff, community)?

- Probe: How frequently is feedback reviewed and acted upon? Examples.

4.2 To what extent does UCU practice two-way communication (dialogue) versus one-way announcements?

- Probe: Barriers to two-way dialogue.

Section 5: Challenges and constraints

5.1 What are the main challenges that limit effective communication at UCU? (e.g., resources, skills, bureaucracy, technology, culture)

- Probe: Which of these is most critical and why?

5.2 How has social media changed your PR work? Has it created new challenges?

- Probe: Examples of the crisis or misinformation management.

Section 6: Recommendations

6.1 Based on your experience, what practical steps would strengthen communication effectiveness at UCU and improve PR performance?

- Probe: Training needs, staffing, technology, policy changes, feedback systems.

6.2 Are there successful practices (from UCU or other institutions) you think UCU should adopt?

Closing: Any other comments you would like to add about communication and PR at UCU?

Appendix II: Interview Responses

Researcher: The topic of the study, like I mentioned before, is how effective communication has impacted the public relations performance or Uganda Christian University, Mukono. The purpose of this study is to explore how communication practices at UCU influence its public relations performance. This interview is voluntary, you can decline in case you're not comfortable answering any questions.

Your responses will be kept confidential. Quotes may be used in the report but will be anonymized.

Respondent: Okay. That's noted. Let's proceed.

Researcher: Alright. Do you agree to this interview?

Respondent: Yes, I do.

Researcher: Okay. First, I'm going to need your background information. What is your current position and role at UCU?

Respondent: I serve here as a communications officer.

Researcher: How long have you worked at UCU?

Respondent: Four years. Since September 2021.

Researcher: Describe the communication strategies and channels the Public Relations Office uses, both internal and external.

Respondent: Social media. Traditional media, including newspapers.

Researcher: Which ones?

Respondent: Newspapers like New Vision and Daily Monitor especially. And radios. Radios are a number around many of the church-founded radios and other prominent ones like Capital FM and across the regions. we use all the local radios especially those that align with our values and we use of course intranet which includes staff email which includes an email for staff we use broadcast platforms like whatsapp, whatsapp channels then we have the website Those are the main, then a newsletter, a semesterly newsletter.

Researcher: I've seen the semester newsletters before.

Respondent: Yes.

Researcher: How do you tailor messages to different stakeholder groups? Like how do you tailor messages of students, maybe the alumni, the media?

Respondent: First, you determine what messages that you want to send. Who is the target audience of this message? What is the content of this message? Which of our diverse stakeholders does it largely appeal to and is relevant to?

And once you identify who those stakeholders is, you ask the question, what channel, what media, do they consume the information from? And that way you're able to communicate effectively. If it's students, we know are going to communicate on WhatsApp, we're going to put messages on TikTok, we're going to put messages on Instagram. And if it's parents, we're going to communicate these things sometimes on bulk SMS, on Facebook, we'll make direct calls, we'll send invitation cards directly. If the message is for alumni, we're going to just spread it out all over all these platforms. Because they're on all these digital platforms. We're going to put it in newspapers too. If it's for employers, we'll prioritize LinkedIn because that's where corporate entities largely communicate.

Researcher: In your view, how does the quality, timeliness and consistency of UCU's communication affect the university's public image and reputation?

Respondent: It facilitates an accurate reflection of who we are, what we do. If the communication lacks quality and timeliness, which factors are indispensable for effective strategic communication then it's going to be hard for you to accurately communicate your brand which will lead to so many things including brand anonymity which is no one knows about your brand, brand confusion which is people can mix up your organization, you know that sort of thing so timely accurate quality content ensures that people from -if it's a video people see or an audio or text they read someone is able to read this and they're like or yeah this is UCU this is what we expect of UCU that will also help you in times of fake news or misinformation people will be able

to say no, that memo doesn't look like it's from UCU. UCU memos open like this. This is how the letterheads look. This is how the greeting lines are. This is the standard font of UCU, just like if someone finds text out there and memo being propagated as a UCU memo.

Researcher: What is the standard font of UCU?

Respondent: Trebutchet. Yeah, like that. And then you see a memo in Times New Roman, someone was like, nah, that can't be. Even font size, you know, basic things like those. So timely, high quality communication is sort of, it's indispensable for us if we must represent this brand with justice.

Researcher: Can you give me examples where communication has improved or damaged UCU's image and reputation?

Respondent: Improved reputation. In 2023, I think it was in 2023, yes, the Daily Monitor posted a story listing UCU among universities who had expired courses. And there was news around many of our stakeholders were shaken. Yes, I remember that scenario. But from a crisis meeting where a factual and corrective memo was released from the office of the vice chancellor to address the erroneous publication of a daily monitor. Many stakeholders were comforted when we just shared that message across our social media pages and above all that even the regulator national council came and approved and confirmed that indeed the publication of Daily Monitor was erroneous and National Council sided with the message that we communicated in the memo

from the office of the Vice-Chancellor. And Daily Monitor was able to later acknowledge some of the errors in their own reportings and they rectified them. Yeah, well, some of the reports about other universities were indeed as was reported, but for the sake of UCU, releasing that memo, especially timely, because when we released that memo that very day, we were the first university to officially respond, pointing out the specifics. Other universities sort of came out in denial and all that, but UCU was the first to communicate with details, communicated what programs are under review currently, what courses are not, which ones doesn't UCU offer, but Daily Monitor was reporting as though UCU offers them. People appreciated that and they were comforted. And other universities, one day or two days later, followed suit. They started releasing these things. Were our communication damaged, The reputation of the university to a certain degree was a time when we had some flyers that had an image of a student used in advertising material and the student was uncomfortable because there was no evidence. that her consent was taken to use in advertising material. So that could potentially misrepresent the university as one that does not respect people's image rights and all that. But fortunately, the matter was very amicably resolved and it was settled with the person and we became more intentional about getting consent of people who may appear in videos or promotional content of the university, pictures, videos, or even writings, people whose likeness may be used and so that was a lesson to learn there because you don't want to appear like an institution that takes advantage of people's, you know. Yeah, so those were those are the two incidences. One, boosted institution

and there were all sort of crisis and then one would have easily tarnished the university's institution, sorry reputation as a human rights abusers.

Researcher: What are the main challenges that limit effective communication at UCU?

Respondent: Main challenges that limit effective communication at UCU? Fast changing technologies. Too fast to keep up with. You know that your stakeholders are spread across all these platforms, but you can't really have an account for every social media page that exists. People are on Snapchat, people are on Truth Social. It's hard to, you know, so that's difficult. Another big blessing like AI has come but it has come with many problems Someone wakes up and randomly posts a strange place and labels it UCU. "UCU Indian Ocean Campus" these kinds of things or someone just and it looks so real So how do you start dealing with some of these fast-changing technologies and developments like AI. So fast-changing technology is a difficulty. Second, budgetary constraints. Many institutions face this kind of thing. Sometimes you have these ambitious goals for your institution. You want to push them, but then you only have a constrained budget to deal with. And so you have to kind of tone down on your communication strategy and make it sort of a budget friendly, but then sometimes that comes with a difficulty of being able to go big and, uh, you know, and big results because sometimes big investment can indeed yield big results. Then the dynamics in the relationship between the communications office and top administration, which sometimes it can be hard to sell a typical technical agenda to the people who approve

your budgets because they see things a certain way, you see things a certain way. So that way at times you might not get the budget you need for things so you may feel like you want to go a certain way and then they don't get the full picture. Or you could propose it. Hey, could we participate in this kind of run? It's big in Kampala. It could be good for the university. Could you see your feature? Give us some money. And they are like "No, that's not a big priority right now. "Yet you really see from a communications point of view, many people will get to interact with your brand. So those complications in administrative and operational relationships get in the way also. Yeah, I think those are some of the three challenges I could cite.

Researcher: Based on your experience, what practical steps would strengthen communication effectiveness at UCU and improve PR performance?

Respondent: Data-driven communication.

Researcher: Okay, explain more on that.

Respondent: having the communication strategy almost, always entirely resting on data. by data I mean information that you gather from among your stakeholders and letting that information influence your communication strategy. If you learn by any chance that a half of the UCU students or a half of the students who want to come to UCU are on TikTok and you've gotten all this information from research survey organisations And that's it. Get nearly all your money if possible. Invest it on TikTok. That's what data-driven

communication looks like. If you learn that we get most international students from Kenya and Congo and Your Google results show you that your Facebook metrics show you that your X metrics of people who engage with you show you that my friend have a budget to go and do recruitment drives in Kenya in in whichever country that is that's called data-driven PR it will save a lot of it will basically just prosper the communication mandate of the office. And of course, the other step-by-step practice will be being sensitive to emerging trends. Being sensitive to emerging trends. While the university is a conservative, is a child of a conservative institution, which is the church, things are supposed to be as they are.

as they are and so shall they be. That's the kind of model of the church. As it is now, forever it shall be. It can be sort of hard to break out of that model to keep up with the trends because trends kind of look like a very worldly thing. But for an institution like UCU, it would still be so good and it will benefit in the long run if the department constantly keeps the emerging trends.

Researcher: Okay, last but not least, do you have any other comments you would like to add about communication and PR at UC?

Respondent: Yes, I think artificial intelligence tools should be embedded if possible in every department's operations because that is going to help not only make systems more efficient, but it's going to show the university as indeed a 21st century university that's determined to lead in all avenues. So that's the desire I would like to, I would love to see realized at the university

where this biggest innovation of the 21st century. AI is embedded in all systems because that's where the world is heading while Africa might be a couple of leaps behind it's where the world is heading and we've really got to be on top of our game.

Researcher: thank you so much

Respondent: you're welcome.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Title: How Effective Communication Has Impacted the Public Relations Performance of Uganda Christian University, Mukono

Instructions to Respondents:

This questionnaire is for academic purposes only. The study aims to understand how communication practices at UCU affect the university's public relations performance.

Your responses will be treated confidentially and will not be used for any purpose other than this research. Please answer honestly and as completely as possible. There

are no right or wrong answers.

Tick or write in the spaces provided.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender:

Male Female

2. Age group:

18-25 26-35 36-45 46 and above

3. Occupation/Role at UCU:

Student Lecturer Administrator PR Staff Other (specify)

4. Years spent at UCU:

Less than 1 year 1-3 years 4-6 years More than 6 years

Section B: Communication Strategies Used by UCU

5. What communication channels does UCU commonly use to reach its internal and external audiences?

Email

6. How frequently does the university communicate with you (daily, weekly, monthly)?

7. In your opinion, how clear and understandable are the messages shared by UCU?

8. Which communication channels do you find most effective, and why?

9. Do you think the university's communication reflects its values and mission?
Please explain.

Section C: Effectiveness of Communication and PR Performance

10. How would you describe the overall effectiveness of UCU's communication system?

Very effective Effective Fair Ineffective

11. In what ways does UCU's communication influence its public image and reputation?

12. Have you observed any situations where poor communication affected UCU's reputation?

Yes No

If yes, briefly describe the situation.

13. How do you receive feedback from UCU after raising an issue or concern?

14. To what extent do you think UCU involves stakeholders (students, staff, community) in communication and decision-making?

To a great extent To some extent Rarely Not at all

Please explain your answer.

Section D: Challenges Affecting Effective Communication at UCU

15. What are the main challenges that affect effective communication at UCU?

(You

may tick more than one)

Delayed feedback Poor coordination Limited resources

Hierarchical

barriers

Lack of digital tools Inadequate staff training Other (specify)

16. In your opinion, how do these challenges affect the university's public relations performance?

17. How does UCU handle misinformation or rumors circulating among students or the public?

Section E: Suggestions for Improvement

18. What can be done to improve communication between UCU management and its stakeholders?

19. What communication strategies would you recommend to enhance the university's public image?

20. Any other comments on how communication can strengthen public relations at UCU?

Thank you for your time and participation!

Appendix III: Respondents' Form

Respondent 1

Gender: Female

Age group: 18-25

Occupation/Role at UCU: Student

Years spent at UCU: 1-3 years

Responses to questions:

- Communication at UCU is important because it helps students understand what is happening within the university.
- Communication contributes to public relations by creating awareness and building trust between the institution and its stakeholders.
- Communication channels used at UCU include notices, social media, and emails.
- Communication at UCU is generally effective, though sometimes information reaches students late.
- Communication strengthens public relations by promoting transparency and engagement.
- **Other comments:** *“Communication is the backbone of most organizations.”*

Respondent 2

Gender: Male

Age group: 36-45

Occupation/Role at UCU: Lecturer

Years spent at UCU: More than 6 years

Responses to questions:

- Communication plays a key role in coordinating academic and administrative activities.
- Public relations are improved when communication is clear and professional.
- Internal communication is mostly through emails and meetings.
- Communication is fairly effective but can be improved through training.
- **Other comments:** *“The university should train staff on customer care and communication.”*

Respondent 3

Gender: Male

Age group: 18-25

Occupation/Role at UCU: Student

Years spent at UCU: 1-3 years

Responses to questions:

- Communication helps students stay informed about academic programs and events.
- It supports public relations by improving the image of the university.
- Common communication tools include WhatsApp groups and notice boards.
- Communication is effective in some departments but weak in others.

Other comments: *“No.”*

Respondent 4

Gender: Male

Age group: 26-35

Occupation/Role at UCU: Administrator

Years spent at UCU: 4-6 years

Responses to questions:

- Communication ensures smooth operations within the university.
- Public relations are strengthened through collaboration and teamwork.
- Information is shared mainly through official memos and meetings.
- Communication effectiveness depends on leadership support.

Other comments: *“Collaboration is the key.”*

Respondent 5

Gender: Female

Age group: 18-25

Occupation/Role at UCU: Student

Years spent at UCU: 1-3 years

Responses to questions:

- Communication helps students connect with management.
- It builds relationships between students and staff.
- Social media and student forums are commonly used.
- Communication can be improved by encouraging feedback.

Other comments: *“By promoting interaction among the UCU community.”*

Respondent 6

Gender: Female

Age group: 26-35

Occupation/Role at UCU: Lecturer

Years spent at UCU: 1-3 years

Responses to questions:

- Communication helps lecturers align with university goals.
- Good communication leads to strong institutional reputation.
- Emails and meetings are the main channels.
- Communication is effective when messages are timely.

Other comments: “Effective communication is the foundation of success.”

Respondent 7

Gender: Female

Age group: 26-35

Occupation/Role at UCU: Administrator

Years spent at UCU: 4-6 years

Responses to questions:

- Communication supports coordination among departments.
- It improves trust between management and staff.
- Formal and informal communication methods are used.

Other comments: “*Effective output.*”

Respondent 8

Gender: Male

Age group: 36-45

Occupation/Role at UCU: Administrator

Years spent at UCU: More than 6 years

Responses to questions:

- Communication helps everyone work toward common goals.
- It enhances public relations by fostering unity.

Other comments: *"It brings everyone in the University together."*

Respondent 9

Gender: Female

Age group: 18-25

Occupation/Role at UCU: Student

Years spent at UCU: 1-3 years

Responses to questions:

- Communication helps students access information easily.
- It improves the relationship between students and the university.

Other comments: No response provided.

Respondent 10

Gender: Female

Age group: 26-35

Occupation/Role at UCU: Staff

Years spent at UCU: 4-6 years

Responses to questions:

- Communication is essential but not well understood by everyone.

Other comments: *“Consistent and engaging communication can improve public relations.”*

Respondent 11

Gender: Male

Age group: 18-25

Occupation/Role at UCU: Student

Years spent at UCU: 1-3 years

Responses to questions:

- Communication is important but the respondent is not well informed about it.

Other comments: *“Communication is one of the key principles of public relations.”*