

ISSUE NO. 10 | AUGUST-SEPTEMBER EDITION 2022

PR DIGEST

A PUBLICATION OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF KENYA



Gilad Millo

From Top Israeli Diplomat to PR Expert

DIGITAL PR AND KENYAN POLITICS- 20
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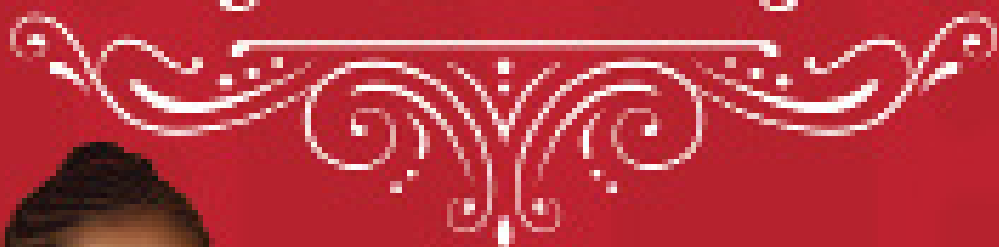
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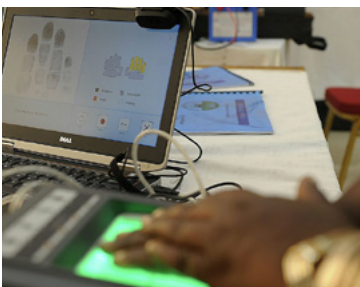
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We must package the story for the youth to believe in the power of uniting to elect better leaders. Decisions that are currently being made will have significant consequences for them now and in future.



Opinions expressed within the magazine are solely the authors' and do not reflect the opinions, beliefs of Public Relations Society of Kenya or its Editorial Board.

Editor's Note

Let's be mindful of others as we celebrate our win

The theme, Business of Elections was deliberate. We wanted to get into the mind of the voter to understand their thought process and what motivated them to make certain decisions. We wanted to know the opportunities for Public Relations professionals during these elections. From coming up with campaign plans, content, messaging and branding- we did stand out #TeamPR. I thank you for sharing your creative pieces with us and always heeding our call for articles. Indeed, they make for a good read.

However, as you are already aware, we have just come out of a hotly contested Election characterised by intense emotions and elevated expectations from the supporters. It's difficult to proceed with a "business as usual" approach when everything has changed so much, so quickly but, telling you how or when to move on or even how to celebrate wouldn't be right. All I ask is to be cognisant of people within our circles who might not subscribe to your political ideologies.

In this edition, we chat with the phenomenal Gilad Millo- the former Israeli diplomat who found passion in music and farming. Who would have thought a retired diplomat would be the one serenading us with afro-jazz? He sings in Swahili, the lingua he learnt here in Kenya, as well! Read on his journey and many other captivating stories lined up for you herein.

Thank you for your continued support to the Publication: we are truly indebted. I encourage you to continue sharing feedback on our magazine via editor@prsk.co.ke.

Happy reading!

Maureen Koech, MPRSK
Editor

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Communications practitioners can add value to the razzmattaz of campaigns and elections

By Chiimbiru Gimode & Nancy Marangu

Politicians must embody the accessible communication techniques provided for by the United Nations Disability-Inclusive as well as the African Union Disability Inclusion Guide.

The ongoing campaign season is at its climax now, with political actors waxing lyrical to woo the electorate to their side. This season is undoubtedly lucrative for a majority of media and public relations professionals. While they are at it one critical conversation that seems missing is accessibility for the campaign messaging for persons with disabilities (PWDs). Looking at the number of manifestos that have been so far unveiled, it is interesting to note that none of the manifestos has been made available in formats accessible to persons with disabilities, such as Braille to aid accessibility of the visually impaired. What is more, out of the many public service

announcements run and paid for on broadcast media, the majority of them lack the sign language captioning for people who are deaf. This is despite the provisions of Article 54 of the Constitution of Kenya (2010) on inclusive reporting as well as the Programming Code for broadcasting services in Kenya.

Disability mainstreaming

Critically, as communicators, might we have missed the opportunity to enlighten aspirants on disability mainstreaming during the campaigns? Did we have a role to play? Nonetheless, we have lessons to learn from global best practices, the most notable one being the United Nations Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines, for future political communications.

To begin with, strategic communication practitioners ought to enhance communication

etiquette by educating the electorate on how to improve communication for PWDs to discard and disprove myths that can classify them in a separate “class.” Some people still have negative stereotypes and misconceptions about PWDs that obscures their brand identity. Therefore, ways in which societies refer to PWDs shapes their beliefs about them. Thus, essential to embody disability etiquette and use appropriate terms that foster positive attitudes about PWDs by referring to them using the “people-first” language. People-first language emphasizes the person, not the disability. By placing the person first, the disability is no longer the primary, defining characteristic of an individual but one of several aspects of the whole person. For example, it is preferred to say, “people with disabilities” instead of “the disabled.”



Secondly, there ought to be deliberate and intentional use of communication aids and alternative documentation formats. Printed campaign materials for instance, can be a significant barrier for people who are visually impaired or have learning and cognitive disabilities. This would call for alternative formats typically in the form of large print, braille, audio clips and computer disk. The original campaign publications should include information about alternative formats that are available. Furthermore, for PDFs and electronic publications, to make longer documents accessible, campaign communication teams can create accessible PDF or an electronic publication (EPUB). Both offer unique benefits, depending on the content developer and the end user.

Adjustments

Besides, the easy to read format provides for small adjustments to language ensures that persons with learning disabilities can extract information with ease. For example, with persons with dyslexia writing in short paragraphs to express an idea can help comprehension and reduce reading fatigue. Information may also be provided in easy to-read format. Easy-to-read (also known as Easy Read) is a format with information designed specifically for the particular literacy needs of persons with intellectual disabilities. It may also include plain language and diagrams, and follows a particular set of rules. Significantly, for this segment of the population, campaign managers can creatively include visual storytelling media (film, photography, images, and

animations) as a campaign strategy which can be a powerful tool to promote and strengthen disability mainstreaming.

Thirdly, to reach out to people who are deaf or hard of hearing, political campaign communications may need to incorporate sign language or oral interpreter during campaigns. Interpreters can be used for one-on-one conversations, group meetings and conferences. By virtue that there are several types of interpreters, the campaign managers ought to be conversant on the appropriate choice and if not sure, inquire from organizations that deal with the deaf community. Consequently, it is also crucial for political campaign messaging to leverage captioning during the broadcast of campaigns, public service announcements or on online campaign platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Tiktok.

Captioning entails the translation of audio portion of video programming into text captions (subtitles) onto a screen as an enabler for people who are deaf or hard of hearing to read what they cannot hear. Over time, the Communication Authority of Kenya (CA) has enforced captioning during news or events of national importance serving as a pace setter for advocating for inclusive reporting. However, how much more can be done?

Accordingly, other avenues for inclusion in political messaging can include workshops and seminars, where campaign managers can ensure that conference facilities service providers make provision where campaign managers can

It is essential to embody disability etiquette and use appropriate terms that foster positive attitudes about PWDs



ensure that conference facilities service providers make provision for assistive listening devices such as hearing/audio induction loops. These are sound systems designed for use by persons with hearing aids and/or cochlear implants. A hearing loop provides magnetic and wireless signals that the hearing aid picks up.

Friendly tools

With accessible and inclusive websites, campaign managers in collaboration with web developers ought to ensure they incorporate global best standards like the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). What is more, accessibility of social media, depends on both the platforms and their content. To insert alt text, for example, each social media platform requires different steps. Therefore, it is important for campaign managers to have requisite skills on how to navigate through various platforms for updates on accessibility features. For example, it is noteworthy, that

Hashtags should use the 'CamelCase' style. The first letter of each word is capitalized, as in #NothingAboutUsWithoutUs or #LeaveNoOneBehind, to enable screen readers to read the hashtag correctly. Notably, for shared online platforms including Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, and Zoom which can create captions using artificial intelligence (AI), campaign managers have to inform their participants on the inbuilt assistive capabilities. Despite all these technological capabilities, it is critical to note that human translators continue to offer the most reliable interpretation and transcription.

As we relish in the campaign razzmatazz in the run up to the elections, communication experts who are in the thick of the campaigns can add value to their candidates by ensuring they leave no one behind. Political campaigns must embody the accessible communication techniques provided for by the United Nations Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines as well as the African Union Disability Inclusion Guide.

Chiimbiru Gimode is Communications for Development (C4D) Expert while Nancy Marangu, Communication and Public Policy Analyst



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Why you pay more for your branding materials

By Adeline Ojung'a

These professionals value their experience and adjust their pricing based on their experience and skills within the industry and are acutely aware of what's fair based on their talent and years of experience.

Dr. Patrick Okoth, is a business owner. He owns a printing and tailoring company in Kisumu called Acryliz Investment Limited. Vincent Omondi, his graphic designer, spends most of his time branding campaign vehicles, printing banners and setting up billboards. His workshop was not as busy two years ago when they first opened. At the time, accessing

raw materials was a challenge following the world-wide lock down. Keeping the business afloat was no easy task and he toyed with the idea of closure a few times. However, due to the business opportunities presented during the electioneering period, they were able to weather the COVID 19 pandemic. Branding is part of marketing and helps put

politicians' stories and messages in front of their audience. With branding, campaign slogans and images can be repeated until they get stuck on the mind of the public. The goal is usually to increase brand awareness and improve brand equity. Branding controls brand's narrative and public image. It can also be a means to differentiate one political party or from another.

Take-it-or-leave- it

However, according to Mr Rakwaro, a political aspirant, branding has its challenges. “Printing companies have understood the weight branding carries. Just designing a candidate’s website can cost as high as half a million. Logos, banners, flyers, calendars, political regalia, do not come cheap. The designers operate on a take-it-or-leave-it basis,” he said. Mr Rakwaro had his eyes set on the MP seat for Rangwe constituency however, the campaigning cost discouraged him. Wayfarer designers however argue that there are reasons why designing cost and printing can appear high. First, design takes a lot of time.

Designers spend more hours

Clients may perceive that designers come up with ideas very easily and quickly. The reality is, there is often hours upon hours of work going on behind the scenes that clients never see. The designer probably had to work through

twenty or so variations of logo concepts to find the best solution. The designers value their experience and adjust their pricing based on their experience and skills within the industry. They usually have a very good awareness of what’s fair based on their talent and years of experience.

Greater impact on career

Another reason is that design has value and can make a big impact on your political career or business. It can directly affect things like sales, attracting your target audience, building trust plus creating new partnerships, and more. Essentially, better design can lead to more money in your pocket. So some designers take that into consideration with their pricing. What they are creating could drastically help increase a company’s revenue and credibility to politicians. So keep that in mind and know that design is valuable and should be viewed as an investment! When you hire

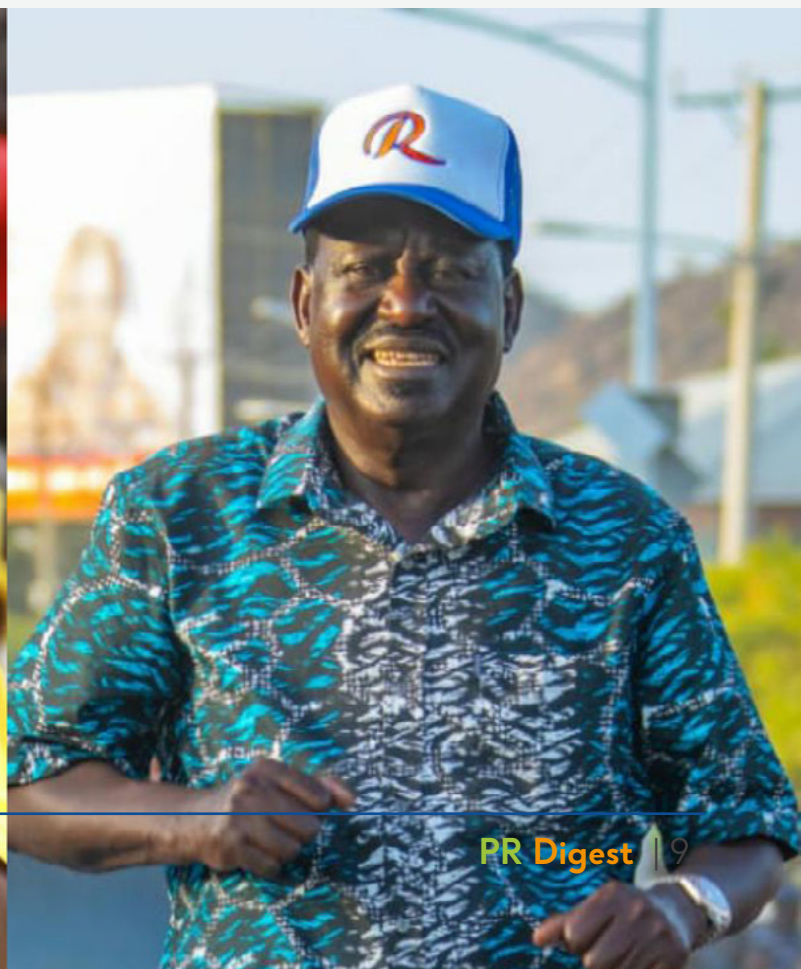
a designer, you aren’t just paying them to spend X number of hours on something or to create X elements for your brand. You are paying them for the result.

Bills to pay

Designers are business owners too and have bills to pay. They have plenty of monthly expenses to keep the business running; tools, outsourcing, marketing, accounting, and so much more. They have their personal expenses as well. Rent, mortgages, car payments, health insurance, student loans.

If cost is a big issue for a client, business owners can decide to design their own branding or website in the beginning. You can also look for pre-made brands that are a great option when you’re just starting out.

Adeline Ojung’a is Journalism and Media Studies graduate from the University of Nairobi and has been a writer from the age of eight.





**KENYA EXPORT
PROMOTION & BRANDING
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KENYA SIHAMI!

Kenya Sihami - Kenya is My Home

This year's elections are unique in that they are being held amid the COVID 19 pandemic. Despite the setback in economic growth during the peak of the pandemic, Kenya maintained its position as one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa, with an annual average growth of 5.9% between 2010 and 2018. Kenya is a land full of potential and immense prospects, abundant in skilled human and mineral resources. It is the land of unlimited opportunities and home to high-quality and authentic products, services, innovations and other positive social, economic and cultural developments. Kenya also enjoys a high profile as East Africa's largest and most important business, financial, and transportation hub, with 80 percent of East Africa's trade flowing through the Port of Mombasa. It is therefore paramount that all stakeholders promote peaceful elections in the country to support ongoing economic recovery efforts following the ravages of the pandemic that slowed economic growth.

The elections will have economic implications beyond our borders. Every election cycle sees the economy of Kenya impacted by an unpredictable political climate which lessens its attractiveness in the perception of foreign investors seeking a stable economic and political environment. Peaceful elections will not only boost investor confidence in doing business with Kenya but also support the agriculture and tourism sectors, two key sectors that are highly dependent on a stable political

environment and heavily impacted by the pandemic. These two sectors combined contribute on average about 40 per cent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Recognizing this impact, Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency is running a six-month-long Citizen Engagement campaign and peace initiative titled, "Kenya Sihami" which aims to encourage Kenyans to commit to peaceful elections. Launched in July, the Kenya Sihami peace initiative seeks to provoke Kenyans to appreciate our deepening democratic space which has seen the country enjoy relatively peaceful general elections since 2013 due to improved preparation and coordination among key peace, security, and election management players to prevent conflict and violence.

The reputation of Kenya, therefore, depends on individual roles in the building of a national brand identity, which will gain the respect and admiration of the international community. The campaign joins other initiatives to encourage Kenyans to come out and vote peacefully against the backdrop that although Kenya has made tremendous gains in matters development in key sectors, citizens must Understand, Believe and Live the Kenya Brand regardless of the outcome of the election.

Kenya is our land, our pride and nation. Maintaining peaceful coexistence is every Kenyan's responsibility.



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Gilad Millo,
Managing Director,
Millo Communications

To transform PR, content creators & leading brands must align- Gilad Millo

He was first introduced to us through his hit song Unajua featuring Wendy Kimani, piqued our interest with his mastery of the Swahili language, a guitar strapped on his back, pushing a bicycle on a dirt road. However, there's more than meets the eye about this diplomat-cum-musician, with a raspy but soothing voice whose journey to being a Kenyan citizen spans slightly over 20 years. You make plans, but God laughs, he says.

By Maureen Koech and AG Awino

When Dolly Parton released Coat of Many Colors in 1969, no one knew that many decades later it would be used as a reference in story of a man whose fame was well written in the stars. First came to Kenya on a backpacking expedition as was a tradition for most military graduates in Israel.

When he is running a few minutes late for our interview, we are met by his beautiful wife, Hadas Millo, an athletic lady who doesn't look a day over 18! She takes us on a tour of their shared space, which is still under construction and will soon host her wellness studio and the offices of Millo Communications, Gilad's boutique PR agency. The fitness enthusiast who is also a vegan is unlike her husband who doesn't hide his love for meat, orange juice and coffee and the occasional glass of beer or wine. Gilad Millo is not the usual 'Mzungu'. He was introduced to us as a musician through his hit song Unajua. His crisp mastery of the

Swahili language and guitar skills set him apart from most foreigners in the country. That Gilad is a man who wears a coat of many colors is not in doubt.

A former diplomat musician, agripreneur, business owner, and brand ambassador, Gilad is a person of diverse and varied ability. The 50-year-old Israeli, now proudly a Kenyan citizen courtesy of the provision of the Constitution that allows for dual citizenship, dons a well-groomed beard and clean-shaven head, one that we came to learn was upon the advice of his stylist. "You would look good with a bald head and a beard," he recounts his conversations with Kenyan celebrity stylist Brian Babu, during our interview and the look that has now become his identity.

Diplomatic Service

Gilad's multicultural upbringing and the influence of his father's 37 years of diplomatic service contributed to his desire to get into

the diplomatic world. He spent his formative years traversing continents. From Germany, Israel, London, New York to Turkey, Gilad spent his childhood moving around these countries as his father's diplomatic work required constant traveling. He graduated from high school in Turkey then he came



At Mt. Scopus University, together with his friend, a guitar player, they formed the White Donkey band

back to Israel to join the army as is required of every Israeli citizen at the age of 18. It was while ion the same military base, that he met the love of his life, Hadas. After their army service the couple traveled together to the far East and later to Kenya and Tanzania as backpackers.

After his military service, Gilad worked as a bell boy at the Hyatt Hotel in Jerusalem, while studying Political Science at Mt. Scopus University. While he was earning a minimum wage salary, he would get tips that he put in a jar as savings towards his planned backpacking trip to Kenya, a trip that changed his life forever. It was during this trip that he first fell in love with Kenya and was inspired him to ask for Hadas's hand in marriage At Mt. Scopus University, together with his friend, a guitar player, they formed the White Donkey band and performed throughout Israel for close to three years.

During these years, he was fully committed to music, promoting the band and doubled up working in a disc store to sustain himself.



At the newsroom, he was tasked with recording news feeds from Reuters, AP and other international media agencies and to edit this into stories to be broadcast in Hebrew.



“ You are the sum of your experiences, he says.

Entry into Journalism

When they say that babies change your life, it wasn't just referring to the many sleepless nights and numerous visits to the doctor's because the baby's poop isn't the same usual color. It also means making life-changing decisions because you have to secure their future. When his son was born, he had to look for a 'serious' job other than music, something that would bring in more money. So, he spoke to journalist who told him about a vacancy opening for an entry level job at Channel 2 News, the leading news channels in Israel at the time.

At the newsroom, he was tasked with recording news feeds from Reuters, AP and other international media agencies and to edit this into stories to be broadcast in Hebrew. It was during this time that time that he covered the 9/11 terrorist attack on the US and the war in Afghanistan. He picked up skills like editing, what it takes to

make a punchy story, how a journalist thinks all of which have helped him navigate the communication world he now operates in. "You are the sum of your experiences," he says.

You might be wondering why a diplomat's son would hustle his way to make money, as it is widely thought that they come from wealth. However, we come to learn that in Israel, a diplomat is a civil servant like any other, earning a civil servant's salary, which is just a decent wage and no more.

Unsuccessful first attempt to become a diplomat

Growing up as a diplomat's son, from a young age Gilad wanted to follow in his father's footsteps and developed an interest in being a diplomat himself." Despite being the son of an accomplished diplomat who had served as Israel's Ambassador to Turkey and Italy, Gilad's initial attempt to join

That Gilad is a man who wears a coat of many colors is not in doubt.



the ranks of the Israeli Foreign Service, was unsuccessful “Getting into the diplomatic corps isn’t easy. The selection process is rigorous and only a handful make it out of thousands who apply” he tells us. A year later, he retries and this time he is successful at a time when he is a rising star in the media, moving from an editing desk job to now covering his own stories. Together with 18 other successful applicants, Gilad underwent a 6 month cadet course at the foreign ministry, that essentially prepared them for their new roles as diplomats

representing their country. The rigorous training interactions with top professionals, including media training from a leading consultant who had previously worked with the likes of Benjamin Netanyahu and Bill Clinton. After his training, Gilad was posted as the Chief of Staff in the office of the Deputy Director General of Public Diplomacy for six months.

Kikambala Bombing

In November 2002, a two-pronged terrorist attack took place in Mombasa, against the Israeli-owned Paradise Hotel in Mombasa at the time and an Israeli charter flight departing Moi International Airport. While the attackers who fired two surface-to-air missiles narrowly missed the plane, an all-terrain vehicle crashed through a barrier outside the hotel and blew up, killing 13 and injuring 80. As a young spokesperson in the foreign ministry, Gilad volunteered to join the Israeli rescue teams who flew to Mombasa to evacuate all Israeli nationals back home.

Landing in Mombasa within 12 hours of the attack, escorted by GSU security to the hotel that was



Gilad volunteered to join the Israeli rescue teams who flew to Mombasa to evacuate all Israeli nationals back home.

still smoking up from the attack, Gilad took up his role as spokesman briefing the media on ongoing activities. As is common with any such event, the media was already on site looking for information on the attack, but no official briefing had been done as the spokespersons from both Israel and Kenya hadn’t arrived yet. “Foreign Minister Netanyahu was giving me direct instructions on what to tell

the media to ensure consistency on messaging,” he says his eyes lighting up. As a young diplomat who had just started his career, at the time this was the most important assignment he had been faced with. He went back to Israel after the successful mission and three months later he was posted as the Deputy Ambassador of Israel to Kenya and his official journey to Kenya began.



Unexpected relocation to Los Angeles

His initial appointment in Kenya was supposed to be for five years, but this was cut short after his brother who was working in the US, made the introductions via phone to the Consul General of Israel in Los Angeles, who was looking for someone with considerable experience in communication to head the public diplomacy department at the Los Angeles Consulate. This was the largest department of its kind for Israel in the US, as the consulate in Los Angeles holds great importance serving, among other things, one of the more influential Jewish communities in the US, together with Hollywood and other areas of importance in the West Coast United States.

He submitted his application and a few months later, after his children were done with their school year, moved to Los Angeles to begin a journey that he says 'were among the best three years of his life'.

Here he got to meet notable Hollywood actors like Adam Sandler, Sylvester Stallone, Sharon Stone among others. This also marked the beginning of a relationship with the Consul General of Israel in Los Angeles, who would become a mentor to Gilad and one of his best friends.

Quitting Civil Service

While on holiday with his family in Las Vegas, he met the Managing Director of Amiran Kenya, one of Kenya's leading agriculture companies, Pinhas Moscovich, who had been his neighbor during his diplomatic stint in Kenya. While talking about the agriculture industry in Kenya which is Amiran's core business, Gilad made reference to the need to address small scale farmers in Kenya, which held the potential of impacting food security issues in the country if approached correctly. This piqued Moscovich's interest and he asked Gilad to develop a concept note that would later guide his work at Amiran. After a successful pitch

to the CEO of the Balton CP Group (the company that owns Amiran) Gilad was hired to the position of Head the Business Development and Public Relations for Amiran

Kenya, and leaving diplomatic life behind, he returned to Kenya, this time to work in the private sector. "Everyone thought I had lost my mind for quitting the diplomatic corps to join private sector to work for an agriculture company," he says with a smile. "I trusted my gut and to this day that was one of the best decisions I have ever made," he adds.

Building the Brand

The return to Kenya was a breath of fresh air for Gilad and his family. He worked round the clock, positioning the Amiran brand, and leading what he terms as an 'agribusiness revolution' which was aimed at Kenya's small-scale farmers, with a focus on the youth. Establishing social media handles that pushed targeted messaging to



the youth, while positioning Amiran toto key strategic partners for project funding and partnerships. He successfully brought on board key partners like USAID, the Kenya Red Cross Society, Equity Bank, the Youth Enterprise Fund and others who together would help to shape the new agriculture landscape in Kenya. As part of the 'farming is cool' campaign targeting Kenyan youth, Gilad on-boarded Kenyan rapper, Juliani as the brand ambassador for Amiran, leading a drive which would create funding for drip irrigation and greenhouse projects for tens of thousands of small-scale farmers in Kenya. After six years at Amiran, Gilad was promoted to the role of Head the Business Development and Public Relations for the group that owned Amiran, with the task of replicating the success achieved in Kenya to Amiran's sister companies in East and West Africa.

Sema Milele!

While still in the corporate world, he began doing performances in bars after work, just for fun. He would do covers of songs by renowned musicians like Ali Kiba and people were fascinated by this mzungu man who sang in Swahili. He then wrote Unajua and played the song for Juliani who thought it was a good song and suggested that he record the song. Working with Kenyan music producer MG, Gilad recorded the song and invited band member Wendy Kimani to feature on the song, a collaboration which birthed the hit song we have come to love. In no time, the song was being played on popular radio stations and that marked the rebirth of Gilad's music career. He has since written and released many more hits notable among them Sema Milele, Nakuahidi and Rangi Ya Bahari.



2016 The year he founded Millo Communications

Setting up Millo Communications

In 2016, he decided to go on his own and set up his own company, Harmony Africa (now Millo Communications) to handle him and his music. A few months later Gilad decided to open up the company to other clients relying on his career expertise managing brands, messaging, storytelling and handling the media, which is what many clients approach him to do. Westgate Shopping Mall was his first client, a journey which began with the memorable 'Westgate Live – Celebrating Life with Music' concert in which Gilad performed together with leading Kenyan artists Nameless and Nyashinski who had just returned to the country from the US. Since then, Gilad has succeeded to grow his client roster and establish Millo Communications as a successful agency creating memorable campaigns in the Kenyan industry. He has managed to take many budding talents under his wing and has a team working with him to create the magic of Millo Communications.

"I teach my team that relationship

building in all areas, not just with the media, is an essential tool in our trade," he says.

Growth of the Industry

Gilad prides himself in the relationships he has fostered in his life that have allowed him to have such success in the sectors in which he has worked. The PR space is undergoing great transformation, with the rise of media influencers and content creators. Such valuable assets can align themselves with leading brands and transform entire sectors. Social media has opened a plethora of new opportunities in Public Relations, and now brands have access to 24-hour audience engagement and two-way communication that has the potential to deliver powerful publicity.

Gilad comprehends the value of Public Relations and he has molded that understanding to not only achieve personal success, but a trans-formative change in the organizations and projects with which he has worked. The innate power of hard work and resilience always has a place in society.

Digital PR and Kenyan politics

By Jedidah Ngutha

The most common and earliest form of public relations in politics consisted of slander where political leaders spread rumors about their rivals. However, the emergence of mass communication has given politicians an opportunity to have a more direct influence of persuading citizens to vote for them. This has allowed them to shape the perceptions and ideologies of the masses in ways that seem impossible; something that has had a profound impact on the role played by public relations in Kenyan politics.

Early forms of PR were often decentralized. Politicians would often use mass media to publicize events and rallies, inviting the media and the public to witness the occasions. Though these events were never part of a campaign strategy, they sought to inform voters. This has evolved into integrated communication campaigns that see candidates hiring extensive PR agencies or

staff and using a wide range of tools and media. For any political candidate, media exposure is critical in a lot of ways as it allows a politician to reach a large audience, especially one that can be targeted to improve political standing.

Public relations professionals have the ability to organize media engagements and ensure their candidate's public brand stays strong. This is especially helpful when a campaign is targeting a particular subset of voters. For example; if a candidate is attempting to court a particular geographical area, appearing on a regional television or radio show can be extremely beneficial.

In addition to PR professionals, political advisors need to focus on the best interests of the political candidate. They can leverage the established relationships with mainstream and media as well as fortify new ones.

This includes interviews with the candidate during: local talk radio programs, regional newspapers and magazines, popular internet forums, online news programs, podcast talk shows, television news programs and television talk shows.

Political campaigns are all about informing, mobilizing, involving and connecting with voters. Social media has opened up spaces for political candidates to engage with voters in more direct ways compared to traditional forms of campaigns such as rallies and billboard advertising. Social media enhances the flow of information between candidates and voters. Traditional media in contrast are expensive, the feedback is constrained and only wealthy elite candidates are privileged enough to use them because they require a tangible amount of resources.



Former Deputy President William Ruto addresses Karatina residents in Nyeri county [DPPS, Standard]



Social media was used sparingly by politicians in Kenya's 2007 elections. However, there was a significant increase in use in the 2013 elections, and an even greater push in the 2017 elections, with over 80% of candidates having an online presence

President Uhuru Kenyatta, who was an active tweeter in 2017, was among Africa's top ten tweeting politicians. Although candidates in higher offices used social media, the biggest beneficiaries were candidates campaigning for lower offices, especially in counties. For those with limited resources, social media provided an opportunity to raise donations from a large number of people. Nevertheless, a candidate's popularity online is not

a good indicator of their actual popularity on the ground. In the 2013 elections, aside from Kenyatta, presidential candidates who had the most likes on Facebook failed to register similar popularity on the ballot.

Social media is ideal for creating dialogue in an attempt to improve engagement with the political party or individual. The party can share their memorandums, press statements and live broadcasts on platforms such as YouTube directly with the audiences. As a PR Professional working for a candidate or a political party, you need to keep a sharp eye on what gets posted on their social media platforms. Essentially, social media can be used to promote the party's

views and perspectives as well as spark debates with followers, which could be used to create a narrative.

PR professionals are essential in the social media space to ensure that all communication is targeted, well disseminated and unlikely to cause unintended offense to others. Social media is a platform that puts you in control of your party's agenda and when effectively utilized can be the game-changer in influencing and winning supporters.

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Nairobi senator Johnson Sakaja is filmed during an impromptu meeting on the streets of the capital. Tony Karumba/AFP via Getty Images



PR & politics: Politicians as brands too have a lifespan

By Dennis Okore and Joyce Murugi

It aims to push the candidate's position while creating a foundation for shared prosperity among those who want to exercise their democratic rights by casting a ballot.

How did President Obama manage to become the first African American President? What branding strategies did he employ?

Brand identity determines the success of a political party or company. It is a powerful tool of any campaigning strategy used by marketing consultants. We are one month past holding our General elections where we as Kenyans exercised our democratic right to decide our fifth president. The political landscape was at intense levels as the big four presidential candidates put their best foot forward to see who amongst them would become our leader. Unfortunately the political period also exposed the fact that politics can be polarizing and it caused considerable psychological fatigue to the electorate.

Come to think of it, how did President Obama manage to become the first African American President? What branding strategies did he employ? How he was able to transform himself from a political unknown to a worldwide sensation remains a wonder. His tagline “Call for change “ stuck in the minds of many hopeless citizens and branded him as a game-changer, a catalyst for change.

Again, he repeatedly used the slogan “Yes we can” in his campaigns. Barack Obama won the hearts of Americans through his brand which made them hopeful that he would tackle the country’s problems. The consistent use of the messages throughout the national election helped strengthen his brand.

We are in the election season again and a number of people follow political brands.

Propaganda

The messages and the standpoints taken by politicians during the election season were sometimes construed at times as propaganda which has over time threatened branding, especially during the electioneering period. Propaganda tarnishes reputation to a point of no repair since voters tend to consume information heavily. Incorporating PR in politics takes care of all forms of truth decay which is a threat to policy making and democracy.

The ferocity of the campaigns, combined with the aggressive branding by the leading contenders, revealed the intensity of the race. Interestingly, just like in other elections, pop culture is an important part of political branding and messaging. For instance, Prof George Luchiri Wajakoya was one of the candidates who drew interest from the audience due to the adoption of Reggae culture.

Role of PR professionals

Public Relations specialists and consultants have to ensure mutual engagement with the public by maintaining visual consistency, simplicity, constant positioning, identifying a selling point and use of repeated taglines. All these are the principles used in corporate advertising which deals with marketing of the corporate or agency. Political branding is not different either, the two are intertwined and if these principles are adhered to exemplary performance is recorded.

In politics, a constant positioning and message design are the secrets to winning this year’s elections. Political branding can be in various forms such as branding of a political party. Here, the political parties adopt a unique identity complete with a colour scheme which serves as an entry point to hearts and souls of the target audience. The ethos of the party as espoused in its political philosophy and manifesto are key pillars on what a party’s brand is built upon. Other candidates go for branding of the candidates where the candidates build their reputation by pursuing particular ideologies. The best brand example comes from the Roots party’s presidential nominee. His politics and beliefs broke the mould of conventional political discourse.

Marijuana debate

For instance, he claims he will legalize marijuana, start snake farming, and pay off debts owed to the government with the money.



Marijuana debate

For instance, he claimed he would legalize marijuana, start snake farming, and pay off debts owed to the government with the money. Due of this, he earned the admiration and support of several voters. The colours of the political parties are reflected in the clothing that politicians wear. Politicians and their parties gain some brand identification based on what they say and how they say it. Most of the time, it is assumed that political statements are also party positions.

Most of the time, they are not. What is said and how it said bestows some brand identity the politicians and their party.

Emotional connection

Every political candidate works hard to develop an emotional connection with voters in order to persuade them to support their political goals during campaigns. The main goal of branding in politics is to push the candidate's program and position while creating a foundation for shared prosperity among those who

want to exercise their democratic rights by casting a ballot. Although we may be busy with following the current politics, in reality we are following brands. In the end, brands likewise have a finite lifespan: they pass away and are replaced by new ones.

Dennis Okore is a communications and public policy consultant at www.sus-afric.org while Joyce is a digital journalist



The best brand example comes from the Roots party's presidential nominee. Due to this, he has earned the admiration and support of several voters.

PR professionals essential for business continuity

By Samuel Otieno

Experts should have their crisis communication tools on standby to deal with any crisis that may occur during this transition period

What role do PR practitioners play to ensure business continuity during the electioneering and transition period? A case in point are PR experts working in financial institutions such as banks or cooperative societies commonly known as Sacco's. In the financial sector, business continuity during a crisis is of utmost importance. Electioneering periods are usually unpredictable hence organizations prioritize initiatives and activities that seek to promote business continuity.

Opportunity

The unprecedented effects of Covid-19 resulted to some organizations closing down as they could not keep up with the huge losses. Other organizations saw the opportunity and enhanced their ICT infrastructure to ensure business continued as normal despite one's geographical location. This is the period that gave rise to online meetings through platforms such as zoom and Microsoft teams just to mention but a few.

Lessons learnt by organizations show that during electioneering periods is when the PR practitioners should be alert as possible.

Away from operational concerns, PR practitioners are mandated to keep open all channels of communication with the organization's internal and external publics. Electioneering periods being unpredictable, PR practitioners have a wide range of channels to utilize in order to keep in touch with their publics. Within the organization for instance, the

PR departments can facilitate smooth flow of internal communication through the organization intranet. However, this technology has been superseded by the emergence of WhatsApp platform where staff members within an organization have created groups to ensure instant messaging and communication flows within the organization.

As a result, PR practitioners should take the center stage in developing content and messaging that they shall use to communicate within the organization.

For external communication, this is where the rubber meets the road. It has been a daunting task for organizations to communicate with their customers in times of crisis like what happened during the post-election violence that rocked the country in the year 2007/2008.

Lessons learnt by organizations show that during electioneering periods is when the PR practitioners should be alert as possible. Social media comes in handy when the organization would particularly want to pass a message to the general public. PR practitioners can use Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn to update their publics on the happenings of the organization.





Contact Center

A functional contact center comes in handy too for PR practitioners as they may use a particular channel to answer to queries raised by their audiences. The call center can function remotely through the use of VPN technology where contact center agents can log in and work remotely from home. Another key revolution has been the

introduction of chat bots. These are human like robots powered by the Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology that enable the bots to respond in a human like manner to queries from customers. The bots have occasionally been linked with organization websites under the chat module, the Facebook messenger section and of more so

integration on WhatsApp. Equity bank, for instance, recently launched a virtual chat tool for social media users to expand digital banking and customer support services. The service dubbed EVA is available on customer's choice of social media channels including WhatsApp, Facebook messenger and Telegram.

Samuel Otieno is the Business Development and Marketing Manager at Ukulima Sacco and a member of PRSK.



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Scaling up the art of the political professional communicator

By Mutethia Wa Mberia



In corporate set-ups, a communication practitioner must be above par with the vision of the institutional leader. They ought to interpret the vision and project it correctly and convincingly; understand the spectrum of legal instruments particular and pertaining to respective institutions; undertake varied statutory sector-specific reporting; be on top of institutional sector interrelatedness, interplay with the intrigues that institutions are usually embroiled into in the course of stakeholder engagement. Communicators experience a lot of pressure from high expectations of political candidates running for different electoral positions especially during political period like the current situation in the country.

This is normally a sensitive period where communicators ought to protect their organizational brands from taking political sides. There are many communicators currently fully/ partly acting on behalf of political outfits/institutions. Some are practicing in political/ election state corporations or non-bodies while others works and of their organizations are affected by the political situation in the country. Notwithstanding the association, mastery of political intrigues is cardinal for a communicator during the electioneering period. Communicators must practice professionalism in balancing political interests.

A modern communication specialist has a minimum threshold for survival to live up to the dynamics of topical communication needs. One must be versatile, well-grounded on the trade and multi-faceted in skill and agility to execute effective communication functions from time to time.

As time goes by, the PR sector requires specialized attributes while retaining its broadness. The contrast is that many outfits will not hire extra hands but require existing teams to handle all areas of offline and online content, packaging, corporate and personal branding; media relations, strategy formulation, personalized writing and a raft of strategic areas within the scope of the communication personnel.

The Communicators directly involved in politics should embrace fairest basics while packaging, propagating political interests and navigating intense competition.

The Communicators directly involved in politics should embrace fairest basics while packaging, propagating political interests and navigating intense competition. This ensures electorates receive appropriate political information. The communication professionals must realize that “information overdose” is at its peak. Duty bearers institutions, political/independent candidates, political professionals, political propagandists are competing for the attention of masses at the same time, on similar avenues and modes of dissemination. The communicator should responsibly sieve, package persuasive information that is positively impactful to the electorates.

Invasion by other disciplines especially among the campaign Secretariats should be addressed at the beginning of the campaign strategy/plan. While acknowledging the interdisciplinary complementarity in politics, it is necessary to define the scope of communication professionals. This helps in streamlining and synthesizing the messaging in a bid to position the political brands assigned to them. The matter of safeguarding and advising political class on infiltration of the PR professional by ‘quacks’ must be amplified.

This is not only the responsibility of the professionals but that the Public Relations Society (PRSK). Indeed, there is need for the Society to forge engagements with politicians and issue public advisories as one way of safeguarding and projecting the PR profession in the context of politics.



Communicators must practice professionalism in balancing political interests.



Professionals involved in this electioneering process should keep up their 'A game' and be ahead of political information floodgates. The shaping of the right perspective in politics, political processes and political rights has never been easy largely due to a number of factors. Some include long-held myths, entrenched mistrust, information malpractices deliberately peddled by the bigwigs and mixed perceptions. The foregoing gives a tougher turf to surmount.

One of the ways to address this is through credibility and dissemination of depth information. Sharing robust information that is engaging and conversational in each electoral phase that resonates with electorates needs. The few thoughts I have fronted in the foregoing, illustrate the rich but yet murky space that communicators face. It's critical for them to support each other to flourish in the profession. We must by all means, come full

guns-blazing in support of each other in measure and not wage war to our fellow brothers or sisters in the trade.

Indeed, the Society may at this period consider to progressively distil pertinent issues in each of the sectors with a view to centralizing the approaches. This will assist in confronting them now and in the near future as sector thought leaders. The political realm across the electioneering period would form a formidable start.



The art of “Doing It”

By Olwande Akoth

I’ve heard it more times than I can count. “You can do it” says anyone who is intent on motivating you, but do they really mean it? Because once you are on that road to greatness, they get scared. Why? Because they came before you and therefore you must pace yourself. Besides, you need their blessings if you are to make it in that field. Unfair, I know.

The youth have so much to give, so much to share with the world but we are “not allowed” to because we should be more like the “fossils” (HA HA)

“ There’s more than one way to kill a rat, no? So why can’t I do it my way? Why can’t I be more like Steve Jobs or Jack Ma? Unconventional? Unacceptable? By whose standards? Yours?”

We’re expected to dream small, within Africa. Because why would you dream of leaving this little box they have created specifically for you? You must stay because you scare them. Because you’re too much. Too innovative. And when

you finally spread those wings and leave that box, they resort to name calling. We have all heard and seen how Elsa Majimbo was treated. The girl had soared high yet we tried to clip her wings. This is a big shame to our generation.

Once we know our worth and want more, we’re questioned at every step. Traps are laid before us too, God forbid, if we surpass their superiority at such a young age. We received questions like; “What do you want to do with all that power?” If they only knew.

I want a home, a car and a business before I get to 35. I’m I close? No. But I’m hopeful I will because I’m relentless. But I have such a long way to go and our peers and the people mentoring us want us to use their methods. You’re expected to lick boots and to be at their back and call doing their bidding. This is truly outrageous!!

Anyway, before I get there I’d have to pay for a whole lot of processes the government has imposed on the youth. I mean, we have to pay to prove we’re not criminals and equally have to pay to prove we’re debt free. Mental! Do you think we should pay to confirm the quality of our innocence?

Now that we’re ready for big things...

This is a rhetorical questions from us; the youth!

Who speaks for us? We cannot do it for ourselves because we have seen this repeatedly and believed this is what we deserve. Subconsciously, of course. Because no human being would want to be treated like this in their home. Not one. I know because I wouldn't want to be treated like this in a place I call home. I'd leave, in an instant.

Come to think of it; is this why so many Kenyans are overseas? So many youths building other countries because we refuse to embrace their tenacity? I don't know. I don't have all the answers. But this is something to think about. We're failing ourselves, our next generation. I hope the next generation will do better than us. But what are we leaving them to work with? A failed and corrupt system? A poor country with debts from here to Timbuktu? FYI, I know where that is. You can too, if you google it.

Yes, we can embrace our struggles but can we do something about them? Anything at all? Please?

So how about we start small? Pick that trash you just threw on the side of the road, find a bin and put it there. Did that feel good? I assume it did.

Now that we're ready for big things, let's change this country. And I know you want to, because I want to. Let's dream big, together. Let's shuffle things, for us: for them that come after us. I'm telling you, they'll talk about what we did for ages. We'll be like the Vikings or the old teachers that everyone can't seem to shut up about. Yes, 'The wahenga'. These guys even made it to the books. We can too, I promise.

So how about running for Presidency someday? A mom of two brilliant boys, Bradley and Tyler; Passionate about everything GOD made or maybe according to you, THE BIG BANG. Oh, come on, I can almost hear your disapproval. Its 2022. I can do what I want. You can too. So, you want to be my deputy?

COME JOIN!

...let's change this country.





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6. Click on the **"loans"** tab and choose Certificate/ Diploma. Then click **"apply"** on the **Maritime Academic subsequent loan**.
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10. Read and understand the loan terms and condition and agree to proceed.
11. Answer the financial literacy questions and scroll down to view results and click **"proceed"**.
12. Select your preferred loan payment option.
13. Click request loan to view and verify your loan details.
14. Click **"submit"** to complete the loan application. A pop-up message will appear to show that you have successfully applied. The loan serial number will also be displayed.
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Of social media and mental health

By Jackson Ngari

The rapid growth of social media as a new medium of communication has enhanced and promoted connectivity between communities, not only in Kenya but also in other parts of the world.

Online platforms like Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook, TikTok, and others provide a virtual interactive environment where communities around the world can connect and share, get news and information and even meet new people every day. This has even prompted the proliferation of new social media users every year.

Social media has been used to increase awareness on mental health because of its rapid use and growth globally. However, despite evidence of a growing trend in social media use in sub-Saharan Africa and in particular Kenya, little has been reported or done on tapping the potential of social media within a mental health practice to not only increase awareness but also, how its users – be it adults or teenagers can help or prevent themselves from falling to the jaws of mental ill-health online whilst surfing through their social media platforms.

For a decade, these popular social networking sites have presented to us so many benefits, the main one being enhanced connectivity that facilitates easier communication between communities. But despite all those positive ends, there have been downsides too; most victims being the college-aged young

adults who have grown up in a world of screens. Spending too much time engaging with social media can make you feel more lonely and isolated—and exacerbate mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts.

Recent studies referenced by The Child Mind Institute and The National Center For Health Research suggest people who frequently use social media feel more depressed and less happy with life than those who spend more time on non-screen-related activities.

Notably, most active users of Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok usually pay more attention to the content they share. People post either videos or pictures of themselves to get more likes or comments (engagements) from their online friends. If they don't

get the feedback they desire, they feel disappointed or invalidated.

Low Esteem

Comparing your posts to those of other people who receive a lot of reactions from their online family can cause a feeling of disappointment, low self-esteem, a distraction from other tasks, and even feelings of anxiety or depression. If one is exposed to such a life online and their real life does not match those expectations, they are likely to lose their self-esteem and view themselves as losers; sinking into a state of worthlessness, helplessness and desperation.

Internet Addiction Disorder

For some years now, a number of studies have found a relationship between the use of social media and some mental disorders. Findings



have even lead to the suggestion that a new mental disorder be recognised and be given the name, Internet Addiction Disorder.

Cyberbullying

Exposure and excessive use of social media apps and websites have also led to cyberbullying which has dire consequences on our mental health. 10 percent of teens report being bullied on social media and many other users are subjected to scurrilous comments.

Social media platforms such as Twitter are hotspots for spreading hurtful rumours, tribalism, body shaming, lies, and abuse which damages our mental health by causing lasting emotional scars. Unfortunately, it is impossible to notice and recognize a person suffering from any mental health condition just from their social media.

Fear of Missing Out

Other users experience the so-called “Fear of missing out”

(FOMO). They keep on returning to social media every time. Many fear that they might miss either a conversation, discussion, latest news, gossip, or invitation. So to remain updated, social media remains the only option that can quench their thirst.

Sleeping Patterns

Furthermore, social media addiction has resulted in the disruption of normal sleeping patterns. Lights from your phone can disrupt your sleep, which in turn can have a serious impact on your mental health.

There are an estimated 3.9 billion users of social media in the world today. Facebook, YouTube and Instagram each claims more than two billion subscribers! Kenyans have not been left behind and an estimated nine million subscribe to various media platforms.

It is ironic that while social network platforms were meant to enhance relationships, but on the contrary,

overuse of these sites normally corrode our interactions with others. Mental health today continues to manifest itself as one of the biggest challenges we face. Increasingly, social media is revealing more and more cases of people doing and saying questionable things.

Conclusively, if your loved ones complain of neglect as you spend time on your gadgets, take note and do something about it before it is too late. Individually, it is advisable to make a habit for a self-regulation mechanism whereby one decides that they will only check their social media at certain given times during the day — and stick to the routine. Likewise, an individual can also see a therapist, who is capable of diagnosing any underlying psychological issues that might be making them spend hours searching for solace on social media.



“ people who frequently use social media feel more depressed ”

The Age of Youthful Leadership

By Ochula Michael

It is conventionally agreed in many countries that the lower limit to voting rights is pegged at age 18. This means that all who are 18 and above have that inalienable right to vote into office people of their choice.

What else do the young people need apart from voting into office their choice of leaders? Once you vote, you get the kind of fair representation you have been yearning for. By taking up the voter's card, the youth can now interrogate the ethical values of all those elected into positions of leadership; people who can move our beloved country to catch up with the world in terms of development and good governance.

The just concluded elections provided an opportunity for the youth of this country to reject the caliber of leadership that we have been saddled with all across the two levels of government.

These include leaders who have plundered and brought our great institutions down to their knees; quacks with questionable stock in trade, merchants of impunity and peddlers of corruption, men and women who can never express themselves in public forums or whose academic qualifications are either unknown or questionable; and those whose backgrounds we do not admire.

Given that close to 65 per cent of Kenya's population is under the age of 35, their optimism and energy gives the youth enormous potential to change the course of leadership in this country. It is with this power we hope that the youth trooped to the polling centers across the country and cast their vote for the leaders of their choice.

Given the heavy campaigning which included inevitable handouts, we hope that the youth examined the character of the said leader(s) and their moral fortitude and not just the money, free goodies and empty promises that were readily given. Since the older leadership has led us close to nowhere for the past 50 years, time will tell whether the youth can provide better leadership.

Our political history has shown that we have men and women who are perpetually youth. They have been youth leaders for the last 30 or so years, and still pretend to talk for the youth.

Our constitution gives us the opportunity every five years to put into political office men and women who can drive our national agenda, but we fail miserably and then we blame them. With the benefit of access to information through technology as well as exposure, we must always rally together to interrogate the quality of people we need to propel to national political leadership.



65%



Percentage of Kenya's population under the age of 35



The question remains, did we put into office leaders who will promote good governance as captured in our Constitution and Kenya Vision 2030? Did we elect leaders of known moral values; people with integrity and not leaders who will keep whining about 'what happened'? We can only hope so, and time will surely tell.

Ochula is a communications and governance expert based in Nairobi- email:ochula.michael@gmail.com

Time is Now!



Most of our current leaders were of youthful ages when they were elected into political offices. They had the vision of ridding the country of illiteracy, hunger, disease and corruption but failed miserably beyond reasonable doubt. Nevertheless, they continue to occupy leadership positions, some since the 80s.

Yet we are the ones who vote them back into political office at the end of every electoral cycle. We bemoan the lack of ethical leadership and yearn for leaders with integrity and those who promote good governance. The one thing we must remember is that these leaders never force themselves on us; we vote them into office with intent.

It is of interest to note that the same leaders who are supposed to have inspired and propelled us to greater heights in the early years of independence are the same ones who keep asking us about what happened to Kenya. They keep comparing us to Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia saying that at independence we were at par socially and economically.

And yet, we keep recycling them back to office for asking us what we should be asking them! It is time we ask them hard questions; why did they squander the opportunity? Why did they deviate away from the development path? These are leaders that led Kenya to be the proverbial Nchi ya Kitu Kidogo!

Reincarnation of Peter Kenneth in 2022 presidential race

By Joshua Muthui

In the 2013 presidential bid, Peter Kenneth was an aspirant who was cheered up by Kenyans on digital spaces, particularly twitter. However, this didn't translate to votes as he managed to garner 72,786 votes only; translating to 0.60% of the total votes cast. This year, the learned professor, Prof Wajackoyah was hyped the same way or even more than Peter Kenneth. He had a strong stance on exporting bhang and claimed that he will introduce death by hanging of anyone found guilty of corruption.

The Sensational Wajackoyah

George Wajackoyah was comical in his campaigns. He had 'radical' ideas of rearing snakes and exporting hyena testicles and dog meat as a way of economic recovery. These and other promises in his manifesto earned him attention from local and international media. He was a buzz on social media! He shared on his journey of being an undertaker to earn a living while abroad.

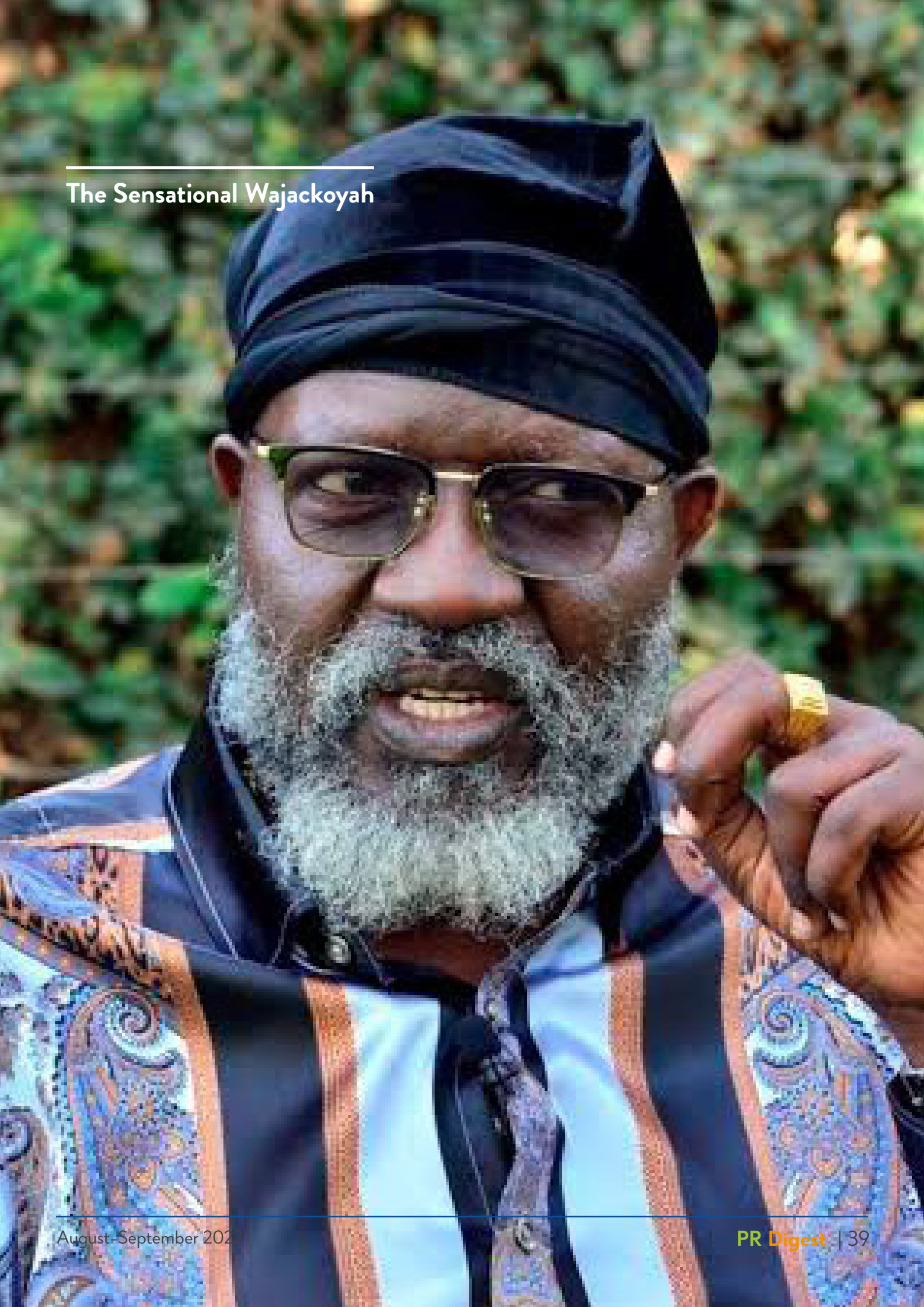
With Kenyans complaining of the high cost of living, these ideas seemed practical enough but sadly they never believed in him enough to make him the 5th President of Kenya. To most, he was a breath of fresh air, away from the two front runners. The same was the case for Peter Kenneth in 2013.

This year's campaigns were decorated aggressive publicity and branding campaigns with each camp keen on choosing messaging that resonated with their party brand. From choice of music to using brand colors in the wardrobe of the teams, to online and offline communication materials. Everything was deliberate and it worked for or against the teams, a discussion that we as Public Relations professionals should have as we audit how we performed during the elections.

This was also very evident during Peter Kenneth's campaign, everything was deliberate.

Joshua Muthui, is Communication and Public Relations student at Maasai Mara University

The Sensational Wajackoyah



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The local leaders you voted for matter the most after election, hold them to account

By Ronald Ng'eno

We have just voted in who will be our leaders from the office of the President to Members of County Assembly (MCA) for the next five (5) years. Some of us voted for the first time, while others are veteran voters. The question remains, how did you select your candidate? How did you decide, among all the candidates, who to vote for?

In 2017 British Broadcasting Corporation article indicated that a size-able proportion of voters usually vote the same way in every election. They have a deep emotional commitment that is strongly linked to their social class. How does this relate to Kenya? A cursory glance at the past 4 elections: 2007, 2012 2017 and 2022 show trends in voting patterns. For example, Coastal, Western and Nyanza regions tend to vote mainly for coalitions led by the Orange Democratic Movement ODM/Azimio while

areas in the Central and Rift Valley have mainly voted for the Jubilee/ Kenya Kwanza coalitions. This tends to indicate that voting patterns in Kenya are mainly ethnic/regional based.

According to the League of Women Voters in the US, candidates for election can be judged in two ways: the positions they take on issues and the leadership qualities they bring to the office.

Pertinent issues

As a voter, you need to ask yourself these questions: What position does a candidate for MCA, MP, Governor, President etc take on an issue such as the rise in inflation, debt and unemployment? Is their position in alignment with your own? Do you agree with their proposed plan to deal with this challenge? If yes, then then I hope it is the reason you considered them, if no I have no good news for you.

It is a bad idea to vote for a candidate based on their ethnicity or financial gifts they have given or may give you in future. If this is the reason you voted for a particular candidate, you may regret for you may that their plan was completely opposite your own.

Leadership qualities

Secondly, as a voter, did you find out what leadership qualities a candidate brings to the office they were seeking. Is he/she a person of character?

Will their character improve the office they sought or make it worse? Character can be judged based on past behaviour. Did you research their behaviour? Most of the leaders who sought elective offices have held an office before and their information is publicly available.

Did you do a 'Google' search of the candidate to see if they have been in any scandals? The main point I am making is that it is very

important to make an informed choice when selecting your representative. If you voted blindly, you may regret.

As the leaders begin to work for you, I hope your research led you to make an informed choice in the just concluded General Election.

As the leaders begin to work for you, I hope your research led you to make an informed choice in the just concluded General Election.



Why political branding and messaging are critical during the electioneering period in Kenya

By Dr. Phyllis Nyakiba

PR practitioners have an excellent opportunity to shape political campaigns through branding and messaging.

Branding is defined by Phillip Kotler, the father of Marketing, as the process of giving meaning to a specific organization, company, product, or service by creating and shaping a brand in the consumers' minds. Brennan Center for Justice (BCJ) highlights that political branding comes from the government and political actors such as candidates, and parties, among others. Accordingly, political candidates and parties have grown over the years from minimal branding to the application of various branding models as identified by Kotler.

In the USA, there are discussions within the PR fraternity on whether former president Donald Trump was elected because he is a brand. BCJ also highlights the fact that branding took center stage with the Trump presidency. "Trump utilizes repetitive rhetoric intentionally. As a master brander, he knows that repeating catch-phrases is the way to affix concepts in the minds of his audience."

In Kenya, it is widely acknowledged that branding has a long history in the commercial industries, with limited application in the political arena. Launching the various political parties and their respective candidates with pomp, color, and glamour has been the first step towards making political parties more visible and identifiable by Kenyans. Those launches are made memorable so as to linger on Kenyan minds for longer, possibly till the voting day.

It is assumed by most politicians worldwide that branding and communication translates into an increased number of supporters. Increased brand identity would thus allow the public to associate with the particular brand. In Kenya, political branding



grew with the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) brand, especially the orange fruit and the orange color as a mode of brand identity across all physical items associated with ODM.

The Kenya Kwanza party predominantly uses the color yellow and the wheelbarrow as its identity, conveying empowerment of the public majority who are at the bottom of the economic model. These colors are chosen due to their specific meaning in the color psychology charts, and there are feelings evoked from the determined colors. Hopefully, the public understands that the yellow color used by Kenya Kwanza is meant to convey optimism, clarity, and warmth. The Blue color predominantly used



More PR and marketing agencies are onboarding to develop brand manuals as a guide to help break down each brand as it is communicated to Kenyans

by Azimio emotionally depicts the party's trust, dependability, and strength. There are more PR and marketing agencies onboarding to develop brand manuals as a guide to help break down each brand as it is communicated to Kenyans. These brand manuals are critical in political branding and messaging since they enable the political parties to communicate a consistent brand identity across all media. However, more can be done by the PR experts and practitioners to ensure enhanced professionalism in brand guidelines for more attractive brand identities.

I look forward to a time when political parties can place expression of interest advertisements and competitively bid for the best PR experts to develop concepts and deliver political brands that stand out in the minds of Kenyans.

Strategic messaging is critical during the political season to shape the political brand and communicate what it stands for. Currently, there is a lot of segmentation with significant penetration of campaigns all the way to the grassroots levels of the communities in Kenya. The messaging for political parties has come a long way with the various manifestos broken down into mini-campaigns that bring out what the political brands promise to deliver.

Phillip Kotler highlights the importance of brand purpose, which is what will convince Kenyans whether to vote or not. Key messaging that connects with the people share the brand purpose that would convince one to vote for a particular party or individual. For Kenya, key messages are essential in explaining what the political brand stands for. People in the villages watch the news and attend political rallies to understand what the political parties intend to deliver if elected.

There is limited study on the effect of political branding and messaging in the electioneering period and whether there is a significant impact in terms of votes delivered. Thus, more research and studies are needed to determine if these are the key variables influencing the outcome of electoral votes in Kenya. Overall, PR practitioners have an excellent opportunity to shape political campaigns and deliver targeted messaging that is impactful during the electioneering period. This is a challenge for all my colleagues in the field.

Personal Bio

Dr Phyllis Nyakiba is the current Head of Corporate Communications & Marketing in the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF). She has over 15 years of experience in corporate communications, Public Relations, and Marketing, working for big brands in the private and public sector.

Brand purpose is what will convince Kenyans whether to vote or not.





The dilemma in the youth

By Faith Supeet

The youth are the future of every country and its economy, in Kenya the future of the nation (youths) are the most affected people in terms of poverty and employment despite them being well educated with high education qualifications.

The dilemma among the youth in this country is openly seen and a large percentage of them unsure of who to elect based on the political promises made during the campaign season. Which begs the question- are they tired?

Until recently the youth were seen relying on the Kenya kwanza side lead by Deputy President William Ruto. Because of his Slogan The bottom-up economy. But a huge chunk are now seen to sway to the Root party led by Prof Wajackoyah a with slogans like Wajackoyah the 5th dominating social media platforms for days on end.

However, every political party in Kenya has shown its interest and a detailed agenda for the youth. Suffice to say, the government is well aware of the challenges the youth and has on numerous occasions promised to look into and offer solutions. The youth have also shown interest in elective positions in these elections.

Faith is a student at the St. Paul's University

The role of PR practitioners in brand building during elections

By Hussein Yusuf

The 2022 General Elections are around the corner. This will be the 13th General Elections in the country's democratic history where Kenyans who registered as voters will be going to the polling stations to vote for their preferred candidates for the President, Senator, Governor, Member of National Assembly, Women Representative and Member of County Assembly seats respectively. With the promulgation of the new Constitution in 2010, this has led to the creation of many elective seats in the history of Kenya totaling close to 2,000 elected officials.

There is a steadily growing interest in Political and Strategic Communication by leaders which if developed can be clearly presented to the electorate, documented and the politician can be held to account.

The PR Fraternity needs to engage these politicians and educate them on the importance of strategic communication during the campaigns. In doing this, the PR fraternity will help the voter make an informed decision on who to elect during the upcoming General Elections. It is time PR experts took up this responsibility even if it is pro bono to ensure voters make informed decisions at the ballot.

Most politicians are beginning to appreciate personal branding and the value it adds to their

image. Right from the choice of a Political Party name, party symbols and their Slogan, branding is essential to communicating the intended message to the masses. The choice of a political party name is similar to choice of a business/company name. As a business person you have to choose a name that closely portrays the product or service you provide to make it easier for customers to identify with the business with the product.

They need to come out and ask for help in terms of branding and packaging themselves to victory.

PR Practitioners need to take their rightful position at the table and help the electorate make informed decisions at the ballot by working with these politicians to study their ideas, package them properly and communicate it using the relevant channels in order to create a lasting impression in the voters mind.

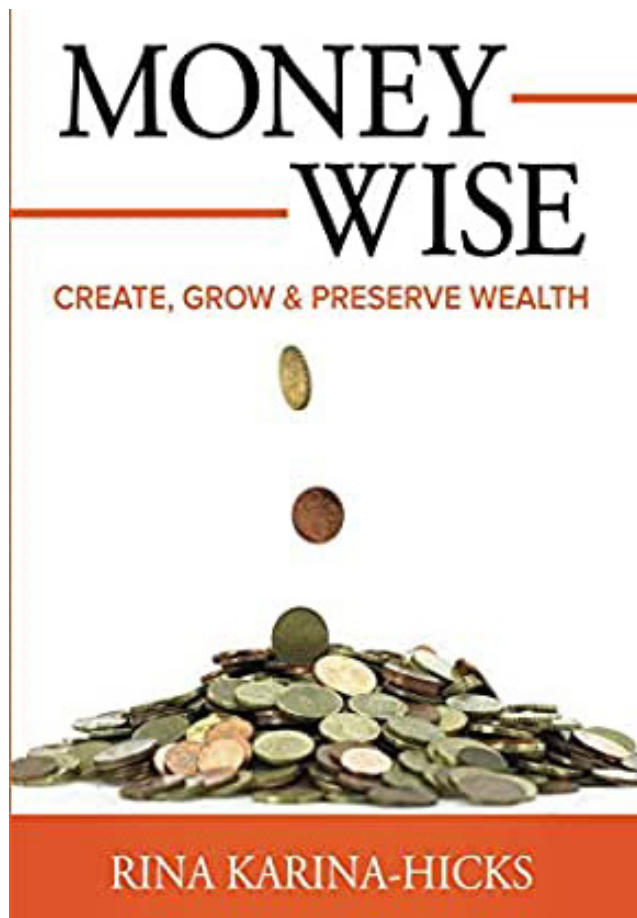
As an umbrella body the Public Relations Society of Kenya is a key stakeholder in these elections and therefore are well suited to organizing sensitizations aimed at enlightening politicians on the importance of branding, developing strategic communication plans and comprehensive manifestos which will be effective in appealing to the voters.

PR Practitioners need to take their rightful position at the table



BOOK REVIEW

By Elizabeth Mulae



How are we as PR professionals doing in relations to developing a plan for wealth creation and management? Are we saving up for retirement from an earlier age? What are your most important values in terms of priority? Take a pen and write six values that mean a lot to you and prioritise them from the most important. This is a personal values clarification mapping exercise that will describe how you want to live. How we live determines how we spend our money and how we save. What investment options have you identified to embark on towards financial freedom?. The Money wise book written by Rina Karina-Hicks highlights step by step actions on were to begin in creating, growing and preserving wealth. The Author is an investment Banker, who takes you on a journey to discover the world of wealth creation. The book explains how to map out investment opportunities available to you. It highlights the advantages and risks of each option. Here are my takeaways after reading the book:-

Know how much debt you have and create a plan to pay it up a step at a time.

Determine your net worth by calculating your assets (shares, bond, rental houses, land, cash in hand, fixed savings) and Liabilities (Car loan, mortgage, digital money loans etc)

Learn to Save, Save, Save. The earlier, the better

Diversify your Investments across a range of option Examples Money market, treasury bonds, Treasury bills, fixed deposit accounts, rental property etc. Google and learn more on www.treasury.go.ke

Create an Emergency Fund..Covid taught us that times and seasons are unpredictable - calculate your monthly 3- 6 monthly expenses to know how much you would need incase the worst happens. This will help you to save up

Protect your Assets:- Remember risk is what we don't know; accept there are things out there we don't know....alot of things!

Network and learn more about opportunities

Know what you own and why you own it

*Give Give Give. It doesn't matter what your instances are, Give Time, Knowledge, Skills, Wisdom, Money even Love...

For those who say they can't afford to save, here is a quote with some encouragement:-

Wealth, like a tree, grows from a tiny seed, the first copper you save is the seed from which your tree of wealth shall grow. And the more faithfully you nourish and water that tree with consistent savings, the sooner may you bask in contentment beneath its shade (George S Clason)

Elizabeth Mulae is the Head of Corporate Communication, Micro Small Enterprises Authority

* Google more podcasts on Money Wise by Rina Hicks to learn more

Positive messaging by professionals a sure bet to stability at the height of politics, says Editor

By Juliana Juma- MPRSK

Political communication is a delicate facet of our national fabric and is a worthwhile vehicle for nation-building not only in the field of PR or politics,

The stage is set, the crowd is ready and the air is pregnant with anticipation. Soon, a flurry of high-end vehicles with bodyguards and aides in tow arrive on the scene with the trademark billows of dust. The bodyguards disembark and make such a spectacle. In the field across the venue, choppers are also landing: the event has all the makings of a political rally in the offing.

For decades, in the run-up and towards the height of the national election in many countries the world over, such events have become the norm with those vying for respective elective seats pulling out all the stops to ensure that they get that all-important vote that will propel their political ambitions. The earliest forms of Public Relations during political seasons consisted mainly of slander, spinning and propaganda strategies aimed at painting the opposing sides in negative light, which unfortunately, are still being practised to this day. Recently however, political movements around the world have woken up to the fact that effective Public Relations can actually work in their favor.

Much more than news and media relations

Public Relations is a strategic and critical communication process utilized by politicians to develop a mutually beneficial engagement with the public. However, not many think about the importance of the narratives that are usually fed to the electorate during these engagements and how they are arrived at. Most believe that this function only consists of management of news and media relations.

It must be noted however, that important aspects of Political PR involve, more often than not, crisis communications, fundraising and effective management of issues. It is vital to enabling the packaging of the politician or political movement in such a manner that is relatable to voters and therefore can leverage on this positive image to gain political mileage. Their role is to source for opportunities that will enable a politician or political movement intensify their awareness.

PR Critical

In politics, Public Relations has become increasingly critical to the extent that one misstep can cost the party votes should the image of the party not resonate with what voters perceive resulting in a possible political upheaval.



In politics, Public Relations has become increasingly critical

The packaging of these parties therefore needs to be very effective yet simple. You will notice that most political parties tend to have a spokesperson and a public relations/communications team who are tasked with building and sustaining the political image of these movements beyond these two facets of image and crisis mitigation. These teams must constantly exercise steadfastness, caution and effective responsiveness to managing dynamic situations as and when they arise.

To remain top-of-mind with voters social media strategies have to be comprehensive and innovative. The advent of social media has necessitated creativity, uniqueness and most of all timeliness in communicating the parties' various messages.

Negative effects of Social Media

Despite these strides, social media contains an extremely unfettered side that has seen many of its users affected especially mentally and emotionally by information and sentiments expressed by political heavyweights. Take the classic case of the former American President Donald Trump's sentiments on Twitter in early 2021 that caused some of his followers to become emotionally charged enough to stage a political riot in Capitol Hill. An act that contributed to him being banned from the platform as it violated its' rules.

Closer home in Kenya our social media platforms were awash with daily hashtags, campaigns, news, opinion polls and sponsored content that were all out to influence the masses to vote for a certain candidate. Unfortunately some of this content also served to rile up negative emotions that would otherwise have been focused towards building peace and sustaining hope regardless of the outcome of the election

PR Professionals in the political arena need to ensure that their communications strategies have a fail safe plan for any situation that may arise. They must also encourage listening within their political teams as this is a critical aspect of successful political PR.



Political movements around the world have woken up to the fact that effective Public Relations can actually work in their favor.

A politician or political movement's ability to listen to their internal communications team would enable this team to best communicate how they intend to address the issues raised by their diverse audiences. If listening is ingrained within the team then it goes without saying that disseminated messages will be received in the positive light.

Rational responses

In as much as spinning narratives or covering up issues tends to be the norm, we must always be alive to the fact that we are dealing with a highly enlightened electorate and therefore responses need to be rational and focused on rebuilding the image of the politician or the political movement in the most positive and sincere manner. In addition to monitoring is extremely crucial in political campaigns. The rise of the digital age has brought with it a wide variety of monitoring methods that serve to mitigate as well as forecast strategies that would enable the creation of targeted positive messages at any given time.

Political PR is a delicate facet of our national fabric as its effectiveness can be a worthwhile vehicle for solid nation-building and hope. It is therefore upon all of us, not only in the field of PR or politics, but also across all professions and all walks of life to massively support positive messaging that is crucial for the sustained peace and prosperity of our land.

Julie is a communications officer with NITA and a member of the Editorial Board at Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK)

Public Practitioners within the political space have the ability to bring about the much-needed positive shifts





In the spirit of paying back

By Wanjiru Wamaitha

The kingdom of Bugaa longed to have a king, they were used to only supporting other kingdoms to make a king. For forty-eight years, the sons and daughters from the other forty-five tribes that had lived in harmony since they gained independence from the white man had been holding the top most positions in the Bugaa kingdom.

That fateful afternoon the elders of the Kaleke tribe had met to discuss how they were going to get back the leadership mantle from the Kiuku tribe. Kaleke tribesmen came in large numbers: young and old, the physically able and the physically challenged, those who had eyesight and those that were blind; they were all speaking the same language, the language of getting back what they believed was rightfully theirs.

“We gave them, and now we need it back,” Mzee Chepkoo shouted. “Yes, it is our time, the time is now, kitaeleweka,” the minister for rainmaking Ezekiel Chepala affirmed. All this time the crowd was charging, waiting for the special address from their leader and the Kaleke kingpin Joseph Ruro.

Joseph Ruro was renowned political leader and a force to reckon with since he put his foot in the political arena. A story was told of how he once sold quail and quail eggs in the village for fifteen years before he was discovered by the founding father of the Bugaa kingdom who gave him a position to serve as the Minister for Food and Maize Production. He was well known as the hustler of the time. He knew how to look for

money, and even in places where other people saw poverty, he saw riches. His kinsmen praised him.

The clock ticked, the crowd was swelling like dough that had been kneaded with excess yeast. “Walipe deni, walipe deni, walipe deni, wakati ni sasa,” they sang in unison. And the hour came where Mr. Ruro arrived, representing the leadership of not only the Kaleke tribe but of the Bugaa kingdom as a whole. Uasani Ground had accommodated about fifteen thousand aggrieved supporters of the hustler. What they wanted to hear from Ruro was that their time to eat meat and honey for five years had finally reached. There was no turning back. Bugaa kingdom had made headlines in the entire region of East Africa as one of the most



corrupt kingdoms, where leaders fought to get the top seat so that they could eat as much as possible. There was a stark discrepancy between the rich and the poor. Hospitals lacked drugs or even basic equipment to assist the patients; it had gotten to the point that women gave birth on hospital floors as the beds were not enough. They also needed jobs, but opportunities were lacking as the leaders didn't care much about the plight of the villagers. The business community had also expressed concerns on the lack of support, and they were finding it hard to continue operations under such a harsh environment.

"This time we are ready to capture this. Elections work like a mouse trap because the voters will be

lured in by the sweet-smelling aroma of money or goods, with the hope that the leader who has dealt with our immediate need will give permanent solutions to our problems when elected. But they lie to us most of the time. Tumechanuka sasa. We want one of us to be at the steering wheel to guarantee us security, job opportunities, education and stability of the economy," Mr. Ruro said as the crowd cheered wildly.

"I promise that within my first sixty days as king, the cost of living will go down, there will be better housing at affordable rates, and the price of basic commodities like unga will go down. Our tribesmen must also hold positions in top offices. For years we have been branded as mere runners, with others having

the audacity to say that there is nothing we can do except running. They are forgetting that we are the largest tribe in the whole of Bagaa. Our numbers can place them in the top seat and remove them as well," Ruro continued, enticing his people with his tongue, as sweet as that of the serpent in the garden of Eden as it led to the fall of man. But this time round the members of Kaleke were ready to fall, so long as they could eat the fruits of the central tree come what may.

"I remember it as if it was yesterday; it was on this ground that I endorsed Uhasi to be the king of this kingdom," Ruro said furiously, spitting his words like a poisonous snake. "Are we not the ones who brought in the numbers in order for Uhasi to be the king he is now?"

Yeeees! We are the ones. We have the numbers, we have the say,” the charged crowd affirmed.

“Now I have come to tell you that we do not fear any union between other tribes. I know you have heard of the newly formed marriage between the one we trusted the most and another man that I do not even want to mention, who hails from the Maji Maji tribe. They are ready to shortchange us. Will you watch them shortchange us? Will you watch them shortchange your sons? Shortchange the son of your soil? Shortchange your hustler? No way!” Before Ruro concluded his bitter speech two groups of rowdy youth emerged from two different

directions, like highly charged bulls during the famous bull fighting ceremony in the neighboring community of Abagaa.. The youth, armed with machetes, were led by their two leaders. From the left was Uhasi Mwako and on the right entered the leader of the Maji Maji tribe, Rala Odede. The youth were singing songs of revolution, resilience and not being ready to pay back anything to anybody.

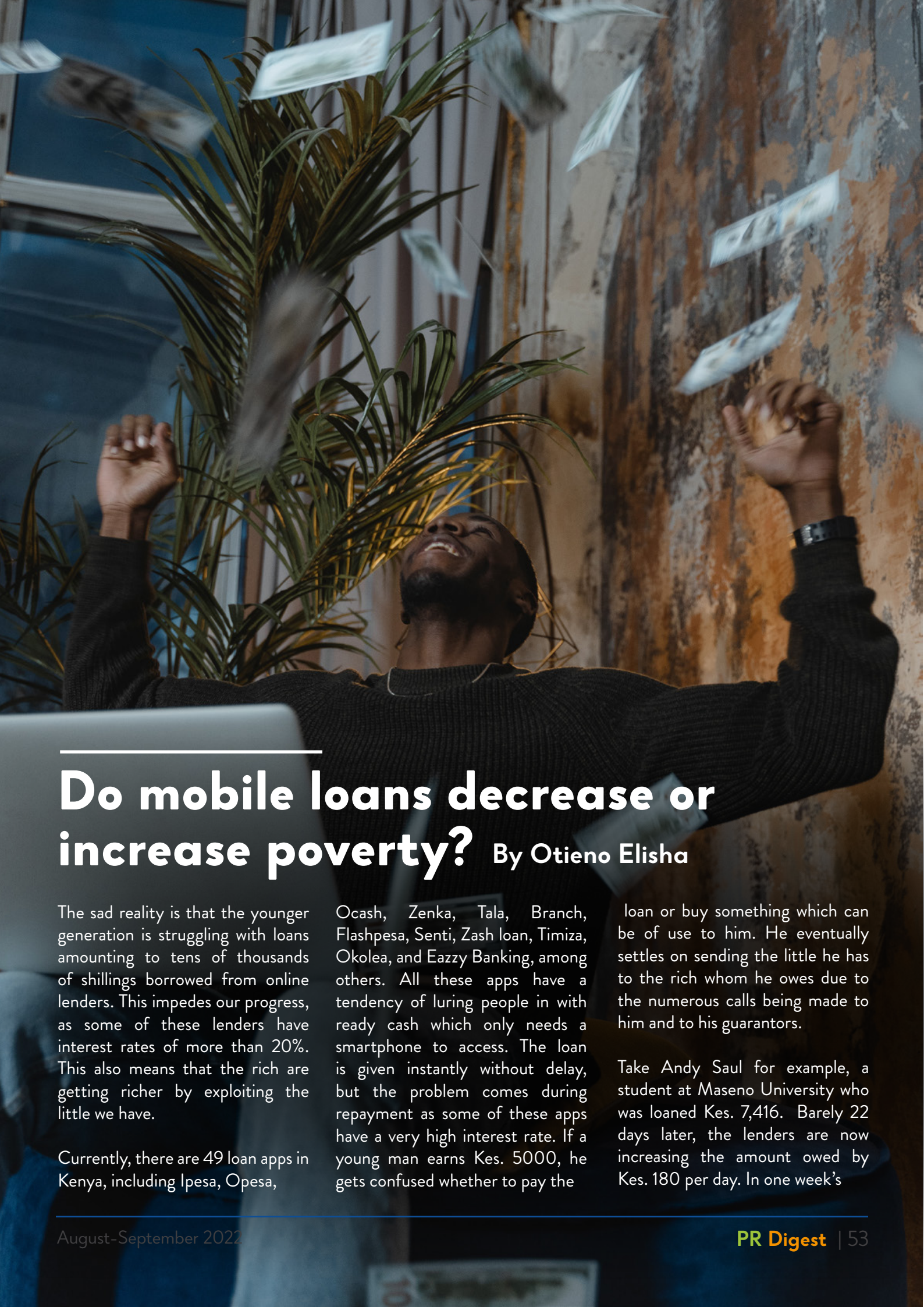
“Hatuna deni, hatulipi deni. Play your cards well. Numbers don’t lie.” They sang and danced, showing their machetes that shone like diamonds in the sun.

“Kujeni hapa!” the Ruro group shouted.

Within seconds, the ground had been converted into a pool of blood. On the ground, thirty thousand lifeless bodies lay helplessly.

Before the police arrived to assess the damage, a huge helicopter descended from the blue sky that had been filled with cries and yelling from mothers and children, and landed on top of the lifeless bodies. Ruro, Uhasi and Rala entered the helicopter and it ascended, as if going to a safe place in heaven.





Do mobile loans decrease or increase poverty?

By Otieno Elisha

The sad reality is that the younger generation is struggling with loans amounting to tens of thousands of shillings borrowed from online lenders. This impedes our progress, as some of these lenders have interest rates of more than 20%. This also means that the rich are getting richer by exploiting the little we have.

Currently, there are 49 loan apps in Kenya, including Ipesa, Opesa,

Ocash, Zenka, Tala, Branch, Flashpesa, Senti, Zash loan, Timiza, Okolea, and Eazzy Banking, among others. All these apps have a tendency of luring people in with ready cash which only needs a smartphone to access. The loan is given instantly without delay, but the problem comes during repayment as some of these apps have a very high interest rate. If a young man earns Kes. 5000, he gets confused whether to pay the

loan or buy something which can be of use to him. He eventually settles on sending the little he has to the rich whom he owes due to the numerous calls being made to him and to his guarantors.

Take Andy Saul for example, a student at Maseno University who was loaned Kes. 7,416. Barely 22 days later, the lenders are now increasing the amount owed by Kes. 180 per day. In one week's

time, the loan amount will have gone past Kes. 10,000. How do you expect such a person to develop himself economically? These online lenders are worse than betting firms and should be monitored with a lot of care.



Young people should get rid of these mobile loan apps because they lead them into larger debt. They are a borrowing trap because they are always readily available. Mobile loans were created to make it easier for smaller entrepreneurs with no access to bank loans to acquire capital for their businesses, but young people are now misusing them. The apps are like modern day colonizers, and they keep getting the majority on the Credit Reference Bureau (CRB) list.

These apps are actually increasing poverty and are also anti-development for the majority due to the high interest rates. For example, after borrowing from any of them and defaulting, you cannot get further access to loans. A joint survey conducted by the non-state financial inclusion agency FSD- Kenya, Central Bank of Kenya, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics and Consultative Group revealed that the available digital loan products have not improved the livelihoods of Kenyans. This is because digital credit does not reach everyone and remains ill-suited for most of the population, including farmers and casual workers.

Half of all borrowers spend their savings on loan repayments. This leads to poor business performance and may also lead to job loss and depression.

The Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) Governor, Dr. Patrick Njoroge recently expressed concern over the rate at which Kenyans are borrowing from the mobile loan apps. “The issue has been there for a while; they prey on individuals and you can’t blame people for taking the loans as they may be desperate,” stated Njoroge. Mr. Njoroge also noted that there must be a law in place to regulate these apps but who will regulate or even how it will be done is anyone’s guess.

Not all apps are safe and Kenyans should be keen on the details that are in the terms and conditions to avoid being duped, as some apps use this information to con the unsuspecting. Unlike banks which tend to be more rigid in their loaning programs, mobile loan apps in Kenya are more accessible even to the marginalized and those in remote locations.

In January 2019, mobile loan apps in Kenya were accused of breaching their clients’ privacy when it was alleged that some of them contacted every single person in a loanee’s contact list upon default. This means that there should be an oversight authority established to scrutinize the lucrative interest rates and penalties used by the digital loan providers, some of which don’t fall under any regulatory regime.

Currently, there are 49 loan apps in Kenya including Ipesa, Opesa, Ocash, Zenka, Tala, Branch, Flashpesa, Senti, Zash loan, Timiza, Okolea, and Eazzy Banking, among others.



Rates used by some of these apps are not compliant with the Central Bank interest regime currently at a maximum of 13.5 per cent, there is leeway for digital loan providers to charge higher interest rates. Some providers charge between 7.3 % to 10% interest for a one-month loan which is very high.

Another app-like lender that infringes on the lives of Kenyans is Fuliza. Fuliza allows M-Pesa customers to complete their transactions when they have insufficient funds in their accounts. This is the most dangerous form of lending as every M-Pesa registered line will be treated as a different account. Each mobile number is qualified for Fuliza and has a limit. The limit is reviewed every three months depending on an individual's usage.

People are being looted in the name of Fuliza. There is a hefty

interest rate of 0.5 per cent per day on one's outstanding balance, that is 15 per cent per month which is 180 per cent per annum. For example, you will be charged Kes. 30 per day in case you 'borrow' Kes. 7,000. In my view, Fuliza is for people who cannot budget for what they have but want to look elite and sophisticated. Fuliza cannot be paid partially as with other lenders.

Fuliza users don't need a smartphone to operate, which means more users can access it, much more than the lending apps. Fuliza was launched in March 2019 and by May of the same year, a total of 45 billion shillings has been borrowed by people on the platform. The question is, are the billions helping Kenyans economically or are we are following suit with what the government is doing with China?

There should be further studies on product innovation which will promote proper use of loans, ensuring digital borrowers are not to stuck with low-value, short-term and expensive credit despite building positive credit history.

All these can be managed by reading the terms and conditions. A large majority of consumers who take mobile loans do not read the lengthy and densely- worded terms they are committing to and are later shaken when the contracts are enforced.

Otieno Elisha is a Communications student at Maseno University City Campus

We need all hands on deck to combat fake news

By Robert Ndwiga



As the clock ticks towards the August 9th polls, the Kenyan media landscape has undergone several worrying developments with the advent of fake news.

The emergence of deliberate disinformation has immersed the media in a state of flux. Political platforms have unleashed innovative digital tools that have enabled novel forms of communication providing greater reach now more than any other point in Kenya's electoral history.

A quick observation of the proliferation of disinformation campaigns packaged as news and

hoaxes that are popularly referred to as "fake news" shows that it is accelerating and affecting the way Kenyans interpret political campaigns.

In general, majority of Kenyans, young and old alike are most likely to get their news through online sources, relying heavily on mobile devices for their communications. Increasingly, most Kenyans have adopted information delivery customized to their personal preferences.

For example, it is possible to sign up for news alerts from many organizations so that one can

space have complicated the manner in which people hold leaders accountable and the way in which our political system operates.

Truth be told, the digital space has complicated political communication and made it more polarized. This has precipitated general decline of public trust in traditional journalism/ media.

Rather than using digital tools to inform people and uplift civic discourse, hired social media gangs are a standard package for those in political office. With bravado, the keyboard gangs have grabbed full advantage to promulgate false or misleading information designed to deceive the public and to a larger extent instigate conflict.

Their stock in trade is to spew outright propaganda flavored with character assassination, innuendo and online bullying in support of or against their real and perceived political enemies. This information is already distorting election campaigns, affecting public perception and shaping human emotions.

Through designated keywords and interactions with influential social media posts, they have managed to magnify their influence and affect national and regional conversations especially resonating with like-minded clusters of people. Experts aver that when such deeds move from sporadic and haphazard to organized and systematic efforts,

they become dis-information campaigns with the potential to disrupt political campaigns and governance.

In Kenya today, there is growing debate among communication professionals on how to address these issues without undermining the benefits of digital media. In order to maintain an open, democratic system, it is imperative that media owners, communication experts, journalists, the Government, businesses and members of the public work together to streamline and provide an accurate account of events.

Media houses and journalists with the support of communications professionals should work hand

in hand with the Government to promote news literacy. On the other hand, the mainstream media houses need to invest in high-quality and unbiased reporting in order to build public trust and correct fake news and dis-information without legitimizing it. It is also important for media houses to call out fake news and dis-information by relying upon their in-house professionals and well-respected fact-checkers.

As for the global technology companies such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter and YouTube among others, it is high time they upped the ante by investing heavily in tools that identify fake news, reduce financial incentives for those who profit from dis-information and improve online accountability.

Similar, it is high time for communication professionals to take the driver's seat, conducting hygiene on fake news and educating Kenyans on why they should prioritize news literacy. This will ensure we minimize the potential to polarize public opinion, promote free speech and, ultimately, increase trust in a free and fair election. Further, it will enable Kenyans to distinguish fake news from real news.

Finally, all of us should follow diverse news sources and always be skeptical of what we read or watch from digital platforms and the mainstream media.

The writer is a member of the Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) and Director Communication-Embu County Government.

It is high time for communication professionals to take the driver's seat, conducting hygiene on fake news.



Inclusion of youths & marginalized groups in national decision making

By Joyce Murugi



Youth participation in politics has been an area of concern for decades now given voter apathy and radicalization that has plagued the country in recent years. Recent studies have shown that marginalized groups face differential access to opportunities. The studies indicate that the allocation of resources favors those coming from families with higher social - economic status or influence. These differences are discouraging for differently abled and economically challenged young people.

According to research, the youth constitute more than half of the world's population. Young people are considered to be more energetic, creative, and innovative than older generations. It is evident that they can be catalysts of

development and change, not only in Kenya but across the Globe.

Gen-Z and millennials have recently ascertained an impressive ability in adapting to and utilizing technology. Their demonstrated sophistication in a digitally-connected world has made the transmission of information easy. They possess all-round skills, like leadership as well as entrepreneurial and communication skills, all of which have contributed to national development.

Ironically, despite their ingenuity, the youth fall under marginalized or vulnerable groups in matters concerning politics, health, education, violence, and gender discrimination. These issues impede their power to showcase their

their abilities hence contributing to frustrations and unrest amongst their demographic. This is because the youth's opinions on what constitutes politics and decision making processes are rarely considered.

On the 9th of August, 2022, Kenyans will exercise their democratic right by casting votes for their preferred leaders. With the country counting down to the big day, political aspirants are in a last-minute rush to culminate their campaigns ahead of the elections. Unfortunately, in the battle to secure support, youths and other disadvantaged groups are being used as foot soldiers, with some being used to disseminate propaganda through social media platforms among other social evils.

The Youth Manifesto

This is the voice of the youth through representation to avoid manipulation in the society. The Youth Manifesto was unveiled on March 18, 2022 at the University of Nairobi graduation square by the National Council of Churches in Kenya. Among the demands that the Manifesto tackles are the 5 E's representing existing gaps facing the young population in Kenya, that is; education, entrepreneurship, engagement, employment and empowerment. The government should acknowledge the contribution of youths in the various societal constructs.

Ideally, youth representation in politics will make it effective for young people to discuss their challenges, participate in electoral processes and allow them to take part in future development programs. This is important in ensuring the accountability of elected leaders as well as improving living situations of as many Kenyan youth as possible.

During this electioneering period, political aspirants have promised the youth full support if elected in August. There is a concern that like in the past elections, such promises might quickly be forgotten, leaving young people severely disadvantaged.

Promoting youth civic and political engagement

The youth require a strong support system for them to be productive. Sometimes politicians resort to giving handouts to youths as a way of enticing them which is an ineffective approach that cannot secure their future. To properly establish progress and stability, the Government should consider applying the following tactics to increase youth engagement and support in national development;

- **Promote incentivized volunteering opportunities that allow the youth to gain experience which prepares them for the job market.**
- **Supporting non- formal education and training**
- **Leveraging digital media platforms to promote constructive engagement**
- **Funding beneficial programs that involve the youth e.g. leadership trainings**

An enabling environment will offer people, especially the youth, a chance to perform activities that are impactful and meaningful. Youth programs need to be ingrained into mainstream politics to remove uncertainty amongst aspiring young leaders. We must acknowledge that young people are now more knowledgeable than ever before and investing in

them will secure the future of this country.

Engaging more youth in leadership roles signifies a move towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (2030). Youth engagement can only be successful if the Government chips in by fundraising for young political aspirants. Promoting deliberating forums such as youth councils and increasing youth advisory boards will further enable young people sharpen how they reason and address political matters and spur them to participate in national decision-making processes.



Youth programs need to be ingrained into mainstream politics to remove uncertainty amongst aspiring young leaders.

The Kenya Youth Manifesto 2022
Photo credits: YouthCafe

FROM FARM TO *Glass*



A photograph of four young people, three men and one woman, looking down at a device held by one of the men. They are in a casual setting, possibly a meeting or a workshop. The man on the far left has orange dreadlocks and is wearing a white t-shirt. The man in the center has bright blue hair and is also wearing a white t-shirt. The woman in the middle has her hair in a bun and is wearing a white sleeveless top. The man on the far right has dark hair and is wearing a brown t-shirt. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Do the youth hold the power to change the Kenyan political narrative in the upcoming election?

By Annette Wachira

On August 8th 2022, Kenyans will decide who their next president will be, a monumental event in our country's history. Kenyan citizens, specifically the youth, have the power to elect leaders who will help combat key issues affecting the common "mwananchi" such as inflation, high food prices, rising unemployment rates and corruption. Africa has gradually become a youthful continent with a large percentage of the population consisting of young people, and Kenya is no exception.

According to the 2019 Population and Census Data, 75% of the Kenyan population is under the age of 35. A lot of political analysts' predictions term this as an election at the mercy of the youth. Armed with passion, information, the desire for a better future and digital media at their disposal, Kenyan youth have all that it takes to change the leadership narrative of this country. They are educated and tech-savvy enough to use social media campaigns to address any injustices and issues that they face. However, are they really aware of the power that they possess?

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) chairman, Wafula Chebukati, recently gave a report highlighting the increase in registered voters since the 2017 elections. A large percentage of the numbers collected is credited to the youth. Based on this, IEBC has made a lot of effort to mobilize the youth across the 47 counties to develop and provide information on targeted voter information and processes, to promote peaceful elections.

Youth in universities have been targeted with concise communication facilitated by youth-led organizations such as; Badili Africa, Youth Agenda, Policy Talks Africa, Siasa place and Universities as well as the College Student's Peace Association of Kenya (UCSPAK). Through these forums, communication strategies were used to ensure the youth are well equipped with the right information and reminded of the potential that they hold in shaping their present and future by electing the right leaders.



Armed with passion, information, the desire for a better future and digital media at their disposal, Kenyan youth have all that it takes to change the leadership narrative of this country.

Our role as Public Relations professionals and Journalists is crucial in setting the agenda for the youth by empowering them to decide on who forms the government. By live-streaming political campaigns and different manifestos, the youth have access to the information they need on the various political aspirants which is crucial for making the right decision at the ballot box. Social media has also been an effective tool for pulling in the youthful masses. Politicians have been using their social media platforms to communicate their manifestos and Kenyans on Twitter (KOT), a known movement, has been fundamental in endorsing certain political campaigns and political movements through the use of trending hashtags. More often than not, one will often stumble upon a poll asking the audience to predict the next president.

In an interesting recent development, George Wajackoya popularly known as “Wajackoya the 5th” and the leader of the Roots Party, emerged as a presidential candidate aspirant who has garnered a lot of attention for his somewhat non-traditional stand. With his key message themed around the legalization of bhang, he has gained a lot of admiration from the youth. His ideologies are new, different and very popular online where they are widely shared and discussed in public forums. It seems to be a breath of fresh air compared to the other publicized agendas, manifestos and common political faces. Does his sudden popularity prove that the youth are willing to take a risk and change the political game?

Acknowledging the deciding power that the youth have regarding who gets into office, politicians have been keen to utilize communication strategies to reach out to the masses for support. In addition, politicians have been keen to ensure that their manifestos include projects specific to the youth

regarding employment, access to education, and better living conditions. This time round, there is hope that the youth will not get the short end of the stick, enough for them to seem willing enough to choose what is best for them. We have also had young political aspirants coming up and vying for seats showing that it’s time for a change; an era where the youth stand for the youth.

As we draw closer to the election date, it is clear that the youth have the ability to change the narrative of the Kenyan political scene in ways that even they are not fully aware of. The media has done its best to share key messages and inform the public about different angles in the political race. It is now up to the youth to do what they deem right and choose the right leaders and hopefully those that will steer Kenya forward in the much-needed direction.

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Bio

Annette Wachira is a PR and Development Communication professional with vast experience in developing communication and PR strategies in local and international non—governmental organizations She is an avid writer and a creative with a passion for digital media and storytelling. Annette’s key interests include health communication and youth programming.

Elections and the power of technology

By Kerry Sheehan

Election campaigns can be a high-risk activity for PR Professionals; Technology Powers More Elections as Data Becomes the Holy Grail

Election campaigning is a risky business. Micro-targeting, data collection, and other tactics for winning election votes have come a long way in the past decade.

Campaigns and elections have always been about data. It's a business of metrics. If a campaign is lucky, it will find its way through the noise of polling, voter attributes, demographics, turnout, impressions, and ad buys to connect with voters in a way that moves or inspires them to vote for your campaign.

In short, campaigns that collect and use the numbers best win.

Traditional polling is giving way to artificial intelligence-powered predictive modelling; massive data exchanges allow campaigns and other groups to coordinate their efforts.

There is microtargeting. Campaigns seek to arm themselves with comprehensive views of each potential voter and are using algorithms to segment and target voters more specifically and strategically.

Over the last few years, campaigns have been steadily adding to the vast amount of personal information they keep on voters. That's partly as a result of a practice called acquisition advertising, in which campaigns



run direct response ads that seek to get either contact information or opinions straight from a person. Campaign officials, historically, tend to dislike disclosing exactly how much data they keep but most voter files probably have somewhere between 500 and 2,500 data points per person. (A voter file is an integral data set that consolidates area-level voter registration information. Each advert, phone call, email, and click made increases that number).

Data exchanges allow campaigns to share data, making outreach and messaging more efficient and comprehensive.

The promise of data exchanges is to allow all aligned organisations share data and further enables

2015

The permanent voter's card and smart card reader were introduced in the general elections

them to save money by not engaging with voters who aren't interested in your campaign and who are unlikely to turn to your corner. Then there is personal targeting. The strategy behind personal targeting comes from computer models that can slice the electorate into highly specific groups. Messaging is honed using extensive A/B testing.

Social platforms vary in the kind of microtargeting they allow. Facebook lets campaigns target small groups and individuals. Through its 'custom audience' feature, campaigns can upload a spreadsheet of users' profiles and deploy their messages with surgical precision. They can also leverage a tool called 'Look Alike' that uses that custom list to find profiles likely to respond in similar ways. Other platforms are more restrictive. Google banned political microtargeting early this year, while Twitter has also banned political ads from campaigns, though it allows ads from politically aligned advocacy groups.

Artificial intelligence during election campaigns

More and more, political movements are turning to machine learning and AI to predict how voters will behave. Instead of relying on intermittent benchmarking of the populace, models are now run using continuously updated data sets.

The most common technique campaigns use is called scoring, where a group of voters are assigned a number from 1 to 100 based on how likely they are to do something or hold a certain opinion. Campaigns use those likelihoods to inform their strategy either by

attempting to persuade undecided voters or by leveraging strongly-held opinions for money or mobilization.

The AI models aren't perfect and have predicted wrongly on a number of occasions as was the case during the Hilary Clinton 2016 election campaign in the UK. Although models have an easier time overcoming some of the problems with polling, the more data the models ingest, the more accurate they are.

As collective messaging fades in importance, it becomes harder to police the myriad of tailored messages political groups are churning out and putting in front of voters. Personalised messaging means that each person's view of a campaign differs, because each is taking in a different information stream.

The technologies being employed at pace now are enabling a reality in which campaigns can manufacture support in the public, fundamentally altering how we form opinions and, ultimately, vote.

Tech in elections is nothing new

However, digital platforms, huge data collection, misinformation

and disinformation spread on social media channels during political election campaigns is nothing new. Many of the newer technologies we are seeing used during election campaigning and voting, around the world, are modernised, digital methods of political behaviours that have been previously used to gain strategic advantage over one another.

However, increasingly sophisticated software can create new ways for bad actors to generate and spread convincing disinformation and misinformation, through artificial intelligence-led deep fakes, bots, mass data scraping and targeting, potentially on massive scales and disproportionality hurting marginalised communities. That said, deep fakes, where a video of a person in which their face or body has been digitally altered so that they appear to be someone else, typically used maliciously or to spread false information haven't been used in elections on a wide scale - yet.

In brief, the introduction of information and communications into election campaigning, continues to generate both interest and concern among voters, and PR practitioners working in the political space, across the globe.

Importance of ethical PR

Whilst the newer election technologies offer new possibilities for the electoral process, especially for voting operations, anyone working in political PR, advising, and deploying a candidate, or party, campaign, should understand there may be unforeseen risks involved.



Be ethical in everything you do

Careful consideration also needs to be given to the risks of inappropriate or untimely introduction of technology, especially if it has the potential to compromise transparency, local ownership, or sustainability of the election campaign process. PR Professionals working in the political space need to be aware of the process of implementing specific technologies for election campaigning, and newer ones which will inevitably come along in the horizon. There are a few considerations to consider, some common to any implementation of technologies while others are more specific to the electoral process:

Data is the holy grail for campaigns

Political PR Professionals must beware of practices which are deemed unethical during election campaigning, particularly regarding data scraping for voter profiling and targeting.

Cambridge Analytica, the UK political consulting firm that did work for the Trump campaign and harvested raw data from up to 87 million Facebook profiles, was shut down when its 'unethical data and voter targeting practices' came to light.

Cambridge Analytica, a data analysis, and strategic communications company got its data from a Facebook app that was a quiz. It not only collected data from the 270,000 people who took the quiz, but it exposed a loophole in the Facebook API that allowed it to collect data from Facebook friends of the quiz takers as well. Facebook prohibited the selling of data collected with this method, but Cambridge Analytica sold the data. Cambridge Analytica then approached PR firms around the world for crisis support, which many declined due to ethical and reputational reasons.

It's no secret that analytics make any communications professional's world go 'round'. Public relations and other communication professionals use demographics and psychographics to create messaging that in turn reaches intended publics. We look at click-through rates, write for Search Engine Optimisation and pay attention to citizen and consumer trends.

However, there is an extreme difference between conducting honest, ethical research, such as an up-front survey about the product your company is selling, and masquerading as, say, a personality quiz to collect user information for potential political purposes or for it to be sold for political purposes. No ethical PR practitioner or organisation would deny the importance of ethics, but at the industry level, enforcement often relies on self-regulation and that's even more important during election campaigning, as 'legitimate persuasion' is the But whether it is

data mining, or the simple fact that what is labelled basis of practice, PR Professionals must start to think more carefully about the consequences of unquestioningly accepting the new programmes and tools being sold in and used in election campaigns, including newer technologies such as AI and, importantly, the data used for the programmes and tools. For PRs working in the political campaigning space before, during and after elections, it's simple: Be ethical in everything you do, always know your ethical data sources and how technologies you may use are built and deployed.

Technologies Used in Election Voting

Most electoral management bodies around the world use the newer technologies with the aim of improving the electoral processes. Technologies being used include basic office automation tools for word and spreadsheets to more sophisticated data processing tools, such as database management systems, optical scanning, and geographic information systems. Technology is also used to compile voter lists, draw electoral boundaries, manage and train staff, print ballots, conduct voter education campaigns, digital mapping, record cast votes, count and consolidate vote results and to publish election results.

An important application of technology to elections is e-voting which is the use of electronic technology in the casting or counting of votes. E-voting has many uses, including increased participation among voters,



and those out of country, and making elections more inclusive for people with disabilities which may prevent them from attending polling stations or make it difficult to do so. Some countries, especially in Europe, began piloting e-voting in some form over a decade ago, and there is ongoing discussion in some countries on the possibilities of voting via mobile phones. The logistics of modern large-scale elections can be a considerable challenge for countries without access to technology. The appropriate application of technology to elections can increase administrative efficiency, reduce long-term costs, and enhance political transparency. For example, in the US, it would take months to manually count election votes without the aid of technology.

Africa and Election Voter Tech

In African countries, nearly all recent general elections have used various kinds of digital technology. In a remarkable extension of technological leapfrogging, Somaliland became the first country in the world to use iris

recognition in a presidential election. This means that a breakaway republic seeking international recognition will have the world's most sophisticated voting register.

Somaliland's shift to such advanced voting technology emerged from a lack of trust because of problems faced during with the 2008 elections. For instance, names were duplicated in the voter register because of pressure from local elders. These fraudulent activities and other logistical issues threatened to undermine Somaliland's good standing in the international community.

Others, like Kenya, have also turned to technology to try and deal with their election challenges. These include biometric voter registration, smart card readers, voters' cards, optical mark recognition, direct electronic recording, and electronic result transmission. The principal reason for using them is to contain electoral fraud. It also promotes the credibility of elections. This is important and for a country

that developed the now world-famous mobile money transfer system, M-Pesa.

Nigeria started using digital technology in the electoral process in 2011. The Independent National Electoral Commission introduced the automated fingerprint identification system to stop voters registering more than once.

The permanent voter's card and smart card reader were introduced in the 2015 general elections. At the polling station, a voter's identity is verified by matching his or her biometrics to the voter's card. The voter is then allowed to vote, and the votes are counted manually after the voting ends.

The lack of trust in the electoral process remains a key source of political tension and violence. Being able to hold free, fair, and credible elections therefore, is critical in democratic transitions.

Kerry Sheehan, Chart. PR; Head of Service Development and Innovation, UK Civil Service

Kila place kila time

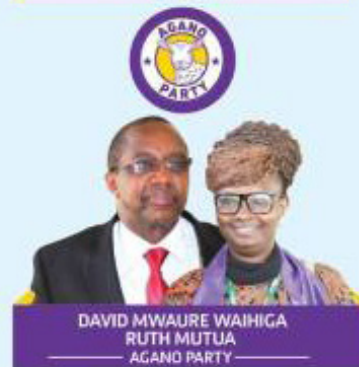
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Branding in politics: A sneak preview of Kenya's 2022 presidential campaign

By Agneta Alubala



Can politics be devoid of branding?

The answer is a definite NO

Essentially, politics is a game of branding. It is the nexus of all presidential races. Annexed to all other aspects within the political landscape, it is the bloodline that helps politicians communicate their mandates and build consistent messaging.

A well-crafted brand strategy that contains a strong logo, a slogan that resonates with the audience, imagery that appeals and stays top of mind and correct choice of a social media platform are crucial in helping candidates build their visual brand.

Currently, politicians have become more intentional than ever in when it comes to creating more interesting brand strategies that comprehensively communicate their brand and help mobilize voters in aligning to their agenda.

Here is a sneak preview of four political brands in Kenya's 2022 presidential campaigns and how they are utilizing branding in their politics:

George Wajackoyah: Roots Party

Wajackoyah’s slogan and key marketing taglines frame his brand as a simple and easy going person. His running mate, portrayed as a liberal youthful learned female, adds to his brand the touch of femininity and superiority. The Roots party theme containing red and white colors bring warmth to the brand. Instead of simply using his image on the brand materials, he chooses to use cartoon-inspired branding as a differentiator which is a powerful attention-grabbing tool in advertising that makes a brand memorable, attractive, funny, and often derives specific emotions and feelings-in this case epitome of freedom.

His messaging further communicates notions of freedom and liberalism through his slogan of “tingiza mti” or ‘...shake a tree’. His message is a persistent call for change from the way things have traditionally been done which resonates well with his target voter audience. Wajackoyah has found a niche of voters whose voices are underrepresented in Kenyan politics, and he is quickly building a brand that speaks directly to their frustrations and needs-quite literally speaking.



David Mwaure: Agano party

The ultimate liberator from an economy plagued by looting; his symbol, a lamb, denotes purity. He utilizes the color purple perhaps to signify wisdom and the wealth Kenyans anticipate if he becomes the president. His messaging revolves around the theme of “change” which directly touches on what Kenyans are yearning for. His choice of running mate; a young female, resonates with his key message of change and inclusion regardless of age or gender.



William Ruto: United Democratic Alliance

The hustler narrative aims to create a brand that resonates with the common ‘mwananchi’ who have to be on the grind on a daily basis to put food on the table, regardless of the type of work. Ruto’s logo with a symbol of a wheelbarrow denotes the hard work Kenyans put in to improve their lives. His slogan of “Kazi ni Kazi” is complemented by the wheelbarrow with the affirmation that he appreciates all work put in by Kenyans.

His consistent messaging of a ‘Bottom-Up’ economy and an advocate of the ‘Hustler Nation’ makes him popular to a majority of voters that feel left out by the ‘dynasty’ regimes. The choice of the brand colors yellow and green perhaps denote optimism and youthfulness with a symbolism that represents the anticipated growth in the economy.

His brand comes out as consistent both through symbolism and messaging across all brand channels hence appealing to a diverse audience. It is even alleged that pre-primary going children equate a wheelbarrow to UDA - call it the power of branding!



Raila Odinga: Azimio la Umoja

Popularly known as ‘Baba’, Raila has managed to craft his brand over the years as the ultimate savior. His key messaging ‘Inawezekana’ communicating an assurance of incoming possibilities. The real masterpiece of his branding though is his consistent messaging with the theme of ‘Azimio la Umoja’- a resolution for unity, something he has consistently been known to vouch for in previous campaigns. The design of his slogan and how it blends in with his key

message is absolutely on-brand (Azimio la Umoja-Inawezekana). His choice of running mate; a no-nonsense, female with a track record of fighting for injustice, culminates his brand as the redeemer. Together they craft a brand that is akin to “parents” through their “Mama Na Baba” dubbed campaign depicting their keenness to taking care of their children (the nation) and ensuring that they live in harmony and achieve their desires.



As per the examples given above, it is apparent that branding in politics is imperative to shaping public opinion. Right from the choice of brand color, text, choice of key words and phrases, the kind of imagery used, the people involved, and the tone of voice largely contributes to the ultimate image that is the bridge between politicians and their intended audience.

During this electioneering period, it's important that we pay attention to the deeper meaning of candidates branding so that we understand the agendas candidates are leveraging on to appeal

to the voters. From billboards, social media posts, to public barazas, we need to be keen and dissect every form of communication given to us up until Election Day. In addition to appreciating the role of communication in political branding, understanding the goal of public campaigns could help us change the dynamics of influence by allowing us to make informed decisions before we make decisions that affect our nation.

Agneta Alubala is a Marketing Communications and International Development Specialist

The role of communicators in electioneering campaign messaging

By Mercy Kabangi

The 2022 general elections were the eighth election held in the country since Kenya reinstated multipartyism in 1992 as a result of a wave of political transformation in Africa.

As expected, it resulted in one of the most important and hotly disputed events in the region. Politicians staked their careers on a winner-takes-all proposition, the economy bore the brunt of the political climate, and voters chanced their entire future on the victor.

With our politics often blamed as lacking in ideology, sparse on issues, deep-rooted in a tribal and ethnic legacy and young democracy, the campaigning process and the quest to persuade voters to vote is a lesson in political communication.

The American polls, maybe the most romanticized political event in history, have always caught our interest for their geopolitical perspective and the depth of their political discourse.

Finding the correct messaging to appeal to a base is the first lesson in the art of campaigning and voter persuasion. This entails measuring one's audience and determining what will appeal to them. Relatedly, political campaign messages have a stronger

emotional impact when they are timely, get into voters' psyches, and speak to their basic needs and values. Their financial stability, access to healthcare, quality of life, and cost of education are just a few of these values and demands.

Barack Obama, the 44th president of the United States, waged two of the most well-known political campaigns. His first campaign's slogan was "Hope and Change," while his 2012 re-election campaign's slogan was "Forward." In his first run for the presidency, he urged his supporters to take charge of their own lives and help end the moral and political crises that had gripped the American society. He urged them to return to the fundamental principles of equality, community, interdependence, and dignity. His "Audacity of Hope" narrative, along with his nomination for the most powerful position in the world, sparked an active movement, especially among young people, and heightened the sense of possibilities in America.

His re-election campaign's narrative was a laudatory look back at his significant policy successes and economy recovery. At a time when the American economy had entered a growth recession, it inspired his re-election.



We have seen three recurrent campaign narratives in Kenya. One aims to address enduring issues like political exclusion, polarizing elections, insecurity, corruption, and restoring the economy. Another one makes the commitment to provide an “inclusive employment-creating economic mode” in order to change the economy for those at the base of the pyramid. The third one is a bold direction offering an alternative approach to managing the economy, including commercializing marijuana, snake farming, suspending the constitution, and a four-day work week.

But will a voter be convinced by that alone? No. Voters make decisions based on their perceptions and interests, which the electoral process may further appeal to. In order to convince the target audience that the candidates want to address their problems, the campaign process must carefully enliven the messaging to that demographic.

The channel-to-audience approach is the second most important aspect. Even if a campaign’s messaging is excellent, how it is delivered is fundamental. The choice of medium is crucial here. This could be accomplished through using voter communication tools such as traditional media, digital media, out-of-home, rallies, debates, speeches, mail and SMS that are addressed to the voter.

These channels must comply to a unified message that conveys the candidate’s viewpoints to the electorate. In Kenya, traditional campaign rhetoric that appears on outlets that certain audience

segments trust, such as rallies, print media, radio, and posters, is more effective with older, more mature voters. Special interest groups, such as community-based organizations, unions, or religious organizations, react to their fraternal groupings. The emerging Kenyan millennial demographic notices messaging posted on social media sites, much as how Obama found a home in digital communications to appeal to young adults.

One important process that could help refine the efficacy of the messaging in the early stages of the campaign trail is message testing. This is achievable through qualitative and quantitative testing. Quantitative tests through opinion polls could establish the hard data on how particular messages are faring.

Among supporters, the campaign team can conduct political phone surveys, to understand supporter behavior around specific issues. Another way to do it is by sending out peer-to-peer text messages with quick polls to supporters. Qualitative testing could be in the simple and direct form through the judgement of a crowd reaction at a rally when a message or issue is introduced or debated. Further, an exit survey on campaign supporters to establish specific questions about the messaging.

Ultimately, communicators have a huge role to play in addressing hot-button social issues bedeviling Kenya through their involvement in political communications.

The author is a Communications Strategy and Brand Management leader.

Finding the correct messaging to appeal to a base is the first lesson in the art of campaigning and voter persuasion.

Youths of Kenya unite! Your right to vote is a sacrosanct duty

By Gregory Ngahu



One of the greatest tragedies of our times is that young people, who ought to be more interested in the politics of the day, seem not to believe that their future is in their own hands. Recently, a voter registration campaign was received reluctantly by the very youth who were the main target of the drive. The indifferent apathy and the load of excuses is a cause for concern, especially at a time like this when we must not allow the concept that power is with the people to become a cliché.

I believe that it is our duty as leaders, and particularly professionals in the business of persuasion, to package politics positively for the youth. Will they listen, you wonder. The question that we need to answer is, what will make young people pay attention?

In creative writing, one of the golden rules often given is “show, don’t tell”, a writing technique in

which story and character are related through sensory details and action to convey emotions. The challenge that I often pose to leaders is that they should tell more stories. The problem with such advice, as Nick Owen explains in his book, *The Magic of Metaphor*, is that, the story idea is like the idea of music. We’ve heard tunes all our lives, Nick Owen says, and we can sing and dance along. So, we think that we understand music, until we try to compose it and what comes from the piano scares the cat.

We must package the story for the youth to believe in the power of uniting to elect better leaders. Decisions that are currently being made will have significant consequences for them now and in future.

Recently, a young girl challenged me to convince her to register as a voter. She claimed that her vote won’t count because people rig

elections. I told her that her right to vote is sacred. It’s not just a civic duty, it is a moral duty too. I narrated to her how the right of all adult citizens to vote or universal suffrage, was fought for through sweat, blood and tears. Did she know for instance, that women were denied the right to vote for centuries? She had no idea. It wasn’t until 1920s that women were allowed to vote, even in “progressive” nations like the United Kingdom and the USA. How can she bypass such a great privilege that generations who came before her were prepared to die for? IEBC should consider packaging its voter information in tidbits like this to first-time voters. Their voice needs to be heard in national discourse.



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