

# Evaluating the Impact of Social Media Metrics on Organizational Decision-Making: A Case Study of PELUM Uganda

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## ABSTRACT

Social media metrics have become an essential tool for organizations worldwide, enabling them to assess stakeholder engagement, monitor public sentiment, and refine strategies. As a nonprofit organization focused on promoting agroecology among smallholders farming communities in Uganda, Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Uganda utilizes social media to engage with local farming communities, international partners including her donors, and stakeholders. A qualitative design was adopted to collect data from Six key staff who were selected through purposive sampling until data reached saturation. Through a case study approach, this paper examines how social media analytics influence PELUM Uganda's decision-making in areas such as campaign planning, resource allocation, and stakeholder communication. The findings reveal that while social media metrics provide valuable insights, challenges related to data integration and the alignment of social media with broader organizational goals persist.

**Keywords:** Social Media Metrics, Organizational Decision-Making, Nonprofit, PELUM Uganda, Agroecology, Campaign Planning, Stakeholder engagement.

## INTRODUCTION

In the age of digital communication, social media platforms have become crucial channels for organizations to engage with stakeholders, disseminate information, and measure the effectiveness of their programs. Various studies including that of Kohavi et al., 2002; Bhimani and Willcocks, 2014; and He et al., 2017 indicate that the use of social media data in the managerial decision-making process has transformed the way organizations conduct business. They argue that the vast volume of data and information generated from social media provides the opportunity for faster and more responsive decisions.

According to Kanter (2009), a social media and nonprofit blogger, asserts that social media has transformed the nonprofit world, offering a valuable way to engage audiences and promote an organization's cause. Renshaw & Krishnaswamy (2009) refer to non-profit organizations as knowledge intensive units involved in creating social value for the society. For nonprofit organizations like Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Uganda, social media offers an opportunity to amplify her message, raise awareness about sustainable agricultural practices (specifically Organic Agriculture and Agroecology), and build a community of practice (CoP). With increasing reliance on social media, the importance of understanding how social media metrics influence organizational decision-making has grown significantly.

A study by Macduff (2012) revealed that nonprofits used social media mostly for marketing, fundraising, program delivery, and market research. She adds that social media use by nonprofits is widespread and legitimate, but should be used only to uphold existing campaigns or programs; it must support but not replace physical operations to be effective in reaching concrete goals. This is true for PELUM Uganda, where programming and activity implementation especially with farming communities is supported by social media use in order to disseminate timely information to a wider community.

Social media metrics, including engagement rates, content interactions, page likes, follower counts, comments, shares, and sentiment analysis, provide PELUM Uganda with data that guides her decisions in real time but also to better plan her programs. However, despite their widespread use, the specific impact of these metrics on

decision-making within nonprofit organizations remains under-researched. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the role of social media metrics in shaping organizational decisions at PELUM Uganda.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Calande (2021) in her article on 'When and How to Use Social Media in Research' defines social media as websites or applications that focus on communication and shared, community-generated content. Similarly, Wellman (2001) looks at social media as one that involves social relations amongst people who have some type of relationship or affiliation. In both definitions it can be seen that there's an element of human interaction. Social media does not only provide information; it also provides a forum for individuals to interact with each other (Wasike, 2023).

Social media is used by many businesses to market their goods and services as well as to interact with current and potential clients. A lot of consumers post about their experiences using a product or service on social media. Therefore, companies must monitor social media information related to their goods and services. Big data analysis and the measurement of specific critical metrics are essential for organizations. When assessing social media analytics, many organizations often use the ideas of traditional metrics.

Social media metrics can be divided into two broad categories: *vanity metrics* (such as likes, shares, and followers) and *engagement metrics* (such as comments, clicks, and sentiment analysis). While vanity metrics may give an indication of reach, engagement metrics provide deeper insights into user behavior and feedback (Chaffey, 2020). In the context of nonprofits, social media is increasingly used to build relationships with supporters, promote campaigns, and engage in advocacy (Harris, 2019).

Several studies have highlighted the growing importance of social media metrics in nonprofit decision-making. For instance, organizations that leverage social media data to assess public sentiment and track campaign effectiveness tend to make more informed decisions (Acharjee & Raj, 2017). Additionally, metrics such as user comments, shares, and overall engagement are used to gauge the success of specific programs, assess public response to issues, and refine strategies (Gupta & Sahu, 2020). However, some studies emphasize that while social media data offers valuable insights, it must be integrated with traditional organizational data for more comprehensive decision-making (DeLisi & Gocławska, 2018).

PELUM Uganda, a membership-based nonprofit organization, uses social media to advocate for sustainable land use and agricultural practices, especially among rural communities. The organization actively engages on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube to inform and interact with its stakeholders. However, the extent to which social media metrics influence its decision-making process remains unclear.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK(S) ADOPTED FOR THIS STUDY

### Social Identity Theory

The current study is supported by the Social Identity theory which suggests that an individual's group affiliations contribute to their overall identity. The Social Identity theory refers to a group as a collection of individuals who perceive themselves to be members of the same social category, have some emotional connection to this self-definition of themselves, and attain a certain level of social agreement over how their group and its membership are viewed (Tajfel et al., 1979, p.40). According to Turner et al., (1994) social identity theory encompasses self-categories that define the individual in terms of his or her shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories. Hogg & Abrams, (1988) posits that individuals form definitions of themselves based on the characteristics of the groups they follow.

PELUM Uganda, a member-based not-for-profit organization works through her members to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and the sustainability of rural communities across 122 districts in Uganda, through fostering of ecological land use management. These actors come together in small groups of at least 15 people who then agree to defined farming practices, all having the same interest. Information dissemination and interactive platforms are created for easy sharing of knowledge relating to agroecology. This means that this theory speaks to how PELUM Uganda operates to serve the different social groups.

## Social Presence theory

Short et al. (1976) defined the Social Presence Theory as the degree to which the other person in the encounter is salient and the resulting prominence of the interpersonal interactions. A more contemporary interpretation of the theory was later developed by Gunawardena (1995), who defines it as the extent to which a person is regarded as a real person in mediated communication. Lowenthal (2010) asserts that definitions of social presence typically fall on a continuum, with an emphasis on the emotional and interpersonal connections between communicators at one end and whether or not someone is seen as "present," "there," or "real" at the other.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a case study approach to evaluate the impact of social media metrics on decision-making at PELUM Uganda. The case study was conducted through interviews and purposively sampling 6 key personnel at PELUM Uganda directly involved in updating/using social media platforms, including the two (2) communications officers who also double as social media managers, (2) program officers for Agroecological Markets and Business Development; and (1) Participatory Plant breeder and (1) Advocacy Officer. In addition, relevant organizational reports such as PELUM Uganda quarterly social media analytics data for a period of one year i.e. 2024 was analyzed.

The selected of respondents is supported by Creswell & Creswell, 2018 who argue that in a qualitative study, a smaller number can be adopted to provide in-depth information about the concept being explored.

The research focuses on how social media metrics are used to inform decisions related to campaign planning, resource allocation, and stakeholder communication. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and trends in the way social media metrics influence organizational decisions.

### Case Study: Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Uganda

Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Uganda is part of the PELUM Association, a regional network of over 320 Civil Society Organizations in 14 countries in East, Central, and Southern Africa working in the area of participatory ecological land use management. The Association works to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and the sustainability of farming communities, by fostering ecological land use management. Country chapters include; Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Botswana, South Africa, Eswatini, Ethiopia, and DRC Congo.

PELUM Uganda was constituted in 1995, as a network of likeminded Civil Social Organizations working to improve the livelihoods of Smallholder farmers and the sustainability of rural communities through fostering ecological land use management.

The network has since grown in number and influence to currently 75-member organizations operating in 122 districts in Uganda reaching approximately three million farmers (3,000,000, 60% of whom are women) smallholder farmers.

PELUM Uganda uses social media as a tool for policy influencing and advocacy, agroecological marketing, Agroecology and Sustainable Natural Resource Management; and community engagement. Its social media strategy involves disseminating information on sustainable agricultural practices, sharing success stories, and fostering dialogue among Agroecological Actors', policy makers and other key stakeholders.

Social media metrics play a central role in evaluating the effectiveness of PELUM Uganda's online campaigns. The organization tracks metrics such as reach, engagement, and sentiment to measure public response to its posts. For example, posts related to new farming techniques or policy advocacy are monitored to assess how they are received by followers. High engagement rates, such as shares and comments, are seen as indicators of successful campaigns.

However, PELUM Uganda also faces challenges in using social media metrics for decision-making. The organization has limited capacity to analyze large volumes of social media data due to resource constraints, and its social media metrics are not always integrated with other organizational data, such as program outcomes or

financial reports. This disconnect often limits the ability of social media data to influence broader strategic decisions, such as long-term program planning or resource allocation.

## Discussion of Findings

As highlighted in the title, the main aim of this study was to evaluate the Impact of Social Media Metrics on Organizational Decision-Making using PELUM Uganda as a case study.

### Section 1: Background information of the respondents.

This section of the tool required respondents to indicate their role at PELUM Uganda, experience with social media in the organization but also their contribution in growing numbers (metrics) of the various social media platforms of the organization.

Study findings indicate that the 66.7% of the respondents i.e. Programme Officers for Knowledge Hub and Communications, Agroecological Markets and Business Development, Advocacy, the project Communication Officer for Knowledge Center for Organic Agriculture and Agroecology in Africa project under the Knowledge hub in Eastern Africa (KCOA-KHEA) had interacted with PELUM Uganda's social media platforms for the past four (4) years actively contributing to the growth of her metrics. The rest of the respondents (33.3%) i.e. the Agroecological Markets & Business Development Program Assistant and the Participatory Plant Breeding Officer had interacted with the platform for 2years, and four (4) months respectively.

At least all respondents indicated that they use social media as a means of communication to their various stakeholders. They all indicated that some of their roles is to create content, coordinating with stakeholders and partners, and ensuring that key messages are effectively shared through various social media channels including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube and Website. The Participatory Plant Breeding Officer indicated that she's heavily involved in managing social media platforms were she regularly post updates, engage with their specified audience, but also monitors the impact of their posts.

Similarly, the Programme Officer - Agroecological Markets & Business Development indicated that her role involves designing and implementing activities, and engaging stakeholders. *"Social media plays a crucial role in amplifying our work and I contribute to social media by providing content on field activities, sharing success stories, sharing PELUM Uganda posts and also posting on my LinkedIn page and tagging PELUM Uganda. My role involves engaging with various stakeholders, which includes using social media to amplify our activities, campaigns, and community outreach efforts".*

The Program Assistant - Agroecological Markets & Business Development indicated that his role involves building capacity of PELUM Uganda member Organizations in various aspects of marketing and Business, creating awareness, market linkages, Financial literacy and promotion of best practices and systems like the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS). He informed the study that he had been supporting and integrating social media engagements in various ways like building capacity of journalists in Agroecology entrepreneurship & reporting, sharing of current updates to improve mileage and inform about the ongoing initiatives within the PELUM Uganda. *"I have mainly supported the communications team in providing intervention updates, pictorials and briefs, success stories and this has been done for the last 2 years"* says the program assistant.

### Section 2: Social Media Strategy and Metrics

This section of the guide required respondents to describe PELUM Uganda's overall social media strategy and goals, the primary social media platforms the organization uses to engage its stakeholders, social media metrics tracked, and how they define success when it comes to social media activities and campaigns.

#### Social Media Strategy and goals

According to the Communications Project Officer (KCOA-KHEA), the social media strategy focuses on raising awareness about the various projects within PELUM Uganda including KCOA-KHEA project, engaging with stakeholders and partners, and advocating for sustainable agriculture and environmental practices. The strategy is meant to create publicity for the various events (e.g. National Agroecology Actor's Symposium,

Agroecological Market System's Expo, Annual Indigenous and Traditional Food & Seed Fair, Land Awareness Week and Green Action Week), projects efforts, motivating the community/public to embrace Agroecology through social media.

The Participatory Plant Breeder indicates that PELUM Uganda's social media strategy focuses on raising awareness about sustainable agriculture, farmer empowerment, and environmental conservation. *"We aim to engage stakeholders and share success stories from our projects".*

The Program officer – Agroecological Markets & Business Development reported that PELUM Uganda's social media strategy aims at raising awareness about agroecology and PELUM Uganda towards changing lives of smallholder. Farmers; Strengthening engagement with stakeholders' farmers, policymakers, development partners, and the public; Promoting advocacy for policy shifts that favor agroecological practices, and showcasing best practices and success stories from PELUM Uganda's programs to inspire replication and scaling.

### **Social Media Platforms used**

When asked to highlight the primary social media platforms used by PELUM Uganda to engage its stakeholders, all participants indicated that Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube are the main platforms used to engage with her stakeholders. In particular, PELUM Uganda uses Facebook for sharing program updates, advocacy messages, and engaging discussions; Twitter is used for real-time engagement and updates on activities, campaigns etc.; and YouTube mainly for sharing training videos, documentaries, recorded events (live streaming major events and or campaign) and visual storytelling of agroecological practices.

*"We use these platforms for posting updates in form of posts, images and videos, live event coverage, sharing success stories, and engaging with a wider network of professionals. Instagram is more focused on visual content, where we share that highlights our fieldwork and impact and conduct awareness campaigns"* says the Project Communication officer – KCOA/KHEA. Study findings by Oloo & Luyombya (2023), Ondieki (2014), and Macduff (2012) agree with the current study findings were she found out that the most popular social media platforms used by nonprofits for marketing (92.5%), fundraising (45.9%), program delivery (34.5%) and market research (24.3%) were Facebook (87%), Twitter (59%), YouTube (49%), and LinkedIn (33.9%).

All respondents indicated that PELUM Uganda tracks several key metrics to measure the impact of her social media efforts. They said that likes, shares, comments, views, impressions, engagements, clicks, reach and follower growth give PELUM Uganda an indication of how well her content is resonating with the audience but also assess the visibility of her content and see how far it spreads. The Participatory Plant Breeder said that they occasionally review post-performance for specific campaigns.

When asked about how they define success when it comes to social media activities and campaigns, the Communications Officer – KCOA/KHEA Project said that success is defined by the level of engagement and the tangible impact of PELUM Uganda social media activities. She added that it's not just about the number of likes or shares but about how effectively they spark conversations, raise awareness, and drive action in her target communities. *"We want to see that our social media presence contributes to achieving the KCOA/KHEA project goals, such as increasing stakeholder participation, driving positive behavior changes, and attracting support for our initiatives".* Says the Communications officer – KCOA/KHEA project.

Similarly, according to the Programme officer-Agroecological Markets & Business Development success is measured by a growing interest from policymakers and donors in PELUM Uganda's content across the different platforms; more inquiries from partners and other actors wanting to collaborate with PELUM Uganda and the positive feedback on our shared resources and knowledge products.

### **Section 3: Use of Social Media Metrics in Decision-Making**

This part of the guide required respondents to share their insights on how social media metrics influence decisions related to campaign planning and content creation; giving an example of when social media metrics directly influenced a specific organizational decision or strategy; how PELUM Uganda uses social media metrics to communicate to with stakeholders, giving specific types of feedback or metrics.

Study findings indicated that social media metrics provide PELUM Uganda with valuable feedback on what types of content resonate with her audience, allowing PELUM Uganda to plan future campaigns more effectively. According to the Communications Officer – KCOA/KHEA Project metrics from PELUM Uganda's '*Know What You Eat*' Campaign, they used engagement data to identify the most shared and commented-on posts. This helped them adjust the focus of their content, emphasizing educational materials and success stories. *"We also learned the best times to post and which formats (e.g., images, videos, infographics) generated the most engagement, which influenced the content strategy for similar future campaigns"* says the programme Officer. This study's finding conforms to results by Neilson (2012) who found out that online reviews and advice are the second most trusted source of information on products (after family/friends recommendations) which in turn has an impact on the purchasing decisions.

Correspondingly, the Programme Officer – Advocacy indicated that Social media metrics was instrumental in shaping the "My Food is African" campaign in informing decisions regarding consumption of Uganda's traditional and indigenous cousins. Understanding and utilizing these metrics helps ensure that such campaigns are relevant and impactful in celebrating and promoting African cuisine.

The Programme Officers for Knowledge Hub and Communications indicated that metrics like engagement rates and feedback from previous campaigns guide the type of content they create. They said that posts with farmer stories often perform well, so they prioritize such content. Additionally, the Programme officer - Agroecology and Markets Business Development assert that metrics inform campaign planning by highlighting content that vibrates with our audience. "For instance, during the '*Know What You Eat*' campaign, high engagement with posts on indigenous foods led us to prioritize more content and farmer-led testimonies. It also leads to engagement of more partners

Similarly, the Participatory Plant Breeder highlighted how social media metrics on the just concluded campaign on Seed Fairs showed high engagement on visual content, which signaled an increase in posting short videos and infographics in future campaigns.

When respondents were asked to provide any specific example of a time when social media metrics directly influenced a specific organizational decision or strategy the indicated that during the '*Know What You Eat*' Awareness Campaign as well as the '*Meet Africa's Organic Farmers*' campaign during the Phase one of the KCOA-KHEA Project, PELUM Uganda noticed a significant uptake in shares and comments whenever they posted videos of local farmers sharing their experiences and successes on the project. Based on this, the respondents said that PELUM Uganda decided to incorporate more video content featuring personal stories into their activity implementation strategy. In a study by Urrego et al (2024), 41.1% of the respondents agreed to using social media results before making a purchase or comparing products. This indicates a positive opinion as regards social media's ability to facilitate products comparison before placing a purchase order.

According to the Programme Officer - Knowledge Hub and Communications they realized that majority of their campaigns are successful when they invest in sponsored posts for Meta (Facebook and Instagram) as they are interlinked and have a big reach. Therefore, during major events that involve the public and when they wish for their farmers' products to be bought, they set the location around the event which ensures the community is aware.

On the contrary, Programme Officer – Agroecological Markets and Business Development said that during the launch of the PESA Model Guide, social media engagement data showed that farmers were interested in practical applications of the guide. This led us to create additional posts breaking down the guide into actionable steps.

Respondents indicated that they use social media metrics to understand how their messages are being received by different stakeholder groups. For example, when they share updates on project progress, they monitor likes, shares, and comments from local communities, which helps them to gauge their engagement and understanding of a given project. The Programme officer – Agroecological Markets and Business Development said that when donors show interest in certain themes, they prepare detailed reports addressing those areas. She adds that equally, if farmers engage more in discussions on organic inputs, then they focus more on sharing training resources on the topic.

Social media provides real-time feedback from local communities and partners. For example, during campaigns, “*we often use comments and shares to gauge interest and inform our stakeholders*” says Programme Officer - Knowledge Hub and Communications

When asked whether there are specific types of feedback or metrics that are particularly useful for adjusting campaigns or organizational messaging, majority indicated that sentiment analysis and comments are especially useful for adjusting campaigns. “*By analyzing the tone of the feedback, we receive (positive, neutral, or negative), we can fine-tune our messaging to address concerns or amplify what resonates best with our audience. Shares are also a critical metric, as they indicate how much our audience believes in the value of the content, suggesting that we should continue promoting similar themes or topics*”.

#### **Section 4: Resource Allocation and Budgeting**

Section 4 of the interview guide required respondents to explain how social media metrics impact decisions about resource allocation, such as budgeting for social media campaigns giving specific examples/instances, but also indicate how social media metrics help decide how much funding or time to allocate to certain campaigns.

All respondents concur that social media metrics help them understand which platforms and types of content provide the best return on investment. She adds that If a particular campaign generates significant engagement and awareness, they (PELUM Uganda) may allocate more resources toward similar activities in the future. The Programme Officer – Agroecological Markets & Business Development says that if an initiative harvests strong engagement, they may allocate more resources for digital promotion. She adds that if engagement on a particular topic (e.g. Agroecology entrepreneurship) is low, then they might explore alternative content formats or outreach strategies. Similarly, the Participatory Plant Breeder argues that metrics help them prioritize campaigns that have high engagement potential. She adds that they allocate more resources to campaigns that showcase success stories.

According to the Officer - Knowledge Hub and Communications, social media metrics informs the amount of budget required as they learn from previous sponsorship and that livestreaming requires budgets for hiring a service provider but also the number of views informs whether there was value for money.

When asked to share an instance where social media data led to a shift in how resources are allocated or priorities adjusted, the Communications Officer – KCOA/KHEA said that during the ‘Know What You Eat’ campaign conducted on the KCOA-KHEA project, social media data revealed that posts about consuming healthy organic foods and not conventional foods were receiving more engagement than posts about policy advocacy. Based on this data, PELUM Uganda has deliberately shifted resource allocation to prioritize creating more educational content around consuming healthy organic foods across the 5 countries implementing the KCOA-KHEA Project.

On the other hand, the program officer –Agroecological Markets and Business Development said that after noticing that posts about youth agroecological entrepreneurship had high engagement, they decided to increase their budget and more resources towards targeted training sessions and initiatives.

When respondents were asked to explain how social media metrics help decide how much funding or time they allocate to certain campaigns or activities, they indicated that they use metrics like engagement rates and conversion rates to assess the success of their campaigns and decide where to allocate more funding or time. For instance, they indicated that if a specific post or ad performs exceptionally well in terms of engagement or clicks, they may allocate additional funds to boost that post for a broader reach.

Additionally, they said that if a campaign say on agroecology receives high interaction such as increased shares, comments and mentions, it indicates strong public interest and potential for greater influence. This data informs decisions on whether to invest more in boosting posts, creating additional content, or organizing related offline activities. They say that analytics like click-through rates and audience demographics guide resource allocation by ensuring funds and efforts are directed toward the most responsive and strategic target groups.

#### **Section 5: Challenges and Limitations**

Under this section, respondents were asked to share challenges they had faced when using social metrics for decision making at PELUM Uganda; indicate whether these metrics are always reliable indicators of success;

share any limitations to relying on social media data when making decisions; and how they balance social media insights with other traditional data sources.

According to the Communications Officer – KCOA/KHEA Project, the major challenge in using these metrics during decision making is the difficulty in distinguishing between different types of engagement. For instance, while a post may receive many likes or shares, it doesn't always indicate a deep understanding or a meaningful connection with the content. The other challenges highlighted by the respondents include limited digital literacy among rural stakeholders, balancing online engagement with offline grassroots mobilization, ensuring consistent engagement across all platforms, rural audiences may not engage due to limited internet access, some platforms require one to pay to access metrics e.g. Twitter, and lastly some staff may lack the skills to utilize the information (metrics) for future works.

The current findings agree with those of Urrego (2024), Shin (2024) in which he found out that social media types have varying impacts on the public's engagement in fundraising campaigns. He argues that such an index as "likes" on Facebook does not necessarily influence donations since clicking the like button might simply represent self-serving slacktivism.

When asked to indicate whether social media metrics are always reliable indicators of success, respondents had mixed responses on this as some said yes while others no or not always. Those who said yes argued that social media metrics are reliable indicators of success. High engagement rates and shares can show that people are interested in the content, and can be used as a measure to reflect that the campaign achieved its deeper objectives, such as changing attitudes or behaviors of the intended audience. On the other hand, those who said not always they indicated that while high engagement indicates interest, it does not always translate to action and that's why they complement social media insights with field reports and stakeholder consultations.

When asked to indicate whether there are any limitations relying on social media data for decision making all respondents indicated positively. Some said social media data and engagement can be driven by short-term trends, which may not align with their long-term goals. This makes it important to balance social media insights with traditional methods of gathering data.

Respondents were asked to explain how they balance social media insights with other traditional data sources (e.g., program outcomes, feedback from stakeholders) and this is what they had to say:

Respondents said that they make it a point to balance social media insights with direct feedback from the communities they work with, as well as data from their on-the-ground program activities. *"For example, while social media may show high engagement on a particular topic, we also gather feedback through surveys and community meetings. We integrate social media data with reports from program evaluations, policy impact assessments, and farmer feedback sessions to ensure comprehensive decision-making".*

## Section 6: Integration of Social Media Metrics with Organizational Goals

Respondents were asked to explain to what extent social media metrics were integrated with broader organizational goals and decision-making processes at PELUM Uganda; how they ensure social media data informs high-level strategic decisions, such as long-term program planning or partnerships; and the role social media metrics plays in future strategic planning for PELUM Uganda.

All respondents in their submission, highlighted that Social media metrics are well integrated into their decision-making processes, as they help them assess whether their communication efforts align with the organizational goals. The Communications Officer - KCOA/KHEA said if their goal is to raise awareness about climate change, then they use social media metrics to measure how well their content is contributing to this goal. *"We then adjust our strategy based on the insights we gather to better meet our objectives".* A study by Siti-Nabiha et al. (2021) entitled *"Social media usage in business decision-making: the case of Malaysian small hospitality organisations"* supports the findings of the current study were they found out that the management of both boutique hotels and the medium-sized hotel monitor the number of new followers on their official Facebook pages regularly as the number of followers is a strong indicator of interest and potential new customers.

According to the Programme Officer – Agroecological Markets and Business Development, metrics are used to refine advocacy strategies, adjust resource allocation, and shape future programs to align with stakeholder needs. Similarly, the Participatory Plant Breeder argue that social media metrics are integrated into their communication strategy but could be better aligned with long-term program goals.

On the contrary, the Advocacy officer indicated that social media metrics should be aligned with PELUM Uganda's overall objectives such as promoting Agroecology, enhancing community engagement, and advocating for policy changes. Regular tracking of engagement, reach, and community feedback can help gauge the effectiveness of outreach efforts in relation to PELUM Uganda's advocacy work.

In response to how they ensure that social media informs high-level decisions, respondents said that they regularly share social media insights and performance reports monthly and quarterly with the Project Manager - KCOA-KHEA and Country Coordinator of PELUM Uganda respectively to ensure that PELUM Uganda's digital presence is aligned with the overall organizational strategy. These insights are used during discussions about long-term program planning and partnerships to ensure that our communication efforts are contributing to the organization's broader goals and mission.

Additionally, the Programme Officer – Agroecological Markets and Business Development indicated that PELUM Uganda integrates social media data into strategic decision-making by analyzing engagement trends, audience demographics, and sentiment analysis to align digital outreach with organizational goals. She added that high-performing campaigns inform program priorities, helping to identify key areas for advocacy, training, and policy influence. For partnerships, social media insights highlight potential collaborators based on shared interests and engagement patterns, allowing the organization to build meaningful alliances. Additionally, periodic reviews of social media analytics are incorporated into planning meetings and donor reports to ensure data-driven decision-making supports long-term sustainability and impact.

In a nutshell, Social media metrics should play a larger role in future strategic planning, as they provide real-time feedback on how PELUM Uganda's initiatives are being perceived by the public and stakeholders. The Officer in-charge of Markets said that the metrics should also guide investment in capacity-building for digital storytelling, influencer partnerships, and targeted campaigns to strengthen agroecology advocacy.

## Section 7: Future Directions

In this section of the interview guide, respondents were asked to project and inform the study on whether they see PELUM Uganda increase its reliance on social media metrics; suggest steps that could be taken by PELUM Uganda to improve her use of social media metrics for decision-making; but also inform the study if there are any tools, resources or training that would help PELUM Uganda make better use of social media data.

To this effect, respondents said that investing in social media analytics tools like Hootsuite, or Google Analytics could provide more comprehensive data analysis and reporting. Additionally, training staff on the interpretation of data for making more informed decisions would greatly impact on the use of social media data. Respondents also added that training staff on videography and photography, digital storytelling and social media advertising would be an advantage and cost saving especially where staff have to document ongoing activities/events.

## DISCUSSION

The case study's conclusions highlight how important social media indicators are for PELUM Uganda's tactical choices, including stakeholder communication and campaign preparation. Based on the input it gets from social media users, the company can modify its tactics in real time. We are still in the early phases of incorporating social media data into more general organizational decision-making, though.

PELUM Uganda might profit from investing in more advanced analytics tools and enhancing the data analysis skills of her employees if social media indicators were to have a greater influence on organizational decision-making. Additionally, the organization would be able to make better judgments, especially in areas like program evaluation and budget allocation, by combining social media insights with conventional data sources like field assessment reports.

## CONCLUSION

Social media metrics are a valuable tool for decision-making, but in order to provide a whole picture, they should be combined with information from other sources, such as field impact assessments. The need for a more comprehensive strategy is highlighted by issues with data integration and the limited impact of social media indicators on more general strategic choices. PELUM Uganda may further use social media to advance her goal of encouraging sustainable land use and agricultural practices by improving its data analytics capabilities and combining social media insights with other organizational data.

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### Conflict Of Interest

The author declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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