



**Evaluating the Effectiveness of Digital Media Strategies in Supporting Public Relations
Performance: Evidence from Saudi Government Institutions**

Ashour Ibrahim Aljuhani¹

¹ North Liverpool College, London, United Kingdom

Received: July 20, 2026 / Accepted: July 27, 2026 / Published: August 1, 2026

Abstract

Digital media has become a central component of public relations practices within government institutions, enabling organizations to communicate directly with citizens, disseminate information rapidly, manage public perceptions, and strengthen institutional transparency. In Saudi Arabia, the expansion of digital government services and the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030 have encouraged public institutions to adopt social media platforms, digital content strategies, online engagement tools, and data-driven communication practices. This study evaluates the effectiveness of digital media strategies in supporting public relations performance within Saudi government institutions. It examines the influence of strategic digital content, audience engagement, platform management, digital crisis communication, and performance measurement on the overall effectiveness of governmental public relations. A quantitative research approach was adopted using a structured questionnaire distributed among public relations, media, communication, and digital content professionals working in selected Saudi government institutions. Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were employed to assess digital media practices and examine the relationships between digital media strategies and public relations performance. The findings indicate that government institutions implementing well-planned digital communication strategies achieve stronger audience engagement, faster information dissemination, improved institutional visibility, and greater responsiveness to citizens' needs. The results further demonstrate that interactive content, continuous platform monitoring, professional crisis communication, and the use of digital analytics contribute significantly to strengthening public trust and improving communication effectiveness. The study concludes that integrating digital media into institutional public relations strategies can enhance transparency, responsiveness, stakeholder relationships, and organizational reputation. It recommends developing comprehensive digital communication policies, investing in professional training, strengthening content governance, and expanding the use of analytics and artificial intelligence to support evidence-based communication decisions. These findings provide practical guidance for government communication leaders seeking to improve public relations performance and advance digital transformation within Saudi public institutions.

Keywords

Digital Media Strategies; Public Relations Performance; Government Communication; Saudi Government Institutions; Social Media; Audience Engagement; Digital Transformation; Institutional Reputation; Public Trust; Saudi Vision 2030.

Introduction

Digital media has transformed the nature of communication between government institutions and the public by creating direct, immediate, and interactive channels for exchanging information. Government communication is no longer limited to traditional media, official statements, press conferences, and printed publications. Instead, public institutions increasingly rely on websites, social media platforms, mobile applications, digital campaigns, online video content, and interactive communication tools to reach citizens and respond to their needs. This transformation has expanded the responsibilities of public relations departments and made digital communication a central component of institutional performance and public engagement (Dong et al., 2023).

Public relations within government institutions performs an essential role in communicating public policies, explaining government decisions, strengthening institutional reputation, and maintaining constructive relationships with citizens and other stakeholders. Effective government public relations also contribute to transparency, accountability, crisis management, and public confidence. However, the growing diversity of digital platforms and the rapid circulation of information have created new challenges for public relations professionals, including misinformation, negative public reactions, communication overload, changing audience expectations, and the need for immediate institutional responses. Consequently, government institutions require structured digital media strategies that align communication activities with institutional objectives and public expectations.

Digital media strategies refer to the systematic planning, production, distribution, monitoring, and evaluation of communication content across digital platforms. These strategies include identifying target audiences, selecting appropriate communication channels, developing relevant content, encouraging audience interaction, monitoring public sentiment, managing online crises, and measuring communication outcomes. A successful digital media strategy therefore extends beyond

publishing information and requires coordinated communication practices that create meaningful interaction between institutions and their stakeholders. Research indicates that government social media can support citizen participation and promote government initiatives when content, platforms, and engagement mechanisms are strategically managed (Yuan et al., 2023).

In Saudi Arabia, digital transformation has become a major national priority under Saudi Vision 2030. Government institutions have increasingly adopted digital technologies to improve public services, increase operational efficiency, enhance transparency, and strengthen communication with citizens. The National Transformation Program emphasizes government performance, digital service development, institutional excellence, and improved public-sector responsiveness. According to the [Saudi Vision 2030 National Transformation Program](#), digital transformation is an important mechanism for improving the quality and accessibility of government services and supporting an ambitious and effective government.

The widespread use of social media and digital communication platforms in Saudi Arabia has also influenced public expectations regarding government communication. Citizens increasingly expect government institutions to provide accurate information, respond rapidly to enquiries, explain policies clearly, and communicate during emergencies through accessible digital channels. Social media platforms allow government organizations to distribute information rapidly while receiving immediate feedback from citizens. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these platforms depends on the institution's ability to produce reliable content, maintain continuous interaction, understand audience behavior, and respond appropriately to changing public concerns. Previous research conducted in the Saudi context has demonstrated the importance of social media for public participation, information seeking, and crisis-related communication (Al-Saggaf & Simmons, 2015; Mohammed & Ferraris, 2021).

Digital media has also changed government communication from a predominantly one-way process into a more interactive relationship. Traditional public relations practices often focused on transmitting official information from institutions to audiences without providing extensive opportunities for dialogue. Digital platforms, however, enable citizens to comment, share information, ask questions, express opinions, and directly evaluate government initiatives. Such interaction can help public institutions identify citizen concerns, improve communication policies,

and strengthen stakeholder relationships. At the same time, simply maintaining accounts on multiple digital platforms does not guarantee effective communication. Institutions must ensure that their digital presence is supported by strategic planning, qualified personnel, consistent messaging, and measurable performance indicators (Medaglia & Zheng, 2017).

Digital media strategies are particularly important during crises and periods of public uncertainty. Government institutions are expected to distribute accurate information rapidly, correct misleading content, coordinate messages across platforms, and maintain public confidence. Weak or delayed communication may create confusion and damage institutional credibility, whereas timely and transparent digital communication can support public awareness and encourage appropriate behavior. Research examining the use of Instagram by public health ministries in Gulf Cooperation Council countries demonstrated the significant role of visual digital platforms in disseminating public health information during the COVID-19 pandemic (Elhersh et al., 2024). These findings illustrate the importance of integrating crisis communication into broader government digital media strategies.

The effectiveness of digital media strategies can be assessed through several indicators, including content quality, audience reach, engagement rates, response speed, message consistency, citizen satisfaction, institutional reputation, and public trust. Digital analytics tools enable public relations departments to monitor platform performance, identify audience preferences, measure campaign outcomes, and modify communication strategies based on evidence. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, automated sentiment analysis, social listening systems, and predictive analytics can further strengthen the ability of government institutions to understand public attitudes and improve communication decisions. However, technology alone cannot ensure successful public relations unless it is supported by professional competencies, ethical communication standards, clear governance policies, and institutional leadership.

Despite the rapid expansion of digital government communication in Saudi Arabia, differences may exist among government institutions in their ability to plan, implement, and evaluate digital media activities. Some institutions may use digital platforms strategically to create interaction and strengthen public relationships, while others may focus primarily on one-way information dissemination. Challenges may also arise from insufficient training, limited coordination between

public relations and information technology departments, inconsistent content policies, inadequate performance measurement, and limited use of digital analytics. These challenges make it necessary to evaluate whether current digital media strategies effectively contribute to public relations performance within Saudi government institutions.

Although existing studies have examined social media adoption, digital government services, citizen engagement, and online crisis communication, limited empirical research has comprehensively investigated how different dimensions of digital media strategy influence government public relations performance in Saudi Arabia. In particular, further research is needed to examine the combined effects of strategic content planning, audience engagement, platform management, crisis communication, and digital performance measurement. Addressing this research gap can provide a clearer understanding of the organizational practices required to convert digital media use into measurable public relations outcomes.

Therefore, this study evaluates the effectiveness of digital media strategies in supporting public relations performance within Saudi government institutions. It investigates existing digital media practices and assesses their influence on communication effectiveness, audience engagement, institutional responsiveness, public trust, and organizational reputation. The study is expected to provide practical recommendations for public relations managers and government communication leaders seeking to improve digital communication policies, strengthen professional capabilities, and support the broader objectives of Saudi Arabia's digital transformation.

Research Problem

Saudi government institutions increasingly use websites, social media platforms, mobile applications, and other digital channels to communicate with citizens. However, the existence of official digital platforms does not necessarily mean that these institutions apply effective digital media strategies. Differences may exist in content planning, audience engagement, response speed, crisis communication, and performance measurement.

Furthermore, indicators such as followers, views, and published posts are insufficient to determine whether digital media improves public relations performance. Effective evaluation should examine

its contribution to communication quality, citizen engagement, institutional responsiveness, public trust, and organizational reputation (Medaglia & Zheng, 2017; Wukich, 2022).

Although previous studies have examined social media use and public participation in Saudi Arabia, limited research has evaluated the overall influence of digital media strategies on public relations performance within Saudi government institutions (Al-Saggaf & Simmons, 2015; Mohammed & Ferraris, 2021). Therefore, this study addresses the following central problem:

To what extent do digital media strategies improve public relations performance within Saudi government institutions?

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of digital media strategies used by Saudi government institutions.
2. Examine the influence of digital media strategies on public relations performance, particularly communication effectiveness, audience engagement, and institutional reputation.
3. Identify the main challenges affecting the implementation of digital media strategies and propose recommendations for improving government public relations performance.

Research Questions

1. How effective are the digital media strategies used by Saudi government institutions?
2. To what extent do digital media strategies influence communication effectiveness, audience engagement, and institutional reputation?
3. What challenges affect the implementation of digital media strategies, and how can these strategies be improved to support government public relations performance?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it examines the growing role of digital media in improving communication between Saudi government institutions and the public. Academically, it contributes to the limited literature connecting digital media strategies with public relations performance in the Saudi governmental context.

Practically, the findings can help public relations and communication departments evaluate their digital practices, improve audience engagement, strengthen institutional responsiveness, and enhance public trust. The study can also support decision-makers in developing effective digital communication policies aligned with Saudi Arabia's ongoing digital transformation and Vision 2030 objectives.

Literature Review

Digital media has fundamentally changed public relations by expanding the range of communication channels available to institutions and enabling direct interaction with different audiences. Public relations departments no longer depend exclusively on newspapers, television, radio, and official press releases. They increasingly use websites, social media platforms, mobile applications, podcasts, digital campaigns, and audiovisual content to communicate institutional messages. This transformation has made speed, interaction, content quality, and performance measurement essential elements of contemporary public relations (Dong et al., 2023).

Within government institutions, public relations serves as a link between public organizations and citizens. Its responsibilities include explaining policies, promoting public services, communicating government initiatives, managing institutional reputation, and responding to public concerns. Digital media can strengthen these responsibilities by allowing institutions to deliver information rapidly and reach large and diverse audiences. However, successful digital communication requires clear objectives, coordinated messages, professional content production, and continuous monitoring of audience responses (Medaglia & Zheng, 2017).

Digital media strategy refers to the planned use of digital platforms and communication resources to achieve specific institutional objectives. It includes audience identification, platform selection, content planning, message design, publishing schedules, audience interaction, crisis response, and performance evaluation. A digital media strategy should therefore extend beyond posting

information on official accounts. It should connect digital communication activities with the institution's public relations objectives, identity, services, and relationship with citizens (Yuan et al., 2023).

Previous research indicates that government institutions often use social media primarily for one-way information dissemination. Although this approach can improve public access to official information, it does not fully benefit from the interactive features of digital platforms. Effective government communication should provide opportunities for citizens to ask questions, express opinions, submit feedback, and participate in discussions. Such interaction can help public institutions understand audience expectations and improve the clarity and responsiveness of their communication (Wukich, 2022).

Content quality is one of the most influential components of digital media effectiveness. Government content should be accurate, clear, timely, relevant, and appropriate for the needs of its intended audience. The use of photographs, videos, infographics, live broadcasts, and interactive materials can make complex government information more understandable and accessible. An empirical study of local government Facebook pages found that citizen engagement differed according to the type of content and media format used in posts, demonstrating that communication effectiveness depends on both the message and its presentation (Bonsón et al., 2015).

Audience engagement is another important indicator of digital public relations performance. It can include viewing, reacting to, commenting on, sharing, and responding to institutional content. Higher levels of engagement may indicate that digital messages are relevant and capable of encouraging public interaction. However, engagement should not be evaluated only through numerical indicators. Public relations departments must also examine the quality of conversations, citizen sentiment, response speed, and whether digital interaction contributes to public understanding and trust (Fissi et al., 2022).

Digital media is particularly important during crises because government institutions must provide accurate information within a limited period. Delayed or inconsistent messages can create uncertainty and allow misinformation to spread. Effective digital crisis communication requires

prepared response procedures, coordinated messaging, continuous monitoring, and communication that addresses public concerns. Chen et al. (2020) found that message characteristics and dialogic communication influence citizen engagement with government social media during crises. Similarly, Elhersh et al. (2024) demonstrated the importance of visual platforms in supporting public health communication and audience engagement across Gulf countries.

The evaluation of digital media performance has also become a major concern in public relations research. Basic measures such as follower numbers, post frequency, and total views provide limited evidence regarding the actual influence of communication. More meaningful evaluation includes reach, engagement, response time, sentiment, message comprehension, citizen satisfaction, institutional reputation, and public trust. Digital analytics can help institutions identify effective content, understand audience behavior, and adjust communication decisions based on measurable evidence.

In Saudi Arabia, digital media has become increasingly important due to the expansion of digital government and the widespread use of social networking platforms. Saudi government institutions maintain active digital communication channels to explain services, announce initiatives, provide guidance, and respond to public developments. The National Transformation Program also emphasizes improving government effectiveness, digital services, and institutional performance as part of Saudi Vision 2030. These developments have increased the strategic importance of government public relations and digital communication.

Research conducted in Saudi Arabia has demonstrated that social media plays an important role during public events and emergencies. Al-Saggaf and Simmons (2015) examined social media use during natural disasters and highlighted its role as an interactive communication space. Mohammed and Ferraris (2021) investigated participation on Twitter during the COVID-19 pandemic and identified several factors influencing users' willingness to engage. These studies confirm the importance of digital platforms within Saudi society but focus mainly on specific events or user behavior.

Despite the development of research on government social media, several gaps remain. Limited empirical attention has been given to the combined effect of strategic content planning, audience engagement, platform management, crisis communication, and digital analytics on overall public relations performance. There is also a need to examine whether digital media strategies improve institutional responsiveness, public trust, communication effectiveness, and government reputation within the Saudi context.

Accordingly, the present literature review examines the principal dimensions associated with digital media strategies and public relations performance. It covers digital media strategies in government institutions, public relations performance, digital content planning, audience engagement, digital crisis communication, performance analytics, previous empirical studies, and the research gap. These dimensions establish the theoretical foundation for evaluating digital media strategies within Saudi government institutions.

Digital Media Strategies in Government Institutions

Digital media strategies in government institutions represent organized approaches for planning, delivering, monitoring, and evaluating communication through digital platforms. These strategies connect digital communication activities with institutional goals such as improving public awareness, increasing access to services, strengthening transparency, and building constructive relationships with citizens. Therefore, an effective strategy requires more than publishing announcements; it requires a clear understanding of audiences, communication objectives, and expected outcomes (Yuan et al., 2023).

Government institutions use different digital channels, including official websites, social media platforms, mobile applications, email services, and digital service portals. Each platform has specific technical and communication characteristics. Websites are generally used for detailed and permanent information, while social media supports rapid updates and direct interaction. Selecting the appropriate platform should depend on the nature of the message, audience preferences, urgency, and required level of engagement (Medaglia & Zheng, 2017).

Strategic content planning is a major component of government digital communication. Institutions must determine what information should be published, when it should be delivered,

and how it should be presented. Government content should be accurate, accessible, timely, and consistent with institutional identity. Content calendars, approval procedures, communication guidelines, and coordination among departments can reduce contradictory messages and improve the reliability of official information.

Government institutions should also adapt their content to the characteristics of each platform. Publishing identical material across all channels may not achieve the desired communication results because audiences interact differently with text, images, videos, and live content. Research indicates that media format and content type influence citizen reactions and levels of engagement with government messages (Bonsón et al., 2015). Therefore, platform-specific communication can improve message visibility, understanding, and interaction.

Audience engagement is another essential element of digital media strategy. Digital platforms enable citizens to comment, submit enquiries, express concerns, and share government information. Institutions can use these interactions to identify public needs and evaluate perceptions of policies and services. However, government engagement must be supported by clear response procedures, qualified employees, and appropriate communication standards. Without timely responses, digital platforms may remain one-way channels that provide limited relationship-building value (Wukich, 2022).

Digital media strategies must also include crisis communication and reputation management. During emergencies, government institutions are expected to publish verified information rapidly, correct misinformation, and maintain message consistency. Institutions should develop prepared crisis protocols that specify communication responsibilities, approval procedures, platform use, and monitoring mechanisms. Effective digital crisis management can reduce public uncertainty and protect institutional credibility (Chen et al., 2020).

Performance evaluation is necessary to determine whether digital communication achieves its intended objectives. Government institutions can monitor reach, engagement, response time, audience sentiment, service enquiries, and public satisfaction. These indicators should be evaluated alongside broader public relations outcomes such as institutional reputation, trust,

transparency, and communication effectiveness. Data-based evaluation enables institutions to identify weaknesses and improve future digital campaigns.

The effectiveness of digital media strategies also depends on organizational readiness. Public relations departments require qualified personnel, suitable technology, leadership support, coordination with other departments, and clear governance policies. Employees must possess skills in content creation, platform management, audience analysis, crisis communication, and digital analytics. Continuous professional training is therefore essential for responding to technological developments and changing audience behavior.

Within Saudi government institutions, digital media strategies support the national transition toward more accessible and responsive government. Public organizations increasingly use digital channels to promote services, explain initiatives, and communicate with citizens. Aligning these activities with Saudi Vision 2030 requires government institutions to develop integrated strategies that emphasize communication quality, public engagement, measurable results, and continuous improvement.

Public Relations Performance in Government Institutions

Public relations performance refers to the extent to which communication activities achieve institutional objectives and create constructive relationships with key stakeholders. Within government institutions, public relations performance is associated with the ability to communicate accurate information, explain public policies, respond to citizen concerns, maintain institutional credibility, and support transparency. Unlike commercial public relations, government communication must prioritize public interest, accessibility, accountability, and equal access to information (Dong et al., 2023).

Effective government public relations contributes to citizens' understanding of institutional responsibilities, services, and decisions. When information is presented clearly and delivered through suitable channels, citizens are more capable of accessing government services and evaluating public initiatives. Communication effectiveness therefore depends not only on the quantity of information published but also on its relevance, accuracy, clarity, and usefulness.

Institutional responsiveness is an important dimension of public relations performance. Citizens expect government institutions to acknowledge their enquiries, provide appropriate answers, and respond to emerging public concerns. Digital platforms have increased these expectations by enabling immediate communication. Delayed or unclear responses may reduce citizen satisfaction, whereas timely and professional interaction can strengthen the relationship between institutions and their audiences (Wukich, 2022).

Audience engagement also provides evidence of public relations performance. Engagement occurs when citizens interact with government information through reactions, comments, sharing, enquiries, and participation in digital discussions. These activities can help institutions understand public attitudes and improve their communication practices. However, engagement should be assessed according to its quality and relevance rather than only through the number of interactions (Fissi et al., 2022).

Public trust is another major outcome of effective government public relations. Trust can be influenced by the accuracy of institutional information, communication transparency, message consistency, and the willingness of institutions to address citizen concerns. Contradictory information, delayed responses, or insufficient transparency may damage credibility. Government public relations must therefore ensure that communication remains reliable and consistent across different departments and digital platforms.

Institutional reputation reflects the public's general evaluation of a government organization and its performance. Digital media can strengthen reputation by highlighting public services, achievements, initiatives, and community contributions. Nevertheless, it can also expose institutions to criticism and rapid reputational risks. Public relations departments must continuously monitor digital discussions and respond professionally to inaccurate information or public dissatisfaction.

Crisis communication performance is particularly important because government institutions are expected to provide immediate and dependable guidance during emergencies. Effective crisis communication requires message accuracy, speed, consistency, empathy, and coordination among responsible authorities. Research has shown that government content and interactive

communication influence citizen engagement during public crises (Chen et al., 2020). Successful crisis communication can reduce uncertainty and maintain confidence in official institutions.

Public relations performance should be evaluated through both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Quantitative measures may include audience reach, engagement rates, response time, website visits, and the number of public enquiries resolved. Qualitative indicators include message comprehension, citizen satisfaction, public sentiment, trust, reputation, and the quality of institution-public relationships. Combining these indicators provides a more complete assessment than relying exclusively on follower numbers or post frequency.

Digital analytics can support public relations evaluation by providing continuous information about audience behavior and content performance. Public relations departments can compare campaigns, identify effective formats, monitor sentiment, and determine which messages produce stronger engagement. However, digital metrics must be connected to institutional objectives to ensure that measurement focuses on communication outcomes rather than superficial online activity (Yuan et al., 2023).

Accordingly, public relations performance in Saudi government institutions can be evaluated through communication effectiveness, audience engagement, institutional responsiveness, public trust, and organizational reputation. These dimensions provide a suitable foundation for examining whether digital media strategies create meaningful improvements in government communication.

Digital Content Planning and Management

Digital content planning is a systematic process through which government institutions determine what information should be communicated, which audiences should receive it, which platforms should be used, and when publication should occur. Effective planning connects every digital message with a clear communication objective, such as explaining public services, increasing awareness, encouraging participation, or responding to public concerns.

Government institutions communicate with audiences that differ in age, education, location, language, interests, and digital behavior. Content should therefore be designed according to the characteristics and informational needs of each audience group. Complex policies may require

detailed explanations, while service announcements may be more effective when presented through short videos, infographics, or step-by-step instructions. Audience-focused content can improve understanding and increase interaction with government messages.

Content quality is determined by several elements, including accuracy, clarity, relevance, timeliness, consistency, and accessibility. Government information must be verified before publication because inaccurate content may affect public decisions and damage institutional credibility. Messages should also avoid unnecessary technical language and present information in a form that citizens can understand and use. These requirements make content governance an essential component of digital public relations.

An organized content calendar helps public relations departments coordinate routine publications, public campaigns, institutional events, national occasions, and service announcements. It can also reduce repetition and prevent long periods of inactivity. However, content plans should remain flexible enough to respond to emergencies, policy developments, and changes in public interest. Effective planning therefore combines scheduled communication with the capacity for immediate response.

The selection of content format can significantly influence audience engagement. Text, photographs, videos, infographics, links, and live broadcasts provide different levels of information richness and interaction. Bonsón et al. (2015) found that engagement with local government Facebook content differed according to media and content type. Government institutions should therefore select formats based on communication objectives rather than relying on the same design for every message.

Consistency across digital platforms is also necessary for maintaining institutional identity. Official accounts should use consistent terminology, visual identity, factual information, and core messages. Nevertheless, consistency does not require publishing identical posts on every platform. Content should be adapted to platform characteristics while maintaining the same institutional meaning. This approach can improve audience experience without creating contradictory messages.

Digital content management also requires coordination among public relations departments, senior management, service departments, legal units, and information technology teams. Clear approval procedures can ensure accuracy and reduce publication delays. Institutions should define who prepares, reviews, approves, publishes, and updates digital content. Excessively complex approval processes, however, may limit responsiveness, particularly during fast-moving public events.

Accessibility should be considered when producing government digital content. Citizens with different abilities must be able to access and understand official information. Public institutions can improve accessibility by providing captions for videos, readable text, clear visual contrast, alternative text for images, and content compatible with mobile devices. Accessible communication supports equal access to government information and improves the overall quality of public relations.

Digital content should also be evaluated after publication. Metrics such as reach, viewing duration, clicks, comments, shares, and completion rates can help institutions identify which topics and formats are most effective. Qualitative analysis of comments and public feedback can provide further evidence about message clarity and audience concerns. Data-based evaluation allows public relations departments to improve future content decisions (Yuan et al., 2023).

Consequently, effective digital content planning and management can strengthen information quality, audience understanding, institutional consistency, and communication performance. Within Saudi government institutions, professionally managed content can also support digital transformation by making government information and services more accessible to citizens.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to evaluate the effectiveness of digital media strategies in supporting public relations performance within Saudi government institutions. The quantitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows the study variables to be measured systematically and their relationships to be examined statistically (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The study population consisted of employees working in public relations, institutional communication, media, digital content, and social media departments within Saudi government institutions. Purposive sampling was used to select participants with direct knowledge of government digital communication practices. The study targeted approximately 200 participants from different institutions to provide sufficient representation for statistical analysis.

Data were collected electronically through a structured questionnaire. The first section gathered demographic information, including gender, age, educational qualification, professional experience, job position, and government sector. The second section measured digital media strategies through content planning, audience engagement, platform management, crisis communication, and digital analytics. The third section measured public relations performance through communication effectiveness, institutional responsiveness, public trust, and organizational reputation.

Questionnaire items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (**Strongly Disagree**) to 5 (**Strongly Agree**). The instrument was developed based on the research objectives and relevant literature. It was reviewed by specialists in public relations, digital media, and research methodology to assess content validity. A pilot study involving 30 participants was planned to evaluate item clarity and internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha values of 0.70 or higher were considered acceptable indicators of reliability.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe participants' demographic characteristics, while means and standard deviations were used to evaluate responses to the questionnaire items. Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine relationships between the variables, and multiple regression analysis was used to determine the influence of digital media strategies on public relations performance. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level.

Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study before completing the questionnaire. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all responses were treated confidentially and used exclusively for research purposes.

Results

A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed among employees working in public relations, media, institutional communication, and digital content departments within Saudi government institutions. Of these, 186 valid questionnaires were returned and included in the statistical analysis, representing a response rate of 93%.

Respondent Characteristics

Characteristic Category		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	112	60.2%
	Female	74	39.8%
Age	Under 30 years	32	17.2%
	30–39 years	71	38.2%
	40–49 years	55	29.6%
	50 years and above	28	15.0%
Education	Bachelor's degree	101	54.3%
	Master's degree	63	33.9%
	Doctorate	22	11.8%
Experience	Less than 5 years	42	22.6%
	5–10 years	76	40.9%
	More than 10 years	68	36.5%

The demographic findings show that most participants possessed relevant educational qualifications and professional experience, supporting the reliability of their evaluations of digital media and public relations practices.

Reliability Analysis

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Digital Content Planning	5	0.86
Audience Engagement	5	0.88
Platform Management	5	0.83
Digital Crisis Communication	5	0.87
Digital Analytics	5	0.84
Public Relations Performance	6	0.91
Overall Questionnaire	31	0.94

All Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and reliability.

Descriptive Analysis

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Evaluation
Digital Content Planning	4.08	0.61	High
Audience Engagement	3.87	0.68	High
Platform Management	4.02	0.59	High
Digital Crisis Communication	3.94	0.65	High
Digital Analytics	3.71	0.73	High
Public Relations Performance	4.01	0.60	High

Digital content planning achieved the highest mean, while digital analytics received the lowest. Nevertheless, all variables recorded high evaluation levels, indicating generally positive perceptions of digital media practices within Saudi government institutions.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between digital media strategy dimensions and public relations performance.

Variable	Public Relations Performance	Significance
Digital Content Planning	0.68	< 0.001
Audience Engagement	0.72	< 0.001
Platform Management	0.64	< 0.001
Digital Crisis Communication	0.66	< 0.001
Digital Analytics	0.59	< 0.001

The results indicate statistically significant positive relationships between all digital media strategy dimensions and public relations performance. Audience engagement recorded the strongest correlation ($r = 0.72$), followed by digital content planning ($r = 0.68$) and digital crisis communication ($r = 0.66$).

These findings indicate that stronger digital media practices are associated with improved communication effectiveness, institutional responsiveness, public trust, and organizational reputation within Saudi government institutions.

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of digital media strategy dimensions on public relations performance.

Model Indicator Value	
R	0.820
R ²	0.672
Adjusted R ²	0.663
F-value	73.76

Model Indicator Value

Significance < 0.001

The model explained **67.2%** of the variation in public relations performance, indicating that digital media strategies provide a strong explanation of public relations outcomes.

Independent Variable	Standardized Beta	t-value	Significance
Digital Content Planning	0.23	4.31	< 0.001
Audience Engagement	0.29	5.42	< 0.001
Platform Management	0.17	3.18	0.002
Digital Crisis Communication	0.20	3.79	< 0.001
Digital Analytics	0.13	2.37	0.019

Audience engagement had the strongest effect on public relations performance, followed by digital content planning and digital crisis communication. All five dimensions had statistically significant positive effects, demonstrating that well-managed digital media strategies improve public relations performance within Saudi government institutions.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that digital media strategies play a significant role in supporting public relations performance within Saudi government institutions. The positive relationships identified between digital media dimensions and public relations performance indicate that institutional communication improves when digital activities are strategically planned and professionally managed. These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that government social media can strengthen communication, facilitate public participation, and support government digital transformation when it is connected to clear institutional objectives (Medaglia & Zheng, 2017; Yuan et al., 2023).

Audience engagement achieved the strongest correlation with public relations performance. This result suggests that citizens value opportunities to communicate with government institutions, submit enquiries, provide feedback, and receive timely responses. Digital platforms become more

effective when they support two-way communication rather than functioning exclusively as channels for official announcements. This finding supports Wukich's (2022) argument that meaningful engagement depends on both the structure of digital platforms and the communication practices adopted by government institutions.

Digital content planning also produced a strong positive effect. Accurate, relevant, timely, and visually appropriate content can improve public understanding of government policies, services, and initiatives. Strategic planning helps institutions coordinate their messages, maintain consistency, and select formats suitable for different platforms and audiences. The findings correspond with Bonsón et al. (2015), who established that media format and content type influence citizens' engagement with government communication.

Digital crisis communication showed a significant contribution to public relations performance. This finding confirms that government institutions need prepared communication procedures, verified information, coordinated messages, and rapid responses during emergencies. Effective crisis communication can reduce uncertainty, limit misinformation, and protect institutional credibility. The result is consistent with previous research demonstrating that message presentation and dialogic communication influence citizen engagement during public crises (Chen et al., 2020).

Platform management and digital analytics also had statistically significant effects. Nevertheless, digital analytics received the lowest descriptive mean among the examined dimensions. This finding suggests that Saudi government institutions may be active in publishing and managing digital content but require further development in measuring communication outcomes. Greater attention should be given to public sentiment, response quality, message comprehension, citizen satisfaction, and trust rather than relying only on follower numbers, views, and general engagement rates.

Conclusion

This study evaluated the effectiveness of digital media strategies in supporting public relations performance within Saudi government institutions. The findings confirmed that digital content planning, audience engagement, platform management, digital crisis communication, and performance analytics positively contribute to communication effectiveness, institutional

responsiveness, public trust, and organizational reputation. The regression model explained 67.2% of the variation in public relations performance, demonstrating the substantial organizational value of strategically managed digital communication.

The study concludes that digital media should be considered an integrated public relations function rather than a secondary tool for distributing information. Maintaining official accounts and publishing frequent content are insufficient without clear objectives, audience-focused communication, professional interaction, crisis preparedness, and continuous evaluation. Institutions that connect these elements are more capable of building sustainable relationships with citizens and improving the quality of government communication.

Within Saudi Arabia, effective digital public relations can contribute to the objectives of digital transformation and Saudi Vision 2030 by promoting accessible, transparent, and responsive government communication. Continued investment in human capabilities, communication governance, digital technologies, and performance measurement will enable public institutions to respond more effectively to changing citizen expectations and technological developments.

Recommendations

Saudi government institutions should develop integrated digital media strategies that clearly connect communication activities with institutional objectives. These strategies should define target audiences, communication priorities, platform responsibilities, content standards, publishing procedures, engagement practices, and measurable performance indicators. Regular reviews should be conducted to ensure that strategies remain appropriate to technological changes and public expectations.

Public relations departments should strengthen two-way communication by monitoring comments, responding to enquiries, addressing complaints, and incorporating citizen feedback into communication decisions. Institutions should establish reasonable response-time standards and assign qualified employees to manage digital interactions. Such practices can improve institutional responsiveness and strengthen citizens' confidence in official communication.

Continuous professional training should be provided to employees responsible for public relations and digital media. Training should cover strategic content planning, audiovisual production, platform management, digital accessibility, crisis communication, audience analysis, and ethical use of artificial intelligence. Improving employee capabilities can enhance communication quality and reduce operational errors.

Government institutions should also establish comprehensive digital crisis communication plans. These plans should specify communication responsibilities, approval procedures, official spokespersons, platform coordination, misinformation management, and post-crisis evaluation. Prepared communication procedures can enable institutions to respond rapidly without compromising message accuracy or consistency.

Finally, institutions should expand their use of digital analytics and social listening tools. Evaluation should extend beyond basic measures such as views and followers to include public sentiment, response quality, message comprehension, citizen satisfaction, institutional trust, and reputation. Connecting digital indicators with broader public relations objectives can support evidence-based communication decisions and continuous improvement.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to employees working in selected Saudi government institutions, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to all public-sector organizations. It also relied on self-reported questionnaire responses, which may be influenced by participants' personal perceptions or their willingness to evaluate institutional practices. In addition, the cross-sectional design examined digital media strategies during a specific period and did not measure changes in public relations performance over time.

The quantitative approach provided measurable evidence regarding relationships among the study variables but did not fully explore the professional experiences of public relations employees or citizens' interpretations of government content. The study also evaluated digital media strategies generally without conducting separate analyses for individual platforms such as X, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, or government mobile applications.

Future Research

Future research should include larger samples from different ministries, authorities, municipalities, and public-service organizations across Saudi Arabia. Comparative studies could identify differences in digital media performance among government sectors or examine how organizational size, technological readiness, and leadership support influence strategy implementation.

Future studies may also combine questionnaires with interviews, focus groups, and digital content analysis to provide a deeper understanding of institutional communication. Longitudinal research could examine changes in government digital communication over time, while comparative studies could evaluate Saudi practices alongside those of other Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Researchers should also investigate the emerging role of artificial intelligence in government public relations. Relevant topics include automated content production, chatbots, social listening, sentiment analysis, misinformation detection, personalized communication, and the ethical governance of AI-generated messages.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses sincere appreciation to the public relations, media, institutional communication, and digital content professionals who contributed their time and experience to this study. Their participation provided valuable insights into the implementation of digital media strategies within Saudi government institutions.

Disclosure of Interest

The author declares that there are no financial, professional, institutional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the design, analysis, interpretation, or presentation of this research.

Funding Information

This research received no financial support, research grant, or external funding from governmental, commercial, private, or nonprofit organizations. The study was completed independently by the author.

References

Al-Saggaf, Y., & Simmons, P. (2015). Social media in Saudi Arabia: Exploring its use during two natural disasters. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 95, 3–15.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2014.08.013>

Bonsón, E., Royo, S., & Ratkai, M. (2015). Citizens' engagement on local governments' Facebook sites: An empirical analysis of the impact of different media and content types in Western Europe. *Government Information Quarterly*, 32(1), 52–62.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2014.11.001>

Chen, Q., Min, C., Zhang, W., Wang, G., Ma, X., & Evans, R. (2020). Unpacking the black box: How to promote citizen engagement through government social media during the COVID-19 crisis. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 110, 106380. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106380>

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Dong, C., Zheng, Q., & Morehouse, J. (2023). What do we know about government public relations (GPR)? A systematic review of GPR in public relations literature. *Public Relations Review*, 49(1), 102284. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2022.102284>

Elhersh, G. A., Khan, M. L., Malik, A., Al-Umairi, M., & Alqawasmeh, H. K. (2024). Instagram for audience engagement: An evaluation of CERC framework in the GCC nations for digital public health during the COVID-19 pandemic. *BMC Public Health*, 24, 1587.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-18957-1>

Fissi, S., Gori, E., & Romolini, A. (2022). Social media government communication and stakeholder engagement in the era of COVID-19: Evidence from Italy. *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 35(3), 276–293. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPSM-06-2021-0145>

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2022). *Multivariate data analysis* (9th ed.). Cengage Learning.

Medaglia, R., & Zheng, L. (2017). Mapping government social media research and moving it forward: A framework and a research agenda. *Government Information Quarterly*, 34(3), 496–510. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2017.06.001>

Mohammed, A., & Ferraris, A. (2021). Factors influencing user participation in social media: Evidence from Twitter usage during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia. *Technology in Society*, 66, 101651. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2021.101651>

Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2020). *Research methods for business: A skill-building approach* (8th ed.). Wiley.

Wukich, C. (2022). Social media engagement forms in government: A structure-content framework. *Government Information Quarterly*, 39(2), 101684. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2022.101684>

Yuan, Y. P., Dwivedi, Y. K., Tan, G. W. H., Cham, T. H., Ooi, K. B., Aw, E. C. X., & Currie, W. (2023). Government digital transformation: Understanding the role of government social media. *Government Information Quarterly*, 40(1), 101775. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2022.101775>

Saudi Vision 2030. (n.d.). National Transformation Program.

<https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en/explore/programs/national-transformation-program>.

Open Access Statement

This article is licensed under a **Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0)**, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, adaptation, and reproduction in any medium or format, provided that appropriate credit is given to the original author(s) and the source. A link to the Creative Commons license must be provided, and any modifications made to the original work should be clearly indicated.

The images or other third-party materials included in this article are covered by the same Creative Commons license unless otherwise stated in a credit line. If any material is not included under the Creative Commons license and your intended use exceeds the permitted statutory regulations, permission must be obtained directly from the copyright holder.

To view a copy of this license, visit:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>