Social Networks Identity Change and its Influence on Communication:

An Empirical Study of Teenagers Learning in Nairobi's Westlands

District.

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award of the Degree of Master of Communication Studies.

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DECLARATION

This Research Project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree award in this or any other University.

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22/11/2012

DEDICATION

To my great wife Lillan, my wonderful daughter Maya, my great parents John and Alice, my

loving aunt Wilkister, to my brother and sister I do dedicate my work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Since the beginning, the plan for my continued education has belonged to God.

Without His guidance, and the support of those around me, I would have quit long ago.

Mr. Sam Kamau, my supervisor was very instrumental in helping me through, thank you.

I have to thank my father and mother, John and Alice Odhiambo, my loving aunt Wilkister Akello for the grit and determination which have never let me down. A major thank you to my great wife Lilian and daughter Maya who often found themselves all alone when I was lost in my work and constantly offered support for the sake of this project. They were the reason I stayed sane throughout the process.

To John Otieno Oredo my colleague for the superb input and to my employer for the wonderful opportunity, I say thank you.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

SN; Social Networks

SNSs; Social Networks Sites

SNI; Social Networks Identities

SPSS; Statistical Package for Social Sciences

FGD; Focused Group Discussions

ABSTRACT

This study set out to investigate the influence of social networks identity change on online communication. The target population was to be teenagers who mainly school in private Schools of Westlands District of Nairobi. The initial assumption of the researcher was that the teenagers are highly involved in online identity change. The choice of teenagers who school in private schools Westlands District Westlands was equally based on the assumption that the living standards of this group offers them an opportunity to have the required gadgets for online communication. The study was to find out the types of online identity choices these teenager make, the reasons behind these choices of identity and finally to find out if the type of online identity choice influences online communication.

The ex post facto research design was used in the study. Questionnaires, interviews and Focused Group discussion were the main means of data collection. Purposive sampling was used where three private schools in Westlands District were identified. Having collected the data, the authenticity of the same was verified after which the data was analysed through descriptive data analysis. Responses to open ended questions were coded after which content analysis was done.

From the data analysis, it was confirmed that online identity type influences online communication People tended to be willing to communicate more with online contacts that they could identify. Those who kept changing online identities had few people willing to talk to them while those who were anonymous equally received minimal communication. Interestingly, those who have changed their online identities were deemed to be doing a lot of online communication. Another interesting bit was that most online users knew less than a half of their online friends.

From the findings the key recommendation made was that the power of online communication cannot be wished away and the authority figures should play more active role in guiding the teenagers on effective usage of SNSs rather than castigate them. Equally, due to their nature of interactivity, wonderful teaching methods could be designed to make them more fruitful.

Another study could be carried out in other locations, or using another age group or even another social networking site to find out if these findings could be replicated.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In the recent past, cyberspace has turned into a populated cyber-place. Social network sites such as *Facebook, Twitter* and *MySpace* have millions of users who incorporate these sites into their daily lives, checking their profile multiple times a day. These social network sites comprise individuals whose social networks constitute social communities, (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Entering cyberspace concerns issues of identity and identification. Urista, (2008) for example argues that *MySpace* and *Facebook* enable individuals to play an active role in the socialization process and in constructing their own identity. The possibility to participate in online communities anonymously may ease the entrance to digital world. Some participants, however, may dislike anonymous people and they, instead gravitate towards digitally eponymous (identified) people, (Jakala and Berki, 2010). To some extent, identity, both in real life and cyber life can be seen as composed of similar qualities. Notwithstanding are questions of security, safety and trustworthiness which are often associated with cyber-participants and their identities. In real life, however, identities are not often questioned, authenticated or even doubted. The issue of one's identity that is shared by others in social networks is therefore of prime importance.

The issue of identity choice, it is perhaps imperative to note, has been compounded by the ease of access to these social network sites. The proliferation of portable hand gadgets like cell phones that can access internet, the spread of internet cyber cafes and the faster bridging of digital divide all have conspired to hasten opening of social accounts and inviting as many online friends as is practically possible. Once one is hooked as a friend, a lot of personal information and online communication both personal and from friends is publically shared. It therefore follows that access to or tracking of anyone's online communication has been made easier

Although most people are members of many different groups, only some of these groups are meaningful in terms of how we define ourselves. In these cases, our self definition is shared with other people who also claim that categorical membership. To share social identities with others does not necessarily mean that we know or interact with every other member of the designated category. It does mean, however, that we believe that we share numerous features with other members of the category and that, to some degree; events that are relevant to the group as a whole also have significance to the individual member.

While communicating with the aid of technology, the management of self presentation has totally new expression tools. People can have multiple simultaneous roles, each of which is actualised within certain communities. Papadimitriou, (2003) These roles can totally differ from each other. One person can also participate in the same event with several parallel identities, (Turkle, 1997). Nowadays, this seems to be the most often used identity in the cyberspace. However, that might also be the reason why some people do not consider virtual communities as a space for real interaction. It is viewed as loaded with mistrust since the source of communication cannot always be verified. It is on this background that Jakala and Berki, (2010) coined five different terms to try and capture the different types of identities that are exhibited in social network sites. The coined terms for various identities are nonymity, anonymity, eponymity, pseudonymity, and polynymity.

Bearing in mind these coined SNSs terms and with full appreciation of the existence of the various identities; informed by the numerous challenges experienced in Social network communication (like cyber crime, spying, identity theft), this study ventures into determining the teenagers' reasons behind SNSs identity choice and/or change. Despite existence of previous studies in SNS communication, the area behind SNS identity choice and/or change (particularly among teenagers in Nairobi) and its influence on communication seems to still beg for more

1.2 Problem Statement

The rapid adoption of online communication by teenagers around the world is something that draws a lot of curiosity. Nairobi's teenagers have not been left behind. A significant aspect of online community is changing of online identity. Inhabitants of virtual communities might create an alternative identity for themselves that they use exclusively online, or several identities to be used during different online fora or simultaneously within one forum. How teenagers engage through SNSs today provides long-lasting insights into identity formation, status negotiation, and peer-to-peer sociality. (Boyd 2007). This begs for some important questions. Why do teenagers flock to these sites? Which type of identity choices do they make? What are they expressing on them? How do these sites fit into their lives? Are these online activities like face-to-face friendships or are they different or complimentary? How do their choices of identities affect their membership and participation?

It is becoming increasingly clear that one way of using social technology is to self-manage identity — either personal or shared identity of a certain group. It is important to note that different contexts, contacts and content of online interaction may demand different self presentations masks. Management of self identity takes place when people enter e-spaces. By picking up username, nickname or aliases and selecting or creating personal information that one may want to share with others, one simultaneously decides how he or she wishes to be perceived by other members of the community they are entering. This also emphasises the relationship between community and identity. (Jakala and Berki, 2004)

Despite the presence of studies that have recently examined SNS, there continues to be a gap in our understanding of why teenagers gravitate towards online identity changes This paper therefore seeks to address the research vacuum — at least in the region of study- on the influence of SN identity change on online communication among the teenagers.

Answers to this research question are expected to help us better understand why young adults have this interesting behaviour. A review of literature reveals that not much study has been carried out to establish the influence of SN identity change on communication. This study sets out to fill in this gap.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Since most of the current discussion focuses on the content of what is being discussed, this paper intends to divert the attention to the choice of identity of the individual that discusses the subject. The paper set out to interrogate the idea behind the choice of online identities adopted by a cross-section of the youth (ages 14-18 in Nairobi) particularly in *Facebook* and study reasons and events that trigger the choices of these identities. It also investigated how these changes of online identities affect interpersonal online communication and participation. In a nutshell, the study explored the intent and the content behind the youths' choice of online identity. The formation of alternative online identity and real identity detachment was the principle concern and is explored in the subsequent matter.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

i.   To explore the types of online SN identities adopted by the teenagers.
ii. To investigate why teenagers pick certain SN identities.
iii. To establish the influence of online SNS identity on the type of online communication.

1.5 Research Questions

i.   Which types of online identities do teenagers choose for their online communication?
ii. What are some of the reasons that trigger their quest to pick certain online SN identities?
iii. Does the SNI taken influence the nature of communication?

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1.6 Significance of the Study

Identity, whether personal or corporate, is increasingly gaining a sharp focus. People perceive one through the image one portrays. Respect or discrimination for an individual (that is personal capital) or corporate profit gains increasingly depend on external perception. Similarly, low individual or low corporate status also depend on the level of esteem that they are held. Identity management and ways of effective identity management therefore become inescapable issues of concern in the current world. Whether one chooses to massage their (group) identity or to discriminate against the rival and bring in issues of prejudice against another (group) to bolster their image may not be within the province of this study. Why? Whichever the case, one of the principle drives here (especially related to the teenagers) could be to create a superior identity; to have a competitive edge over the rest; and that is what is important.

Cyberspace identities in particular have heavy positive and negative consequences that highly influence online communication but remain largely unnoticed. There is need to investigate this phenomena since online presence compromises the privacy of interaction. An improved understanding of the relationships between online identity building, online identity types, and e-activities could contribute to the design of e-spaces, where people's activation and participation increases. For instance, this new information might lead towards the design of e-learning communities that could increase learners' participation in the e-learning process. Similarly, this new knowledge could contribute to open new ways for social inclusion by overcoming biases and digital divides.

Guided by the hypothesis of *Social Identity Theory*, for instance, which poses that the group members of an in-group will seek to find negative aspects of an out-group to enhance their image, identity could lead to evils like prejudice. This prejudice is what in its extreme forms has led to tribalism and tribal (read political) wars like in Kenya 2007, Rwanda's Hutus and Tutsis genocide 1994, Yugoslavia's war between Bosnians and Serbs and German's against the Jews

Without doubt, the type of identity one opts for affects trustworthiness, credibility, and security of e-transactions and e-interactions. (Jakala and Berki, 2004). Extensive research on such a subject would be beneficial in discovering the capabilities of an individual who uses alternative identities and the severity to which they abuse that alternative identity. By discovering the severity of individuals abusing multiple identity formation in online mediated communication, more research will be conducted on how social network sites contribute to alternative identity formation.

This study could be of great value to marketers as it has outlined how teens interact in sites such as *Facebook* thus offering valuable insights into the online behaviour of teens. In particular, it has unmasked the preferred identities types in various occasions and how the teens are likely to respond to each type of identity that confronts them. This opens gateways to marketers as it informs them on the type of identity that can be used to reach the teens hence serving to enhance marketers' understanding of the lucrative teen segment. In their study, Boyd and Ellison (2008) had indicated that SNS provide an opportunity for users to articulate and make visible their social connections.

The identity choice of a marketer –if appealing- could be used to rally teenagers behind a product through "likes" which in turn helps in marketing even by word of mouth. This is a view that Dunne et al (2010) held when they said that 'Not only can SNS provide tweens with an avenue for experimenting with their social identity, but through brand befriending, it can also provide tweens with an opportunity to develop their commercial identity.'

1.7 The Hypothesis of the Study

Bearing in mind that the proponents of *Uses and Gratification Theory* Blumler and Katz (1974) hypothesise that individuals use media to fulfil their various needs, it can be advanced that the teenagers in Westlands District in Nairobi flock the SNSs with different identities to satisfy their cognitive and affective needs. These needs involve personal needs and entertainment needs. These needs could include needs to personal

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identity, escape from reality, and self presentation. Chances are that the teenagers could group into these sites since they believe that they will help serve their objectives of socialising with other people. The presence of several functions of SNSs like modifiable profile, photo album, ability to share music and video files make them particularly attractive to the users.

But why change the SNSs identity? One may ask. To answer this important question, allow me to invite and invoke Henri Tajfel's *Social Identity Theory* into the discussion.

Social Identity Theory hints to us that these teenagers could be joining SNSs with different identities so as to enhance their social status; to have a sense of pride and self esteem; group(s') membership helping play this pivotal role. Through the power of its facilities and abilities to create a new online identity, a new online group, and a new online community, websites and SNSs empower these teenagers to modify their identities, join or opt out of groups according to the group's social capital which by extension rub onto the individual member's social capital giving them high or low self esteem as the case may be.

From the above, it might be presumed that the holders of hidden identities are rather casual not just with their communication but also with their group membership. Popularity of hidden identities warrant a wide latitude for the topics of discussion and the would be consequences, a rather rare privilege with real identities.

From the above, the hypotheses of the study are
i   Teenagers use different online identities to satisfy their cognitive and affective needs.
ii.   These alternative identities are aimed at gaining some social capital through freedom of communication

1.8 The Assumptions of the Study

The Researcher assumed that

a. The teenagers in Westlands District in Nairobi utilise Social media

b. Teenagers in this region are active in using SNS like *Facebook*

c. Teenagers are aware and can articulate their reasons for changing their online identities

d. That the same target population would be willing to participate in the study and answer the questions honestly and clearly.

1.9 Limitation of the Study

The study aims at investigating the types of social networking identity adopted by teenagers and the influence of these identities on their communication. The major limitation here was that just like a personal diary, social networking sites have highly been regarded private hence the owners were highly guarded in free access to them. However, it was possible to get a few that allowed some access to their sites just like it was possible to befriend a few and get to know their identities as well as evaluate their communication.

1.10 Delimitation of the Study

While it was the principle purpose of this paper to study the types of identities adopted by the youth and their influence on communication, it was neither the purpose of this paper to study the pitfalls and limitations of each choice of identity nor to demonise the social network sites. Secondly, in examining the practices of teenagers in social network sites, the study focused purely on *Facebook*. Although the study touched on other social networking sites, which were duly referenced as appropriate, the case study of this paper was primarily trained on *Facebook*. It is true that there are many social networking sites that facilitate communication but *Facebook* was ideal because of its popularity with teenagers which offered critical insight into their participation patterns that do and will exist on other sites that cater for this age-group.

Studies carried out by De Rosa et al found that 61% of college students using social networking sites use *Myspace* and from another sample 94% use *Facebook*, (Boyd 2006).

1.11 Definition of Significant Terms

Virtual Community: A community that is found and supported by online networking

Social Networking Identity: The name that a Social Community inhabitant is identified with in virtual community.

Social Identity Change: Manipulation of one's real identity and adoption of a new social networking identity.

Teens: Thirteen to nineteen year old people.

Tweens: One who is not a child and not a teenager. Around 9-12 years of age.

Branding: A person's creation of a new personal social image.

Fun page: A social networking sites that brings a group of people together for leasure and pleasure of communication

Netuens: Members of the Social Networking Community.

1.12 Theoretical Framework

1.12.1 Uses and Gratification Theory

A casual logging into and exploration of various SNSs like *Facebook* would easily reveal that SNSs are over populated with teenagers. Curiously, identity change is a common phenomenon. The reasons behind teenagers flocking into these sites with alternative identities could well be explained by *Uses and Gratification Theory* (Blumler and Katz, 1974).

The *uses and gratification* theory is best suited in revealing the motivations behind these desires and also the tactics employed by members to fulfill their needs and wants. The uses and gratification perspective proposes that individuals use media to fulfill their various needs Blumler and Katz, (1974). The underlying principle of the perspective is that people will choose media according to their expectations and their drive to attain a gratifying experience. The perspective assumes that people are active consumers of media Katz et al., (1974) and they make choices about where to go and what to pay attention to. This assumption of an active audience seems particularly well suited to studying a medium designed for active use and known for its interactivity. (Morris and Ogan, 1996; Stafford and Stafford, 1998) Indeed, teenagers and especially those in Nairobi's Westlands District appear to flock into *Facebook* with hidden identities to gratify a certain thirst.

Uses and gratifications research has typically focused on how media is used to satisfy cognitive and affective needs involving personal needs and entertainment needs (Rubin, 2002). These include the need for personal identity, escape, and self-presentation. In short, an individual will be motivated to use the SNSs if he or she believes it will help serve his or her objectives to socialize with other people. The presences of several functions of SNSs make them particularly attractive to users. These include walls, blogs, bulletins, profiles, and photo albums. The issues of security, social capital and belonging amongst others inject in the cautionary approach

SNS provide members with an easy and convenient medium for communicating with family, friends, and others. Additionally, individual users' needs and wants can be fulfilled constantly and instantaneously. SNSs like *Facebook* enable individuals to play an active role in the socialization process and in constructing their own identity. For example, individuals can develop their own home page to include their favourite music, television shows, and photos. Being able to share these with a group of friends certainly raises ones' social capital.

This theory best fit this research because the respondents were to fill in questionnaires that attempted to find out the reasons behind changed SNSs online identity change.

However, this use of retrospective 'self-reports' had some limitations. Some of these *'Facebookers'* did not know why they chose *Facebook*. Others were not able to explain fully. Some simply offered reasons which they had heard others mention.

In issues of social networking and identity, uses and gratification theory is still useful, the above criticism notwithstanding. SNS, as already said, provide members with an easy and convenient medium for communicating with family, friends, and others. Additionally, individual users' needs and wants can be fulfilled constantly and instantaneously. In the past, people have used a combination of face-to-face human interaction as well as mass media such as television, radio, and movies to fulfill these needs and wants. Often, these gratifications were delayed due to factors including inaccessibility, unresponsiveness, programming and scheduling. In contrast, SNS are different from these other forms of mass media due to the fact that they empower individuals to play an active role in sending messages to others in their social network. Moreover, this active role is revolutionary insofar as it changes the traditional model of mass media effects. In the new model, individuals can be instantly gratified by their use of SNS through both mediated social contact and through selective and on-demand access to other media content provided as part of SNS services.

1.11.2 Social Identity Theory

Apart from *Uses and Gratification theory* by Blumler and Katz (1974) another theory that can help propel this study further is Henri Tajfel's *Social Identity theory*. It is argued that Henri Tajfel's greatest contribution to psychology was *social identity theory*. *Social identity theory* according to Tajfel is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s).

Social Identity Theory was developed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979. The theory was originally developed to understand the psychological basis of intergroup discrimination, a common phenomenon among teenagers. Tajfel et al (1971) attempted to identify the minimal conditions that would lead members of one group to discriminate in favour of the in-group to which they belonged and against another out-group.

Groups which people belong to like social class, family, football team and many more, are seen as an important source of pride and self esteem. Our groups give us a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world. To enhance our self image, we enhance the status of our group. Our image can also increase by discriminating or by prejudice against the out-group, the group to which we do not belong. This leads to a bipolar world for teenagers: "them" and "us". A case that McLeod (2008) refers to as social categorization: an in-group (us) and an out-group (them), where people are put in social groups.

1.12.2.1 Core Assumptions of the Theory

In the *Social Identity Theory*, a person has not one, "personal self", but rather several selves that correspond to widening circles of group membership. Different social contexts may trigger an individual to think, feel and act on basis of his personal, family or national "level of self" (Turner et al, 1987). Apart from the "level of self", an individual has multiple "social identities". Social identity is the individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership of social groups (Hogg & Vaughan,

2002). In other words, it is an individual-based perception of what defines the "us" associated with any internalized group membership. This can be distinguished from the notion of personal identity which refers to self-knowledge that derives from the individual's unique attributes.

Social Identity Theory asserts that group membership creates in-group/ self-categorization and enhancement in ways that favor the in-group at the expense of the out-group. The examples (minimal group studies) of Turner and Tajfel (1986) showed that the mere act of individuals categorizing themselves as group members was sufficient to lead them to display in-group favouritism. After being categorized of a group membership, individuals seek to achieve positive self-esteem by positively differentiating their in-group from a comparison out-group on some valued dimension. This quest for positive distinctiveness means that people's sense of who they are is defined in terms of 'we' rather than 'I'.

Individuals are likely to display favouritism when an in-group is central to their self-definition and a given comparison is meaningful or the outcome is contestable. Henri Tajfel concludes that stereotyping (that is putting people into groups and categories) is based on a normal cognitive process: the tendency to group things together. In doing so, we tend to exaggerate.

1.13 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework strived to draw a link between teenager's choice of identity and its influence on communication. The focus here was on to what extent the choice of online identity affects the teenagers' communication.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │      IDENTITY       │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                        │              │
                        ▼              ▼
        ┌──────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────┐
        │     SOCIAL       │    │   REAL IDENTITY  │
        │    NETWORK       │    │                  │
        │    IDENTITY      │    │                  │
        │     CHOICE       │    │                  │
        └──────────────────┘    └──────────────────┘
                │                         │
                ▼                         ▼
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- Increased (informal casual) communication and participation
- Unreliable information

- Formal communication
- Reliable information

Figure II Conceptual Framework
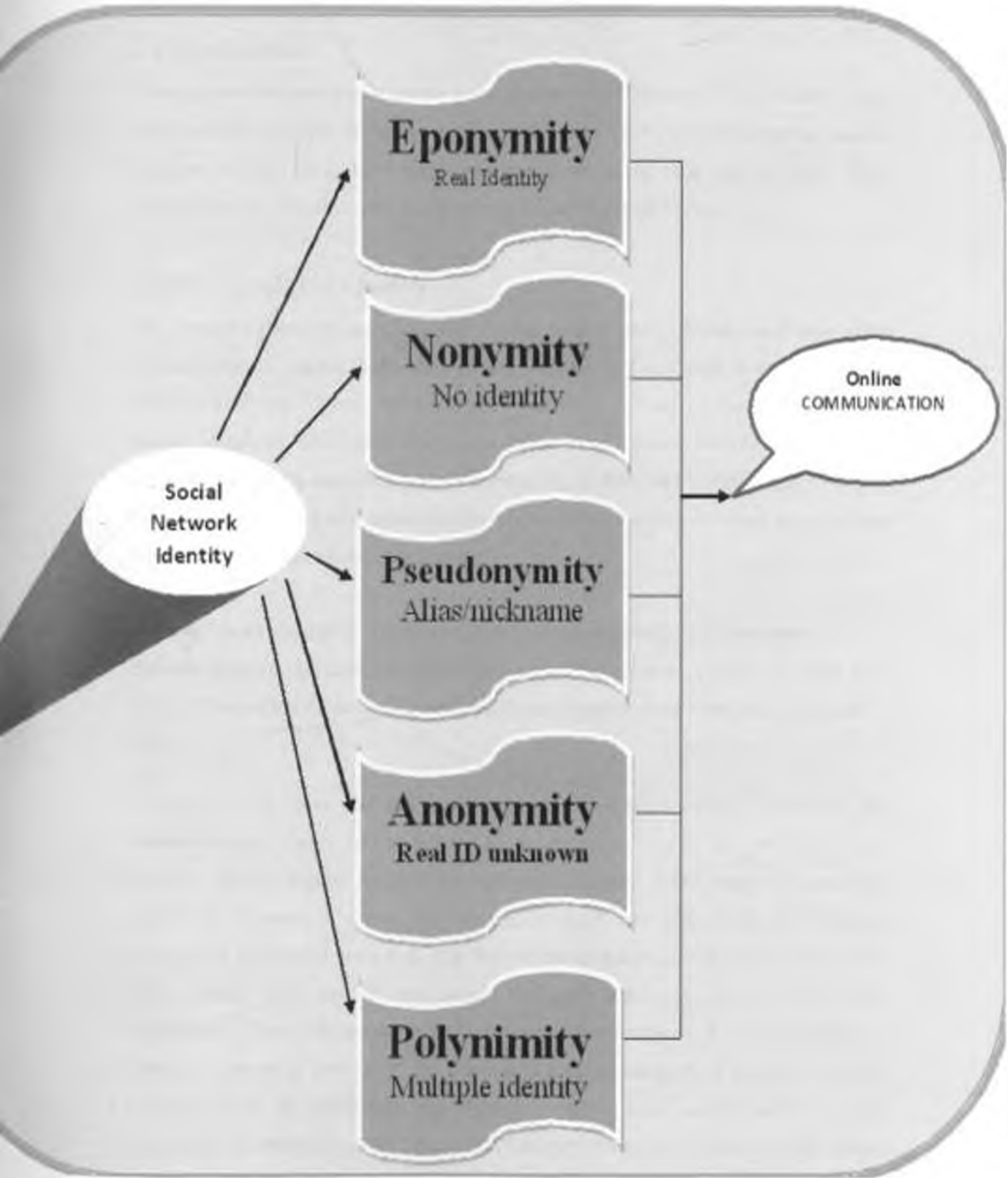
2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review discusses the general concept of identity. It then makes a step down to focus on some of the reasons that inform the choice of SNS identities and the activities in these sites. After that, it narrows down to the main area of study, SNSs identity change. The final part is a summary of the literature review

2.2 The Concept of Identity

The concept of identity has a long history – as long as human beings have been using different types of masks (both material and abstract) to cover their faces and identity. (Wiszniewski and Coyne, 2002). Identity has been defined as the combination of essential qualities, which characterise and differentiate a person from others, that is the continuum between sameness and differentiation. (Jakala and Berki, 2010). Identity has also been defined as a sense of integration of self in which different aspects come together in a unified whole. (Deux2001).

"Identity" is a term that is widely used and, as a consequence, can mean many different things to different people. Identity according to Deaux, (2001) may refer to a sense of integration of the self, in which different aspects come together in a unified whole

In another case, Stets and Burke, (2000) argue that there exists a very thin line between identity theory and social identity theory which may in the near future cease to exist. Identity theory, which is the core of an identity, is the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role and the incorporation into self, of the meaning and expectation associated with that role and its performance. (Burke and Tully 1977; Thoits, 1986). These are the expectations that guide behaviour. (Burke, 1991; Burke and Reitzes, 1981). On the other hand, in social identity theory, a social identity is a person's knowledge that he or she belongs to a social category or a group. A social group is a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category.(Hogg and Abrams, 1988). Social

identity has also been viewed as an individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership of social groups (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). In other words, it is an individual-based perception of what defines the "us" associated with any internalized group membership. This can be distinguished from the notion of personal identity which refers to self-knowledge that derives from the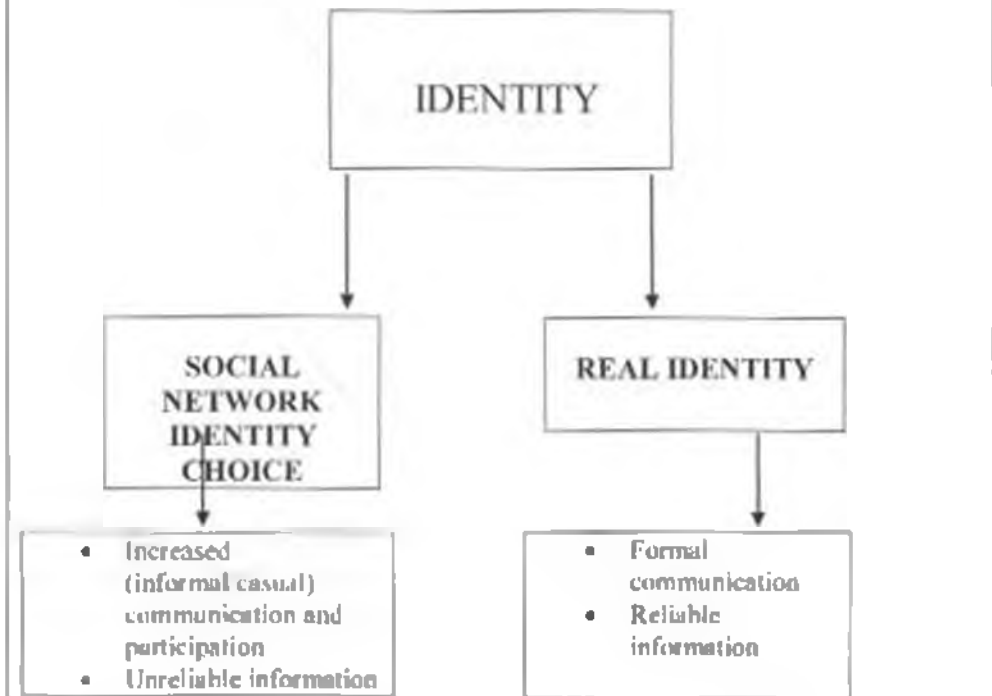 individual's unique attributes. Although there is a thin line between social identity and identity theory, that is, the basis of self classification is different in the two theories (groups or categories versus role), theorists in both traditions recognize that individuals view themselves in terms of meaning imparted by a structured society. (McCall and Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980; Turner et al, 1987)

2.3 Social Network Identity Choice

Social Network Sites such as *Myspace* and *Facebook* have millions of users who incorporate these sites into their daily lives, checking their profile multiple times a day. These social network sites are comprised of individuals whose social networks constitute social communities. (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). With the volume of the users and frequency of the usage among the users, there are inevitable consequences.

Those with an interest in how popular engagement with digital technologies generates new socio-cultural practices, so argues Guy Merchant (2012), cannot fail to ignore the rapid absorption of online social networking into the daily lives of friends, families, and fellow professionals. Despite the presence of significant numbers who do not engage in *Facebook* and the like, even the 'refuseniks,' Willet (2009) are aware, at least in general terms, of what they are opting out of and why.

The term Social Network sites (SNSs), Guy Merchant (2012) says is used to describe the social platform and to distinguish them from other forms of techno-sociability: *Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, Flickr, Bebo and Google+* being the most popular. SNSs greatest strength is in the way they support public displays of friendship and

connection. Boyd and Ellison (2008) tie their definition of SNSs to three core characteristics which may determine social identity formation. These are that:

- Individual users or members construct a public or semi-public profile on the site
- Users/members create and list connections with others (friends, followers or buddies)
- Users/members traverse the site through their own and others' friendlists.

From the above, it can be said that the type of social networking one engages in determines the choice of one's social identity.

Engestrom (2007) argues that it is useful to distinguish those social environments specifically designed to promote social interactions and friendship (e.g. *Facebook*) and those that support social networking around a specific activity (e.g. *LinkedIn and Flickr*)

Recent studies show that the degree of success and functionality of virtual communities is incorporated and built through trustworthy group interaction. (Werry and Mowbray, 2001). The rise of social software technologies and online social networks impose new challenges for law, security and trust, identity and interaction. (Kollock, 1999; Kimppa, 2007; Berki et al, 2007). The challenges go sometimes as far as to raise questions related to democracy and citizens' degree of participation in private or public virtual communities (Wilhelm, 2000). The existence of cyber-places also challenges the definition of membership since within the digital worlds; inclusivity and exclusivity have totally new semantics or terms of definitions with different applications and tools to facilitate membership management (Berki and Jakala, 2010)

Participation in virtual communities shows a range of diverse interests, different roles and different tasks. Leisure time and hobbies have also become net-based which increases the use of different e-spaces during and after work hours. Studies by Earnshaw et al., (2001); Kisielniki, (2002); Werry and Mowbray (2001) concentrate

on commercial exploitation of leisure and use of internet as a means of controlling personal and collective identity, (Wallace, 1999; Jakala and Berki, 2004)Other studies regarding motivations for Internet usage point to image building amongst others being a drive (Ho Cho, 2007).

As earlier said identity in cyberspace is not and sometimes cannot be a constant attribute of someone's online presence. It is a rather fluid concept which evolves during the time, enriched or simplified according to the communication needs of the cyber surfer. Again, different social contexts may trigger an individual to think, feel and act on basis of his personal, family or national "level of self," (Turner et al, 1987). Apart from the "level of self", an individual may have multiple social identities It is, however, important to note that not all members of social network community have multiple identities. Often times, social and mass media dissolves social boundaries related to time and space, cyber-communities and social software seem to also dissolve the boundaries of identity. This in turn, questions the trust, privacy and confidentiality of interaction, (Berki and Jakala2010).

Understanding cyberspace requires exploring the meaning of individual and group (collective) identities, in particular, how they are built, and how they affect interaction and participation, (Renninger and Shumar, 2002; Georgiadou et al., 2004). Arguably, the identity shared by cyber-societies participants should be empowering to facilitate participation and support communication. Curiously though, as my argument seems to lean towards technology enhancing or determining communication, Guy Merchant (2012) posits that technology may make new connections possible, but there is little evidence that it actually determines them.

2.4 Activities in Social Network Sites (SNSs)

2.4.1 Teens and Branding

According to an adapted study by a sociologist Schwab (2012) entitled Pew Internet: *Teens and Social Networks* teens are increasingly turning to SNSs to follow artists and pop culture icons, take part in (or create) memes and trends, and express their innermost thoughts. More and more, teens are also using SNSs as a way to escape their parents' prying eyes, it seems many teens are keeping their accounts private, away from their parents and sometimes also from those who might bully them online. SNSs also allow for anonymity, so teens can take on new (or multiple) personalities, and further isolate themselves from parents or unwanted peers.

In one interesting Pew study, statistic show that teens use of digital media is growing overall; 80% of middle class and above teens use online SNSs accounts.

For teenagers, SNSs are outlet for stress, gossip, and chatter. It however becomes more than refreshing if your trendy topic gets mentioned by a celebrity or teen idol, your popularity is sure to rise. SNSs are slowly but surely becoming digital autograph book.

The following include but not limited to some of the things that teens do in order to have an edge over the rest and become a brand:

1. **Have a voice.** Increasingly, friends are looking for peer brands who are interesting, human and personable. Building a brand voice that is clever, creative and sustainable will appeal to teenagers.
2. **Be conversational.** Constant presence and replies to regular posts, jumping in to existing conversations and creating your own is extremely exciting to this age group. Ask questions. Ask for advice and input. Look for questions to answer. And make it about everything but yourself. If you do conversation well, you'll get plenty of followers and friends and as a result heroic status and love.

3. **Learn what's cool. But don't overdo it.** In order to win over this group, we have to figure it out. Enlist appropriately-aged kids, cousins and neighbors to throw concepts at and get feedback. Be careful not to go too far, or you could see a backlash.

4. **Make them feel special.** Teens don't want to just be another follower, they want to be followed and recognized.

5. **Be real.** Teens have their alert on, and they're becoming increasingly savvy consumers, s/he that seeks their attention must not assume s/he can pull anything over on them. One has to appear honest, transparent and open with them and they'll show you their power to rally friends (and frenemies) to your cause.

Many teens found an early home in Facebook, a place where they could keep up with friends and share photos, stories, and just generally "hang out" together.

Not in the distant past, when cell phones were just getting popular, few teens could be seen anywhere without a cell phone glued to their ear. It was their constant travel companion, and still is — but for a slightly different reason. Teens discovered texting as a way to engage, keep in touch, and chat back and forth with each other, but the cell phone has now shifted from their ear to their hands, as they "let their fingers do the walking" over the text keyboard.

Geoffrey Graybeal, a PhD student and journalism instructor in the Grady College at the University of Georgiain in a debate about social branding today advises that as soon as one begins to use social media one should be conscientious of how his or her actions on those sites and others one communicates with contribute to your overall digital identity. With this awareness, the next step, of course, is to actively manage your social identity and to begin to shape your social brand

According to Graybeal (2012), teen branding among children start early enough. At times, children as young as eleven start building their personal brand on social sites. Whatever the age group, if one is actively using social media sites then one generally

starts to get concerned about developing her social brand. Of course, developing a specific niche or areas of interest, even at a young age, work best in developing your brand.

Just as technologies evolve, our personal brands may as well change as we change and evolve new exciting and sophisticated brands. The biggest challenge is to either integrate the different social media presences to a unified brand presence and/or to use the different social media outlets accordingly.

With these entire craze, teenagers slowly come to learn that social media is affecting branding and particularly that of younger, naive and vulnerable audiences.

Amongst the effects include the fact that social media knows no boundaries or age limits for the potential to breakout among the masses. Young people have become overnight sensations.

To this age group however, the good news is that they can get a message out, brand themselves as experts in a particular topic they are passionate about or convey their talents to the masses. The downside, and the danger though, is that one mistake or social media misstep can irreparably harm their social brand

Source: Stephanie Schwab March 28, 2012 Stephanie Schwab, @socialologist. Also www.socialmediaschoolny.com, www.digitalfamilysummit.com and www.hashable.com

Geoffrey Graybeal, February 28, 2012,is a PhD student and journalism instructor in the Grady College at the University of Georgia. Source: WordPress.com.

2.4.2 A Related Study

An interesting study by McKenna and Bargh (2006) set out to observe social activities among members of a virtual newsgroup, their response to survival in this virtual medium and consequent identity morphology. An important question they asked was why do people create multiple identities? The response was that in many cases it is an individual's attempt to create a virtual personality that others accept. In the original model of Social identity Theory, Tajfel explained that the propellant for an individual identifying with a social group was the emotional fulfilment it brought by just in itself identifying with that particular social group (McKenna and Bargh, 2006) Real life situation offers no options for identity modification but the virtual world present an array of options that one can exploit in his quest to construct another identity for a person who does not receive emotional fulfilment from their real-life identities. Benkler (2006) adds that networked individuals are able to 'reorganise their social relations in ways that fit them better' and 'loosen bonds that are too hierarchical and stifling or fill in the gaps where 'their real world relations seem lacking.' Gergen (2003) refers to it simply as the 'floating world.' Dye (2007) pointed out that this new medium has created a new generation of individuals whose identities are defined by their connections and the content they produce online.

Barney (2004) argues that the basis of online relationship is primarily shared personal interests rather than some form of obligation. As a result of users, networked individualism and choice of social encounters, there is creation of multiple identities: one that satisfies the real world and one or others that satisfy the virtual community as determined by their social network site. Given this choice, users are creating their own world in which different personal identities are displayed or more so choosing the personal identity that is perceived more socially advantageous over the other. Pilzer states that in many cases the change of identity is an individual's attempt to create a virtual personality that others accept and that a decrease in social capital has the potential for an individual to create an alternative identity given a virtual community setting. In one study for example, a person continued to be a group member only when

it added affirmative characteristics, such as power, self-efficacy, and the need to belong, to the person's social identity, (McKenna and Bargh2006). Inevitably in a situation when one can choose their group affiliation to compromise these affirmative characteristics, they will take advantage. He further states that a motivation for one to enact an alternative social network identity is that they can conceal their marginalised (powerless position in society or group) identity.

Concealment enables the absence of visibility to a group, which eliminates group-members from comparing each other but in order for a member to construct a virtual identity they must first feel the primary need to belong and second have the general motive to obtain a positive self-image. (McKenna and Bargh, 2006). Additionally a person that conceals their identity in a virtual setting will feel a sense of belonging with their alternative identity simply by the inclusion of a group, positive feedback he or she receives, and the "feelings of membership." (Blanchard & Markus, 2002). Creating an alternative identity is not just relegated to the virtual community.

As a parting shot, McKenna and Bargh, (2006) emphasise that if people use the social networking sites on the convention that all personalities are real, they put a great amount of trust in the system. If that convention is broken there may be failure to a part of the social networks or possibly the network community itself. Although a collapse of the network community is a worst case scenario, the real trouble is to the individual. The self-deprecation is a personal issue of low self-esteem. Moreover, formation of multiple alternative identities is a psychological and psychosocial issue, consequently affecting the mental health of the public and decreased individual self-confidence. Importantly not all members of a social network community have multiple identities, but it is important to note that while using such media, trust in such a setting is compromised.

Some studies have shown that a decrease in social capital increases crime rates, decreased public health (psychologically and psychosocial ailments), and decreased economic efficiency (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Individuals seize the opportunity to

reverse their social fortunes (or lack thereof) in this virtual setting simply because they can. As a result of a person choosing an alternative identity, in response there are indicating self-disapproval and self-marginalization.

2.5 Social Network Identity Change

Picking the cue from the above discussion, it is evident that SNSs identity change is becoming more and more a common phenomenon. This therefore begs the question: why would one opt to communicate using a changed identity? Is there any influence SNI has on communication? The first question —though briefly tackled in this paper- could be the focus of yet another study. The latter question is the focus of this study.

In an attempt to answer this question, this paper shall focus on the teens who are not only becoming SN addicts but are also joining online SN with an array of changed identities. The social network of choice is *Facebook*.

Perhaps one of the major concerns that may crop up is what informed the choice of *Facebook* as the social network of study against the other numerous SNSs. As already mentioned under delimitation of this study in chapter one, it is true that there are many social network sites that facilitate communication but *Facebook* is ideal because of its popularity with teenagers which offer critical insight into their participation patterns that do and will exist on other sites that cater for this age-group. Studies carried out by De Rosa et al for instance found that 61% of college students using social network sites use *Myspace* and from another sample 94% use *Facebook*. (Boyd 2006).

To demonstrate this further, the following study may prove useful.

2.5.1 Internet Usage Trends in Kenya

Synovate (currently Ipsos-Synovate - Kenya) carried out a research published on February 2010 aimed at establishing Internet usage trends in Kenya. The outcome, the "Digital Drive" report which is probably the first of its kind in Kenya identified the following key trends:

(Please see the report here:
http://www.rich.co.ke/rctrbs/downloads/TheDigitalDivide.ppt)

By the year 2010, *Facebook* had registered over 2 million users and that *Email* was being discarded in favour of SNSs like *Facebook* and *Twitter*. It further found out that 79% of internet users are members of *Facebook* and that the internet usage in the last two years grew by 80%. Further, the study found out that Kenyans internet users spend approximately 70 minutes online during each visit. The research further found out that there were, by then, over 1 million internet users in Kenya, as well as 18 million mobile subscribers. This therefore confirms a shift towards an era of digital communication and interaction like never witnessed before. (Source: Ipsos Synovate – Kenya

Please See this link http://radar.oreilly.com/fbookdemo_us_20090415.jpg. and http://mbozzmnoma.wordpress.com/2010/03/02/kenya-has-2-million-facebooks-synovate-e%e2%80%99-99mon-give-me-a-break/)

2.6 Types of SNS identities

Bearing in mind that the latest information and communication technology has gradually transformed the virtual communities to active meeting places for sharing information and supporting human actions, feelings and needs. Berki and Jakala (2010), guided by the latest cyber trends, presented a way of classifying and viewing self-presentation regarding cyber identity management in virtual communities. Their study was based on the premise that cyber-surfers prefer to attribute themselves and

accordingly present themselves to others. They therefore coined distinct types or classes of identities: *eponymity, nonimity, anonymity, pseudonymity and polynymity.*

The following is a brief summary of these classes according to Berki and Jakala (2010).

2.6.1 Eponymity

To be identified and recognised by name (eponym) and other distinctive individual features is a state of eponymity. It is a state of having a set of known, distinctive characteristics such as name, title and affiliation used for identification and to some degree for authentication.

2.6.2 Nonimity:

This refers to an identity that avoids detection. A non appearance identity. A stealth mode of identity. A silent, non observable and no public identity. It is the state of being identified by neither any name nor any other distinctive features. In this case, nobody knows whether a person exists when it is not apparent while participating. The identity is even non-communicative and non-interactive with other participants. No one is aware of the online presence and sometimes not even the actions of a person with no identity. A nonymous person for instance may harbour malicious actions; theft of online identity or of information.

2.6.3 Anonymity

This is a state of not being known by name. It is the lack of distinctiveness. The actions of an anonymous person cannot be acknowledged. It can also be seen as a negative identity. The online participants are aware of the presence of anonymous person even without their direct participation. This, however; is not the case with nonymous persons. In addition, anonymous persons are not necessarily silent like the nonymous persons. One way of entering cyber-places is by strategically choosing anonymity: a state at which the identity of the communicator is not apparent.

2.6.4 Pseudonymity

This is state of being identified by a pseudonym: a name that is not the communicator's real name. This is to say that being pseudonymous in virtual community means bearing a set of false distinctive characteristics.

2.6.5 Polynymity

This refers to having and presenting oneself with many different names. It can also be the state of presenting oneself with so many pseudonyms. It can also be a case of real and artificial distinctive names and characteristics which are presented in interaction with different persons or groups

2.7 Summary of the Literature Review

Since internet is a relatively new means of communication where identity formations have recently been paid attention to and bearing in mind that cyberspace has no physical borders, the effect of these types of identities in communication begs for answers and this is the subject of this study.

From the information gathered so far, it is becoming apparent that Social networking is being propelled by the urge to belong hence the careful choice of the identity. This fulfils one of the basic human drives according to Maslow's (1987) *Theory of Human Needs* Significantly, it evokes the idea that who you know matters and with the more settling idea that making this visible is more important. This in a way has redefined the term community.

According to Rheinghold (1993), 'virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace.' Starting from short message exchanges and advancing to more demanding forms of e-discussions and e-interaction, humans express their sympathy,

empathy, concern and demonstrate their needs to communicate and ability to support other humans. (Preece, 2000).

Members of social network sites are people with distinct social identities. The formation by some of alternative identities in many cases among other issues is due to their quest to increase their social capital, give them freedom of association, and hide their weaker self. At other times it could be meant to intrude or take a peek at one's communication, association and interaction. These among others, form the hypothesis of this study. As things stand, little if any study and particularly from Westlands District in Nairobi has been carried out to find out why most teens opt to change their social network identities. This study sets out to either verify these hypotheses or establish what informs this social trend

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The research methodology discusses the various methods that were be used when carrying out the research, the description of the sample and the sampling procedure. It also discusses the description of the instruments, data collection and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

Research design can be defined as schemes, outlines or plans that are used to generate answers to research problems, (Orodho2004)

The study used ex post facto design which according to Kerlinger (1973) is a systematic empirical inquiry in which the researcher does not have a direct control of the independent variables because the manifestation has already occurred or are not manipulable. This design is appropriate because the selection of social network identities and the consequent effect on communication had already occurred or was already occurring and the researcher could not manipulate any variable The researcher was to only try to determine the type of identities their relationship and consequent effects occurring between the variables. (Orodho, 2004).

3.3 Target population

The study was based on a cross section of teenagers aged 14-18 majorly from Nairobi's upmarket Westlands District's private schools. This formed a good target population due to their economic levels that not only empower them to have easy access to social communication tools like phones, computers, internet and ipads but also their constant contact with these tools give them ease of use and manipulation of the same. Similarly, there socio-economic background is fairly at par which was likely to inform their character. The study restricted itself to ages 14-18; basically high school pupils, as this group was not only homogenous in character but also formed a major stage of social identification, quest for association, recognition and social identity crises.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

Since the population was large and the geographical location big, simple random sampling was ideal. Given that the socio-economic lifestyle of these teenagers is more or less identical a purposive sampling of the target schools was to help guide the study. Three schools of a similar socio-economic back ground were picked. Having picked three schools, and through the assistance of the school's administration from the selected schools, at least 20 students were randomly picked from each form from form one to form four as the respondents. Questionnaires were administered to these students/ respondents. This, it was felt would give a feasible number of 200 to 240 respondents in total.

3.5 Research Instruments

3.5.1 Questionnaires and Interviews.

The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from the students. The questionnaire consisted of Likert Scale statements which were closed and open ended questions, leading the researcher towards his goal. Likert scale was used because the research was attitude based and the academic levels of these students it was thought would not empower them to give detailed analytical look at some of the reasons or consequences of their choice of identities. In addition to questionnaires, the same questions were used to interrogate a few students for a further clarification, justification and explanation of the responses so far collected.

3.5.2 Focused Group Discussions

This took about 40 minutes. It aimed at bringing the target population together. Through group power, the target population were relaxed and free to share. The two sessions of FGDs helped identify and unlock some areas that had not been asked.

3.6 Validity of the Instruments

Validity is the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure, Borg and Gall, (1989). To check on validity, a pilot study was conducted with 30 respondents. From the three schools selected, 30 respondents were picked randomly. That means that 10 students were selected randomly from each school. The students were given questionnaires to answer, and placed in a Focused group discussion and the content validity test done.

Also, the questionnaire was given to the supervisor to clear all ambiguities, omissions and errors. Then corrections were then done.

3.7 Instrument Reliability

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) define reliability as a measure of the degree to which a research instrument yields consistent results or data after repeated trials. To ensure reliability, the test-retest method was used. This involved administering the same questionnaire after an interval of one week to the same group and then a comparison of the two scores was done. This was aimed at finding out if the results were consistent to determine the reliability of the instrument. Two schools were used for this purpose.

The Pearson's Product-Moment was used to check reliability. The correlation coefficient ranged between 0-1. A correlation coefficient of 0.5 and above was considered high enough to deem the instrument reliable. For raw data, the formula for Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient 'r' is as follows:

$$r = \frac{\sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)/N}{\sqrt{\left[\sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2/N\right]\left[\sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2/N\right]}}$$

Where   r - Pearson's Product-Moment Coefficient of correlation index

                  N – the number of subjects

                  X scores of test one

                  Y scores of test two

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

A letter was collected from the University of Nairobi to allow the researcher to conduct the research. The letters was taken to the principals of the sampled schools for permission. Once permission was granted, the researcher arranged with the respective school's administration to determine the date and time for the administration of the students' questionnaires, interviews and Focused group Discussions. In some schools, questionnaires were left behind.

3.9 Data Analyses Techniques

Descriptive statistics was used. All the data from the field was summarised and interpreted. For the qualitative analysis where the interviews were involved, the analyses involved quick impressionable summary which included summarising key findings, explanations, interpretations and conclusions while in the field. Then a narrative report was written including quotations from the respondents.

For quantitative analyses, the questionnaires were coded and then the frequency tables drawn from a tallying system. From there, percentages, and frequency distribution tables were used to show the different patterns of data categories. Diagrams like pie

charts and bar graphs and frequency polygons and histograms were later generated. Thereafter, through the use of appropriate software, conclusions were drawn from the collected data.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation, Interpretation and Discussion of Data

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis and discussions on the findings of the data collected from the field. For ease of discussion, analysis and presentation, the data is presented in tables, pie charts and bar graphs.

4.2 Questionnaire Return Rate

The Study focused on a sample population of 240 teenagers from whom their responses was intended to inform the trends in communication among teenagers. The table below (Table 4.1) shows the sample that participated and their return rate in percentages.

Table 4.1: Questionnaire return rate

Respondents	Administered	Returned	Spoilt	% Return Rate
School 1	80	77	5	96
School 2	80	74	0	92.5
School 3	80	64	5	80
Total	240	215	10	89.58

An 89.58% return rate from the target population being above the 70% from all the respondents makes the study be deemed reliable. The first set of respondents where 96% return rate was realised was a population that the researcher had direct contact with hence the follow up was easy. However three respondents were unable to trace their questionnaires at the time of collection. In the other two target stations, the supervision was under different authority. Some of the respondents overstayed with the questionnaires hence at the time of retrieval; quite a number could not be traced. Despite these hitches, the total collected was still good enough to warrant the study to go on.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The respondents were required to provide some demographic information. The information they were to give principally included their gender and age. Table 4.2 presents a summary of the findings.

Table 4. 2: Gender and Ages of all respondents

How old are you?

What is your gender?			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
male	Valid	13-15 yrs.	30	25.0	25.0	25.0
		16-18 yrs.	84	70.0	70.0	95.0
		above 18 yrs.	6	5.0	5.0	100.0
		Total	120	100.0	100.0	
female	Valid	below 13 yrs.	1	1.2	1.2	1.2
		13-15 yrs.	35	41.2	41.7	42.9
		16-18 yrs.	47	55.3	56.0	98.8
		above 18 yrs.	1	1.2	1.2	100.0
		Total	84	98.8	100.0	
	Missing	System	1	1.2		
	Total		85	100.0		

4.3.1 Distribution by Gender and Age

From the above table, a high percentage of participants were teenagers between ages 16-18. 70% of the respondents in this age bracket were male while 56% were female. There was only one female respondent (1.2%) who was above 18 years while the males were six (5%) in that age bracket. Of the valid questionnaires, 59% of the respondents were male while 41% of them were female. It is worth noting at this point that it was curious that most of the questionnaires that were not received back were majorly from female respondents. Some took long to return their questionnaires and an oral Focus Group Discussion (FGD) established that some of them did not want to "betray" their operations online. On further probing of the meaning of betrayal yet the questionnaire never expected them to write either their names or anything so intruding, the answer given simply said that female gender, unlike their male counterpart is normally a bit secretive so some still felt that putting their personal information

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on paper may touch on their guilt conscience. Ironically, through FGD, it emerged that the female gender is apparently more active on social networks than the male gender. The reason for this was however not within the province of this study and could form a basis of yet another study. But the findings here seem to touch on Bonds and Raacke's (2010) research entitled *Individual Differences Research*, which indicated that women and girls tend to post more: (a) personal information, (b) sexual pictures, and (c) links to sexual communities than men and boys.

4.4 Level of Study of respondents

As earlier mentioned under Methodology in Chapter 3, this target population (of teenagers aged 14-18) was predominantly to be found in high school.

Table 4.3: Level of Study

<div align="center">

In which class are you?

</div>

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	form 1	18	23.4	25.3	25.3
	form 2	39	23.9	25.8	51.1
	form 3	39	19.0	20.5	71.6
	form 4	54	26.3	28.4	100.0
	Total	190	92.7	100.0	
Missing	System	15	7.3		
Total		205	100.0		

The high school students form the bulk of teenagers who are perceived to be very vibrant in Social networking and this study did actually prove that many of them have social networking accounts. From Table 4.3 above one is able to see representation per class.

A previous study by Raacke and Bonds-Raacke, (2008) confirms this initial presupposition in their research where they posited that networking sites are becoming popular at the high school level and students are entering into to college already using these sites.

4.5 Rating of Respondents with Social Networking Accounts

Amongst the first questions that a respondent was expected to answer was to verify whether s/he has a social networking account. Of the 205 valid responses, 200 (97.5%) of the respondents admitted being owners of social networking accounts. Only five (2.5%) said that they never had any social networking account. Interestingly, of the five that claimed not to own social networking accounts, some still went ahead to fill in details of their purported operations on social networking. Through the FGD, it was established that the question was not the problem and most of them understood it. These operations without social networking accounts were attributed to those who use friends or relatives accounts probably because of curiosity, parental guidance that they should not have a social networking account or lack of constant access to the gadgets like the personal computer or even preferably the cellular phone. Table 4.4 illustrates this access to SNAs.

Table 4.4: Rating of responses of those students who had social networking account(s)

Do you have social networking account?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	200	97.6	97.6	97.6
	no	5	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	205	100.0	100.0	

4.6 Number of Social Networking Accounts

Since the study focused on the influence of identity on communication, it was imperative to establish the number of social networking accounts that the respondents have and their preferred type of identities in these social networking accounts. This, the researcher expected would ultimately lead to their (identity type) probable influence on communication. From table 4.5 below, it was evident that most teenagers are owners of multiple accounts. Only 28.9% said they had one social networking account. 27.9% owned two, 11.4% owned five accounts and there was one respondent who said he had seven (7) social networking accounts. Table 4.5 below gives a summary of the findings.

Table 4.5: Rating of the number of social networking accounts of respondents

How many social networking accounts do you have?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	58	28.3	28.9	28.9
	2	56	27.3	27.9	56.7
	3	39	19.0	19.4	76.1
	4	17	8.3	8.5	84.6
	5	23	11.2	11.4	96.0
	6	7	3.4	3.5	99.5
	7	1	.5	.5	100.0
	Total	201	98.0	100.0	
Missing	System	4	2.0		
Total		205	100.0		

An attempt through the questionnaires and an FGD to try and find out why one would have so many social networking accounts yielded various reasons. Amongst them included the admission that various types of communications, friends and contacts required various

accounts. Others said that they had secret accounts just known to a small clique of contacts while others felt it wise to open other accounts when they felt that the one normally in use had either been hacked into or someone (like a parent or guardian)has an access to it or demanded access to it. There was yet another group that opened various accounts for fun or had no sound explanation as to why they had multiple accounts.

4.7 *Facebook* as the Social Networks of Choice.

The hypothesis of the researcher was that most teenagers have *Facebook* as the most preferred social networking of choice. Though the study appreciated the fact that there are numerous social networking sites, it limited its study to *Facebook*. The pie chart below (Chart 4.1) summaries the findings of the most preferred social networking account.

Figure 4.1 Rating of respondents who had Facebook networking site
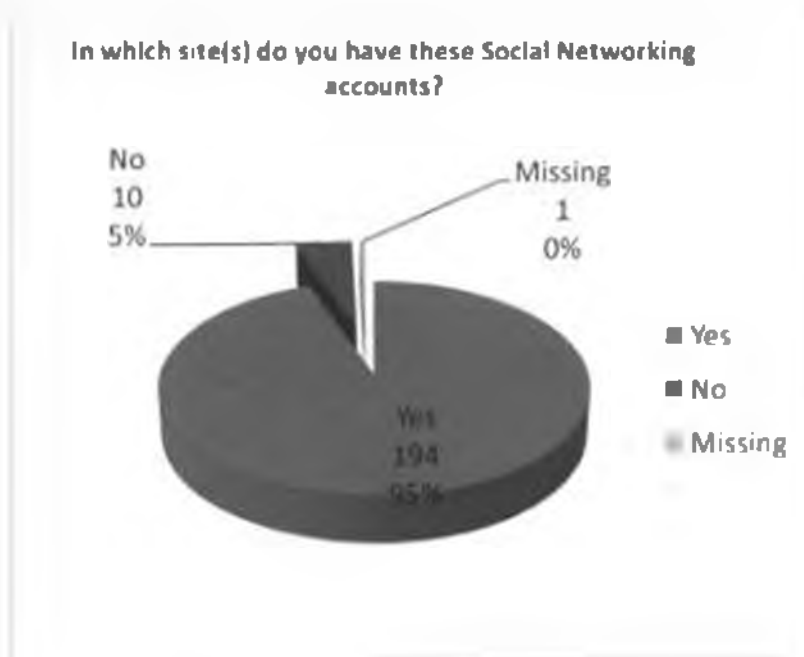
The study found out that most of the multiple accounts held by some of these respondents were actually in one social networking account and *Facebook* was the preferred social

networking account Of all the valid responses, 95% said that *Facebook* was their most preferred choice of networking. Reasons for this ranged from being user friendly, the number of characters that can be used are many, "My friends are mostly in it," allows sharing of pictures and videos and even file attachments through links, and "It is fun."

Of all the respondents, only 5% had social networking accounts in other networks though some of the respondents had these accounts in addition to *Facebook* accounts.

4.8 Choice of Identity

In order to establish the types of identities used in these social networking accounts, the researcher tried to find out the information that the respondents included in their profile; that is their identity.

Figure 4.7: Rating of information included in profile
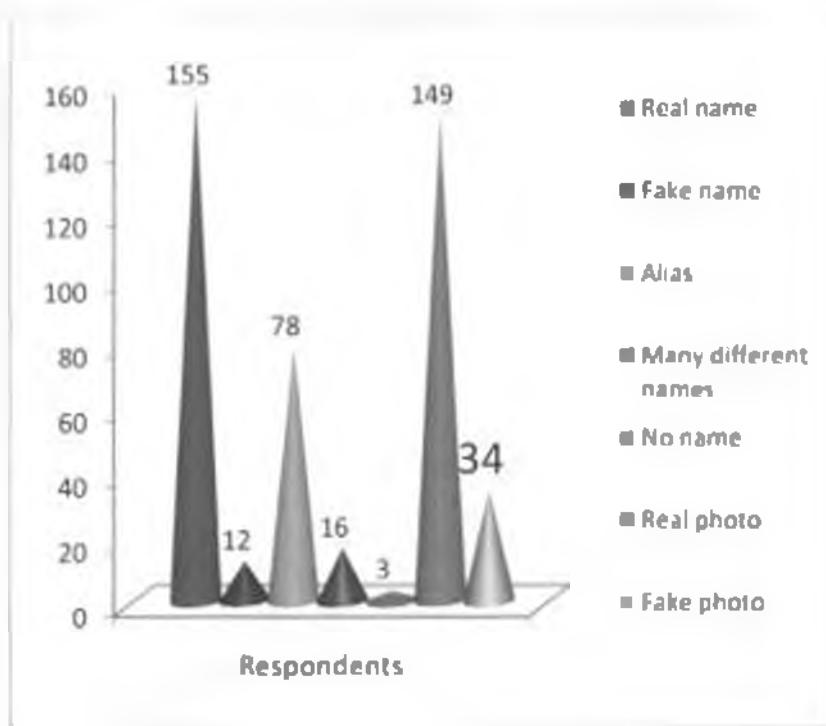
Since the terminologies coined by Berki and Jakala (2010), are relatively new, simpler alternatives were used. Real name and/or Real Photo helped identify eponymous identities, fake names for anonymous, no name for nonymous identities, many different names for polynymous identities and aliases for pseudonymous identities. From the bar graphs above, many teenage respondents said that they used their real names 75.6% (155 205) and real photographs 72.7% (149/205). This could be attributed majorly to two factors:

i.   Due to proper guidance from an authority figure, they are keen on their choices of online contacts hence no serious need to hide identities.

ii. Use of real identies could also be due to the fact that they were young and naïve and are simply responding to the the urge for identification and belonging; hence had not thought of any risk that could lurk.

Of the valid respondences, 38% respondents said they used aliases while 17% said they used fake photographs. 8% respondents admitted having many different names (polynymity) while 6% of the respondents said they were anonymous online users.

4.9 Fun Page Membership

Fun pages are online sites that bring together people with shared interest like sports, politics, matters religious, jokes, fashion and many more. Since these fun pages bring together people with different virtues, the identities used in them appear to be a matter of concern. The study set out to find out the types of identities used in these fun page social networking sites and the consequential influence on communication. Figure 4.8 below presents the findings.

Figure 4.8: Rating of information included on Facebook Fun page
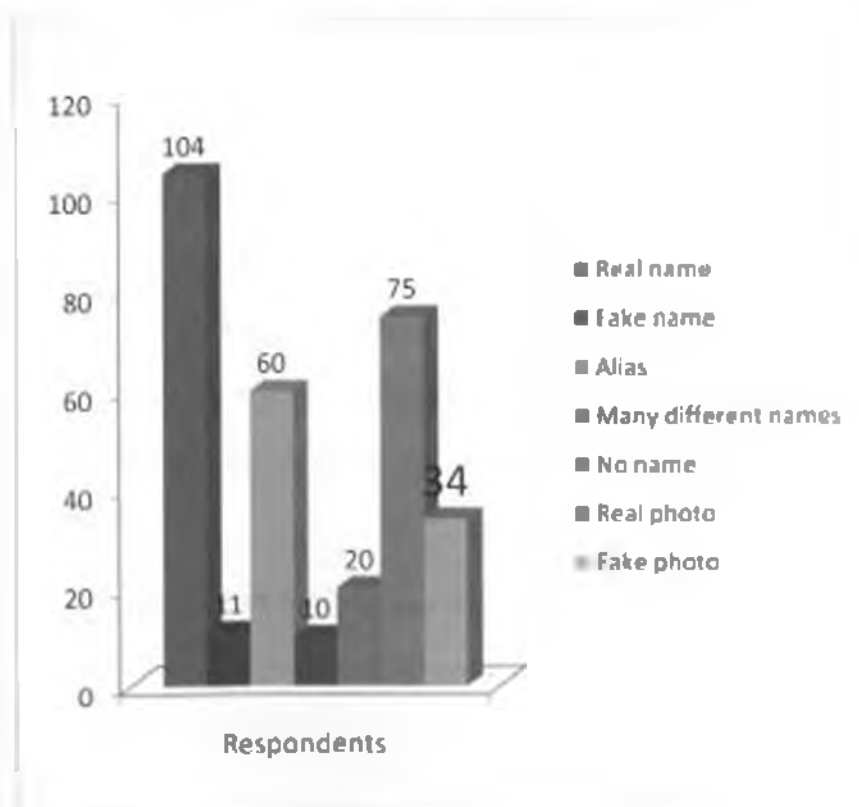
From the respondents, 51% (104) said they used their real names. It is worth noting that for fun page, use of real identities (eponymity) somehow shrunk from 75.6% to 51% and from 149 (73%) to only 75 (36.5%) respondents willing to be identified with their real photographs; that is almost a drop by a half. 29% of the respondents used pseudonyms while another 17% of the respondents preferred to use fake (anonymous) photographs if not none.

A probe into this behaviour established that fun page was considered by the teenagers to be just for what it is: fun; a place where they could express themselves or hear other people's views freely without fear. Some were however hesitant to join and when they joined they opted to hide their identity, their name or even of great concern was their photographs. There was a nonymous lot (10% respondents) majority of whom navigated the fun page but through other people's accounts or other crafty means. Some said that they were very selective on the fun pages that they joined (for example fashion, jokes and sports) some of which they felt posed no great risk even if they used their real names. They were however very keen on where their real photographs were used. Another category joined the fun page to be active consumers of 'fun' without contributing much to avoid being detected by a member who might know them. From this, it was becoming clear that they would have preferred nonymity hence the ones who had only provided their identity details as a ticket for joining the fun page after which almost no one would perceive their presence.

There was another category that provided their real name and real photographs. Most of these eponymous respondents and even some that slightly modified their real names and photographs said that they were keen to belong: a confirmation of an earlier research by

McKenna and Bargh, 2006; who posed that concealment of online identity enables the absence of visibility to a group, which eliminates group-members from comparing each other but in order for a member to construct a virtual identity they must first feel the primary need to belong and second have the general motive to obtain a positive self-image. Additionally a person that conceals their identity in a virtual setting will feel a sense of belonging with their alternative identity simply by the inclusion of a group, positive feedback he or she receives, and the "feelings of membership." (Blanchard and Markus, 2002).

Through virtual communication and interaction, the respondents said that changing or modifying their identities made them feel 'cool or gish '' slang words for great. With these alternative or modified identities, they have been able to express themselves freely; a phenomenon that in a way has helped some of them to discover their talents and be creative. Amongst the talents cited included art e.g. counselling, humourists, rappers and musicians. In turn, these fun pages have made some of them to become celebrities amongst their peers and gain new contacts.

4.10 Types of Online Friends and Types of Identity

The fifth item of the questionnaire wanted to find out if it is true that different online friends needed different online identities. The findings are captured in figure 4.9 below.

Figure 4.9: Rating on different social networking identity choices

Do different online friends and contacts require different types of identity?

Most times 1.2 1%
Yes 16 8%
Sometimes 77 41%
No [...] [...]%

Legend:
- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
- Most times
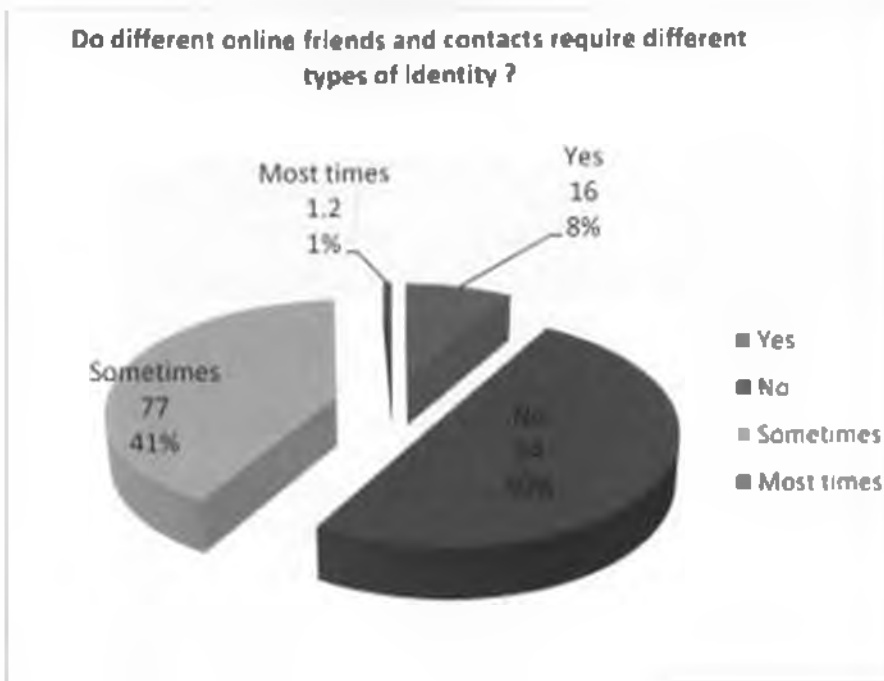
Interestingly, this question divided the respondents right in the middle with one half giving negative responses. The other half gave a variety of shades of the affirmative responses. 41% of them felt that yes, sometimes different online friends and contacts require different online identities while 16% were straight forward and said they actually do. A one percent intensified it by saying that they do require different online identities most of the times. This portrays a certain element of uncertainty of a group that is probably yet to experience any online risk.

4.11 Influence of Online Identity on Online Communication

Having established that the group under study is actually active in social networking and the types of identities that they have, it was the purpose of this paper to explore the influence of social networking identities on communication. Apart from what has already been discussed, Table 4.10 gives more insight into this.

Table 4.10: Influence of online identity on online communication

Key: H: Hardly.   S: Sometimes.   Oft: Often   V.O: Very Often

	How often would you respond to friends' requests, posts and comments if	H	S	Oft	V.O
a.	They used their real names and photographs?	4%	16%	34%	46%
b.	They used their aliases nick names?	14%	43%	34%	9%
c.	They used fake names and/or fake/non human being photo(s)?	53%	28%	13%	6%
d.	They hid their identity?	71%	16%	9%	4%
e.	They kept on changing their identities and/or profiles?	63%	23%	10%	4%
f.	How often do people with fake identities make posts?	6%	14%	24%	56%
g.	How often do people with true identities make posts?	5%	22%	44%	29%
h.	How often do you make posts on fun page sites?	43%	40%	11%	6%

From the above table that captures the crux of this study, choice of identity and especially online identity appear to have a major bearing on online communication. Eponymous people (those who use real online identities) tend to excite some confidence in their online communication. 46% of the respondents admitted to be very willing to respond to friends' requests, comments and posts if they used their real identities. 34% would often respond while only 4% would hardly respond

There is; however, a slow shift to the left when the identity is varied. When people use pseudonyms, (aliases and/nick names) the interaction is slowed a bit. The 46% that would

very often communicate when people used their real identities now shrinks to only 9% as most of them (43%) now opt to communicate sometimes and 34% would often communicate. The number that would hardly communicate now grows to 14% from 4%. Probably, the communication here, though not as active as when real identities are used, is still fairly active because some pseudonyms (aliases and nicknames) are common knowledge to friends and are at times equal substitutes of real names.

Anonymous people apparently would have a bigger chunk of people who would hardly communicate with them while those who are unknown or undetected (nonymous) would suffer even more as lesser and lesser people are willing to interact with them. People who keep changing their online identities would suffer the same problem as few (4%) people will be willing to communicate with them.

Interestingly, it is these people who have altered their identities that are highly active online communicators with 56% being often communicators. This seems to suggest that people who would generally appear silent would emerge from their cocoons when masked and talk more when in the comfort of alternative identities.

From the above findings, it is almost clear that inasmuch as online communication seem to be taking a centre role pushing the traditional face to face communication to the periphery, scepticism is still abound with confidence building in terms of identity used still playing a pivotal role in enhancing online communication. People generally appear to be willing to communicate with the others that they can 'trust,' an element that real identity helps in

realising. Real identity seems to exude confidence, trust and most likely reliability. Alternative identity excites doubt, lack of trust and probably ill or skewed motive.

A 2000 study, published in the *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, by Papacharissi and Rubin explored computer mediated communication through the Uses and Gratifications lens. They posed several research questions and explored the relationships between them. The questions focused on relationships between motives for use, effect of antecedents and media perceptions on motives, and outcomes of use based on motives. A summary statement of the findings in the discussion section of the document explained the findings this way:

> *It appears those who were more mobile, economically secure, satisfied with life, comfortable with approaching others in an interpersonal context, and who felt valued in their interpersonal encounters preferred the more instrumental Internet uses, such as information seeking. Those who were less satisfied and who felt less valued in their face-to-face communication used the Internet as a functional alternative to interpersonal communication, or to fill time.*
>
> (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000, p.192)

From the above citation, it can be argued that those who are economically secure hence satisfied with and valued in life prefer the more instrumental Internet uses, such as information seeking hence might not see the need of changing their identity. On the other

hand, those who feel less satisfied in life and less valued in their face-to-face communication are likely to use alternative online identity to prop up their image or massage their ego amongst other things since to them the main significance of the Internet is one of a functional alternative to interpersonal communication, or merely to fill time.

4.12 Expression of Confidence in Online Communication

Item No. 9 of the questionnaire was geared towards establishing the confidence levels of the people who engage in online communication vis a vis online communication factoring in the various types of identities. Figure 4.11 below captures the findings.

Figure 4.11: Confidence Levels in Online Communication
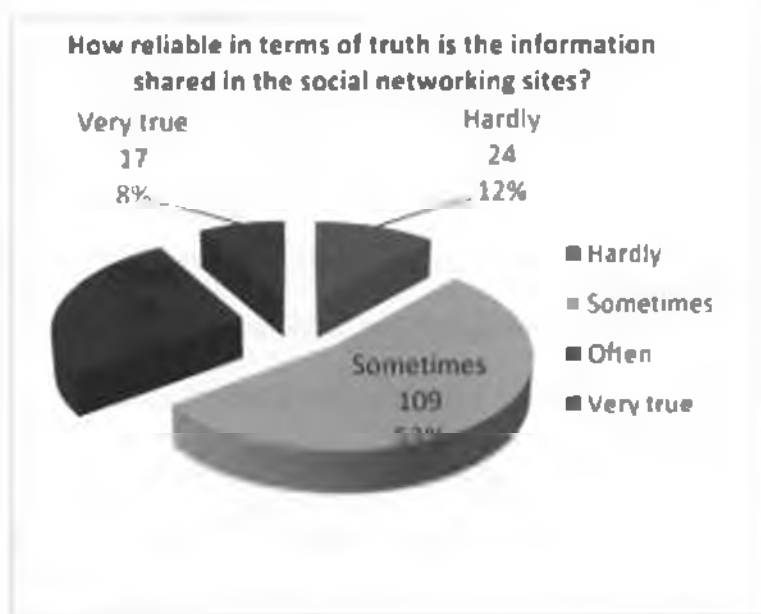
From the findings, only 17% felt that online communication is normally very true. 12% feel online communication is hardly ever true. Majority seem to feel that online communication is

sometimes true and sometimes not true. This feeling was expressed by slightly over a half (53%) of the respondents.

This seems to paint a picture that online communication still has to grapple with winning the confidence of netizens as most online users feel that this type of communication is a necessary evil. Carter M. S. (2008) equally paints a glimmer picture about having full confidence in social networking information when she say that Facebook is completely interactive in every sense of the word, offering as much or as little information shown as a user desires and allowing users to completely explore any area of another person's life that is shown.

4.13 Discussion of the Findings

A key concern of online communication and indeed any communication is truthfulness, accuracy and credibility. A key component that leads to verification of these details is identity. With the online communication gaining grounds in all spheres of life from personal to serious business, online identity's influence on online communication should not escape unnoticed. This therefore was the intention of this study: *to investigate the influence of SNI change on online communication*. The main propellant of the study was Jakala and Berki's (2010) study that led them to coin five terms with reference to the types of online identity. The five terms for various online identities they coined were nonymity, anonymity, eponymity, pseudonymity, and polynymity. The objectives of this study included to explore the types of online SN identities adopted by the teenagers, to investigate why teenagers pick

certain SN identities and to establish the influence of online SNS identity on the type of online communication.

The study did verify from its sample population that indeed these five types of online identities actually are in use in online communication. Though majority started off in their first online account with real names with very few using no name.

An attempt to find out why they opted to use alternative social networking identities found out several reasons. Some did it because it was "the in thing" i.e stylish, for fun, "gives me freedom to say what I want without my parents scoulding me" some never wanted to be known, to avoid online stalkers, while others wanted to be identified by their role models. This arguments seems to concur with Schwab (2012) study entitled **Pew Internet:** *Teens and Social Networks* where he says teens are increasingly turning to SNSs to follow artists and pop culture icons, take part in (or create) memes and trends, and express their innermost thoughts. More and more, teens are also using SNSs as a way to escape their parents' prying eyes, it seems many teens are keeping their accounts private, away from their parents and sometimes also from those who might bully them online. Another possibility could be the one fronted by Jake Harwood (2004) who said that when individuals set down who they are in writing for a public context, they might take particular care to present themselves in ways that are acceptable to the self across multiple audiences and over time.

Further investigation into this quest for alternative identity behaviour confirms Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe, (2007) study that indicated that friend networking sites may provide greater benefits for users with low self-esteem and low life satisfaction.

From the study, it was realized that the choice of online identity has a bearing on online communication. For example, those who used their real identities received 46% of the respondents who would very often interact with them. 34% would often interact with this same group while only 4% would hardly communicate with them.

A slight variation on the online identity and the effect is noticeable. For instance, those who opted to use aliases and nicknames received only 9% who would very often communicate with them as 34% would often communicate with them. Those who would sometimes communicate with them were the majority at 43% communicate with them while 14% would hardly communicate with them.

Anonymous people receive mixed reactions. 53% of the respondents said they would hardly communicate with this lot while 28% would sometimes communicate with them. Only 13% would often communicate with them and 6% would very often open up.

Constantly changing your online identity (polynymity) receives even dire consequences as 63% would hardly communicate with those people. 23% would sometimes communicate with such a person and only 10% would often respond. A negligible 4% would very often communicate with them.

Hiding your identity or having a stealth identity (nonymity) would almost mute communication with 71% hardly willing to communicate to such a person. 16% would sometimes communicate, 9% would often communicate and only 4% would very often communicate.

Interestingly, the study established that it is these people with changed identities that are very active online communicators with 56% anonymous people very often making online post and comments. Only 29% of people with real identities make online posts. Another curious observation was that most of these SNS users know less than 50% of their called online friends. 48% said they knew 25-50% of their online friends, 33% knew below 25% of their online friends while 11% knew between 50-75% of these friends. 8% of the respondents claimed that they knew over 75% of their online friends.

The respondents admitted to being aware of some online risk. Amongst the ones that they posted included online stalking, online imposters who download pictures of others, create new profiles then invite your online friends as if they were you only for the culprits to participate in misguided communication, be robbed, kidnapped, raped or even killed. Amongst the measures they suggested was to be keen on whom you accept as friend, never accept to meet a stranger alone and call to confirm online invite or communication. Changing your online password or closing your online site all together were other suggested measures

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a summary of the findings of this study. It explores this through by giving key findings, conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further study. The summary will include the aim of the study which was to find out the influence of social networks identity change on online communication, the objectives of the study, the target population, sampling techniques, data collection procedures and data analysis techniques. The conclusion integrates the whole study where as recommendations touches on areas where the study could be useful.

5.2 Summary

The purpose of this study was to find out the influence of social networks identity change on communication. The study was to focus on teenagers especially the ones who study in Westlands District of Nairobi. The motivation of the study was precipitated by current trend especially among teenagers of using alternative online identities in their interaction. The objectives of the study included: to explore the types of online SN identities adopted by the teenagers, to investigate why teenagers pick certain SN identities, to establish the influence of online SNS identity on the type of online communication.

The relevant data was gathered through the use of questionnaires, interviews and Focused Group Discussion. Questionnaires were administered 240 respondents, while

two focused groups' discussions each comprising ten students were carried out. A total of ten respondents were interviewed. The main aim of interviews and FGDs was majorly to verify the content of the questionnaires and to offer a rather relaxed environment where the respondents could divulge more information.

From the study which majorly focused on *Facebook*, it was realised that respondents had numerous social networking accounts some of which were in other social networking sites but *Facebook* was their network of choice. There were many respondents who admitted to having numerous social networking accounts in *Facebook*. Due to these multiple accounts, they had to use modified identities. Some said that various types of contacts, friends and communication demanded a different type of identity while others had alternative identities meant to hide from an authority figure like a parent or a guardian. There was another group that changed their identities for fun and others for self esteem and personal branding.

Another feature that came out was that in most cases people start off with their real identities but with time the desire to manage these identities creep in as others slow down the level of operations in them while opting to open other networking accounts with other changed identities.

The net effect on this activity of changing online identities was found to be high level of non substantial communication (mostly non-formal and less serious) from people who have changed their identities while receiving a slowed response from eponymous

people. The active interaction was either between two people who know one another or between those who do not know one another. The difference only being that former was taken seriously while the latter was treated with sceptism.

Communication with pseudonymous people generated mixed reactions probably because the pseudonyms at times act as perfect reliable substitutes of real identities. The people who keep on changing their online identities were equally doubted in their motives and few people were willing to engage them.

Interestingly, the study established that people who have doctored their online identities were the most active online communicators. Unfortunately, they are treated coldly by most people. This study is therefore well summed up by Pelzer Chris J. of Iowa State University in his study entitled *Social Networking Sites and the Consequences of Multiple Identities among Members of Virtual Communities* if people use the social network sites on the convention that all personalities are real, they put a great amount of trust in the system. If that convention is broken there may be failure to a part of the social network or possibly the network community itself.

5.3 CONCLUSION

As previously alluded to, SNSs constitute a rapidly growing phenomenon, with sites such as MySpace and Facebook attracting 250,000-300,000 new members on a daily basis (Fraser and Dutta, 2008). As late as August 2, 2012, Facebook Company, through a posting in their website said that it believes there are more than 83 million illegitimate accounts on their social network.

In their company filing posted in the fiscal year's third quarter, they said that 8.7% of its 955 million active accounts broke its rules. The company went further to say that "Duplicate profiles" – belonging to already registered users – made up 4.8% of its membership figure. User misclassified accounts (that is accounts created if users have already created personal profiles for business, organization, or non-human entity such as pets) amounted to 2.4% while 1.5% were described as "undesirable." "Undesirable accounts included those accounts using fake names which were intended to be used for purposes that violate the company's terms of service such as spamming

In separate but related report, it was reported that the BBC's technology correspondent Rory Cellan-Jones set up a fake company called VirtualBagel to investigate allegations of fake "likes" in Facebook. His investigation found that the large majority of "likes" for the fake firm originated from the Middle East and Asia. Many users, he found appeared to be holders of false identity such as "Ahmed Ronaldo" – apparently a Cairo- based user who is employed by Spanish football club Real Madrid. In yet another case, a digital distribution firm Limited Press also alleged that based on its own analytics software, 80% of clicks on its advertisements within Facebook had come from fake – changed identity- users.

From the above revelations and the study findings, it can be deduced that use of alternative identity is a fairly rampant phenomenon that people need to be concerned about especially the young and the vulnerable. There are numerous threats amongst

which is summarised by the voice of a 13 year old quoted by Dunne A, Lawlor A. M and Rowly J (2010) in their study *Young people's use of online social networking sites*

"Sometimes you have to be careful especially if someone you don't know asks you to be their friend on ... (social networks) and you don't know them, you really can't be sure if they are the person in their profile pictures. I mean, you hear stories about young people getting tricked by older people who lie about their   age and who they are online" (Olivia, 13 years).

According to Dunne et al (2010) the gratifications the teenagers are seeking are often as simple as communication, entertainment or friending. However, the gratifications that are actually being met or obtained from the use of such sites are deeper and more complex. However, it appears that for most teenagers, the advantages of using an alternative identity far much outweigh the use of real identity. Dunne et al (2010) finds out in their study that, many of the gratification sought by the teenagers through identity creation and identity management were clearly connected to the gratification obtained, that is the rewards that accrued from such actions like peer acceptance. This peculiar behaviour can probably be best understood from another study that argued that the tween segment exists in an unstable and fickle culture where they are constantly experimenting with their social identity (Samson and Conlon, 2006; Cook and Kaiser, 2004)

5.4 RECOMMENDATION

From the study, it was evident that social networking is powerfully taking root and it would be futile trying to block or curb its use and especially doing so amongst the teenagers. Probably, a less strenuous activity would be to come up with ways of using it positively. As the picture is currently, SNSs have been criticized in some quarters to the level of stigmatization

a. The authorities in charge of teenagers may consider guiding the teens on proper use of these sites rather than criticize them.

b. People should be very cautious when dealing with strangers online.

c. As had been hinted by Ruggiero (2000), social networking is an interactive computer mediated mass communication which is a treasure trove of possibilities for Uses and Gratifications scholars. This can be exploited by coming up with software that would engage learners more excitingly whenever this audience chooses to use SNSs either consciously or subconsciously based on a need.

5.4.1 Recommendation for Future Research

To sum up, this study might have its limitations. The most likely is that due to the already mentioned unstable and rather euphoric nature of teens, these findings may probably vary a bit hence more studies are needed in this area before coming up with a blanket generalization on the online identity change. Similarly, other age groups may have other reasons explaining their possible reasons for online identity change. This study also included only a small number of participants which were used to explore

potential trends for the larger population. This was intentional as to allow the researcher to seek in depth interviews rather than breadth in numbers. However, a study could still be conducted that accounts for larger and may be a more diverse population and the results compared. Other than *Facebook*, a cross section of other SNSs could equally be studied just to verify if the results of this study could be replicated in those other studies

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear respondent,

I am a student at the University of Nairobi carrying out a research on *The Influence of Social Networking Identity Change on online Communication* I kindly request you to assist me by completing the questionnaire provided. I promise that your identity will be treated as confidential and that the data will be used for the purpose of this research only.

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Fred Odhiambo

Appendix B Students' Questionnaire

Dear respondent,
*I am a student at the University of Nairobi carrying out a research on **The influence of Social Networking Identity Change on online Communication** I kindly request you to assist me by completing the questionnaire provided. I promise that your identity will be treated with utmost confidence and that the data will be used for the purpose of this research only.*

Instructions
1. *Do not write your name.*
2. *Please respond to each question correctly and honestly. Place a tick (√) where appropriate in the spaces provided. Remember, where applicable it is ok to tick more than one response as long as they apply.*

Part I   Personal details

1. What is your gender   Male [   ]   Female [   ]

2. How old are you? Below 13 yrs[   ]   13-15yrs[   ]   16-18yrs[   ]

   above18 yrs [   ]

3. In which class are you? Form 1[   ]   2[   ]   3[   ]   4[   ]

Part II

1. Do you have a social networking account?   [   ] YES   [   ] NO

2. How many social networking accounts do you have?

   [ ] 1   [ ] 2   [ ] 3   [ ] 4   [ ] 5   [ ] Others, specify ....

3. a) Do you have more than one social networking account in the same site?

   [   ] Yes   [   ] No

   c) If yes, why?

   ....

   ....

b) In which site(s) do you have these Social Networking accounts?

[ ] Facebook   [ ] Twitter   [ ] MySpace   [ ] Google+   [ ] 2go

[ ] Other(s) Specify ....

c) a) Which information among the following do you mostly include in your profile?

[ ] Real Name   [ ] Fake name   [ ] Alias/nick name

[ ] Many different names in different accounts   [ ] No name

[ ] Your real Photograph   [ ] Fake Photo

d) If you don't use your real name and/or photo, what would be your reasons?

[ ] I don't want to be known [ ] It's fun/stylish [ ] Others, specify...........

e) In your opinion, what guided your choice of your type(s) of online identity?

[ ] Fun   [ ] Nothing   [ ] Avoid stalkers

[ ] Gives me freedom to say what I want   [ ] Others, specify ....

f) Approximately, what percentage of your *Facebook* friends are personally known to you?

[ ] Below 25%   [ ] 25-50%   [ ] 50-75%   [ ] Above 75%

4. a) Have you *'liked'* any *Facebook* fun page hence a member?

[ ] Yes   [ ] No

b) If yes, which information among the following do you include in your profile in that fun page site? [ ] Real Name   [ ] Fake name

[ ] Alias nick name

[ ] Many different names in different accounts   [ ] No name

[ ] Your real Photograph [ ] Fake Photo

5. Do different online friends and contacts require different types of identity?

[ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] Sometimes [ ] Most times

6. What are your main reasons why you use Social networking sites? *(Giving the main reason as 1, rank them using 1-5 in the order of preference) e.g* For fun/ Pleasure ,helps release stress

....
....
....

Respond to these questions by placing a tick (√) where appropriate in the spaces provided.

Key: **H: Hardly** **S: Sometimes** **Oft: Often** **V.O: Very Often**

7. How often would you respond to friends' requests, posts, and comments if

	Statement	H	S	Oft	V.O
a.	They used their real names and photographs?				
b	They used their aliases/nick names?				
c.	They used fake names and/or fake/ non human being photo(s)?				
d	They hid their identity?				
e.	They kept on changing their identities and/or profiles?				
f.	How often do people with fake identities make posts?				
g.	How often do people with true identities make posts?				
h.	How often do you make posts on fun page sites?				
i.	How true are the identities of members of a *Facebook* fun page?				

8. a) If your social networking account(s) was to be accessed without your permission, what would you do to it?   [   ] Nothing   [   ] Close it

[   ] Change my user identity   [   ] Change my pass word

[   ] Other, specify ....

b) Why would you take the action you have said in question 8a above?

....

....

9. How reliable in terms of truth is the information shared in these social networking sites?

[   ] Hardly   [   ] Sometimes   [   ] Often   [   ] Very true

10. List some of the risks likely to be encountered with online contacts.

....

....

....

11. How can these risks be avoided?

....

....

....

Thank you for your assistance

Appendix C

Research Work Plan

Activity	2011					2012							
	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Topic Selection	██	██											
Literature review			██	██	██								
Writing the proposal						██	██	██	██				
Data collection										██	██		
Data analysis												██	
Report Writing													██
Report submission													██