

# **THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE**

**By: Faith P. Oneya**

**Reg. No.:K50/72464/2008**

**A research project report submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the award of a Masters degree in Communication Studies in the School of Journalism, University of Nairobi**

**October 2010**

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October 2010



**Declaration**

I, Faith Oneya, hereby declare that this research project report is my own original work and has never been presented in any other institution of higher learning for examination purposes leading to award of Certificate, Diploma or Degree.

Signature: 

15/11/2010

**Student:** Faith Oneya

**Date**

This project report has been submitted with my approval as the supervisor on behalf of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications of the University of Nairobi.

Signature: 

22/11/2010

**Supervisor:** Dr. Peter Oriaro

**Date**

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank the Almighty God for making this work possible.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Peter Oriare, for his guidance, motivation and patience throughout this project.

I sincerely feel indebted to my friends and colleagues who walked the journey with me. Special thanks to Brenda Munyendo, Florence Gicovi, Cyprian Metobo, Melissa Njeri, Boniface Ngahu and Achieng' Ozogo who played different roles of advisors, research assistants, editors, mentors, supporters and proof-readers. God bless you all!

## **Dedication**

This piece of work is dedicated to my departed parents Jack Erick Owuor and Florence Agutu Owuor. Thank you for instilling in me the value of education. I also dedicate this to my late sister Purity Owuor in memory of her passion for education and my sister Cynthia Owuor without whose moral support and encouragement this work would not have been possible.

I really appreciate you all; God bless you and keep you.

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## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

**Blogs** – short for web logs

**IABC**- International Association of business communicators

**IPR** – Institute of Public Relations

**PR** – Public Relations

**PRSK** – Public Relations Society of Kenya

**RSS**- Really simple syndication

**SPSS**- Statistical Package for Social Science



## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This section introduces the background to the problem area, which is then followed by the statement of the problem, research objective, research questions, significance, justification and study limitations.

### 1.1 Background

PR practice is facing challenges in the era of new media. There are multiple platforms offered in the dissemination of information and technology is at the disposal of a highly demanding public. New media has changed the way in which information is produced, distributed and displayed. Broom (2009, p.266) observes that the internet represents the most ubiquitous leading edge of communication revolution in that nearly all new media are internet based. For public relations practitioners, the new media environment offers at least three new challenges: (1) staying abreast of technological developments in new media (2) conducting media relations with untraditional "journalists" and (3) representing organizations in the new media environment.

Jenkins (1998, p.6) defines public relations as consisting of planned communication, outwards and inwards, between an organization and its publics for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding. Public relations practitioners have traditionally used "old media" to communicate to its publics but "new media", a relatively new phenomenon, has gained currency as a tool to be used for communication in many organizations as technology is rapidly changing too.

New media has been defined in many ways but this study will focus on social media as the new media

According to Broom (2009, p.58), the public relations practitioner as a communication facilitator is a sensitive listener and information broker. Communication facilitators serve as liaisons, interpreters, and mediators between an organization and its publics. They maintain two-way communication and facilitate exchange by removing barriers in relationships and by keeping channels of communication open. The goal is to provide both management and publics the information they need for making decisions of mutual interest.

Broom argues that practitioners in the communication facilitator role find themselves acting as information sources and the official contacts between organizations and their publics. They referee interactions, and help participants diagnose and correct conditions interfering with communication relationships. Communication facilitators occupy boundary-spanning roles and serve as links between organizations and publics. They operate under the assumption that effective two-way communication improves the quality of decisions that organizations and publics make about policies, procedures and actions of mutual interest.

Social media has changed this landscape of public relations practice in the sense that public relations practitioners no longer act as information sources since social media like Facebook, YouTube and Blogs afford organizations and publics a multiple array of information sources.

This paper focuses on how social media has impacted on public relations practice.

It is imperative to know what scholars have said about new media. According to Dizard (2008, p.16) new media are not simply an extension of the old. The old and new media both offer information and entertainment resources to large audiences, conveniently and at competitive prices. Dizard continues to explain that the new media are dramatically expanding the range of resources that are available to consumers through the internet and other channels.

New media includes but is not limited to blogs, podcasts, online video and social networks (Facebook, Twitter)

New media and old media are not mutually exclusive as there are areas of convergence of the two.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

The overall research problem to be addressed in this study is looking at the impact of social media on public relations.

Although many Public Relations practitioners recognize that new media technology has changed the industry's environment, the changes are so rapid that the practitioners are scrambling to adjust.

One of the challenges that faces public relations practitioners as identified by Broom (2009, p.267) is representing organizations in the new media environment.

This study will explore the social media phenomena and the impact that it has had on public relations practice.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The main research question was:

- i. What impact is social media having in the way PR professionals communicate?

Other research questions were:

- ii. How do PR practitioners communicate internally? Externally?
- iii. What is the impact of social media on the methods/tools of PR?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

This study sought to:

- i. Investigate the impact of social media on PR practice.
- ii. To assess the extent to which social media is changing the attitude , practice , relationships, methods/tools and knowledge of PR practitioners

### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The study will help with policy formulation and academic knowledge advancement. Research is important for development of theories and furthering academic knowledge. There is lack of theoretical understanding of social media.

### **1.6 Justification of the study**

Social media is becoming a significant tool in PR because of the advancement in communication technology and should be looked into.

### **1.7. Definitions of terms**

#### **Social media**

The term "social media" represents media that users can easily participate in and contribute to. Forms of social media include blogs, forums, virtual worlds, wikis and social networks. Although definitions vary,

a few key characteristics are common amongst social media platforms. Most of these properties thrive on the notion of participation and making connections. Part of this is informed by the notion of a flat community, in which all parties engage in open dialogue. Influence and credibility are prized in this arena, as the user's reputation can often be a key motivator for one to remain active in the dialogue.

### **Common forms of social media**

**Blogs** are websites that typically feature posts, by an individual or group, which readers can comment upon. Blogs vary widely in nature, but tend to be popular as they often provide an unvarnished, insider perspective on a particular topic.

**Forums** are areas in which multiple users can create topics and then comment on these topics. They are commonly used as resources for those interested in a particular topic. For example, guitar players might all take part in a forum on this topic in order to share knowledge.

**Content communities** are sites that allow users to post and share content. Such communities exist around anything from videos and photos to stories and links. Some of these sites include voting functions that allow the community to determine the relevance of content.

**Virtual worlds** represent one of the most novel areas on the web, in which users can engage in immersive worlds. Some of these spaces closely mirror real-world notions such as community and economics.

**Wikis** are community-generated documents and databases. Approved users can create content and augment that of others in the interests of creating better resources. Wikipedia is arguably the best known wiki, with over 2 million articles in the English edition alone.

**Social networks** are virtual communities that allow users to connect with others. Some of these avenues appeal to broad groups (i.e. Facebook) whereas others are built around particular niches and demographics (i.e. LinkedIn).

Although many other forms of social media exist (including news aggregators, microblogging, podcasts, and mash-ups) the examples presented focus mainly on the forms listed above.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the previous chapter, an introduction and background into the study area as well as the overall purpose and research questions were presented. This chapter presents a review of literature relating to the objective of the study.

Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communications, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools. (Harlow, 1976, p.36)

In the advent of new media such as social media, PR practitioners have found themselves scrambling to adjust to the technologies that have allowed for more interactivity with the internal and external publics and has rendered almost futile the need for a middle man.

### **2.1 Overview of traditional media and public relations practice**

Practitioners of public relations use printed words, spoken words, images and combinations of all these communication forms.

According to Broom (2009, p.254), traditional media have long provided economical, effective methods of communicating with large and dispersed publics. Consequently, work in public relations requires understanding of and skills in using newspapers, magazines, trade publications, AM and FM radio, television, cable, books and so on.

According to Wikipedia, The old media are traditional means of communication and expression that have existed since before the advent of the new medium of the Internet. Industries that are generally considered part of the old media are broadcast and cable television, radio, movie and music studios, newspapers, magazines, books and most print publications. Many of those industries are now less profitable than they used to be and this has been attributed to the growth of the new media.

The following represents a list of different medium that can be referred to as the "traditional" way in which public relations practitioners communicate according to Broom(2009, p.254)

**Newspapers:** Newspapers remain the workhorse of public information system. When people think of publicity, they almost instinctively think of the newspaper. The strengths of a newspaper are many. No other medium offers comparable audience size and breadth day in day out, or the range and depth of content.

**Wire Services and News Syndicates:** News wire services economically and effectively distribute human-interest stories and spot news to state, regional, national or international media.

**Press Release:** The press release is the most common material provided to media outlets. These documents provide a brief, yet thorough, description of an upcoming activity, whether it is rush or a service project.

**Photographs:** There are usually two types of photographs in publicity portrait shots, where people pose for the camera and smile, and candid, where the subjects are doing something.

**Brochures:** A booklet published by the organization which contains the organisations background, its ethics, vision, mission, its past, present and future projects, its USP, etc.Eg: brochure given to new employees to give them a gist of the organisation.

**Written Speech:** The typewritten or printed text of a speech given to achieve a public relations objective.

**Internal Newsletters and Publications:** These are publications in which information about the company, its profits, employees etc. is given.

**Letters to the Editor:** The practitioner submits a letter to the editor and does not require a media contact.

Broom (2009, p.267) argues that traditional media have a relatively fixed capacity ;newspapers and magazines have a limited number of columns for editorial matter , and there are only 24 hours in a

broadcast day. Hence, any one of these media cannot possibly convey all the news and information available. Receivers also have limited time and attention given to the millions of messages. In a media world crammed with messages, only a tiny fraction gets past the door and into the home. Even fewer get attention. Nonetheless, institutionalized power is largely exercised through control of the means and content of mass communication. Mass media constitute the key components in a nation's public information system, a system in which public relations practitioners play an increasing proportion of the content. Many sources compete for access to media, however so practitioners must continually adjust their communication strategy to rapidly changing media and audiences.

## **2.2 Overview of social media**

Social media has had a staggering impact on the practice of public relations since the first weblogs, or blogs, appeared more than a dozen years ago. This has continued and increased as social media developed into a number of different forms including text, images, audio and video through the development of forums, message boards, photo sharing, podcasts RSS (really simple syndication), search engine marketing, video sharing, Wikis, social networks, professional networks and micro-blogging sites. Recent research (Tancer, 2008) says social media have overtaken pornography as the number one use of the Internet. According to the IABC more than half of all Internet users have joined a social network, social networks have become the number one platform for creating and sharing content and nearly 75 percent of all Internet users have done this. (Young, 2009)

Even though social media are changing how people and organizations communicate, it still is difficult to define exactly what social media are. In some circles what most people call social media are referred to by others as "consumer-generated media" or as "user-generated content." The Pew Research Center (2008) for the first time in 2008 noted more people were getting their news online than from traditional mass media. However, most blend online and traditional sources and the Pew study also points out more young people than ever before are reading online versions of traditional news media.

A number of books have explored how blogs, social media and other new technologies are changing the way organizations communicate with strategic publics such as employees, customers, stockholders, communities, governments and other stakeholders. Weher (2007) suggests the communications world is dramatically moving in a digital direction and those who understand this transformation will communicate much more effectively than those who do not.

Scott (2008, p.8) believes, "one of the coolest things about the Web is that when an idea takes off it can propel a brand or a company to seemingly instant fame and fortune". Scott also points out that although communicating via the Web usually is free – as opposed to purchasing space through traditional advertising – only a small number of public relations practitioners are effectively using blogs and other social media when communicating with their strategic publics.

Breakenridge (2009) believes powerful new social media tools offer unprecedented new opportunities in a day when most traditional methods of communication will not reach many audiences; much less convince them to do anything.

According to Technorati (2008), in the US alone in 2008 there were 23 million bloggers and 94 million blog readers. Technorati (2008) claims that more than 50,000 blogs mention typical news events every day and on some days that figure is greater than 100,000.

### **2.3. Different Kinds of Social Media**

Social media deliver web-based information created by people with the intention of facilitating communication and now represent one of the world's major sources of social interaction as people share stories and experiences with each other.

Not counting blogs, Traffikd (2009)<sup>1</sup>, a blog about social media, claims there currently are more than 400 social media web sites and these have been classified into the following categories: arts, books, cars, connecting with friends, consumer reviews, cooking and food, cultures and foreign languages, dating, education, event planning, family, fashion, finance, games, general networking, health and medical, kids, Internet marketing, microblogging, movies, news, pets, photo sharing, politics, pop culture, professional, real estate, religious, shopping, social action, sports, technology, teen, travel, video sharing, women and miscellaneous.

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<sup>1</sup> Traffikd (2009). Categorized list of social media and social networking websites "Available at: <http://traffikd.com/social-media-websites>



Wikipedia (2009a)<sup>2</sup> classifies social media into these categories: Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures and video. Since social media represent a young and emerging set of technologies there are many different thoughts and opinions when it comes to categorization. With the availability of so many social media sites, obviously some receive much more web traffic than others. For example, popular social networking sites such as Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)) and MySpace ([www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)) and popular video sharing site YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) all are ranked by web information service Alexa<sup>3</sup> (2009) on the list of the world's most accessed websites.

#### 2.4 Social media In Kenya

Studies have shown that Kenya is ripe for Social Media. According to the statistics from the Communication Commission of Kenya at the end of the period under April/June 2008/2009, there were 1.82 million internet subscribers in Kenya. At the same time the period April/June 2008/2009 reported 1.80 million mobile data/internet subscribers.<sup>4</sup>

Global Social Media Rankings from the authoritative web tracking site alexa.com indicate that Facebook, YouTube and Blogger are the top ranking social media sites in Kenya. Statistics from the Information and Communications Board of Kenya (ICT Board)

(Kenya <http://www.ict.go.ke/images/pdfs/Digital%20KenyaKeyFindingsMarch%202010.pdf>) indicate that 85% of Kenyans who go to the internet visit social networking sites. More specifically, 96% of social networkers visit Facebook, and 30% visit You Tube.

#### 2.5 Social media and public relations practice

It is difficult to predict the form that our new communication system might eventually take. Tankard and Severin, 1997, p.5)

Heath (2001, p.603) asserts that the transformation to digital technology has far reaching implications for the practice of public relations .Capabilities are expanding while equipment prices are dropping .The ease, cost and capability of the computer are stretching and changing the boundaries ,roles and relationships of public relations practitioners inside and outside their organizations. Heath continues to

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia (2009a). Social media. Accessed at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_media](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media).

<sup>3</sup> Alexa (2009). The top 500 sites on the Web." Accessed

at [http://www.alexa.com/site/ds/top\\_sites?ts\\_mode=global&lang=none](http://www.alexa.com/site/ds/top_sites?ts_mode=global&lang=none).

<sup>4</sup> CCK Report available at ([http://www.cck.go.ke/publications\\_and\\_statistics/](http://www.cck.go.ke/publications_and_statistics/)).

say that technology has been touted for some time as enabling public relations practitioners to do more work in less time. Productivity has been enhanced by tools such as e-mail to clients, employees and other publics.

Recent changes in technology have allowed organizations to reach out to their constituents in ways never before imaginable. The computer has not only spawned word processing and desktop publishing; it has also allowed us to reconfigure our communication and our modes of delivery. Additionally, technology has expanded the scope of both internal and external communications beyond that of traditional media. The role of everything from the news release to the corporate magazine has been broadened by the ability to make what was once a static delivery system now interactive. (Bivins, 2005, p.319)

Marketers and public relations professionals today are confronted with an astounding array of new communications channels. Internet-based social media tools like blogs, podcasts, and online video and social network are giving voice to the opinions of millions of consumers. While mainstream media continues to play a vital role in the dissemination of information, even these traditional channels are increasingly being influenced by online conversations. (Paul Gillin, senior fellow, society for communication research, p.11)

Today's communicators are confronted by a paradox of: Multiplying channels of communication permit a sharper focus of the message, but greatly escalate competition for audience attention. (Broom, 2009 p.254)

Broom (2009, p.267) reports on the findings of a study conducted by the Institute of Public Relations and WORLDCOM to evaluate the internet's impact on public relations. The findings made the following conclusions:

- i. Almost all public relations professionals(98%) agree that advances in technology such as e-mail and the internet have changed how they do their jobs
- ii. Almost all(91%) say they now stay in touch with more people in their business and professional environments than they did before e-mail
- iii. Most ( 90%) agree that the ability to send instantaneous written communication and to access real time information via the internet has accelerated decision making in news journalism

- iv. Public relations professionals typically spend between 15 and 19 hours online each week, and go online 5.8 days during an average week. One in three (33%) say they are online every day.
- v. Sixty nine percent chose an internet-connected computer when asked what medium they would choose if they were stranded alone somewhere for an extended period of time and could have access to only one medium

Wright and Hinson (2009) through a study commissioned by the Institute of Public Relations have conducted a study to measure new media and their impact on public relations and have found:

- i. Blogging and other aspects of social media have the potential to bring dramatic changes to the public relations field.
- ii. Development of new technologies has empowered many strategic publics.
- iii. Has given them dynamic new ways to communicate with many internal and external audiences.

Results from the 2009 survey also indicate that:

- i. 73% of PR people say blogs and social media have changed the way they communicate.
- ii. Impact more prominent in external than internal PR.
- iii. 72% tell us social media have enhanced PR practice.
- iv. 66% claim blogs have enhanced PR practice.
- v. 85% suggest blogs and social media complement each other.
- vi. 61% believe the emergence of blogs and social media have changed the way their organizations communicate.
- vii. 85% believe blogs and social media compliment traditional mainstream news media.
- viii. 92% insist blogs and social media influence coverage in traditional news media.
- ix. 88% believe blogs and social media have made communications more instantaneous because they encourage organizations to respond more quickly to criticism.
- x. Traditional news media are perceived to be more accurate, credible, truthful and ethical than blogs and social media.
- xi. 80% expect traditional news media to be honest, tell the truth and be ethical.
- xii. 41% hold these same expectations for blogs and other social media.

Many aspects of technology recently have challenged how public relations is practiced. As Robert J. Key (2005) explains, "Public relations in the digital age requires understanding how your key constituents are gathering and sharing information and then influencing them at key points. Doing so requires strategies that embrace the digital age" (p. 19).

The Internet gives public relations practitioners a unique opportunity to collect information, monitor public opinion on issues, and engage in direct dialogue with their publics about a variety of issues. (McAllister & Taylor, 2007)

Generally, these new and emerging media are facilitating person-to-person or person to-persons communications through the availability of email, text messaging through SMS, and multimedia messaging through MMS, instant messaging and chat online, online forums and blogging.

There has not been much research on the impact that social media has had on the way in which public relations is practiced in Kenya. This study will therefore focus on the impact of social media on public relations practice. It will target PR managers in various industries.

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.6.1 Technological Determinism theory**

The theory of Technological Determinism relates to the studies conducted by Marshall McLuhan who states that we are living in a new age of technology that has never been experienced before. Studying media and culture in England, McLuhan found himself trying to decipher the media environment that surrounded him. The people that lived through the inventions of the phonetic alphabet, the printing press, and the telegraph saw drastic improvements in the way people were able to communicate. Sometimes known as the "Oracle of the Electronic Age," McLuhan is telling people that the new electronic media is changing the way people think, act, and feel. McLuhan suspects that the current technological environment, when looked back upon, will be seen as a major turning point in the history of communication.<sup>3</sup>

It is a theory that presumes the media is the key element in mass communication's processes that evoked widespread controversy during the 1960s mostly due to the colourful writing of Marshall McLuhan, a professor of English. McLuhan declared that each medium alters our physical environment, imposing on us a particular pattern of perceiving and thinking that controls us to an extent we scarcely suspect. (Emery, et al 1991, p.56)

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<sup>3</sup> The Marshall McLuhan center on global communications report available at <http://oak.cats.ohiou.edu/~kh380597/ID.html>

Most interpretations of technological determinism share two general ideas:

- i. that the development of technology itself follows a predictable, traceable path largely beyond cultural or political influence, and
- ii. that technology in turn has "effects" on societies that are inherent, rather than socially conditioned or produced because that society organizes itself to support and further develop a technology once it has been introduced.<sup>6</sup>

Strict adherents to technological determinism do not believe the influence of technology differs based on how much a technology is or can be used. Instead of considering technology as part of a larger spectrum of human activity, technological determinism sees technology as the basis for all human activity.

The ideas behind this theory are:

#### **The medium is the message**

According to Seitel (1989, p.143), McLuhan's argument "The medium is the message" stemmed largely from the fact that many people today watch television. He said that television is a "cool" medium; that is, someone can derive meaning from a TV message without working too hard. On the other hand, reading involves hard work to fully grasp the idea, as such, newspapers, magazines and books are "hot" media. Furthermore, McLuhan argued, a television viewer can easily become part of that which he is viewing. In other words, the television programme becomes the message.

Rather than acknowledging that a society or culture interacts with and even shapes the technologies that are used, a technological determinist view holds that "the uses made of technology are largely determined by the structure of the technology itself, that is, that its functions follow from its form" (Postman, p.3).

McLuhan was convinced that the lifestyles people live rely heavily on the way they process information. Each communication invention throughout history changed the people thought about themselves and the world around them. Whether it is oral, written, or electronic, the communication channel changes the way we perceive the world. He derived his argument that the medium is the message from a view of languages that is media, as 'macro myths' while single images or words are myths as abstractions from living processes. (Chaney, 1972, p.146)

Its contention is that the medium is the message and such message has effect on the individual's attitude, behaviour and his entire lifestyle. The contention of Innis (1950) who is considered to be the mentor of McLuhan, is that the nature of the media technology prevailing in a society at a given point of time greatly influences how the members of the society will think and behave (Dey, 1993, p.97)

Dey further observes that McLuhan analyses how the media affect the individuals who encountered them. They impose a particular logic on the organization of visual experience.

#### **We shape our tools and in turn they shape us:**

McLuhan was the first one to suggest that evolutions in communication had a direct impact on the existing society. However, he was unique in saying "the channels of communication are the primary cause of cultural change." Nothing exists that is not affected by the applied technology of communication. McLuhan regarded every form of media as an extension of the human being. For example, a book is an extension of the eye and clothing is an extension of the skin.

### **2.6.2 Historical Background to the technological determinism theory:**

#### **The Tribal Age: An Acoustic Place in History**

In this society the senses of hearing, touch, taste, and smell dominated. The ear was king; hearing meant believing. McLuhan suggested that these people led richer lives because unlike the eye, the ear cannot select what stimuli to take in.

### **The Age of Literacy: A Visual Point of View**

Upon the invention of the phonetic alphabet, people who could read quickly traded an ear for an eye. McLuhan claims the alphabet was the catalyst for the emergence of science, mathematics and philosophy that came out of ancient Greece.

### **The Print Age: Prototype of the Industrial Revolution**

Print allowed the production of mass copies of the same products, which McLuhan believes was the forerunner of the Industrial Revolution. The printed book allows man to set himself free of his surroundings and be in touch with the truth

### **The Electronic Age: The Rise of the Global Village**

Today, as McLuhan predicted, we have reverted back to a culture where hearing and touching take precedence over sight. We live in a global village connected by electronic communication devices.

### **2.6.3 Criticism**

Modern theorists of technology and society no longer consider technological determinism to be a very accurate view of the way in which we interact with technology, even though determinist assumptions and language fairly saturate the writings of many boosters of technology, the business pages of many popular magazines, and much reporting on technology. Instead, research in science and technology studies, social construction of technology and related fields have emphasised more nuanced views that resist easy causal formulations. They emphasise that "The relationship between technology and society cannot be reduced to a simplistic cause-and-effect formula. It is, rather, an 'intertwining'", whereby technology does not determine but "...operates, and are operated upon in a complex social field" (Murphy and Potts, 2003 p.21).

In his article "Subversive Rationalization: Technology, Power and Democracy with Technology," Andrew Feenberg argues that technological determinism is not a very well founded concept by

illustrating that two of the founding theses of determinism are easily questionable and in doing so calls for what he calls democratic rationalization (Feenberg, 2004 p.210).

In his influential but contested article "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" Langdon Winner illustrates a form of technological determinism by elaborating instances in which artifacts can have politics. (Winner, 1986 p.26)

Although "The deterministic model of technology is widely propagated in society" ( Miller, 1997p.57).It has also been widely questioned by scholars. Miller explains that, "When technology was perceived as being outside society, it made sense to talk about technology as neutral". Yet, this idea fails to take into account that culture is not fixed and society is dynamic. When "Technology is implicated in social processes, there is nothing neutral about society" This confirms one of the major problems with technological determinism and the resulting denial of human responsibility for change. There is a loss of human involvement that shape technology and society

In opposition to technological determinism are those who subscribe to the belief of social determinism and postmodernism. Social determinists believe that social circumstances alone select which technologies are adopted, with the result that no technology can be considered "inevitable" solely on its own merits. Technology and culture are not neutral and when knowledge comes into the equation, technology becomes implicated in social processes. The knowledge of how to create and enhance technology and of how to use technology is socially bound knowledge. Postmodernists take another view, suggesting that what is right or wrong is dependent on circumstance. They believe technological change can have implications on the past, present and future. While they believe technological change is influenced by changes in government policy, society and culture, they consider the notion of change to be a paradox, since change is constant.

Dey (1993 p.98) asserts that the conflict between McLuhan's thinking and the thinking of present day societal scientists reflects distinctly on the media strategy in many developing countries. Dey further argues that McLuhan's optimism remains confined only within his phrase: "The medium is the message"



#### **2.6.4 Relevance of the theory to the research topic**

McLuhan wrote: "The effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions or concepts, but alter sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without resistance" McLuhan is saying that the most important effect of communication media is that they affect our habits of perception and thinking. (Severin and Tankard, 1997 p.303). It is therefore important to note the various ways in which social media has affected the habits of perception and thinking of PR practitioners.

Technological determinism has formed itself to the modern PR practice of this century. McLuhan, in his theory, was convinced that the lifestyles people live rely heavily on the way they process information. The way PR practitioners conduct their practice, their relationships, their knowledge and attitude has been shaped by this new communication invention in the form of social media.

Social media has basically changed the PR practitioners' thoughts about themselves and the practice

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter outlines the overall methodology used in the study. It includes research design, population of study, the sample and sampling procedure, a description of the data collection method and data analysis approach used.

### **3.1 Research Design**

The research will be a descriptive study, to gauge the impact of social media on public relations communication. Descriptive design is design that is appropriate where the researcher is fairly knowledgeable about the key aspects of a phenomenon but has little knowledge if any, regarding their characteristics, nature or details.

Gay as cited in Mugenda and Mugenda (1999, p.160) defines descriptive research as a process of collecting data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subjects in the study.

A descriptive research determines and reports the way things are. This type of research attempts to describe such things as possible behaviour, attitudes, values and characteristics. (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999, p.160)

The researcher investigated the opinions of people through questioning them by use of a questionnaire. A review examination and description of findings was undertaken and results reported.

### **3.2 Study Population**

A population refers to an entire group of individuals, events or objects having a common observable characteristic. In other words, population is the aggregate of all that conforms to a given specification. (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999, p.9)

The population of interest in the study constitutes of public relations managers in different institutions. These institutions are privately owned either privately or by the government.

### 3.3 Sample and sampling procedure

A sample is a representation of the population in a research study. Sampling techniques are methods used to arrive at the desired sample size. 10% of the accessible population according to Gay<sup>7</sup> is representative for descriptive studies.

The sampling frame for this study was the public relations managers of the population being studied. A sampling frame is a representation of the element of the target population. It consists of a list or a set of directions for identifying the target population. A combination of random and purposive sampling was employed in the research which targeted private companies (inclusive of PR companies), public companies, and government, manufacturing and development partners. Membership lists were drawn from:

- I. The government of Kenya website
- II. Public Relations Society of Kenya website (PRSK)
- III. Companies listed at the Nairobi Stock Exchange
- IV. Kenya Association of manufacturers membership list
- V. Invitations through Facebook were also sent

A total of 40 public relations managers were sampled.

### 3.4 Data Collection

Questionnaires were used to collect data for the research. The questionnaire consisted of both open ended and closed ended questions, and provided both qualitative and quantitative data. They were divided into two sections. Section A provided general information on demographics, section B sought to gauge the impact of social media to public relations.

The questionnaire had closed ended items and open ended items. The closed ended items required the respondents to select one or more responses from given alternatives and open ended items required the respondents to express their personal views about the questions asked. The researcher used the drop and pick method to administer the questionnaires to the target potential respondents.

It was a self administered questionnaire targeting the public relations managers of these institutions. Pick and drop method of data collection was used since the questionnaire was fairly straightforward and

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<sup>7</sup> Gay L. R. (1981) Educational Research: Competencies for analysis and application. Charles E. Mairill Company A. Bell & Howell Company. Columbus, Toronto, London

also allowed for a considerable degree of anonymity. It was a convenient way of distributing and collecting the questionnaire and it minimized the effort required by the respondent.

The 5-point Likert-type scale was used for data collection because it is relatively easy to develop and use. It is more reliable than the Thurstone scale. It was also easier to complete the questionnaire hence unlikely to put off the respondent.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Completed questionnaires were edited for completeness and consistency. The data was then coded and checked for any errors and omissions. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages and arithmetic mean scores. Frequency tables, bar charts and histograms were drawn using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Visual representations such as frequency tables were used to summarize statistics.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

The data analysis was guided by the research objective presented in chapter one, specifically: to investigate the impact of social media on PR practice. The survey also sought to assess the extent to which social media is changing the attitude, relationships, methods/tools and knowledge of PR practice. Data in this study is summarized and presented in terms of frequencies, means scores, graphs and charts.

#### Responses to the questionnaire

The questionnaires were edited and coded after they were filled in. Out of the 40 respondents targeted, 39 successfully completed the questionnaire.

**Table 1: Response rate**

	Targeted	Actual	% Response
	Respondents	Respondents	Total
PR managers	40	39	98%

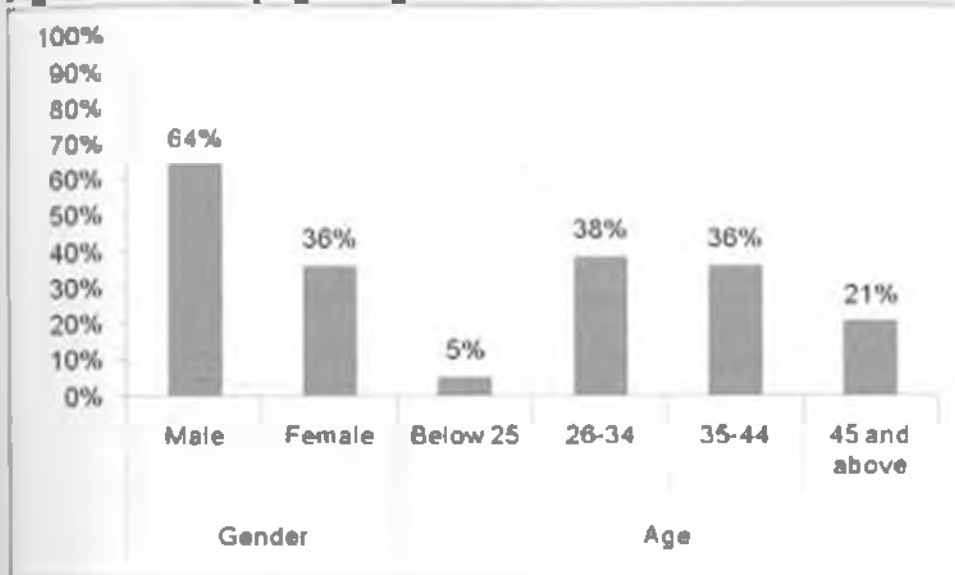
From the table above the response rate of respondents is 98%. The researcher deemed the response rate adequate and sufficient for the study and for the purpose of data analysis.

## 4.2 Sample demographics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are discussed in terms of age, gender, number of years of employment, industry and level of education.

Figure 1 and 2 below represent the profiles of the public relations managers that were interviewed for the survey.

**Figure 1: Profile by age and gender**



Of those interviewed, 64% were male and 36% were female. A majority of the respondents were aged between 26 to 34 years, 36% were between 35 to 44 years, 21% were 45 and above. Only 5% were below 25 years.

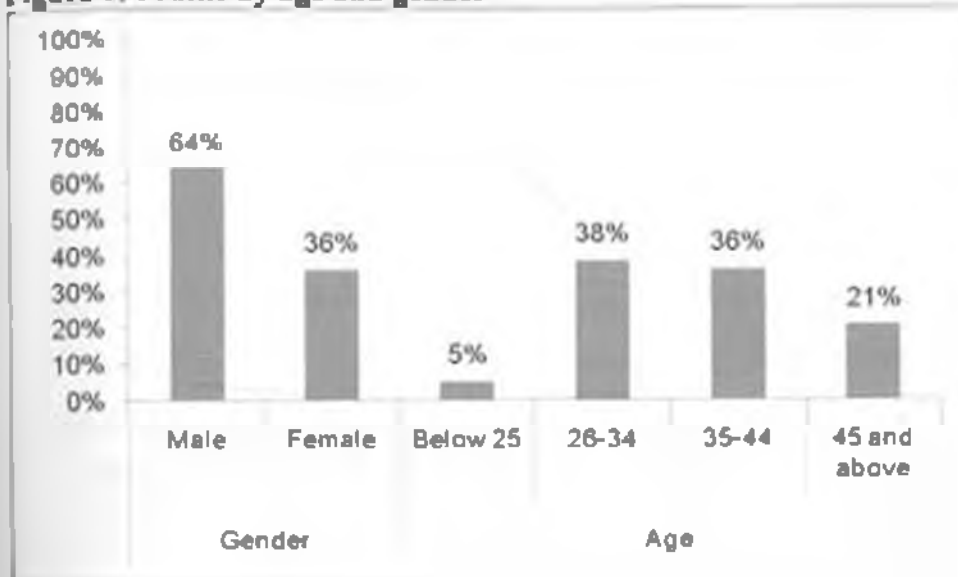
The sample was skewed to male respondents and this could be generalized to mean that the field of PR is dominated by the male gender. The practitioners are also fairly youthful with a majority falling in the 26-44 age bracket. This could mean that the uptake of new technology could be much faster as previous studies have indicated that the young generation adopts much faster to technology than the older generation.

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The figure below indicates the number of years of experience in employment.

**Figure 2: Profile by number of years of employment**

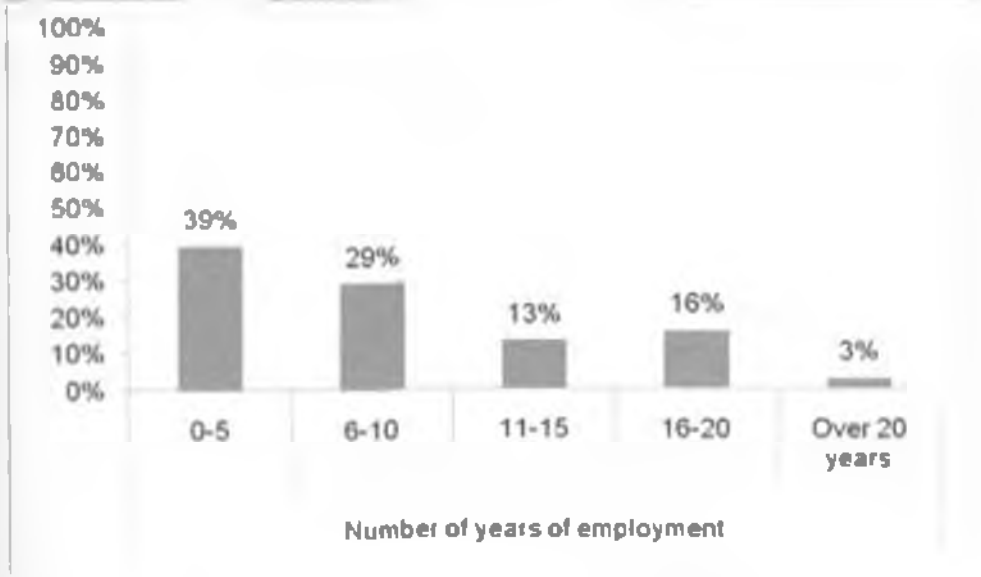


Figure 2 above indicates that a majority of those interviewed had been employed for 5 years and below at 39%, 29% for 6-10 years, 13% for 11-15 years, 16% for 16-20 years and 3% for over 20 years. This indicates that the majority of those interviewed had been practicing for less than ten years. This implies that a majority of those interviewed had reasonable years of experience to comment on issues to do with the practice.



The pie chart below indicates the distribution according to the various industries that were targeted.

**Figure 3: Profile by Industry**

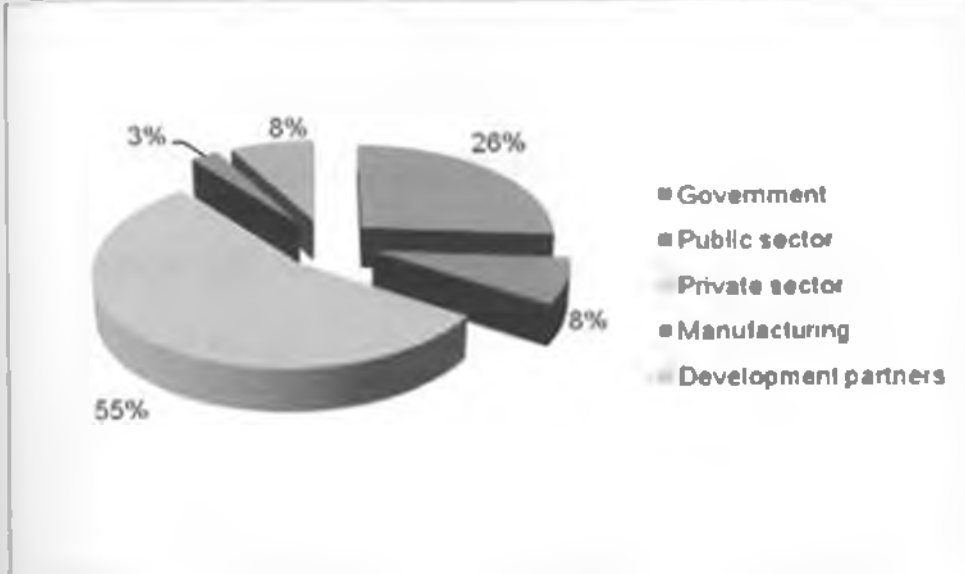


Figure 3 above indicates that of the respondents interviewed, 26% were in the government, 8% in the public sector, 3% in manufacturing, and 8% were development partners. There was a fairly even distribution which makes the results representative of the various industries in Kenya. This could also indicate that social media cuts across all sectors.

Figure 4 below presents the profile of the respondents by the education levels

**Figure 4: Profile by education**

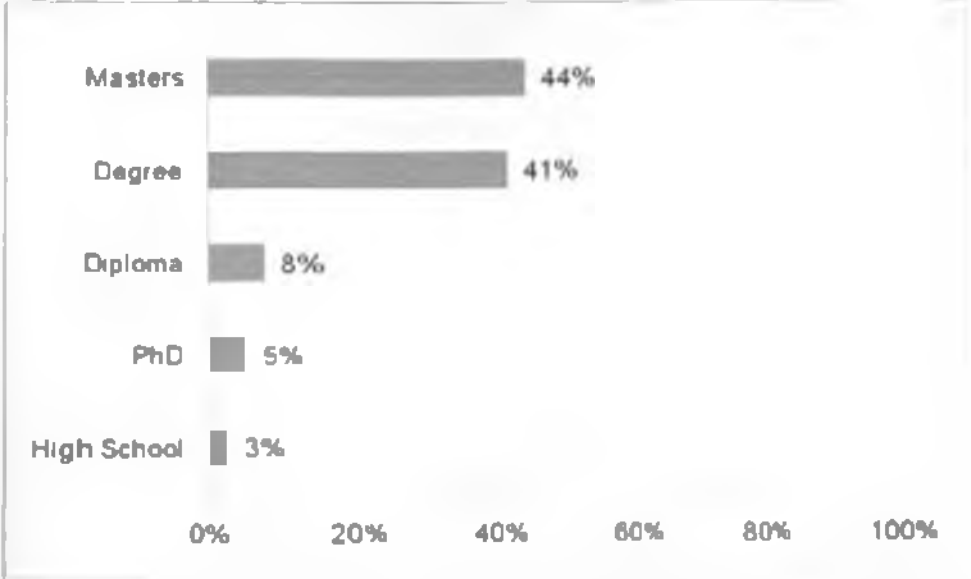


Figure 4 above indicates that 44% of those interviewed had master's level of education, 41% had degrees, 8% had diplomas, 5% had PhD level and only 3% had high school level of education. It is apparent from the chart that the majority of the respondents are fairly well educated with the majority having at least a degree. This could mean that there is an equally high level of exposure and knowledge on different social media technologies and therefore high usage levels.

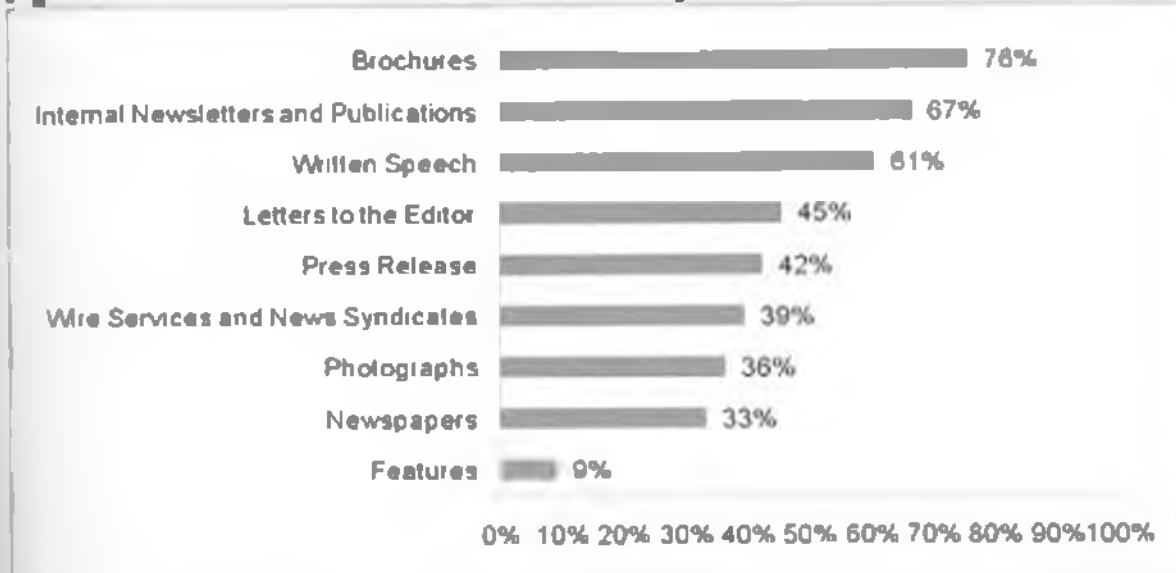
### 4.3 The impact of social media on public relations practice

#### 4.3.1 Methods used for internal/external communication

Respondents were asked which 'traditional methods' they used to communicate in their organizations internally and externally. Figure 5 and 6 below indicate that in the last six months, brochures were used to communicate.

Figure 5 below indicates show that brochures were used to communicate internally at 76% followed by internal newsletters and publications at 67% . written speeches at 61% followed by letters to the editor at 45%.

**Figure 5: Communication methods used internally**



It is apparent from the chart above that brochures, internal newsletters and publications and written speeches are still fairly popular ways of communicating to internal publics.

The chart below illustrates the communication methods used externally.

**Figure 6: Communication methods used externally**

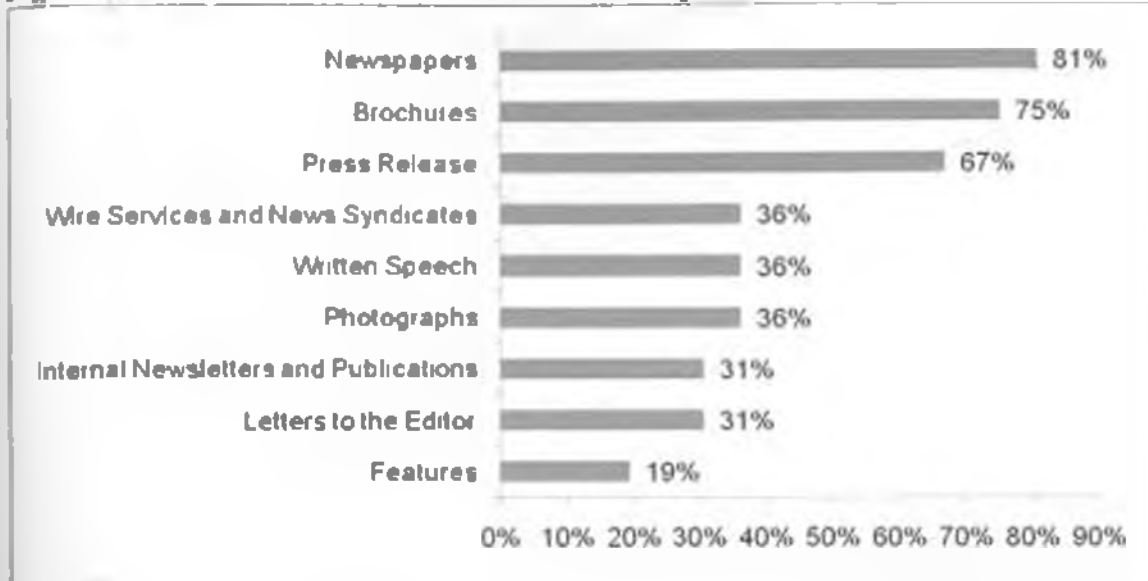


Figure 6 above indicates that when it comes to external communication, PR practitioners mostly use newspapers(81%), Brochures(75%) and press releases(67%). These methods have been referred to in this study as traditional methods. They still enjoy high usage levels among PR practitioners. Data from this chart can be compared with data on the usage of of social media (Table 3). Comparing the two , it is evident that social media enjoys much higher usage incidences that traditional media.

### 4.3.2 Awareness and Usage of social media

#### Awareness of social media

Respondents were asked which social media they were aware or had ever heard of. Table 2 below illustrates that a majority of those interviewed had heard of social networks (e.g. Facebook) at 97% followed by Blogs at 94% and Online videos (e.g. YouTube) at 85%.

**Table 2: Awareness of social media**

	Total	Government	Public sector	Private sector	Manufacturing	Development partners
Social networks e.g. Facebook	97%	100%	100%	95%	100%	100%
Blogs	94%	90%	100%	95%	100%	100%
Online videos e.g. YouTube	85%	80%	100%	84%	100%	100%
Instant messaging	82%	70%	67%	84%	100%	100%
Newsgroups /forums	79%	80%	67%	79%	100%	67%
Photo sharing e.g. Flickr	71%	70%	67%	68%	100%	100%
Podcasting	59%	60%	33%	63%	0%	100%
Social Bookmarking	59%	70%	33%	68%	100%	0%
Virtual worlds	53%	40%	33%	63%	100%	33%
Music sharing	50%	50%	33%	53%	0%	100%
Wikis	44%	50%	0%	58%	0%	33%

The table above indicates the levels of awareness of the different social media across various industries of the respondents that were interviewed.

### Usage of social media

Respondents were asked which social media they had ever used in at least one campaign in the last six months. Social networks (97%), Blogs (94%), online videos (85%) and instant messaging (82%) generally enjoy high levels of usage across all the sectors.

Table 3: Usage of social media

	Total	Government	Public sector	Private sector	Manufacturing	Development partners
Social networks e.g. Facebook	97%	100%	100%	95%	100%	100%
Blogs	94%	90%	100%	95%	100%	100%
Online videos e.g. YouTube	85%	80%	100%	84%	100%	100%
Instant messaging	82%	70%	67%	84%	100%	100%
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Music sharing	50%	50%	33%	53%	0%	100%
Wikis	44%	50%	0%	58%	0%	33%

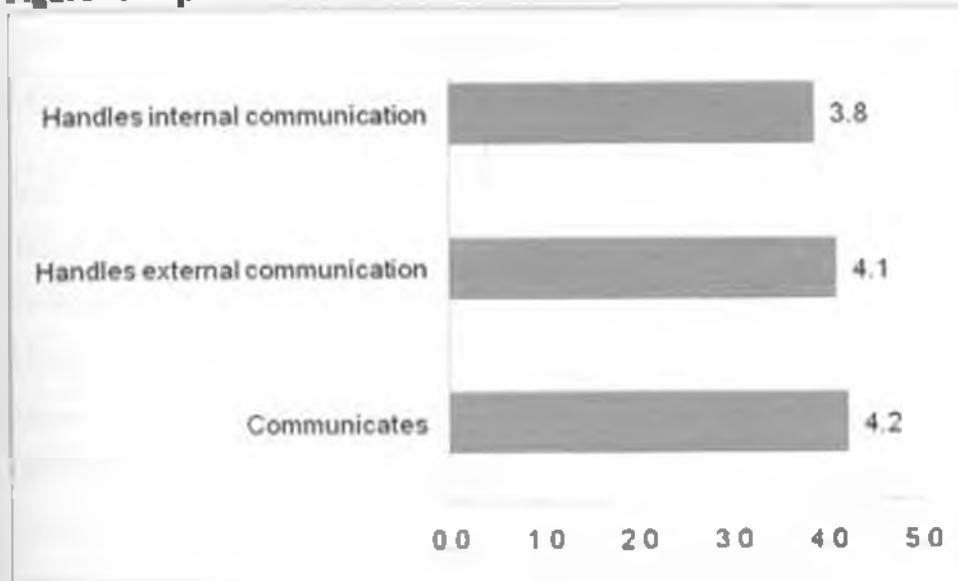
Table 3 above suggests a strong linkage between awareness and usage.

### 4.3.3 Impact of social media on communication

Responses to the question: "Please tell me whether you agree or disagree that the emergence of social media (including blogs) has changed the way your organization (or your client organizations): a) communicates? b) handles external communication? c) handles internal communication? Were analyzed and the results presented in Figure 7 below. Public relations practitioners who responded to

this survey believe the emergence of social media has changed the way their organizations (or their client organizations) generally communicate. Figure 7 below shows that 84% agree that social media has generally changed the way organizations communicate generally.

**Figure 7: Impact of social media on communication**



*Note: Mean scores throughout this report are based on responses to five-point Likert-type scales where "1" =*

*"Strongly Disagree" and "5" = "Strongly Agree." Consequently, the higher the mean score the greater the agreement as the figure above indicates.*

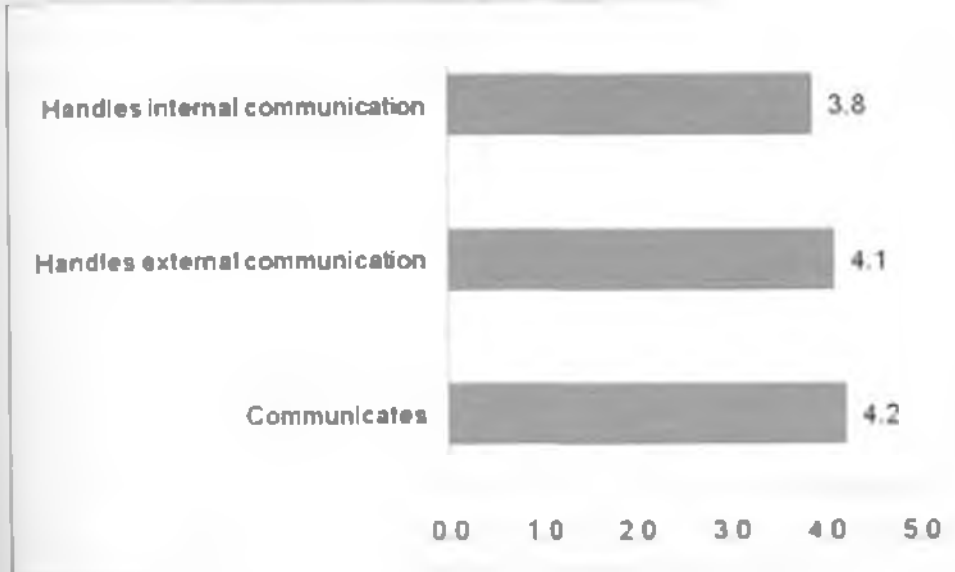
**Table 4: Impact of social media on PR communication - mean differences**

	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
Communicates	4.21	0.16	1.00	1.01
Handles external communication	4.08	0.18	1.13	1.28
Handles internal communication	3.85	0.21	1.29	1.66

This chart and table above show that changes/ the impact of social media on communication are more prominent in external communications (82%) than they are in internal communications (77%). This implies that the external publics are much more affected than internal publics by social media and therefore more effort need to be geared towards streamlining information that goes to the public since they are not only users of this information but also generators of the same.

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#### 4.3.4 Importance of social media to PR practice

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of various social media on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 meant least important and 5 meant very important

Table 5 below indicates the results of the same.

**Table 5: Importance of social media to PR practice**

	Mean Statistic
Social Networks	4.55
Online videos	4.24
Newsgroup/Forums	4.23
Blogs	4.13
Instant messaging	3.81
Social bookmarking	3.70
Photosharing	3.59
Virtual worlds	3.58
Wikis	3.54
Podcasting	3.49
Music Sharing	3.05

It is apparent from the table above that social networks were rated as the most important at 90%, online videos as second most important at 84% followed by newsgroups/forums at 84%and Blogs at 82%. This implies that PR practitioners should ideally be managing the information that comes from these social media forums.

#### 4.3.5 Positive/Negative impact of social media on PR practice

##### Positive impact of social media on PR practice

The respondents were asked open-ended question to gauge how they thought social media impacted on PR practice positively. The responses were edited, coded and data entered and analysed. They have been presented in the table below in form of percentages.

The table below provides the percentages of the responses to what the respondents felt were the positive impacts of social media to PR practice.

**Table 6: Positive impact of social media**

	TOTAL.	
	Count	%
BASE	35	100%
Wide reach of publics	12	34%
Instant feedback	9	26%
Cheaper to reach publics	8	23%
One message can target many	7	20%
Rich information source	4	11%
Enhanced marketing and advertising	3	9%
More creativity is involved	3	9%
Interaction with publics personal involvement	2	6%
Widens scope of relations	2	6%
Communicate to different age groups at the same time	2	6%
Viral effect Fast spread of information	1	3%
Timeliness of information	1	3%

It can be seen from the data in table 6 that PR practitioners find the ability to reach wide audiences and the immediacy of communication as major positive impacts of social media.

**Negative impact of social media on PR practice**

The respondents were also asked to say the negative impact of social media on PR practice Table 7 below provides the results of the open-ended responses.

**Table 7: Negative impact of social media on PR practice**

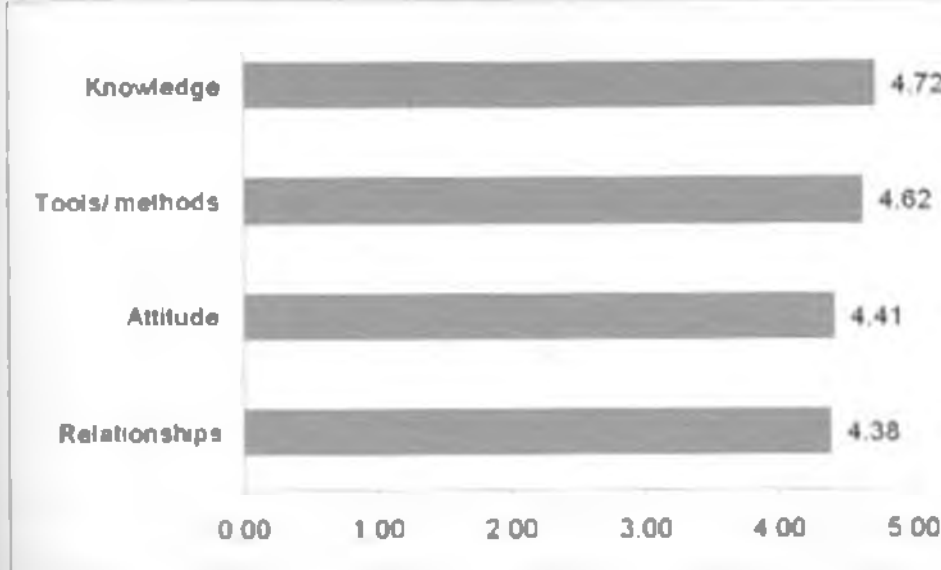
	TOTAL.	
	Count	%
BASE	34	100%
Cyber crimes	9	27%
Time wasting/distracting	8	24%
Lack of gatekeepers	8	24%
Erosion of basic social skills	6	18%
Message distortion	6	18%
Lack of privacy	4	12%
Difficult to measure usage	2	6%
Reduced advertising	1	3%
Language barrier	1	3%

As can be seen from the table above, about a quarter of those that responded to the questions expressed great concern about cyber crimes and time wastage in as far as social media is concerned. Going forward, PR practitioners in their use of social media need to come up with various intervention measures for these in order to enhance the effectiveness of the same in PR practice.

#### 4.3.6 Impact of social media on attitude, knowledge, relationships and tools of PR

The survey also sought to determine the extent to which social media had impacted on the attitude, knowledge, skills, tools and relationships of PR practitioners. This was measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 meant very little/no impact at all and 5 meant to a great extent/very much.

Figure 8: Impact of social media on attitude, knowledge, relationships and tools of PR



As the results reveal that PR practitioners generally feel that social media has impacted most on their knowledge (94%) followed by the tools and methods of PR (92%), attitude (88%) and relationships with other departments (88%)

The results suggest that knowledge has been the most affected by social media as PR managers reported on enhanced information sharing and access to a wide network of information from both internal and external publics. Social media has also greatly impacted on the tools and methods of public relations. For example, information is no longer just two way as the external public both receives and generates information. Through social media, information is also accessible at a faster rate than before and PR practitioners, in future, will have to adjust their tools to suit the pace at which technology is changing.

#### 4.3.7 Whether social media has enhanced PR practice

Respondents were asked to respond to the question: "Please tell me to what extent you agree/disagree with the statement 'Social media has enhanced the practice of public relations'. The findings are presented in table 12 below.

**Table 8 Whether social media has enhanced PR practice**

		Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
Whether social media has enhanced PR practice	39	4.436	0.088	0.552	0.305

The level of agreement was measured on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 meant strongly disagree and 5 meant strongly agree.

PR practitioners generally agree that social media has enhanced the practice at 4.436 out of 5 which translates to about 89%.

The researcher made further inquiry by asking the respondents who had agreed to give responses as to why they had agreed. This was in the form of open-ended questions, which were then coded and the keyed in. The responses have been presents in table 13 below.

**Table 9 Whether social media has enhanced PR practice (open-ended)**

	<b>TOTAL.</b>	
	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>BASE</b>	35	100%
Easy to reach wide market/publics	13	37%
Instantaneous communication	11	31%
More accessible information	6	17%
Creativity in information sharing	4	11%
More communication channels	2	6%
Flexible communication channels	1	3%
Strengthened interpersonal communication	1	3%
Understanding and goodwill in the company	1	3%

The major reason that PR practitioners gave for agreeing that social media had enhanced the practice had to do with the ability to reach many people/publics (37%) followed by having instantaneous communication (31%) and information being more accessible (17%)

### 4.3.8 Challenges of using social media

Respondents were asked to state the challenges that they had faced in using social media. These have been presented in table 14 below.

**Table 10 Challenges of using social media**

	TOTAL	
	Count	%
<b>BASE</b>	34	100%
Lack of proper internet resources	13	38%
Staying abreast with technological advancements	7	21%
Lack of controls/ gatekeepers	6	18%
Difficult to keep up with consumer language	5	15%
Needs practitioner to be IT savvy	5	15%
Technophobia from older generation of PR practitioners	3	9%
Abuse of social media	2	6%
Little expertise in social media	2	6%
Choosing the right technology to use	1	3%
Information overload	1	3%
Its addictive nature	1	3%
Lack of acceptance by some practitioners	1	3%
Expensive in the long run	1	3%
Difficulty in measuring impact of social media	1	3%

Top among the challenges of using social media as cited by the respondents include lack of proper internet resources (38%), staying abreast with technological advancements (21%) and lack of control / gatekeepers (18%).

The most interesting observation from this table is that PR practitioners have generally acknowledged that much as they are willing to adopt the social media technology in their practice, they are facing challenges in relation to internet resources and lack of adequate knowledge on how they can fully tap into it. This means that there is an opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of social media among practitioners since social media is here to stay.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION CHAPTER**

### **5.1 Background information**

Prior studies that have noted the importance of social media to PR practice as mentioned in the literature review. Very little was found in the literature on the question of the extent to which social media has impacted on the attitude, knowledge, relationships and the tools and methods of PR.

The study set out with the aim of assessing the impact of social media on PR practice, and it targeted PR managers from different organizations.

### **5.2 Summary of the main findings**

From the findings of the study, it emerged that the impact of social media has generally been high and has affected all areas of the practice.

It emerged that while PR practitioners still use 'traditional' communication widely, there were also high usage levels of social media across the different sectors.

Social media such as social networks, online videos and blogs enjoy high awareness levels. The high awareness also went hand in hand with the usage as these were also the most commonly used

Social media was generally acknowledged as having influenced PR practice positively but challenges such as lack of internet resources, keeping up to date with changing technology and lack of controls/gatekeepers were cited.

### **5.3 Implications**

This section relates to how the outcome of the research questions influences or changes understanding about the topic under examination: the impact of social media on PR practice. Sub-sections within this section have been used as it was deemed useful to determine what impact the findings had on the practice of PR and on the theory of the study

### **5.3.1 Implications for PR practice**

One of the issues that emerged from these findings is that social media has had a huge impact in moving public relations into the direction of facilitating more two-way communication by opening up direct channels of communication between organizations and their publics. Public relations practitioners interviewed admitted to social media having highly impacted on communication, especially in the way in which their organizations handled external communication. Development of social media technology has empowered many strategic publics and has given PR practitioners dynamic new ways to communicate with many internal and external audiences. Social media provides a cost-free forum for the expression of ideas, information and opinion.

Social media provides excellent opportunities for PR people to build relationships with strategic publics. It would be safe to conclude that social media has opened up a new group of stakeholders with which to engage, as well as new vehicles for reaching them.

The abuse and misuse of social media also emerged as a major concern from the respondents of the survey. This impacts on PR practice directly because as social media comes of age, people will use it for short term gain e.g. identity theft, at the expense of long term gains. In future, PR practitioners will need to obtain knowledge on internet security in order to overcome this challenge.

The other issue that emerges from these findings is the challenge of the PR practitioner keeping abreast with the new technologies of social media. The challenge is not only keeping abreast of what is going on but also of what is being planned for release in the future. Public information campaigns that may have been formulated years in advance by large companies or even international campaigns may need to be revisited several times to accommodate trends in usage of new technologies among key publics.

Due to the immediacy of communication in social media, PR practitioners may be under much more pressure in future to respond to queries, respond to allegations and generally offer instant feedback. The implications for public relations practitioners of needing to prepare material faster than ever before include being able to produce what is required almost instantaneously and with the required level of accuracy; having processes in place that can get required priority clearances for materials to be released; and, having the technology at hand to directly distribute or upload what is being disseminated.

The findings also suggest that PR practitioners acknowledge that there exists a knowledge gap among practitioners especially on how social media can be best tapped into. If social media are to be fully embraced, public relations practitioners will need more technical skills in areas such as web publishing, new software operation, online security, search engine optimization, web analytics and web trend analysis software operation. They will need enhanced online information architecture skills and skills related to managing an increasing amount of complex information digitally.

The study also identified that social media has enhanced the practice of PR by making it easy to reach a huge number of publics cheaply and within a short time. While this may have its advantages, it also poses a challenge to the practitioners in terms of dealing with a highly fragmented public who may not be easy to profile. The question of whether the targeted publics are able to access these new media would also arise.

Finally, the present results suggest that the usage of social media is almost equal to the use of traditional media and going forward, PR practitioner may have to consider ways in which to merge the two media in way that will not erode on the other. There may be needed to form strategic alliances with different departments or companies in order to deliver cross-discipline multimedia services.

### ***5.3.2 Implications for theory***

The findings have confirmed the theoretical basis under study. The theory used in this study was Marshall McLuhan's Technological Determinism theory. The theory is widely interpreted as: that the development of technology itself follows a predictable, traceable path largely beyond cultural and political influence and that technology in turn has "effects" on societies that are inherent, rather than socially conditioned or produced because that society organizes itself to support and further develop a technology once it has been introduced.

The findings suggest that PR practitioners have to a great extent embraced the social media technology and are employing it in their day to day practice. There is evidence from company websites that most companies have social media pages like Facebook, Twitter and this shows that the practitioners are willing to develop this technology further.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter provides the conclusions, limitations of the study and recommendations for future work. The main objective of the study was to determine the impact of social media on public relations practice.

### **6.1 Conclusions**

The study concluded that social media is dramatically changing the way PR is practiced. Social media has accelerated and intensified the way public relations practitioners communicate, relate, their attitudes and tools/methods of practice.

Social media has given them dynamic new ways to communicate with many internal and external audiences.

Social media has made the practice more challenging for PR professionals because it requires a diverse and ever-expanding collection of skills and proficiency especially with the rise of new social media technologies every day. There is increased knowledge that social media has forced PR professionals to have. Practitioners mentioned being unable to keep up with the changing technologies as one of the major challenges. This means if professionals haven't been educating themselves on the field then the challenges may catch up with them. Practitioners have to come up with content management strategies in future. Responding to the demands of social media in a working environment where traditional media demands on public relations practice are not reducing significantly will be a major area of concern in coming years.

The study has offered a few insights into the impact of social media on PR practice but the full ramifications of social media and the way in which it is continuing to evolve go far beyond the scope of this paper

### **6.2 Limitations of the study**

This study faced several limitations. The target respondents were very busy individuals who were hard to access. The researcher was dependent on the cooperation of the respondents and some were unwilling to respond. This made the research to take quite a long time- in some cases the respondents had to be

given a questionnaire more than once. However, the researcher used public relation approaches and established a rapport with them. The researcher also guaranteed the respondents' anonymity.

Insufficient funding also limited the extent to which the researcher picked the population and thus sample size only made reasonable generalization to the study.

.A bigger sample representation would have been more comprehensive. The research is based on self reported information and hence there was a risk of bias.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

There exists a gap in knowledge in as far as fully tapping into social media for the benefit of PR practice is concerned. Other areas of concern include keeping abreast with the ever changing social media technology and managing social media content since social media is prone to abuse is also an important area of research. A new question of the effectiveness of using social media for communication has been raised through this study and this needs to be checked in future research.

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**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE**

**University of Nairobi  
School of Journalism  
Academic Questionnaire**

I am undertaking a master's degree course in communication studies at the University of Nairobi. As part of the fulfillment of my studies, I am undertaking a research project to determine **the impact of social media on PR practice**. You have been selected as one of the respondents for the research.

The findings of this survey will be used for academic purposes only. You will also be provided with a copy of the final report upon request.

**SECTION A**

Respondents Name				
Name of organization				
Job title/designation	Public relations manager	01		
	Corporate affairs manager	02		
	Communications manager	03		
	Marketing manager	04		
	Other(Specify )			
Gender	Male	01		
	Female	02		
Industry of organization	Government	01	Development partners	05
	Public sector	02	(Other(Specify))	
	Private sector	03		
	Manufacturing	04		
Number of years of employment	0-5	01		
	6-10	02		
	11-15	03		
	16-20	04		
	Over 20 years	05		
Age	Below 25	01		
	25-34	02		
	35-44	03		
	45 and above	04		
Level of Education	High School	01		

	College	02
	Diploma	03
	Degree	04
	Masters	05
	PhD	06

## SECTION B: MAIN INTERVIEW

1a. What best describes your industry (or the primary industry you represent if you work for an agency)?

1b. Please tell me whether you use the following 'old/traditional' methods to communicate internally/externally in the last six months?

	1b. Internally	1c. Externally
i. Newspapers	01	02
ii. Wire Services and News	01	02
iii. Press Release	01	02
iv. Photographs	01	02
v. Brochures	01	02
vi. Written Speech	01	02
vii. Internal Newsletters and	01	02
viii. Letters to the Editor	01	02
ix. Features	01	02
x. Other(specify)		

1d. Which social media, if any, do you know or have you heard of?

1e. Which of the following social media has your organization used in at least one campaign in the last six months?

	Q1d. Know/Ever heard of?	Q.1e. Ever used?
i. Blogs	01	02
ii. Online videos e.g.	01	02
iii. Social networks( e.g.	01	02
iv. Podcasting	01	02
v. Photo sharing e.g. Flickr	01	02
vi. Newsgroups /Forums	01	02
vii. Wikis	01	02
viii. Social Bookmarking	01	02
ix. Instant messaging	01	02
x. Virtual worlds	01	02
xi. Music sharing	01	02

2. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree that social media has changed the way your organization (or your client organizations):

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2a. Communicates?	05	04	03	02	01
2b. Handles external communications?	05	04	03	02	01
2c. Handles internal communications?	05	04	03	02	01

3a. I would like your opinion on the importance of different social media on PR practice. Please rate the importance on a scale of 1-5 where 1 means least important and 5 means very important.

	Very important	Important	Neither important	Not important	Least important
i. Blogs	05	04	03	02	01
ii. Online videos (YouTube)	05	04	03	02	01
iii. Social networks (Facebook)	05	04	03	02	01
iv. Podcasting	05	04	03	02	01
v. Photo sharing e.g. Flickr	05	04	03	02	01
vi. Newsgroups / Forums	05	04	03	02	01
vii. Wikis	05	04	03	02	01
viii. Social Bookmarking	05	04	03	02	01
ix. Instant messaging	05	04	03	02	01
x. Virtual worlds	05	04	03	02	01
xi. Music sharing	05	04	03	02	01

4a. I would like you to assess the extent to which social media has affected your: Attitude, Knowledge, Relationships (e.g. with other departments) and Behaviour: Tools/methods

As a PR practitioner? Would you say social media has impacted on PR practitioners' .....?

	Very much /to a	A little	Neither/nor	Hardly	Not at all
a. Attitude	05	04	03	02	01
b. Knowledge	05	04	03	02	01
c. Relationships	05	04	03	02	01

d. Tools/methods	05	04	03	02	01
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4b. Please give reasons for your answers above?

Attitude	
Knowledge	
Relationships e.g with other	
Tools/methods	

5a. Please tell me to what extent you agree/disagree with the statement "Social media has enhanced the practice of public relations?"

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Agree Strongly</b>
05	04	03	02	01

5b. Please give reasons for your answer above?

5c. What are some of the positive impacts that social media has had on PR practice?

5d. What are some of the negative impacts that social media has had on PR practice?

5e. What are the challenges of using social media?

## APPENDIX 2: TABLES

The responses on the impact of social media on attitude, knowledge, tools and relationships of PR have been presented in the tables below.

**Table 11 Impact of social media on attitude**

	TOTAL	
	Count	%
BASE	32	100%
Enhanced exchange of information	9	28%
More motivation for work	7	22%
Has gotten rid of prejudices	6	19%
Strengthened internal	4	13%
More open-mindedness	2	6%

**Table 12 Impact of social media on knowledge**

	TOTAL	
	Count	%
BASE	35	100%
Enhanced information exchange	15	43%
Wide network of information	15	43%
Enhanced interaction with publics	2	6%
Faster information sharing	2	6%
Easy access to information	1	3%

**Table 13 Impact of social media on relationships**

	TOTAL	
	Count	%
BASE	33	100%
Easier networking opportunities	21	64%
Better relationships within	6	18%
Faster decision making	3	9%
Faster communication	2	6%

**Table 14: Impact of social media on tools/methods**

	TOTAL	
	Count	%
BASE	34	100%
Effective communication	25	74%
Wide range of alternative tools for	5	15%
Emerging tools to handle social	2	6%
Major information sources	1	3%
Better presentation equipment	1	3%