

**SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE NEW CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT  
MODEL: A CASE OF SAFARICOM**

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**DECLARATION**

I, Mutugi Caroline Kanana, do hereby declare that the content in this project is my original work, has not been published or submitted for publication in any other learning institution.

Sign .....Date .....

**Ms. Mutugi Caroline Kanana**

This project has been submitted for examination following my approval as University Supervisor.

Sign ..... Date .....

**Mr. Edwin Nyutho**

## **ABSTRACT**

Previous research reveals an increase in the use of the social media in business, but not much has been done, from the customer's perspective, on the success of the use of these social networks in customer relations. This research aimed at establishing whether the use of social media (Facebook and Twitter) by Safaricom has been effective in the management of its relationship with the customer when compared to the conventional means of managing customer relations. Success in the use of the social media customer relations was examined from a client perspective through their own attitudes and opinions related to the response time to their communications. The findings from the study will be useful in informing the organizations and others in the service industry on the impact of their use of the social customer relations strategy. The theoretical framework that was used in the research is the Uses and Gratifications Theory. The researcher used a mixed method research design collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were collected using questionnaires which were distributed to 200 participants, purposively sampled from the population of Nairobi. Qualitative data were collected from a virtual ethnography where the researcher engaged in a study through the Internet to find out the response time and opinions of the users on the Internet. A sample of 20 users was selected from the Internet using purposive sampling, for the virtual ethnographic study. The data from the two methods was analyzed, using descriptive statistics for quantitative data and content analysis of the qualitative data. Findings from the analysis led to the conclusion that the use of social media in customer relations was more effective as it has reduced response time, compared to use of conventional models such as telephone communications, like the traditional 100 line. The researcher therefore, recommends that business organizations use the social media applications to communicate with their consumers but should seek to reduce the response time.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to my mom, Lucy Mwendwa, who has supported me tirelessly throughout my life, to my love Michael, my beautiful girls Kiki and Jess, and my nephew Sam. This is the team that has made me the person I am today.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	iv
DEDICATION .....	v
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
LIST OF TABLES .....	x
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS .....	xi
<b>CHAPTER ONE:INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of the Study .....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	2
1.3 Purpose of the Study .....	3
1.4 Significance of the Study .....	4
1.5 Objective of the Study .....	4
1.6 Research Questions .....	5
1.7 Scope of the Study .....	5
1.8 Theoretical Framework.....	6
<b>CHAPTER TWO:LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Social Networking .....	8
2.2 Social Media in Business .....	9
2.3 Customer Relations Management (CRM) .....	11
2.4 Social Customer Relations Model .....	16
2.5 Gaps in Research.....	21
<b>CHAPTER THREE:METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	23
3.2 Research Design.....	23
3.3 The Population .....	25
3.4 Sample Size.....	26
3.5 Sampling Method.....	26
3.6 Eligibility Criteria .....	27
3.7 Data Collection Techniques .....	27

3.8 Data Analysis and Presentation .....	28
<b>CHAPTER FOUR:DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION.....</b>	<b>29</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	29
4.2 Response Rate.....	29
4.3 Profile of the Respondents .....	29
4.3.1 Gender of the Respondents.....	29
4.3.2 Age of the Respondents.....	30
4.3.3 Occupation of the Respondents .....	30
4.3.4 Highest Educational Qualification of the Participants .....	31
4.4 Internet Usage .....	32
4.4.1 Frequency of Internet Usage.....	32
4.4.2 Platforms Used in Accessing the Internet.....	32
4.4.3 Internet Access Location .....	33
4.5 Social Networking Sites Usage.....	34
4.5.1 The Duration for which they have been on SNSs .....	34
4.5.2 Average Use of Social Media in a Day .....	34
4.5.3 Hours of the day the Participants are on the Social Media.....	35
4.5.4 Purpose for using Social Networking Sites .....	36
4.6 Social Media Connections .....	37
4.6.1 Number of Social Networking Communities, Groups or Fan-pages Participated in .....	37
4.6.2 Reasons for Joining a Community, Group or Fan Page .....	37
4.6.3 Fans of Safaricom on Facebook .....	38
4.6.4 Followers of Facebook on Twitter.....	39
4.7 Frequency of Communication with Safaricom on Social Media.....	39
4.7.1 Frequency of Seeking Help from the Organization Concerning Services.....	39
4.7.2 Frequency of Seeking Information and News Posted by the Organization.....	40
4.7.3 Frequency of Recommending Use of the Page and Handle to Others .....	40
4.7.4 Participants who have contacted the Organization for Information or to Solve an Issue .....	41
4.7.4.1 Frequency of Contact.....	42

4.7.4.2 Effectiveness in Addressing the Request.....	42
4.7.5 Timeliness in Addressing Requests.....	43
4.7.6 The opinion of Participants on Whether the Company is being Effective in Addressing Issues from the Customers through Social Media.....	44
4.8 Online Ethnography Data Analysis .....	44
4.8.1 The Average Time Taken to Reply to a Request or Tweet .....	44
4.8.2 The Opinions of the Users .....	45
<b>CHAPTER FIVE:DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>47</b>
5.1 Discussions of Findings .....	47
6.2 Conclusion.....	53
6.3 Recommendations .....	55
6.4 Suggestions for Further Research .....	57
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>62</b>
Appendix I: Questionnaire .....	62
Online Ethnography Guide.....	68



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure1: Gender of the research participants .....	29
Figure 2: Where Internet is used most frequently.....	33
Figure 3: Duration for which respondents have been using SNSs.....	34
Figure 4: Number of Social Networking communities, groups or fan-pages participated in ..	37
Figure 5: Fans of Safaricom on Facebook .....	38
Figure 6: Followers of Facebook on Twitter .....	39
Figure 7: Contact with the organization for information or to solve an issue .....	41
Figure 8: Frequency of contact .....	42
Figure 9: Effectiveness in addressing the request.....	43
Figure 10: Timeliness in addressing requests .....	43

## LIST OF TABLES

Table1: Age distribution .....	30
Table 2: Occupation of the research participants.....	31
Table 3: Highest education qualification .....	31
Table 4: Frequency of Internet Usage.....	32
Table 5: Tools used to access the internet .....	33
Table 6: Average use of social media in a day .....	35
Table 7: Hours during which respondents use social media.....	35
Table 8: Purpose for using Social Networking Sites .....	36
Table 9: Reasons for joining a community, group or fan page.....	38
Table 10: Frequency of seeking help from the organization concerning services.....	40
Table 11: Frequency of seeking information and news posted by the organization.....	40
Table 12: Frequency of seeking information and news posted by the organization.....	41
Table 13: Requests sent to Facebook fan page .....	44
Table 14: Requests sent to Safaricom Twitter Handle.....	45
Table 15: Opinions of users .....	46

## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

CRM - Customer Relationship Management

ICT- Information and Communication Technology

SCRM - Social Customer Relations Model

SNSs – Social Networking Sites

SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

WWW - World Wide Web

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The main aim of this study was to find out how effective social media is in customer relationship management as compared to the conventional face-to-face customer relationship management model.

Social media networks are the technologies which are used in turning communication into interactive discussions between individuals, communities as well as organizations. These social networks either take the form of web-based or mobile-based networks. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 59) defines social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.” This means that social media networks are social applications which are utilized in mediating communication between individuals and groups. Social networks provide various services such as personal unique space, and enable the users to develop blogs, photos and video sharing, and motivating group interactions through applications like instance messaging and chat rooms (Heinrichs, Lim & Lim, 2011).

Social media has become a major force in consumer culture and has as a result been exploited by some of the global leading businesses as their new arena for customer relations. Various companies are using social media as the means for strengthening their customer relations. Their customers are able to connect and have conversations with the customer relationship representatives in the organizations. Development of the social media has

attracted many people to its use, and has led many businesses and other organizations to adopt the trend as a means of taking advantage of the presence of their clients online. Many organizations, both in the public and the private sector; have developed a presence in the social media, such as Twitter and Facebook (Peppers & Rogers, 2011). More and more companies are becoming present and available on social media 24/7, allowing the customers to communicate with them round the clock. Customer service via social media is no longer being seen by the organizations as a luxury, but as a major component of any customer service strategy adopted by the organization.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The trends in social media in the modern-day can be summed up in only one single word: *Convergence*. Since the emergence of the social media, practitioners as well as the industry itself has tried to define and redefined the concept, and it is apparent that almost all forms of communication have assumed this aspect: becoming social. At the same time, communications, sales, and customer service has grappled with its utilization, measurement its mastery, conducting business and generally working around it. Thus, it is not a surprise that the social media sector can be said to have converged (Lund, 2012). It is this convergence that companies are taking advantage of.

The use of the social media in organizations for various purposes such as marketing is an area attracting a lot of interest in research and practice. A study carried out by Universal McCann (2009), Social Media Research Wave 4, revealed that the social media is a global phenomenon present in all markets. The study revealed an astonishing growth in all kinds of social media applications, with customers gaining a strong presence in sites such as Facebook and Twitter among others. The shift of the customers from the conventional means of

communication, such a face-to-face and even telephone conversations, to the use of the social media, have revealed the need for companies to take advantage of these applications in managing their customer relations. Social media has been used as the avenue for the companies to keep in touch with their customers, real and potential.

However, regardless of the increase in the use of social media by business organizations, the effectiveness of the move into management of customer relations is a new area of research. This has led to an interest in research on this topic. This research investigated the effectiveness of the move to the social media by companies in addressing the needs of their customers (customer relations). This research used Safaricom as a case study, in its move to the twitter and Facebook as a means of directly interacting with the section of its clientele that is present in the social media. The impact on customer relations in the use of the social media by this organization is the focus of this study.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

While there is an increase in the number of companies using the social media to communicate with the customers, there is no much research done in establishing whether the companies are achieving their objectives (by being more effective in their customer relationship management). This research therefore, sought to establish whether the use of the social media has an impact on the need to achieve better communications with the customers and improving customer satisfaction. The main purpose of this study was to determine whether the use of social media (Facebook and Twitter) by Safaricom has been better in the management of its relationship with the customers when compared to conventional means such as telephone. The effectiveness in the use of the social media customer relations was examined from a client perspective.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Companies are more and more investing in the social media as the means of reaching more of their clients directly, with the aim of enhancing customer relations. This is slowly changing the conventional business model where the clients had to visit or call for any assistance. This is perceived as an effective means of enhancing communications and improving customer satisfaction. This is a huge investment for most of these companies and organizations. This research therefore sought to establish whether the investment is worthwhile. The findings from the research will be beneficial to the company in development of its customer relations strategies. The findings will also be applicable to other organizations that are using the social media in the management of customer relations and others that are considering this strategy.

#### **1.5 Objective of the Study**

General Objective:

The main objective of this study is to find out how social media (Facebook and Twitter) are being used in customer relationship management by Kenyan Companies

**Specific Objectives:**

- i. To study the social media habits of Kenyans
- ii. To find out the impact of the social media on consumer attitudes towards organizations and their services
- iii. To establish how the response time has improved since the introduction of social media in customer relations in comparison to conventional customer relations models such a telephone

- iv. To establish how the companies can improve their use of the social media to enhance their relationship with the customers

## **1.6 Research Questions**

The questions that this study seeks to answer are:

- i. How are the social media (Facebook and Twitter) being used in customer relationship management by Kenyan Companies?
- ii. What are the social networking habits of Kenyans?
- iii. What is the impact of the social media on consumer attitudes towards organizations and their services?
- iv. How has, the response time has improved since the introduction of social media in customer relations in comparison to conventional customer relations models such a telephone?
- v. How can the companies improve their use of the social media to enhance their relationship with their customers?

## **1.7 Scope of the Study**

This study covers the use of social media (specifically Facebook and Twitter) in the management of customer relationship by Safaricom. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) includes the area of communications with the customer and the provision of feedback. The people surveyed are the users of the social media in Nairobi. The study was limited to the use of Facebook and Twitter as they are the most common sites used by the organization, as well as the most famous among Kenyan social media users.



## 1.8 Theoretical Framework

By understanding the Uses and Gratifications Theory, organizations can easily understand the needs of the customers and implement effective ways of fulfilling them. With the rapid growth of the social media, this theory is applicable to the utilization of social media in promoting the use of goods and services. The theory was developed during the 1940s, by communication experts in studying the radio as well as the success of mass media communications (Chung & Austria, 2010). The Uses and Gratifications Theory emphasize on the relationship between the audience (which is active) and its utilization of the media. The question it seeks to ask is why do users utilize some kinds of media and how do they benefit from its use. While the Uses and Gratifications Theory was developed in studying the radio, it can be accurately used in understanding the use of social media. It took the radio up to 38 years to reach 50 million users, but it took Facebook only nine to reach about 100 million users (Qualman 2009). Currently, more and more organizations have taken this advantage in targeting their users (see the figure below).



The theory is based on three main assumptions which are based on three objects and they include: to offer an explanation for how people use mass media in gratifying their needs; to

find out the basic motivations for the individuals in their mass media usage; and to find out the consequences (both positive and negative) of individual media usage. With the use of the three objectives, the theory holds the assumption that the audience uses particular media in order to achieve a particular goal (which is gratification). The needs can be cognitive, including information and knowledge; affective, which includes aesthetic and emotional experiences; personal integrative that allows for self-improvement or to enhance confidence; social integrative, which include improving interactions with others via networks; and tension release as well as reality diversion (Chung & Austria, 2010).

The theory also reveals that there is the freedom of choice within the audience of the medium that they will use, which is determined by their personal needs. The level of freedom is what is referred to as activeness. This identification has become very important to those involved in public relations and customer relations. The theory is an important tool for understanding audience. The reason the audience will use the media is either for entertainment or information. By understanding the theory, it is possible to understand why and how the audience uses social media. It is also possible to understand how organizations can effectively engage with the audience (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). The customer relationship management is already using the social media, but the theory can be used in determining whether or not they are satisfying the needs of the customers. Given that the users already know what they want, the theory is applicable in determining whether these needs are being met, and in a way that satisfies the customers.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Social Networking**

Social networking has emerged as one of the most interesting topics in communication. The social networking sites are providing important resources for sharing information, photos, videos and blogging (Luo & Zhang, 2013). The society has continued to experience and witness heated debates, hype, theorizing and bogging around the role played by the social media in the modern age. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) posit that the social media applications enable the users to create and share user-generated contents, and they have been linked with diverse positive and negative developments in society. The social media applications are designed in such a manner that they offer a means for people to connect or communicate.

According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) in the last two decades or so, social networking was new and different. This is because it was still a developing and uncertain phenomenon in society. Nonetheless, within the last few years, the role of social networking has come to be more exceptional, with its usage increasing. Nielsen/NetRatings have suggested that the social networking sites make up five out of the ten fastest growing Web brands in the world. These sites have played an important role and are becoming an important part of the lives of many, especially teenagers and young adults. Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, and Flickr come in diverse forms and types. The user-generated sites which offer the means for connecting or communicating can either be business-related or for social purposes. People are able to join the sites and connect with ease via online registration or via an existing offline connection.

According to Peppers & Rogers (2011), various ways exist through which the social networks engage the users by enabling them to create their desired content. They are providing the users with a high level of freedom in the manner in which they engage with the sites as well as how they communicate and interact with one another. The information shared tends to be what the user desired due to the capability to generate content. Kane et al (2014) elucidates that the information tends to be extremely targeted.

Kane, et al (2014) posits that users join the social networking sites for diverse reasons. In a research carried out by the authors some people are in these sites for the sole purpose of connecting with their friends, others to make new friends, and others to reconnect with past friends. There are those who have a presence to be able to follow up on events. Other reasons why users join the sites include a sense of association and belonging, in search for information, self-identity, achievement of certain objectives, ideas of accepted behavior and values. While using these sites, various other needs are met, such as getting important information and news and getting updates on events among others.

## **2.2 Social Media in Business**

During the initial years in the development of social media applications, it was only viewed as a means for communicating for social purposes (Peppers & Rogers, 2011). In the world of business, it was viewed as an accessory of some kind, a kind of marketing that was just for experts. While the assumption remains in some areas of business, the tools have come to be accepted in the modern business world as a marketing tool, and for conducting other business operations all over the world. This means that it is no longer a new phenomenon in the business world. It is increasingly becoming a part of the way marketing is carried out today.

Edosomwan, et al (2011) suggests an increase in the use of the social media as a marketing tool, bringing in a new face in e-marketing. Businesses are using the social media increasingly as a means of reaching their consumers and their target markets. Research carried out in the last two decades has shown an increased interest in the use of the social media by business globally (Luo & Zhang, 2013; Scott, Mende & Bolton, 2013). The use of the social media has played an important role in marketing and advertising. Advertisers are the main users of social media in organizations in marketing their brands to the real and potential users.

According to Kaltcheva, et al (2014) from the point of view of players in the world of business, it has become important to see the social media as an evolution instead of a revolution. However, in the research done by Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson (2013) it might be misleading to suggest that every person is using the social media in gaining advantages in business. While some in the social media might believe that all persons in business are using the social media, this is very far from the truth. Edosomwan, et al (2011) suggests that it is individuals who use the social media but not businesses. This is unfortunate for the businesses that have not adopted the trend, as Kaltcheva, et al (2014) puts it not using the social media is similar to not using cell phones, cars or electricity in the 21st century business world.

Regardless of the conventional means of marketing like advertising, referrals and public relations remaining important in the modern business world, social media networks have become very critical fabric in marketing. Edosomwan, et al (2011) argues that businesses considering these tools at the strategic level and in making business decisions are bound to benefit. The authors add that rather than asking whether the organization should use the tools,

they should be considering how these tools can be utilized in achieving the marketing objectives of the business. Looking at the statistics of the users of the social media, it becomes evident that businesses can gain a lot from using them. Various studies have been carried out looking at the numbers of individuals using the social media sites. The findings are overwhelming as they show a skyrocketing increase in the users of these sites. A study carried out by the online competitive intelligence service Compete.com, showed that the top three social sites (Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) had more than 2.5 billion visits in September 2009 only. Twitter grew by more than 600% in 2009, while Facebook grew by 210% and LinkedIn by 85%. As a matter of fact, if Facebook was a country, it was revealed in the study that it would be the fourth largest internationally (Edosomwan, et al 2011). This means that any business would benefit from using these sites to target and interact with their customers.

### **2.3 Customer Relations Management (CRM)**

CRM refers to a model for managing interactions of a company with its real and potential customers. Kaltcheva, et al (2014) posits that CRM entails the use of technology in organizing, automating, and synchronizing sales, marketing, technical support, and customer service. It is often seen as a business strategy which makes it possible for a business to: understand its customer; retain the current customers via better customer experience; attract and win new customers; lower customer management costs and increase profitably.

CRM is defined by Reynolds (2002) as the way a company finds, gets and maintains its customers. The author borrows this definition from the Gartner Group, which suggests that CRM is a management function or discipline which necessitates that a business recognizes and nurture relationships with real and potential customers. It is a process used in collecting

information about real and potential customers regarding their needs. Kotler et al (2005) define it as consisting of software as well as analytical tools for integrating customer information from various sources, analyzing it in-depth and applying the results to building stronger customer relations.

During this current era of technological convergence, companies are more and more using information and communication technology (ICT) in organizing, automating and synchronizing business processes, basically customer service, sales and marketing activities. According to Kaltcheva, et al (2014) the general objectives are finding, attracting, and winning new customers, nurturing and retaining the customers that the company already has, enticing back to the company former customers, and reducing the costs of customer service and marketing.

Practically speaking, a lot of people view CRM as simply a technology for enhancing customer service, a perception that might cause failure in its implementation, according to Kaltcheva, et al (2014). Thus, the author suggests that it is important for the CRM initiatives to be viewed as a strategy for momentous improvement of customer services by improving loyalty, satisfaction, as well as advocacy via ICT. Thus, issues concerning people like culture transformation, customer behavior, personal agendas, as well as new interactions between persons and groups should be part of the CRM initiatives. It is important, as argued by Luo & Zhang (2013) for companies to understand the behaviors and expectations of the clients that continue to transform over time. As a result, CRM should be able to take into consideration the dynamic nature of the needs of the customers and therefore implement adjustments strategies integrated in CRM.

It is from this perspective that Greenberg (2004) defined CRM as a business strategy and philosophy, which is facilitated by technology and a system that is designed with the aim of improving human interactions in business settings. It refers to the operational, transactional strategy or approach to customer management. It is focused around customer-facing divisions or departments, sales, marketing as well as customer service.

CRM initiatives, earlier, was the process of culture change, modification, technology as well as automation via utilization of data in supporting customer management such that it would achieve the business value of organizational objectives like increase in revenue (income), increase in selling time, higher margins, campaign effectiveness, as well as reduction in call queuing time. Nowadays, CRM is designed with the aim of engaging customers in a conversation that is collaborative so as to offer mutually beneficial value in a transparent and trusted business environment. Scott, Mende & Bolton (2013) argue that when the strategy is developed and implemented into a proper planning as well as a good choice of supporting technology, the model is anticipated to have the capability to manage the relationships.

While the development of CRM can be argued to have attained maturity, many challenges have encountered its adoption in many organizations. Because of the complexity of the nature of business in organizations and their operating environment, there are various issues in the provision of services that should be put into consideration. The service industry is experiencing a paradigm shift from industrial age model to an information age model. This change is shaping various systems within the service sector (Scott, Mende & Bolton, 2013). It is also changing the organization-client relationship. For example, the development of the World Wide Web has changed the manner in which the public is engaging with organizations' information. Many of the clients will agree that they are largely depending on



the Internet in their search for information on services and products offered by an organization. There is an increase in the number of the people who are using the Internet in this manner (Scott, Mende & Bolton, 2013).

Information communication technology, according to Scott, Mende & Bolton (2013) has created an environment in which the customers are exploring business records and other sources of information at anytime and anywhere. This has brought about the need to align CRM strategy to the mission and objectives of the organization so as to achieve sustainable performance of the objectives as well as achieve effective customer relationships. The organization should adopt the perspective of the customer and put efforts towards development of an integrated plan containing the specific objectives of the organization. These strategies should be developed in such a manner that they offer benefits to the organizations and the customers; greater involvement of the customers in service development; shorter cycle times; and reduced operation costs through designing of business process eliminating work that does not add value to the customers.

Within the service sector, relationship between the organization and the customers vary depending on the diverse levels of complexity. However, in the operating environment, organizations are being challenged to get potential customers, retain them, and extend various services into the future. To be able to navigate the modern complex working environment, it is important for organizations to develop close and effective relationships with their clients to provide convenience of services, and offer transparency in services, achievable via information sharing. Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson (2013) have identified the need for the organizations to re-engineer their business strategies to adopt their CRM strategy and tool in order to get potential customers coming for the service, and the

prevailing CRM which has been developed in the company requires some adjustment to be able to accommodate the changing preferences of the customers as a result of technology development.



Business Strategy and CRM Model (Marketingteacher.com)

Figure 1 shows a business strategy on CRM. This model is hybrid and has three main phases as well as three contextual factors. The three phases include: customer acquisition; retention, and extension. The three contextual factors include: marketing orientation; value creation, and innovative information technology (Marketingteacher, 2010). Customer acquisition is defined as the process of attracting customers to the company for the very first time. Customer retention is ensuring that the customers return to the company and use the products of services of the company over and over; the company can retain them as its customers. Customer extension refers to the introduction of new product or service line to the original

product or service to the loyal customers which might not be related to the service or product. The new and retained customers are able to use the service or product via marketing orientation, value creation of innovative information technology. Once the organization acquires a new customer for a service or product via through marketing orientation, the customer determines the value of the activities provided by the organization. Nonetheless, it has not incorporated the social network within the process. This might have an impact on the processes of retention and extension (Klaus & Maklan, 2013)

Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson (2013) suggest the cost of failure for a company to implement an effective model of managing customer relations, for example not having in place an effective system to handle customer complaints. Inappropriate respond or lack of effective response can lead the customer to lose its customers in the future. Thus, the company requires having in place the right strategy in addressing and managing its customer relationships.

#### **2.4 Social Customer Relations Model**

The increase in the social media is changing the manner in which people send/receive, given that it is possible for any person to create the message and share their experiences or opinions with others. It has revolutionized how people communicate. It enables peer-to-peer collaboration as well as easy access to real-time communication. Customers participate in the social network sharing information regarding their experiences. This is normally in form of unstructured communication that can offer insight in the management of customer relations by business organizations. Wagner & Hughes (2009) has defined Social customer relations model as a philosophy as well as a business strategy that is supported by a technology platforms, business rules, processes, as well as social characteristics, and which are designed

to engage the customer in a collaborative conversation so as to offer mutually beneficial value in a trusted and transparent environment. It is the response of the company to ownership of the communication by the customer. This model provides new special abilities of social media that offer powerful new approaches which surpass traditional customer relations.

Organizations are increasingly seeking to capitalize on the trend toward social customer relations model as they seek specific strategies as well as tactics to drive value for their customers. According to research carried out in this area, it has been revealed that when effectively used social media can enable marketing professionals, salespersons,, as well as customer service agents, to establish positive relationships with their real and potential customers in innovative ways. Companies should consider their main business processes as well as customer management strategies, and identify the way social media can further improve and enhance the strategies. A white paper by Organic, Inc. (2010) revealed that Social CRM (SCRM), which is a complement to the conventional CRM, has a primary focus on relationships. The white paper acknowledges that with the development of the new media, individuals are developing their own consumption needs, greatly influenced by the social networks. The blending of the two offers a strong basis for organizations to influence business results by enhancing brand awareness as well as brand preference. SCRM is founded on the simple idea that one is capable of interacting with the customers based on their own needs and not the rules of the company (Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013).

Social CRM is simply an extension of CRM; it is not a replacement, and one of the significant benefits it provides is adding value back to the customers (more adoption). Heinrichs, Lim & Lim (2011) elucidate that it is an important component of the social

business strategy addressing the way organizations required to adapt to the customers in a world that has become social, and addressing the expectations of these important stakeholders. The expectations of the customers from the companies have changed, and it is important that the organizations adapt accordingly (Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013).

SCRM has become possible as a result of the Social CRM strategy, which is defined by Lund (2012) as an operation model, which is supported by information technology as well as business processes developed to the most important element of the SCRM operating model is an extremely flexible framework which makes it possible for the firm to observe what is being done and said by the customers, and then experiment with various customer experiences in discovering those that reverberate with customers (Wagner & Hughes, 2009). The major benefactor in the use of social networking in businesses is the marketer. Social networks are providing marketing businesses with novel insights into their products and brands, innovative means of executing and tracking grass-roots marketing programs, as well as novel means of turning online conversations that are fragmented into actionable insights. However, as suggested by Wagner & Hughes (2009) to achieve these benefits, the organizations should monitor, understand, as well as participate in an effective way in the conversations and leverage them in connection with the current marketing processes and programs.

The design of social marketing is such that they interact with the social media applications such as Facebook and Twitter to enhance marketing activities and processes. The tools focus on providing optimization on the basis of the way they are able to interpret the activity of the individuals on the social network as well as the data on their profiles. The tools also provide a high level of mobility. There is accessibility to the comments and ratings of the customers,

and it is possible to track the real-time activities of the customers. This can happen at any time and anywhere given the availability of the applications on mobile devices (Greenberg, 2009). Social media monitoring can also result in quantitative and qualitative reactions to adverts and campaigns for promotions, provide the necessary information for the improvement of the products, services or brands of the company, uncover major needs of the customers that are still unmet, and find out the individuals who are making a difference for the company by consuming its products or services.

With the increase in fragmentation, business organizations will be forced to continue adapting to highly sophisticated analytics as well as dynamic optimization abilities to be able to effectively capitalize on social networking. Business organizations will continue to witness more and more fragmentation in various aspects of their user experiences and in marketing performance. This increase in fragmentation requires that analytics is focused on various forms of communication with the customers; what customers tell the company through Twitter feeds and Facebook posts; what they are saying to other users in relation to the products or services of the company, and their interactions with products and services offered by other companies. This continues to necessitate much more than just spreadsheets and gut feeling. To be able to create optimal customer experiences, companies will have to be able to interpret and effectively respond to these communications (Wagner & Hughes, 2009).

Social networking also provides the benefit to service companies by offering them with new means of finding, connecting with, and understanding their customers. Regardless of the opportunities, there are still uncertainties regarding the use of social networking in this sense. Cautious and even more established sales personnel might look at social networking as an untested channel taking them away from the conventional core sales activities. However, for

every hesitant sales person, there is another resourceful seeking the next way of attaining competitive advantage. More and more, organizations are realizing the importance of adopting social networking into their conventional sales and customer relations functions (Wagner & Hughes, 2009; Klaus & Maklan, 2013)

The use of social CRM tools is revealed by Lund (2012) to exceed the traditional CRM tools. This is due to the fact that their design is such that they optimize the success rate for dealing with customer needs. The traditional means looks into the internal histories with the customers who are able to define the same kinds of deals and the way they are effective in handling external unstructured data which is removed from the conventional corporate information. On the other hand, the social CRM capitalizes on the information that is removed from the social media tools, which is more current and up-to-date. The information is analyzed as well as compiled into a more detailed and richer view of the chance to fulfill the needs of the customers. Customers also use the social media tools in finding, receiving, and communicating information regarding the products and services that they consume. This suggests that the social networks can be source of unfiltered feedback as well as dialogues that can be very important in pointing to issues with products or services and thus an opportunity to address the issue and improve on the product and service quality.

Lund (2012) suggests that generally suggest that if used correctly, social network applications can assist customer relations and make companies become more effective, while creating value for the organization. Additionally, these platforms offer an interaction and communication channel which plays an important role in eliminating the perceived barriers to communication and interaction between companies and their customers (Klaus & Maklan, 2013). Customer Service 2.0 tools and applications are founded on noticeably different

model from conventional CRM ones. Services which scan communities, ranging from Facebook to Twitter, seek complaints from customers and make use of analytic tools in determining the emotional depth- bad or good-of the complaint. This ensures that the complaints and issues raised from the customers are addressed, leading to greater levels of customer satisfaction.

## **2.5 Gaps in Research**

There is still limited on organizational use of social media applications in enhancing customer relations. This is regardless of the fact that many business organizations such as Safaricom among others have established a presence in social media as a way of interacting with their customers. The use of these applications has played a major role in the relationship between the organizations and the customers especially given the need for reciprocity of relationship. From a study carried out by Organic, Inc. (2010), the interactions most likely to benefit from the use of social media in companies are those related to customer experience and service. The focus for the companies should be placed on expeditiously and appropriately dealing with the interactions emanating from customers as well as potential customers.

Much of the social media research has focused on impression management as well as friendship performance, online/offline connections networks and network structures, and privacy issues related to the use of these applications. Researching on technology organization, Klaus & Maklan (2013) has revealed considerable body of existing research on methods of application of social media in general in a corporate setting. Also, the examination of these studies has been restricted to skilled workers on of technology organizations. Therefore, the studied cannot be regarded as being applicable to general



businesses. Klaus & Maklan (2013) has followed a practical approach in studying general companies to essentially find out how much of the social media applications have penetrated the non-technology as well as traditional organizations. Research has revealed that that 15% of general working population use social media at work though but they use them outside the work context, mostly for personal use. The researchers have pointed out that the general understanding as well as use of social media applications for business purposes is somewhat low and uncommon.

Regardless of the proliferation of corporate Facebook pages and Twitter accounts in the last few years, much research is yet to be done in establishing the perceptions of the customers of their effectiveness in improving customer relations. Business organizations continue to invest in these applications and thus the importance of more research to establish whether these investments are worthwhile.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The methodology chapter is a description of the way the study was carried out; the study design; the methods that was used in collecting data for the research, the population and the sample; and the method that was used in data analysis and presentation.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This research used a concurrent mixed research design. This means that the researcher used both qualitative and quantitative data to answer the research questions. Generally, there are two main kinds of research designs that are used in research, quantitative and qualitative. Patton (2001) suggests that the two research designs greatly differ from the point of view of the type of data collected. Thus, while the two designs have a common objective of scientifically establishing a truth regarding a social phenomenon, the two designs tend to differ in terms of the type of information or data that is collected. Glesne (2011) argues that quantitative research collects data in the form of numbers of numeric data. The quantitative research approach focuses on counts and measures of things. Quantitative research uses scientific techniques as well as hypothesis testing to collect data. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007) the data collected on the use of quantitative research include calculated coding tallies, operationalized variables, numbers and statistics. To collect the quantitative data, the research used questionnaire.

Lichtman (2010) elucidates that unlike quantitative research approach, qualitative research is based on naturalistic philosophies that are also based on the perception that there are multiple

worlds' realities as well as multiple interpretations that are all valid and depend on the creation or construction of the observer. From the perspective of being a naturalistic inquiry, the approach tries to provide a detailed analysis of social phenomena in their naturalistic settings. The chief focus is 'why' as opposed to 'what'. According to Biklen & Casella (2007), the design entails collection of data or information in form of narratives. The research concerns itself with meanings, definitions, concepts, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of what is being studied or observed. This approach is generally effective in the cases where the researcher is seeking to collect culturally-specific information concerning the subject(s) under study like the behaviours, opinions, attitudes and values of a particular population. To collect qualitative data for this study, virtual (online) ethnography was used.

Virtual ethnography is basically an ethnographic research approach, which is one of the various qualitative research designs, performed in an online environment, or on the Internet. The ethnographer, who focused on understanding the culture or social context of the subjects under study, engages in fieldwork immersing oneself within the culture under study (Hakken, 2014). Similarly, online ethnography studies online culture and communities. The study is carried out on the World Wide Web.

The current research used both qualitative and quantitative research methods as a way of capitalizing on the strengths of each, catering for their weaknesses to achieve more reliable and valid findings. Quantitative research design has a number of advantages that made it appropriate for this research. One of the advantages of quantitative research design is that it is more objective and reliable and that it uses statistics in generalizing findings. Creswell (1994) suggests that with collection of data in form or numbers, the approach eliminates the issue of researcher bias and subjectivity. Another advantage of quantitative research design is

that it often restructures and reduces a complex problem to a few variables which are easily measured. Sampling is very important in the use of quantitative research design, and assumes that a sample is representative of the target population. The approach is much more appropriate for large samples and is much less expensive in such studies that require bigger samples and highly distributed geographically. Rubin and Babbie (2010) argue that a high level of reliability is achieved in quantitative research due to the use of mass surveys as well as controlled observations, and other kinds of manipulations.

Qualitative research design has various advantages which inform its importance for the study. Unlike quantitative research, with the use of qualitative researcher, the researcher does not have to establish a hypothesis. This is also because the researcher does not require a firm design plan prior to the beginning of the research. Biklen and Casella (2007) suggest that this allows the research to unfold in a more natural manner. Another importance in the use of the qualitative research design is that the researcher has the opportunity to gain more detailed understanding of the phenomenon under study. Collection of narratives from the participants allows the researcher to collect more detailed and rich information in form of visual evidence or inclusive written descriptions. The approach looks into the context as well as the social significance of the phenomenon under study, as well as the way the individuals are affected, which is very important especially in social sciences. It is important to be able to capture the perceptions of the participants from what is said, experiences, stories, interactions, as well as observations.

### **3.3 The Population**

A research population, in general, refers to the collection of units, individuals or objects, which is the main focus of study. It is for the gain of the population that studies are carried

out. Nevertheless, because of the large sizes of populations, it is not possible for the researcher to investigate all the individuals or units in the population as it is extremely expensive and time-consuming. This is the reason why samples are obtained from the population using sampling techniques. The population for this study was the people in Nairobi who are using the social media, preferably Facebook and Twitter. The population of Nairobi was estimated at 3 million people. It was estimated that there are over 16 million Internet users in the country, though the exact number of users in Nairobi is unknown (Gichane, 2013).

### **3.4 Sample Size**

A sample is obtained from the population and should, therefore, be representative of the population. The sample for this study was 200 participants, which was drawn from the population of Nairobi. This is the sample that was involved in the survey that used questionnaires. No sampling was required for the virtual ethnography.

### **3.5 Sampling Method**

There are two general groups of sampling techniques that are used in research, as identified by Patton (2002). These two categories are probability and non-probability. The former requires for the researcher to have a sampling frame from which to get the sample. The sampling frame is defined by Patton (2002) as a list of cases from the population from which to get the sample from. The researcher performs random sampling from the list of cases, making up the sample. On the other hand, the latter does not require a sampling frame. This is the easiest sampling method to use in research. This research opted for this sampling method to select the sample for the research. The research used the purposive heterogeneity sampling, which is a sampling method used where the researcher seeks to get a homogeneous

sample, a sample with units (people) sharing the same traits or characteristics (a group of people that is similar in terms of the use of the social media. The use of this method is justified by the fact that the research question being addressed is particular to the characteristics (social media use) of the specific group of interest. The sample was then being examined in more detail. The researcher purposely chose participants who were similar in terms of the identified characteristic (Patton, 2001). To ensure that the entire county was represented the eight constituencies: Makadara, Starehe, Kamukunji, Dagoretti, Langata, Westlands, Kasarani, and Embakasi were included. Thus, from each constituency, 25 cases were chosen purposively.

### **3.6 Eligibility Criteria**

To be able to obtain the homogeneous sample, it was important that each case included in the survey uses the social media, and more specifically Facebook and Twitter. Social media use is the characteristic that was used.

### **3.7 Data Collection Techniques**

The researcher used two methods in collecting data. One of the methods that were used in collecting data for the study was the survey method. Primary data was utilized for the study to measure how effective social media is as a tool for CRM. The instruments that were used for the collection of this data were self-administered questionnaires which were filled by the participants (see appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaire). In the month of August the questionnaires were administered to the 200 participants; they were filled and collected by the researcher within the same month. The questionnaire was selected for the study as it allowed a number of variables to be studied at the same time. Another important factor considered is the use of self-administered questionnaires, suggesting that the participants

would fill the questionnaires on their own providing the information required by the researcher (Savin-Baden, 2013).

The other method that was used to collect the data was online ethnography. The instrument that was used to collect this data was virtual ethnography guide (see appendix 2 for a copy of the virtual ethnography guide). During the month of September, the researcher spent 7 days (21<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> September 2014) going through the activities on the Safaricom fan page and Twitter Handle. Guided by the virtual ethnography guide important data on the use of the page and the handle was recorded for analysis. An interview was carried out on a sample of 20 users identified from the two platforms. The interview was done online and the main focus was on the opinion of the users on the use of social media for customer relations by the Safaricom, in comparison to the conventional face-to-face customer relationship management model.

### **3.8 Data Analysis and Presentation**

The method that was used in data analysis is descriptive statistics. Percentages and frequencies were derived using SPSS. The collected data was keyed into the program and the findings established from the output. The results will be presented using graphs, charts and tables. For the data collected using online ethnography, discourse analysis was used. The collected data was first transcribed and analysis done to establish what was said by the participants concerning each of the main topics of the research. Presentation of the data was provided in terms of the main themes identified from the transcribed data. From the analysis, the researcher was able to come up with practical findings and conclusions in relation to the research question.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and findings from the data collected using the questionnaires and the virtual ethnography. The analysis is presented in the form of tables, figures, frequencies and percentages.

#### 4.2 Response Rate

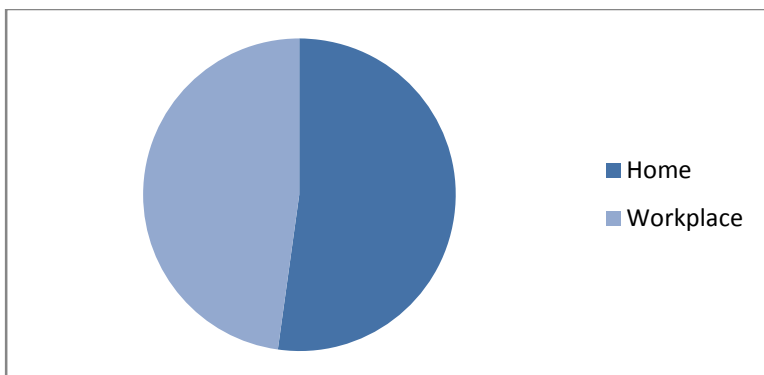
This study was done over a period of two months between July 2014 and August 2014. The response rate was 100% as all 200 targeted participants responded.

#### 4.3 Profile of the Respondents

##### 4.3.1 Gender of the Respondents

The study was carried out on 200 participants, 90 (45%) male and 110 (55%) female. The study sought to establish the gender balance in the Social Networking Site usage. The figure below shows this more clearly.

**Figure1: Gender of the research participants**





### 4.3.2 Age of the Respondents

From the data, most of the participants were youth, ages between 18 and 37 years. 94.5% of the participants were within this age bracket. Table 1 one below shows this more clearly.

**Table1: Age distribution**

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage
18-22	22	11
23-27	137	68.5
28-32	25	12.5
33-37	9	4.5
38-42	4	2
43-47	1	0.5
48+	2	1

### 4.3.3 Occupation of the Respondents

Most of the respondents were students, at 55.5%. Besides the students, 30.5% were employed, and 12.5% were self-employed. The table below shows this data

**Table 2: Occupation of the research participants**

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Employed	61	30.5
Self-employed	25	12.5
Student	111	55.5
Other	3	1.5

#### **4.3.4 Highest Educational Qualification of the Participants**

The majority of the respondents, at 41% had a secondary school education qualification, 29% had a diploma/ certificate, and 21% had a degree, while 9% had a postgraduate qualification.

**Table 3: Highest educational qualification**

Primary School	0	0
Secondary School	82	41
Diploma/ Certificate	58	29
Degree	42	21
Post Graduate Degree(s)	18	9

## 4.4 Internet Usage

### 4.4.1 Frequency of Internet Usage

The data showed that the majority of the participants, 96% accessed the Internet at least once every day, while the rest 4% accessed it less than once every day.

**Table 4: Frequency of Internet Usage**

No. of times they access the Internet	Frequency	Percentage
3 or fewer times a week	180	90
4-7 times a week	12	6
Multiple times a day	4	2
Once a day	4	2

### 4.4.2 Platforms Used in Accessing the Internet

Various tools are utilized in accessing the Internet, as it was found out in the research. Most of the participants were found to use more than one platform to access the Internet. Some of the participants were claimed to be able to use all the platforms that were proposed in the questionnaire. However, the researcher was interested in the mobility of Internet access by the participants. From table 4 below it is evident that 76% of the participants use laptops in accessing the Internet, 62.5% use mobile phones, 43.5% use a desktop, 28% use smart phones, while a minor 4.5% use tablet devices to access the Internet.

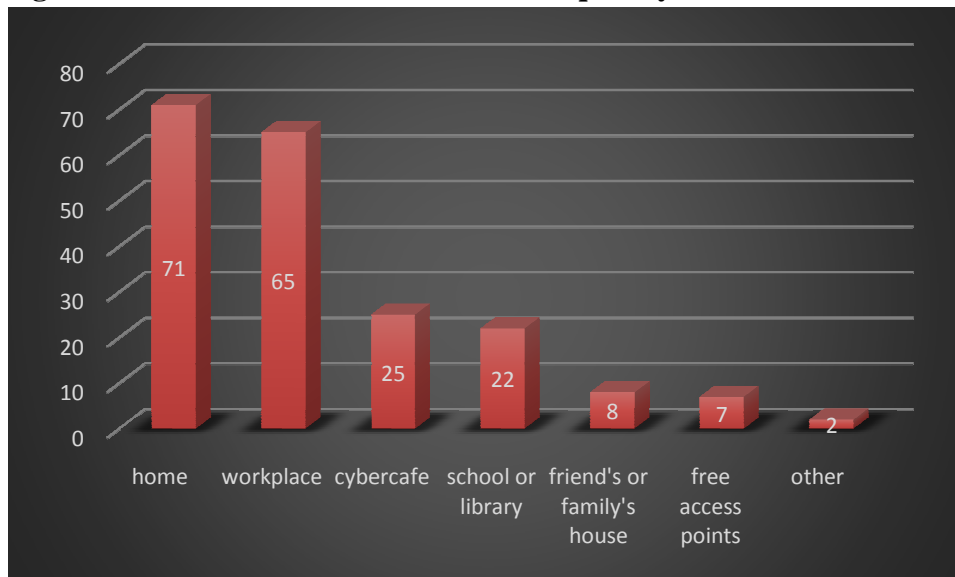
**Table 5: Tools used to access the internet**

Tool	Frequency	Percentage
Laptop	152	76
Mobile Phone	125	62.5
Desktop	87	43.5
Smartphone	56	28
Ipad and other similar tablet devices	9	4.5

#### 4.4.3 Internet Access Location

The data reveal that most of the participants use the Internet from home, 71 participants, while 65 participants access the Internet from their workplace. The data show that the remaining 64 of the participants used the Internet in other places which include cyber café (25 participants) school or library (22 participants), Friends' or family's houses (8), free access points (7 participants), and anywhere (2 participants). The aim of this question was to establish the ease with which the participants are able to access the Internet as they go on with the day to day work.

**Figure 2: Where Internet is used most frequently**

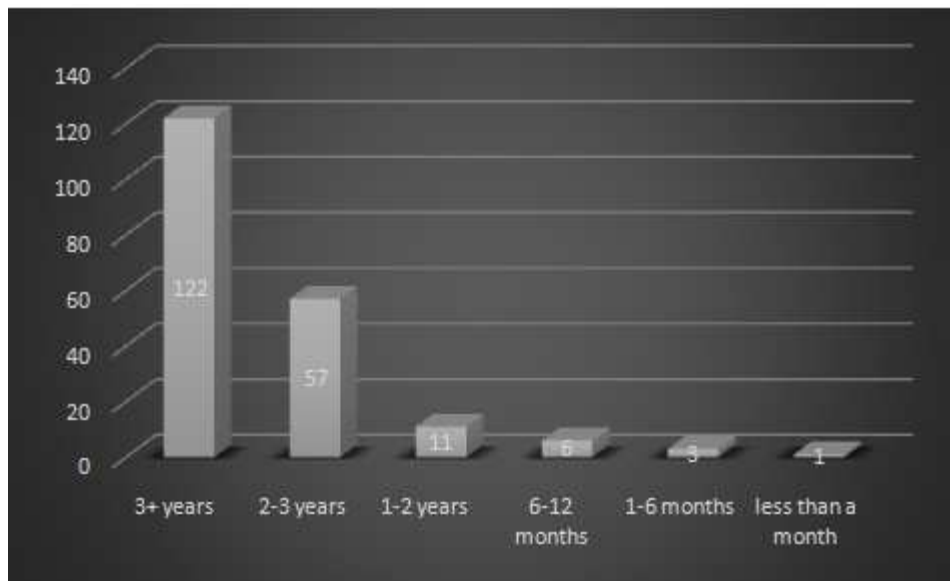


## 4.5 Social Networking Sites Usage

### 4.5.1 The Duration for which they have been on SNSs

Out of the 200 participants, a majority, 122 (61%) had been using social media for more than 3 years; 57 (28.5%) had been using the social networking sites 2-3 years. The remaining 21 (10.5%) had been using them for less than 2 years. This is illustrated in figure 3 below

**Figure 3: The duration for which respondents have been using SNSs**



### 4.5.2 Average Use of Social Media in a Day

Out of the 200, 129 used social media for 1 –4 hours a day; 37 used them 5 – 8 hours a day; 12 used them 9 –12 hours a day whereas 9 used them more than 13 hours a day. In this question, the researcher sought to establish the amount of time exposure the participants had to content on SNSs per day. The data are illustrated in table 6 below

**Table 6: Average use of social media in a day**

Average hours a day	Frequency	Percentage
1 –4 hours a day	135	67.5
5 – 8 hours a day	41	20.5
9 –12 hours a day	15	7.5
13+ hours a day	9	4.5

#### **4.5.3 Hours of the day the Participants are on the Social Media**

From the data, a majority of the participants, 74 percent, used the social media at 6.01 pm to 12.00 am, with 51% of them using social media between 6.01 am and 12.00 pm and 33.5% using them at 12.01 pm to 6.00 pm. Only 11% of the participants were found to use these sites from 12.01 am to 6.00 am. Table 7 below shows this.

**Table 7: Hours during which respondents use social media**

Time	Frequency	Percentage
12.01am – 6.00 am	22	11
6.01 am – 12.00 pm	102	51
12.01 pm – 6.00 pm	67	33.5
6.01 pm – 12.00 am	148	74

#### 4.5.4 Purpose for using Social Networking Sites

The data revealed that the participants use the social media to connect with their friends, follow social events, seek information and opinions, sharing information, seek entertainment, to make new friends, to date and form relationships, conduct business, seek assistance and kill time, in that order. The researcher sought to establish the sort of activities that were of interest to SNSs users and to identify what they spend their time doing on these websites.

This is shown in Table 8.

**Table 8: Purpose for using Social Networking Sites**

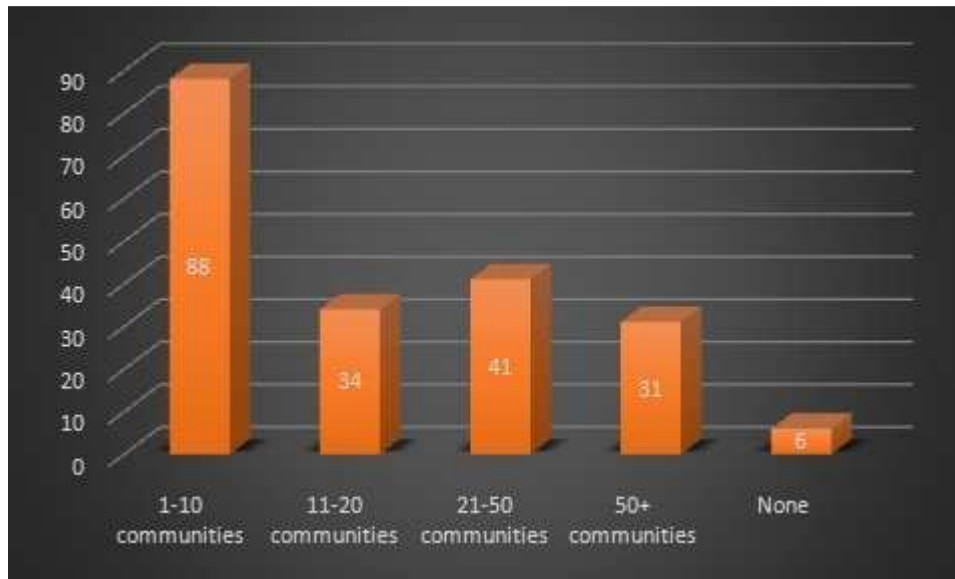
<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
To connect with their friends	191	95.5
To follow social events	135	67.5
To seek information and opinions	114	57
To share information	108	54
To seek entertainment	114	57
To make new friends	95	47.5
To conduct business	92	46
To seek assistance	62	31
To kill time	58	29
To date and form relationships	15	7.5

## 4.6 Social Media Connections

### 4.6.1 Number of Social Networking Communities, Groups or Fan-pages Participated in

Most of the participants, 88 were members of 1-10 communities; 41 were members of 21-50 communities; 34 were members of 11-20 communities; 31 were members of more than 50 communities with a minority of 6 not participating in any communities. Here, the researcher sought to establish how many communities of people or fan-pages formed by product marketers. The average number of communities per participant was 11 –20. The figure below shows this.

**Figure 4: Number of Social Networking communities, groups or fan-pages participated in**



### 4.6.2 Reasons for Joining a Community, Group or Fan Page

The participants showed to have joined the communities, groups and fan pages for various reasons. The data showed that 72.5% joined because it was a relevant, active community, 61.5% because it would keep them informed about community news and updates, 57.5% joined to seek



information about various aspects of the community, 42.5% wished to have an opinion on the community and membership was necessary. 22.5% because they believed it would get them new, useful connections. The reason for this question was to find the reasons that motivated people to join communities on social media.

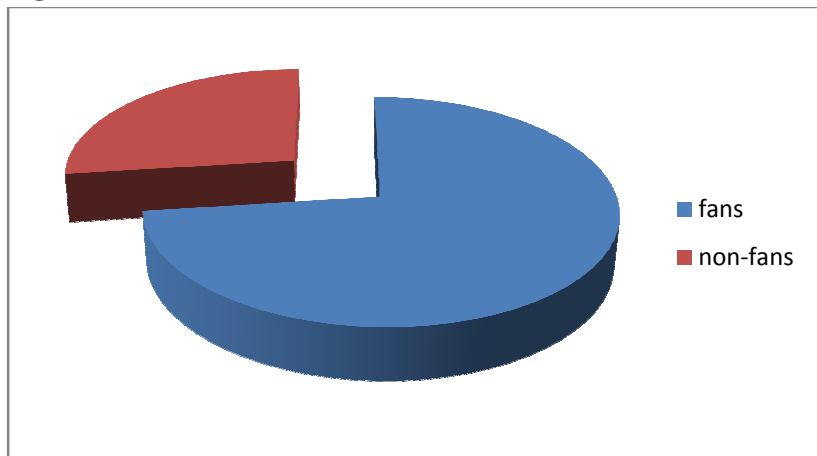
**Table 9: Reasons for joining a community, group or fan page**

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
It is a relevant, active and interesting community	145	72.5
To let me stay up to date with the community news/updates	123	61.5
To seek information about various aspects of the community	115	57.5
To have an opinion	85	42.5
To get new useful connections	45	22.5

#### 4.6.3 Fans of Safaricom on Facebook

From the data, it was showed that those who have liked and followed the Safaricom page on Facebook were 146 while the remaining 54 were not fans. Figure 5 below indicates this.

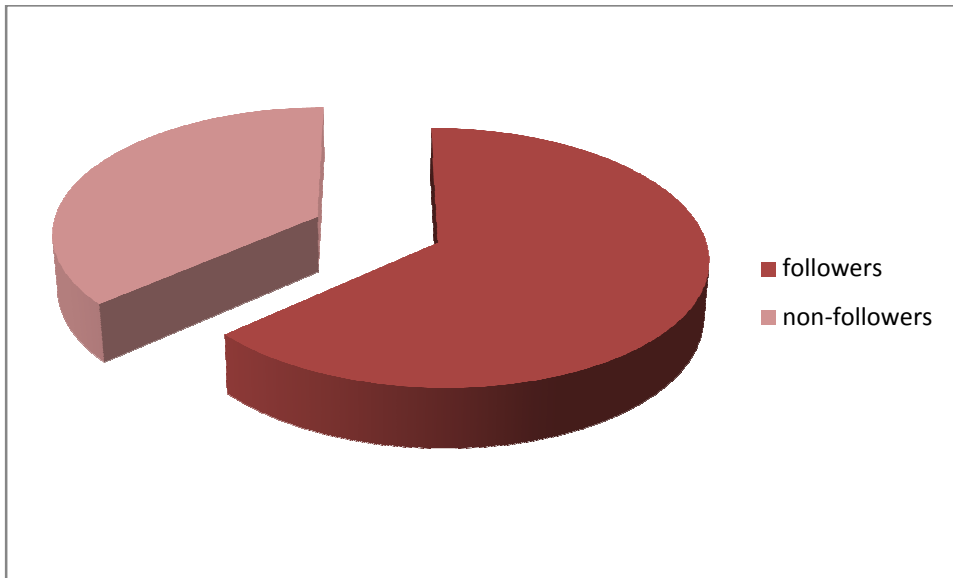
**Figure 5: Fans of Safaricom on Facebook**



#### 4.6.4 Followers of Facebook on Twitter

The participants who followed Safaricom on Twitter from the research were 127, while the remaining 73 did not. The figure below indicates this.

**Figure 6: Followers of Facebook on Twitter**



#### 4.7 Frequency of Communication with Safaricom on Social Media

This question sought to find out the kind of actions and how often the participants perform them on the social media.

##### 4.7.1 Frequency of Seeking Help from the Organization Concerning Services

From the data, 28 participants said they have never sought any help for Safaricom services via the social media, 38 have rarely done this, 61 sometimes do, 42 often seek help, while 31 are always doing it.

**Table 10: Frequency of seeking help from the organization concerning services**

Frequency of seeking help on services	Frequency	Percentage
Never	59	29.5
Rarely	33	16.5
Sometimes	57	28.5
Often	31	15.5
Always	20	10

#### **4.7.2 Frequency of Seeking Information and News Posted by the Organization**

Majority of the participants, 40.5% have never gone to the Safaricom page or Twitter Handle seeking for information and news on the organization. 21.5% rarely does this, 22.5% sometimes seek information and news on Safaricom, 9.5% often do and only 6% always seeks information and news.

**Table 11: Frequency of seeking information and news posted by the organization**

Frequency of seeking information and news	Frequency	Percentage
Never	81	40.5
Rarely	43	21.5
Sometimes	45	22.5
Often	19	9.5
Always	12	6

#### **4.7.3 Frequency of Recommending Use of the Page and Handle to Others**

Of the 200 participants, 96 have never recommended the Page or Handle to others, 46 rarely do, 30 sometimes recommend, 22 often recommend, while only 6 participants always recommend.

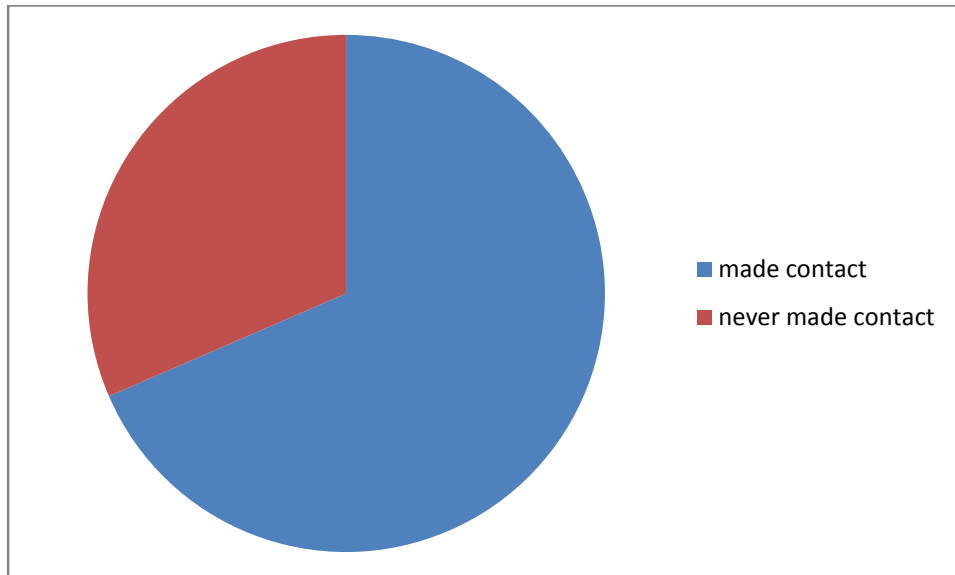
**Table 12: Frequency of seeking information and news posted by the organization**

Frequency of recommending use	Frequency	Percentage
Never	96	48
Rarely	46	23
Sometimes	30	15
Often	22	11
Always	6	3

#### **4.7.4 Participants who have contacted the Organization for Information or to Solve an Issue**

Out of the 200 participants, 137 (68.8 percent) have contacted Safaricom through the social media seeking information or to have an issue of problem solved. The remaining 63 have never made such a contact. Figure 8 below depicts this.

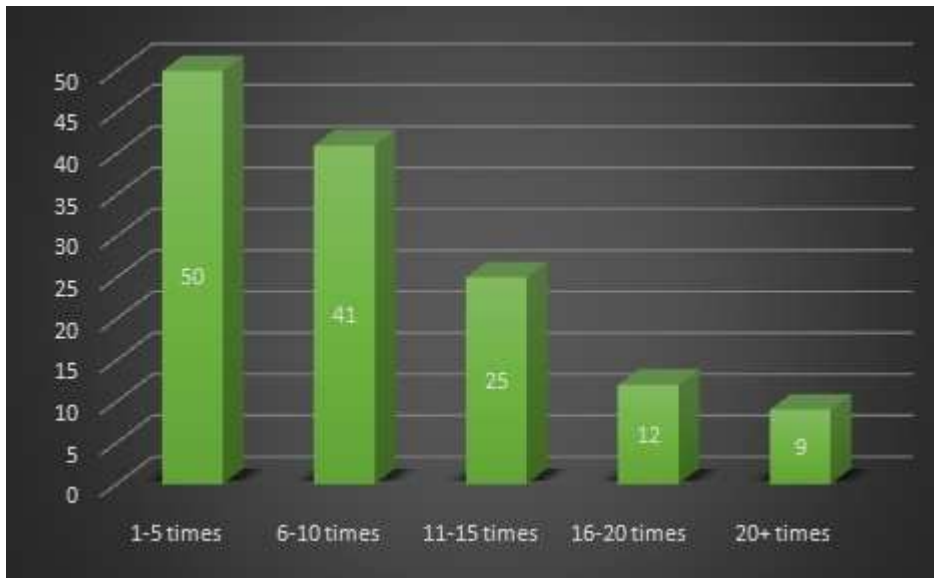
**Figure 7: Contact with the organization for information or to solve an issue**



#### 4.7.4.1 Frequency of Contact

For those who have made a contact with the organization through social media, the researcher sought to find out how many times this has happened. 50 of those participants had contacted the organization between 1 and 5 times, 41 between 6 and 10 times, 25 between 11 and 15 times, 12 between 16 and 20 times, with only 9 participants contacting the company for more than 20 times. The figure below depicts this.

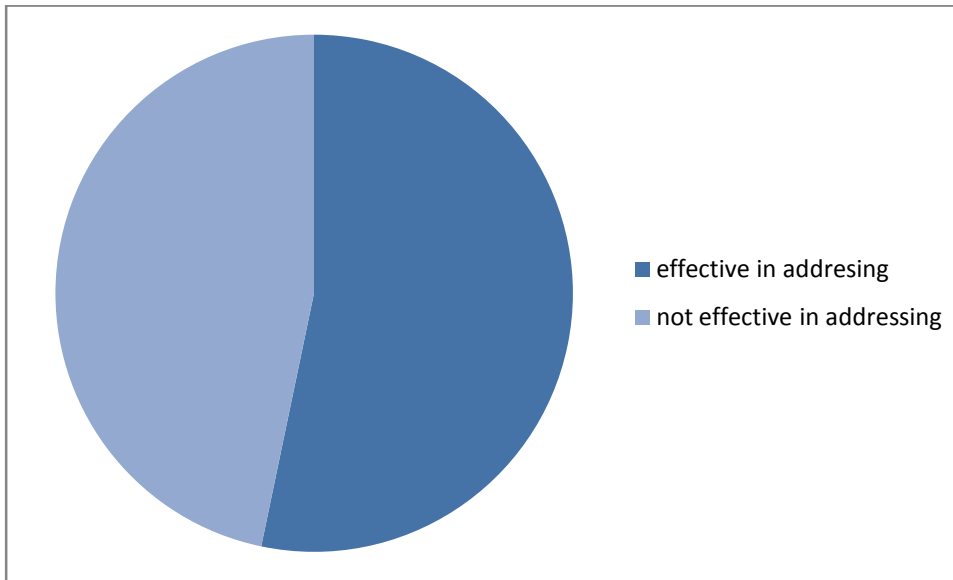
**Figure 8: Frequency of Contact**



#### 4.7.4.2 Effectiveness in Addressing the Request

The question sought the feeling of the participants, who had made contact with the organization through social media, regarding the effectiveness of the organization in responding to their request and addressing the issue(s) they raised. This question suggests whether or not the organization was helpful to the user. From the 137 who had made contact with the organization in the past, 73 (53.3 percent) felt that their request was addressed in an effective manner and thus their use of social media was helpful.

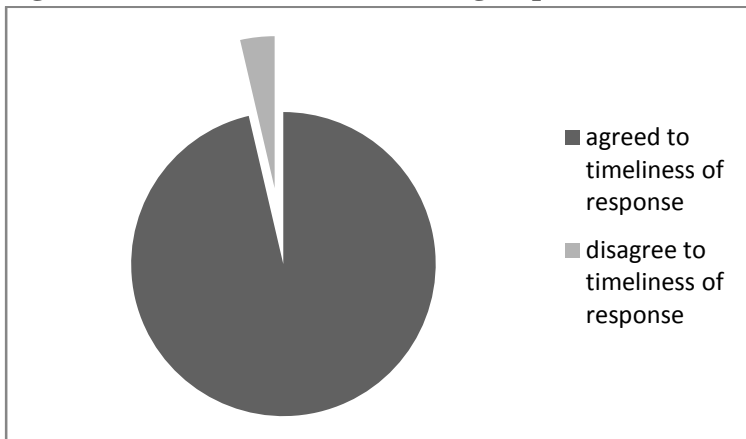
**Figure 9: Effectiveness in addressing the request**



#### **4.7.5 Timeliness in Addressing Requests**

The researcher sought to find out, compared to the conventional media, whether requests made through the social media were responded to, in a timelier manner. Out of the 137 participants who had made contact, 132 (96.4 percent) agreed that their requests were addressed in a timelier manner compared to when they were using conventional channels such as telephone.

**Figure 10: Timeliness in addressing requests**



#### **4.7.6 The opinion of Participants on Whether the Company is being Effective in Addressing Issues from the Customers through Social Media**

Out of the 200 participants, including those who are not fans or followers in social media, 157 agreed that the company is doing a good job in addressing issues from the customers through social media.

#### **4.8 Online Ethnography Data Analysis**

##### **4.8.1 The Average Time Taken to Reply to a Request or Tweet**

From 10 days (21<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> September) the researcher sent a request through the Safaricom fan page and the Twitter Handle to find out, on average, how long it took to get a response. The table below clearly shows the data.

**Table 13: Requests sent to Facebook fan page**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time taken to respond</b>
Sunday, 21/09/14	20 minutes
Monday, 22/09/14	17 minutes
Tuesday, 23/09/14	16 minutes
Wednesday, 24/09/14	14 minutes
Thursday, 25/09/14	11 minutes
Friday, 26/09/14	10 minutes
Saturday, 27/09/14	16 minutes

To calculate the average time taken to get a response from the Facebook fan page, the total time taken is 104 minutes, this number divided by the seven days is 14.86

**Table 14: Requests sent to Safaricom Twitter Handle**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time taken to respond</b>
Sunday, 21/09/14	15 minutes
Monday, 22/09/14	13 minutes
Tuesday, 23/09/14	11 minutes
Wednesday, 24/09/14	10 minutes
Thursday, 25/09/14	8 minutes
Friday, 26/09/14	9 minutes
Saturday, 27/09/14	14 minutes

To calculate the average time taken to get a response from the Safaricom Twitter Handle, the total time taken is 69 minutes, this number divided by the seven days is 9.86.

#### **4.8.2 The Opinions of the Users**

Nine out of the 30 users interviewed expressed their disappointment in social media, and preferred telephone calls to send their requests as the response is instance.

Fifteen out of the 20 users were satisfied with the use of social media platforms in sending their requests. Some said that the telephone calls take a long time to be answered, citing an example of the 100 call to customer care. However, the fifteen users suggested the need to reduce the response time to less than 5 minutes for greater effectiveness



Six out of the 20 users were indifferent, suggesting that they were yet to use the social media platform to send a request to the organization.

**Table 15: Opinions of users**

<b>Opinion on social media use</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Dissatisfied	9	30
Satisfied	15	50
Indifferent	6	20

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Discussions of Findings

The response rate from the questionnaires was 100% / which means that all those who were given the questionnaires filled and gave them back. The data analyzed was from the 200 participants, 90 males and 110 females. From this data, it is evident that the women were more than the men, who participated in the study, and the majority of the participants were youth aged between 18 and 37 years. It emerges from the data that most of the users of the Internet are the young people as opposed to the older ones. Only 5.5% were between above 37 years old.

The researcher was also interested in finding out the occupation of the social media users. Most of the respondents were students, at 55.5%. Besides the students, 30.5% were employed, and 12.5% were self-employed. This shows that students are the majority users of the social media, and are also expected to seek services from Safaricom as most of them are subscribers. This, again, confirms that the youth are the majority users of the social media. Related to this, the researcher was interested in finding out the highest level of education attained by the participants. Given that most of the participants were students, 41% had secondary school education qualification and some were pursuing degrees, certificates or diploma from higher learning institutions. 29% already had a diploma/ certificate and 21% had a degree. Only 9% had a post graduate qualification.

Given that a majority of the users of the social media were the youth and students, it was expected that majority (at 96%) would access the social media sites at least once every day, with others accessing even more than once every day. only 4% accessed it less than once per day. Various platforms are used to access the social media. This data was necessary to find out ease of access of the social media by the participants. Most of the participants were found to have access to multiple platforms to access the Internet. From the research, it became evident that many of the participants (76%) used laptops, alongside other platforms. Another significant proportion of the participants used the Internet from their mobile phones. 62.5%. 43.5% use a desktop, 28% use smart phones, while a minor 4.5% use tablet devices to access the Internet. Generally, it would emerge from the research that the users of the social media use more than a single platform to access the social media and in different places as it seen in the following section. An inference can be made that most users of SNSs are frequent users of the internet, and that most of them access it using desktop and laptop computers.

The data revealed that most of the users of the Internet use it from home, 71 participants, while 65 participants access the Internet from their workplace. The data shows that the remaining 64 of the participants used the Internet in other places which include cyber café (25 participants) school or library (22 participants), Friends' or family's houses (8), free access points (7 participants), and anywhere (2 participants). Establishing the location from which the Internet is accessed is also important to understanding the ease of access.

It was important for the researcher to establish the duration in which the users of social media have been using. This was a background question to understand the general social media usage by the participants. Out of the 200 participants it was revealed that most of them, 61%

had been using social media for more than 3 years. Those who have been using social media for between 2 and 3 years were 57, 28.5%, while the rest had been using it for less than 2 years. The response to this question was important as it is expected to have major impact on what the users are likely to use the social media for.

In this question, it was important to establish the amount of time exposure of the participants to their social media content. It is important to note that this relates to any content the participants are exposed to. Most of the participants, 129 used social media for 1–4 hours a day, while 37 used them 5–8 hours a day; 12 used them 9–12 hours a day whereas 9 used them more than 13 hours a day. This reveals that most of the participants spend a lot of time accessing the social media. The time of the day that this happens was also an area of interest to the researcher. It was revealed that most of the participants, 74% used the social media at 6.01 pm to 12.00 am, with 51% of them using social media between 6.01 am and 12.00 pm and 33.5% using them at 12.01 pm to 6.00 pm. Only 11% of the participants were found to use these sites from 12.01 am to 6.00 am. This information is important as it has a lot to tell about the likelihood of getting a fast or delayed response from the customer care department of Safaricom.

There are various reasons why the users of the social media do so. The questionnaire gave options for the participants, in relation to the common reasons for social media usage. Most of the users are shown to be interested in connecting with friends, and this is their reason for being on social media. This would be expected for most young people and students. Others use the social media to follow social events, seek information and opinions, sharing information, seek entertainment, to make new friends, to date and form relationships, conduct

business, seek assistance and kill time. Whatever the reason, it is evident that search for information and communication are important reasons for social media usage.

For social media users, being members of communities or groups is very important. Especially on Facebook, it was revealed that there are very many groups and pages that one can join or like. Also on Twitter, there are very many communities of interest that one can follow. Most of the participants, 88 were showed in the data to be members of 1-10 communities, 41 were members of 21-50 communities, 34 were members of 11-20 communities, 31 were members of more than 50 communities with a minority of 6 not participating in any communities. This is important for most of the social marketers as they target the membership of the users of social media.

Another area of interest for the researcher was finding out why the members of the social media groups and communities joined, liked or followed them. Various reasons would emerge, but the researcher restricted the participants to the most common reasons. The data showed that 72.5% joined because it was a relevant, active community, 61.5% because it would keep them informed about community news and updates, 57.5% joined to seek information about various aspects of the community, 42.5% wished to have an opinion on the community and membership was necessary. 22.5% because they believed it would get them new, useful connections. It should be noted that a member would join for more than one of the states reasons.

Proceeding to the phenomenon of interest, the researcher sought to find out the number of participants who had liked and followed the Safaricom page on Facebook. The data showed that a majority, 146 liked the page, while the remaining 54 were not fans. Clearly, most of

those who participated in the research found it relevant to like the page. The participants who followed Safaricom on Twitter from the research were 127, while the remaining 73 did not. Similarly, most of the participants found it relevant to follow Safaricom on Twitter.

The researcher was interested in finding out how frequent the followers and fans of Safaricom communicated with the customer care department of the company. It was also important to establish the sort of actions and how often the participants performed them on the social media. This was very important in establishing the effectiveness of social media customer relations model as used by Safaricom. The question seeking to understand the frequency of seeking help from the organization concerning services was set in a Likert scale and it was revealed that 28 participants said they have never sought any help for Safaricom services via the social media, 38 have rarely done this, 61 sometimes do, 42 often seek help, while 31 are always doing it. Additionally, majority of the participants, 40.5% have never gone to the Safaricom page or Twitter Handle seeking for information and news on the organization. 21.5% rarely does this, 22.5% sometimes seek information and news on Safaricom, 9.5% often do and only 6% always seeks information and news. The information was very important in answering the research question.

Social media is a platform for information sharing and it was interesting to know if the participants have in the past recommended use of the Safaricom fan page and Twitter Handle to others. data showed that 96 participants have never recommended the Page or Handle to others, 46 rarely do, 30 sometimes recommend, 22 often recommend, while only 6 participants always recommend. Generally, it is interesting to note that other users of the social media get information on social media customer care from others.

Data was sought by the researcher on the number of participants who have ever contacted Safaricom for information or assistance through the social media. A majority (68.8%) of those who have a social media connection with the company have used the social media to contact Safaricom customer service. Only 63 have never made such a contact. Of those who have made such a contact, the researcher was interested in finding out the frequency of contact. Data revealed that 50 of those participants had contacted the organization between 1 and 5 times, 41 between 6 and 10 times, 25 between 11 and 15 times, 12 between 16 and 20 times, with only 9 participants contacting the company for more than 20 times. While the question in itself was not very significant, the importance is revealed in the opinion of the participants regarding whether they received the needed help or not, and whether the response of to their satisfaction. From the 137 who had made contact with the organization in the past, a majority, 73% felt that their request was addressed in an effective manner and thus their use of social media was helpful. In relation to timeliness of response, the idea was to compare conventional ways of making contact with the organization to the social media. Out of the 137 participants who had made contact, 132 (96.4 percent) agreed that their requests were addressed in a timelier manner compared to when they were using conventional channels such as telephone.

Finally, on the questionnaire, the researcher sought the opinion of the participants on whether the company is doing a good job in addressing issues from the customers through social media. Out of the 200 participants, including those who are not fans or followers in social media, 157 agreed that the company is doing a good job in addressing issues from the customers through social media. However, there is always room for improvement.

Besides the questionnaires, the researcher obtained data through an online ethnographic study. In this study, the researcher was interested in two major topics, presented as themes in the analysis of data. The first one was the average time taken in responding to request on Facebook and Twitter. In Safaricom fan page, the average time taken to respond to a request was 14.86 minutes, while in the Twitter Handle the average time taken was 9.86 minutes.

With this in mind, the researcher wanted to find out the opinion of some of the users of the social media on the success and timeliness of the responses compared to when they used conventional means of communication such as the telephone. From the 30 participants interviewed online, 9 expressed their disappointment in social media, and preferred telephone calls to send their requests as the response is instance, 15 were satisfied with the use of social media platforms in sending their requests. Some said that the telephone calls take a long time to be answered, citing an example of the 100 call to customer care. However, the fifteen users suggested the need to reduce the response time to less than 5 minutes for greater effectiveness and only 6 out of the 20 users were indifferent, suggesting that they were yet to use the social media platform to send a request to the organization.

## **6.2 Conclusion**

Important conclusions can be made from the data. Evidently, most of the users of the social media are young people, mostly students and with a level of education higher than high school. This is an important segment of users of Safaricom services. Therefore, for developers of social media marketing strategies, this is a very important market segment to target. These users also access the Internet at least once a day and they do so mainly using laptops, mobile phones and desktop computers. They access the Internet wither from the comfort of their homes, at work and at school or the library.



Another important data from the research is the time of usage. While the customer care representatives have no control over where, when and how the users use the social media, it is important to note of the time of the day the majority are online. Given that most of the participants use the social media at 6.01 pm to 12.00 am and between 6.01 am and 12.00 pm, this should be the time that the customer service department in Safaricom should be most active. At this time, it is expected that the company will have a lot of requests. Having adequate representatives is important during these hours of the day.

Communication and information sharing are the most important reasons for social media usage. All other identified reasons boil down to these two important reasons and it is important that customer care and marketing departments realize this in the development of social media strategies. Making it easier for users to communicate and share information is critical for their success.

Membership to communities and groups on social media is very important for the users. Data reveals that there is no limit to the number of communities and groups that the users can become members of. Therefore, organizations should establish communities, groups and pages, and make them interesting for the members. This creates a platform for the members to interact with other likeminded users of social media. Safaricom has created such an online presence through a Facebook fan page and a Twitter handle. More and more users are learning about the existence of such as they use the social media and interact with other people.

The presence of Safaricom on Facebook and Twitter has emerged as an important platform for the users of the social media to communicate with the company. The data reveals that

most of the participants are using these platforms to send requests to the company and also recommending them to other users. Therefore, the experience of the users of social media from the company is very important as one satisfied user will contact and share the information with many others.

It was revealed from the research that most of the users of the social media are satisfied with the rate and speed of response to requests made to safaricom through the social media. Most agree that the social media is much faster and more reliable compared to the use of conventional means of communicating such as telephone. The users who agree with this also convey their disappointment with telephone conversations such the 100 line. Most of these calls go unanswered or the user has to wait for as long as 20 minutes for the call to go through.

In terms of the time taken to respond to a request on Facebook and Twitte, I Safaricom fan page, the average time taken to respond to a request was 14.86 minutes, while in the Twitter Handle the average time taken was 9.86 minutes. This time is an improvement compared to the use of telephone calls, but most of the users interviewed online suggested a further improvement to less than 5 minutes on both platforms.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

For the company to take advantage of and continue benefiting from the social media usage in customer relations there is need for the customer relations representatives to listen. Listening to what the users are saying about the company and its services is very important. Users in the social media say a lot of things, information that can be used by the company to improve

its services to the users. Listening to the customers is the best way of getting what they are saying and addressing any concerns (Lipsman, et al 2012).

Besides listening, it is important that the organization use the social media applications to communicate with their consumers at least once a day. The organization should not always wait for the users to initiate communication. The researcher recommends that organization have a website and pages on the Internet that are customized for mobile access to enable easier access for users. Organization's pages and groups should be easy to read in various environments, with content that is easy to understand and decipher.

Effective analysis of the data produced in social media is critical in making proper use of social media in customer relations. Use of the social media generally generates and leverages diverse kinds of data that should be analyzed to make decisions about the social media strategy of the company. Collection, organizing and preparing the data for analysis can be a challenge and the company should have in place effective tools and resources for this purpose. It is also important that the data should be integrated with other third-party and corporate data so as to come up with the metrics as well as analytics for determining Return on Investment. The data is important in making the most out of social media in marketing and customer relations (Lipsman, et al 2012).

It should be noted that customer experience is very important in social media, due to the tendency of social media content to go viral (Lipsman, et al 2012). The social media can either improve or damage reputation of the company. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the company has in place adequate number of customer care representatives to

adequately address the requests of customers in a timely manner. Response time need to be reduced to less than 5 minutes for better customer experience.

#### **6.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

The researcher recommends that further research be carried out on the impact of social on online consumer behavior. This is because the extent to which social media influence pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase behavior of online consumers are not exhaustively established in this research, yet it is also important for organizations and marketers to understand this impact as well. It is important to understand how consumers make the important decision to use either products or services offered by one company and not the other. This will be beneficial to business organizations seeking to capitalize on social media usage.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: Questionnaire

*The researcher is a student from University of Nairobi that hopes to establish how Safaricom marketers can use Social Networking Sites (Facebook and Twitter) for Customer Relationship Management. Please indicate your answer using either a tick or a cross. Your answers will remain anonymous as no identification is required. The information is also confidential and will not be shared with third parties.*

*Thank you in advance for your cooperation and assistance.*

1. Gender

a) Male

b) Female

2. Age

a) 18 - 22 years

b) 23 – 27 years

- c) 28- 32 years
- d) 33 - 37 years
- e) 38-47 years
- f) 48+

3. What is your occupation?

- a) Employed
- b) Self-employed
- c) Student
- d) Other (specify) .....

4. What is your highest education qualification?

- a) Primary School
- b) Secondary School
- c) Diploma/ Certificate
- d) Degree
- e) Post Graduate Degree(s)

5. How often do you use the internet?

- a) Multiple times a day
- b) Once a day
- c) 4-7 times a week
- d) 3 or fewer times a week
- e) Once or twice a month
- f) Less than once a month

6. What tool do you use in accessing the Internet? (you can tick more than one option)

- a) Desktop computer
- b) Laptop
- c) Mobile phone
- d) Smartphone
- e) Ipad or tablet

7. Where do you mostly use the internet?

- a) Home
- b) Workplace
- c) Cybercafé
- d) School or library
- e) Friends' or family's houses
- f) Free access points
- g) Other (please specify) .....

8. How long have you been using Social Networking Sites?

- a) Less than a month
- b) 1-6 months
- c) 6-12 months
- d) 1-2 years
- e) 2-3 years
- f) 3+ years

9. How many hours per day do you use the social media?

- a) 1 –4 hours a day

- b) 5 – 8 hours a day
- c) 9 –12 hours a day
- d) more than 13 hours a day

10. During what hours are you on the social media (you may select more than one option)

- a) 12.01am – 6.00 am
- b) 6.01 am – 12.00 pm
- c) 12.01 pm – 6.00 pm
- d) 6.01 pm – 12.00 am

11. What do you mostly use these sites for? (you may select more than one option)

- a) Connecting with friends
- b) Making new friends
- c) Entertainment Sharing information
- d) Following social events
- e) Seeking information and opinions
- f) Killing time
- g) Conducting business
- h) Seeking assistance
- i) Dating and relationships
- j) Other (Specify) .....

12. How many social networking communities, groups and fan pages are you a member of?

- a) None
- b) 1-10
- c) 11-20
- d) 21-50
- e) 51+

13. What is the key reason for you to join a community, group or fan page? (you may select more than one option)

- a) It is a relevant, active and interesting community
- b) To let me stay up to date with the community news/updates
- c) To seek information about various aspects of the community
- d) I would like to have my say and membership is required
- e) I believe it will get me new useful connections
- f) Other (please specify) .....

14. Are you a fan of the Safaricom page or Twitter?

- a) Yes
- b) No

15. Are you a follower of Safaricom on Twitter?

- a) Yes
- b) No

16. How often do you do the following?

Never          Rarely          Sometimes          Often          Always

Seek help  
from the  
organization  
concerning  
services

Seek  
information  
and news  
posted by  
the  
organization

Recommend  
use of the  
page to  
others

17. Have you ever contacted the organization for information or to solve an issue?

- a) Yes
  - b) No
- b. If yes, how many times have you done this
- a) 1-5 times
  - b) 6-10 times
  - c) 11-15 times
  - d) 16-20 times

e) 20+ times

18. If the answer to (16 above) is yes, has the organization been helpful in providing the information or addressing the issue

a) Yes

b) No

19. Compared to conventional channels such as phone calls, do you feel that your requests were addressed in a timely manner?

a) Yes

b) No

20. In your opinion, is the company doing a good job in addressing issues from the customers posted on the social media?

a) Yes

b) No

### **Online Ethnography Guide**

1. On average, how long does it take for a request to get a response on Facebook?
2. On average, how long does it take for a request to get a response on Twitter?
3. What are the opinions of the users on the use of social media for customer relations by the organization?

