

**THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SOURCE FOR POLITICAL
INFORMATION: A Case Study on the Use of Facebook and Twitter Among Selected
Youth in Nairobi, Kenya.**

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI,
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DECLARATION

I, Elizabeth C. Wanjeri Kamau, declare that this Research Project is my original work and that all acknowledgements have been properly made. I further declare that it has never before submitted for the purpose of examination or for an award of a degree at any university.

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I confirm that this Research Project has been done under my supervision and has been submitted for the purpose of examination with my approval.

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Jane Wambui Thuo

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Date:

DEDICATION

This research project is dedicated to my beloved parents Alice and Antony Kamau who have always believed in me and encouraged me to strive to achieve my dreams despite many odds. Their confidence in my abilities has been the driving force to accomplishing my goals and achieving my ambitions. Without your constant belief in me, support, sincere advice and prayers I would not have been able to complete my Master degree.

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Special thanks to my family for their support, understanding and encouragement. I am humbled by your goodwill, support and belief in me.

To all my friends, too numerous to mention, who in one way or another were a constant encouragement to me as I pursued this Master's degree I just want you to know that you occupy a special place in my heart.

ABSTRACT

The growth of the Internet has brought with it new ways of communicating and interacting. Social networking sites have indeed become quite popular in the recent past especially among the urban population. This is as a result of the fact that SNSs are not only being accessed on computers but are also accessible on mobile devices. Majority of the mobile devices purchased today are more for online networks than for their telephone calls making and texting capabilities. The capability of social media to allow individuals to share their experiences, opinions and ideas being seen as an enabler for participation and democracy among citizens. The youth today engage a lot with the internet and particularly the SNS leading to the question if the SNSs can be used effectively to get them interest in political issues. This study sort to establish the role of the social media as a source for political information and in particular the use of Facebook and Twitter among the urban youth in Kenya. Its objectives were to investigate the use of social media to access political information by urban youth, their main objectives for engaging in it and if there was a direct link between social media and the youth perception of the political issues in Kenya. The research design used was Case Study of a selected population sample. Data collection method was through the use of questionnaires. The data collected from the study was both quantitative and qualitative. The study found that majority of the urban youth in Nairobi subscribe to Facebook with the second SNSs subscribed to being Twitter. In addition, half the urban youth population in Nairobi use social media to access political information. This makes Facebook a good avenue that can be harnessed for the sharing and exchange of political information in Kenya by both the youth and political elite as it is a tool that be used to reach, engage and interact with the youth. To reduce youth apathy to politics SNSs need to be used for the circulation of credible political information. In addition, SNSs should be used as a two-way rather than one-way communication system. Adequately responding to raised queries and also giving relevant information would inform and educate the youth thereby creating a more engaged citizenry.

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DEFINITION OF MAJOR TERMS

Facebook	A popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues.
Follower(s)	A follower is another Twitter user who follows a user to receive Tweets in their Home stream.
Political elite	a group of people who are directly (when they are entitled with authority) or indirectly (when they are in opposition) engaged by power, making political decisions and governing the state. They possess particular privileges and professional qualities, high personal incomes and good material state.
Social Media	form of electronic communication as Web sites for social networking and microblogging through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.
Tweet	A Tweet may contain photos, videos, links and up to 140 characters of text; The act of sending a Tweet. Tweets get shown in Twitter timelines or are embedded in websites and blogs.
Twitter	is a free social networking microblogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices.
Twitter Handle	The username a user's has selected and the accompanying URL, like so: http://twitter.com/username ; is how a user is identified on Twitter, and is always preceded immediately by the @ symbol.
Youth	The period between childhood and adult age or young people considered as a group.

ABBREVIATIONS

DAP	Data analysis procedures
IEBC	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
MPs	Members of Parliament
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
SAS	Statistical Analysis System
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SNS	Social Networking Site
SNSs	Social Networking Sites
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

There is little doubt about the importance of political information in a democracy. The availability of accurate, intelligible and comprehensive knowledge allows citizens to formulate their own responses to political events and thereby participate in the political process. SNSs contribute to the process of public opinion formation by providing a forum in which citizens can share their views and allow a collective view to evolve in an age when face-to-face communication with the political elite is so rare. SNSs deliver information in an accessible way and are likely to be the only means by which the masses are able to get unbiased and impartial political information. However for the information to be effective it is important that the public have access to impartial political information and not political propaganda. Also if the public is not informed enough to make decisions the political elite will not necessarily be held accountable for their actions and if they are not engaged enough, then democracy itself is called into question.

1.0 Brief Background

Though the traditional media sources of political information are still with us, recent growth in the world of technology especially of the internet has played a role in the dissemination of news stories leading to the growth of citizen journalism. As the number of people using smart phones continues to increase this has also lead to growth in the people who today have access to the internet.

Social media has in the recent past become a major force to reckon with in all areas of communications and this has changed the way communication is handled on all fronts be they social, economic or political. This has therefore meant that political communication is not immune to the influences of social media making it increasingly relevant in election campaigns, with both politicians and citizens integrating them into their communication.

Johnson and Kaye (2014) state that the successful use of the social media by Barack Obama in the 2008 election to connect with voters, mobilize volunteers and amass huge campaign war chest and his intense reliance on the internet especially social network sites was thought to be critical to his victory. Thus the 2008 election underscored the importance of social network sites as a campaign tool and showed the world that they are popular venues of political persuasion.

In trying to remain relevant politicians have become very involved in social media however, serious thought needs to be given to the ensuring of accuracy and in-depth analysis of political issues in the social networking websites which many young minds subscribe to with an aim to developing more political debate and more political involvement of all citizens.

This research investigated the political issues raised in social media and their relative importance of their translation to policy formation in Kenya. This study focused mainly on urban internet users because they are more interested in politics unlike their rural counterparts who have more diverse use for the internet. The researcher examined specifically the use of Facebook and Twitter in the Kenyan context and how these have been incorporated into the overall political

communication efforts. As this study was being conducted in a post-election period it is also likely to provide more insights into the use of the social media by governed as political emotions which were high during the election period (late 2012 – March 2013) are likely to have dwindled.

For the purpose of this study the researcher endeavoured to gauge user generated participation through content sharing and comments posting on personal profiles and its intended purpose and outcome. The researcher also sort to find out if the involvement by the political elite in the social media networks had impacted the citizens' perception of their leaders. The researcher also looked at the leading political elite to analyze how often they post comments on the social media and also what type of information they provide.

1.1 Problem Statement

The youth today engage a lot with the internet and particularly the SNS leading to the question if the SNSs can be used effectively to get them interest in political issues. If this happens it can help in the establishment of accountability and transparency in the conduct of government business by the political elite.

The political elite have today embraced the role of the SNSs especially among the youth who are majority of the voters. As evidenced in the 2013 Kenyan election more and more politicians were active on social media than in previous years. In an article in the daily press, George Madiangi (2012) states that technology has magnified the politicians' words and that the use of

electronic political activism is slowly taking shape in Kenya. Madiangi (2012) further states that the fact that politicians are listening to their constituents via SNSs is the clearest sign that the age of digital politicking is with us. A major question however is if the political elite and the governed are continually engaging then why is there still so much apathy by the public especially the youth to political issues.

A common statement to be heard among majority of the youth is that politics does not really affect or impact their lives except through heavy taxation and they therefore feel that they have no voice in advocating for the change they so much long for. This is another issue that has made a majority of them stay clear of politics or even information concerning politics even as a number of them have embraced political offices and vie for elected positions. This is also evidenced in the number of youth who do not follow political stories through the print or broadcast media.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

It is important to assess the trends and patterns of youth (20-40 years) as these are active voters who will shape and select the government and those in political office over the next 30-50 years. Further they are the first demographic group that has had an active and consistent interest in digital platforms which presents information that may affect their perception of politicians and those in political office. It is also true that many in this age group view political office as the domain through which they can promote social change and with a number of them aspiring for political posts as was evidenced in the 2013 elections.

1.3 Main Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to better understand the effective role and usage of new media technology as a source of political information among the youth in Embakasi West Constituency in Nairobi County.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

- (i) To investigate the use of social media to access political information by urban youth.
- (ii) To establish the main objectives for engaging social media by the youth.
- (iii) To find out if there is a direct link between social media and the youth perception of the political issues in Kenya.

1.4 Research Questions

From the objectives above, the researcher derived the following questions which guided the study:

- (i) How has the urban population used social media to access information on politics?
- (ii) Has social media created more accountability and transparency in political issues?
- (iii) Which particular age group of the urban youth population is likely to use social media to access information on politics?

1.5 Importance of the Study

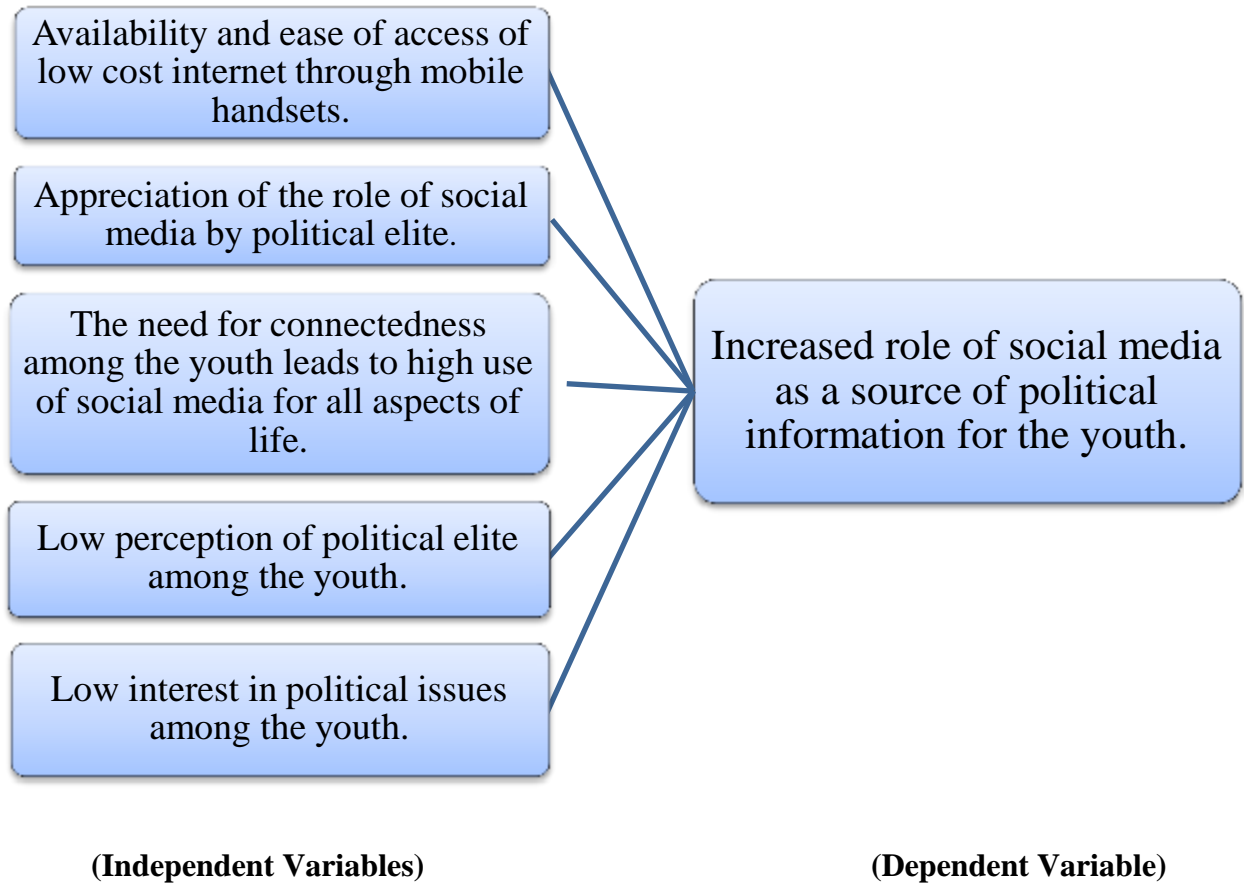
This study will assist students of political communication in identifying the gaps that currently exist in the use of social media as a source of political information with a view of leading to more research in this area. The researcher hopes to make a contribution to the body of knowledge available to other students interested in the area of political communication.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

This study focused mainly on a selected sample of members of the Umoja One Ward of Embakasi West Constituency, Nairobi County aged between 20 years to 40 years meaning the results produced may not be generalized on the whole Nairobi population and the inclusion of total population is likely to produce different results especially as the Nairobi political scene is quite fragmented and biased towards the well-known political figures. This study was also mainly interested in the collection of political data and not the total usage of the social media websites.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

Figure I: Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher 2014

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

As with any research, the starting point for any research project is to look at available literature on the subject area. The chapter will look at the different definitions of social media and political communication. The chapter will also look at the available resources on the use of the social media as a source of political information.

2.1 Social Media

Merriam-webster.com defines social media as the forms of electronic communication as Web sites for social networking and microblogging through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content as videos. Another definition by Oxforddictionaries.com defines social media as referring to websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. However the most often cited definition is by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) which states that social media is “a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of the Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content”. Boyd and Ellison (2007) defined SNS as “web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semipublic profile within a bounded system; articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.”

What separates the social media from the traditional media is that it offers ordinary citizens unrestricted access and ability to voice their political agenda to a worldwide audience. Thus leading to the main reason the Internet is widely appealing to political candidates and organizations as it offers a source-controlled form of communication. But as Deloitte (2013), points out though social media has the power to influence millions of people this has led to leaders in Africa to taking steps to control it especially during election time. It should be also noted however that the issue of access is at the foundation of notion of the Internet as a public sphere.

As of December 2013 Facebook stated that it had 757 million daily active users in average, 1.23 billion monthly active users with 945 million monthly active users who used mobile products and approximately 81% of these daily users are outside the US and Canada. Today there is a global penetration of 33% internet users, 24% social media users and 91% mobile internet users. The emerging economies of Africa and Asia show the largest percentage increase in internet usage. According to <http://marketingland.com> in year 2012, 32% of all Internet users were on Twitter with 50% of them using the social network via mobile according to Microsoft tag.

According to Becca Blond of AFK Insider it appears, politics and business are super important in social media in Kenya and the report “How Africa Tweets” Nairobi is listed as the most active city in East Africa and the sixth most active on the continent, with 123,078 geo-located tweets in the fourth quarter of 2013.

With this change in the landscape of news provision people are able to address a large number of news sources directly which has in turn given them the freedom and independence in what news they consume (Volders, 2013). The internet has provided citizens with the possibility to give directly feedback on news stories that are of particular interest to them thus allowing to interactiveness. With the spread of access to the internet, growth in use of social media has also increased. The way we use these social media websites differs depending on the focus and possibilities provided for by these sites. Volders (2013) states that Facebook is used mainly used for keeping in touch and forming personal relationships while Twitter is for example mainly focused on keeping track of rapidly changing subjects, news items and updates. Thus the news value of this medium is very high since the focus is less on personal relationships and is especially suitable for news provision on the go. However, the Pew Research Centre states that 42% of online adults use multiple social networking sites but Facebook remains the platform of choice.

Camelia Beciu (2011) as quoted in Taseu and Ciacu (2012) identifies a number of functions that the Internet / the New Media have, as follows:

- a) The politician broadcasts his “controlled speech” and has the possibility of presenting his point of view without being “interrupted” by the journalists, by his opponents, by the media format constraints, etc.;
- b) The political opinions and posts broadcast in the traditional media - local and national - are replicated online. Thus, the political actor argues the visibility of his key messages delivered to a target group;

- c) Due to the new media, the politicians launch a presumptive political and media agenda. Nowadays, it has become of common practice for the journalists to give visibility to some statements taken from the blogs or Facebook pages of the politicians. It was already created a symbiosis between the traditional media and the new media;
- d) The governors use the new means of mass communication to promote their policies and the decisions they take and which give them the image of “good governors”;
- e) The political doctrines, policies and electoral projects are promoted by the New Media, in a form other than the one in the traditional political communication. There are used publicly available forms – “interactive”, “narrative”, and “conversational”.
- f) The visibility of the electoral message - designing an alleged online electioneering is part of a candidate's electoral strategy, and each online resource has a specific function for his campaign;
- g) By means of the Internet, there can be mobilized the voters who are asked to advance their opinion and to participate in the discussion on some issues of public interest.
- h) By using the Internet, the political actor interacts apparently more “efficiently” with his voters, beyond the institutional and bureaucratic rigors.

2.2 Characteristics of Social Media

Mayfield (2008) identified five characteristics of social media. These are participation, openness, conversation, community and communality; and connectedness. This five characteristics are explained in more details below.

2.2.1 Participation

This is one of the most distinctive characteristics of social media which allows all interested parties an opportunity to engage and interact. This further emphasizing the social element of social media for participants to share and engage with each other as opposed to giving monologues or passively observing. Participation can be measured through organizational citizenship behaviors model as well as the frequency of visits, and length of stay in social media.

2.2.2 Openness

Social media allows openness to user feedback and participation by having few barriers to accessing information or making comments thus information easily travels between sources and users and among users. This openness is enhanced by its availability of easy to use mechanisms for creating and sharing contents. The degree of openness in social media can be measured through three types of behavior: requesting information, receiving information and acting on information received.

2.2.3 Conversation

Social Media enables two-way conversations rather than one directional transmissions or distributions of information to an audience. The Internet provides a two-way communication environment as well as enhancing the capacity and speed of dialogic loops thus marking conversationalist as a central theme of media. The two-way communication can be measured by focusing on the key dimensions of feedback.

2.2.4 Community and Commuality

Social Media offers a mechanism for individuals and organizations to form communities quickly and to develop relationships effectively with others who share some commonality with them. While Social media provides an effective means of developing communities its core utility is in linking individuals and organizations as determined by their temporal needs and interests at the time of interaction.

2.2.5 Connectedness

Social connectedness is characterized as a pattern of active and trustful interpersonal behavior. People with high connectedness feel close and amiable with others, identifying with them and engage with social groups while people with low connectedness see themselves as outsiders and not adequate for social situations. Connectedness enables people to tie to the outside world and to easily expand their experiences.

2.3 Political Communication

McNair (2011) states that political communication is a term that has proved notoriously difficult to define with any precision because both components of the phrase are themselves open to a variety of definitions more or less broad.

According to Nomo & Sanders (1981) the label political communication first appeared to describe an intervening process by which political institutions and citizens interact with each other and “political influences are mobilized and transmitted”. Kid (1996) and Swanson (1993) on the other hand see political communication as a subfield of communication studies that has evolved into a mature field of study. Mahatma (2012) sees communication between political leadership or institutions of government and the people as fundamental to the sustenance of the political system, stating that though political communication is as old as political activity for much of this time it has been a top-down process from the leaders to the people. Mahatma (2012) further state that democratization has changed the nature of political communication and activity thus moving it into the public sphere and argues that democracy has led to the need for political education and effective political participation which is based on access to information and a greater demand for political involvement. Thus the greater the number of voices competing, the more intense the competition leading to the professionalization of political communication. He feels that as a result political communication is currently invaded by politicians, political activists, media practitioners and ordinary citizens who feel strongly about the affairs of the nation.

Tuman (2007) on the other hand argues that the way in which we send, receive, and share the information that shapes our political discourse and decision making is encompassed in the term political communication. He thus sees the definition of political communication is as wide and controversial as the subject matter making up the political discourse and some would argue that political communication refers to the tools employed by different groups and individuals to express their differences and celebrate their unity while others see it as a way of describing the interactions of different groups that influence decision making in a country. He further states that some see political communication as key to participation in a democracy while others view it as a three-way discussion between political elites, the media, and the public thus focusing on the interactions between elites (which include the politicians, their supporters and their detractors), the media, and the average public.

Truman (2007) further argues that many see political communication as a misnomer—suggesting that no information is really being shared but that it is rather argued that distortion, propaganda, exaggeration and half-truths make up the nature of political communication in an attempt to unethically manipulate and or influence voters in an election.

McNair (2011) defines political communication as simply as purposeful communication about politics. This incorporates: all forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives; communication addressed to these actors by non-politicians such as voters and newspaper columnists; and communication

about these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials, and other forms of media discussion of politics.

But what really is the state of political communication in the Kenyan context? Onduru (2013) states that a couple of things set Kenya apart in comparison to other African countries especially with regard to active use of social media because Kenyans are very outspoken on social media thus making such forums some of the most active and politically charged. She further states that due to this fact and the realization of the value of social media, many presidential candidates in the Kenyan 2013 elections had an official presence on both Twitter and Facebook. She argues that the politicians' use of social networks has impacted the tone of communications put forth to various audiences thus making social media more interactive and providing the opportunity to receive instant feedback to audiences thus creating the need for intentional and relevant communication. Onduru (2013) goes on to state that the users on social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook range are intellectually equipped to challenge what they are told meaning that politicians are judged by the promptness and relevance of their responses to questions posed to them.

2.3 Youth Definition

There have been many definitions given for the term youth. Below is a summary of some of these definitions that are relevant to this study.

Table 2.1: Summary of Youth Definitions

Entity/Organization	Reference/Year	Age in Years
Constitution of Kenya	Chapter 17 Article 260 (p)	18 - 35
Kenya National Youth Policy	2006	15 - 30
The African Youth Charter	African Union, 2006	15 - 35
UN		15 - 24
UNESCO	African Youth Forum,	15 - 24
UN Habitat	Agenda 21	15 - 32
Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS)	Kenya Youth Employment Challenge, 2013	15 - 34

Source: Researcher 2014

The “Youth” in Youth Civic Engagement (2008) defines youth as a social role, the incumbent of which is an individual, actual young person. There are macro and micro levels. On the macro level, youth as social role refers to ways of doing and being certain ages, typically 12-22 years. Youth is the carrying out and age-graded social expectations about thinking, feelings, talking, acting, dressing, playing and the rest. Social roles are space and time specific, so what a youth is

and how “youth” is to be done must be grounded to place and history For the purpose of this study the youth was defined as the social role. It took into consideration the definition given in the Kenyan Constitution and also the general understanding of youth in the Kenyan setting where in the political arena emphasis on youth is placed on those between the ages of 20 years and 40 years. As evidenced by the fact that for one to seek a political position they need to be at least 35 years of age and above.

2.4 Internet Access in Kenya

According to the PwC report, Kenyan Entertainment and Media Outlook 2013-2017, Kenya is a market that reflects both the growing trend of urbanization in Africa and the innovation of high growth markets. Approximately a quarter of the population now resides in urban areas and there is also a fast developing middle class, notably in the capital city of Nairobi. The report further states that Internet access is a key driver of entertainment and media advertising and content spending in most segments. Internet access considers consumer spending on accessing the Internet and is split into two categories: mobile Internet and fixed broadband Internet. Internet traffic in Kenya has increased due to the reinforcement of international bandwidth capacity. Increased capacity has benefitted both the fixed and mobile segments.

Table 2.2: Revenues from Internet Access and Advertising

Revenues from Internet Access and Advertising, 2008-2017 (US\$ millions)											
Kenya	Historical data					Forecast data				CAGR %	
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2013-17
Internet access	9	21	36	63	111	187	305	483	729	897	
<i>YOY growth (%)</i>		<i>136.2%</i>	<i>74.1%</i>	<i>76.5%</i>	<i>75.3%</i>	<i>69.5%</i>	<i>62.6%</i>	<i>58.7%</i>	<i>50.9%</i>	<i>23.0%</i>	<i>52.0%</i>
Internet advertising	2	4	9	16	24	33	43	52	59	64	
<i>YOY growth (%)</i>		<i>110.8%</i>	<i>110.2%</i>	<i>66.0%</i>	<i>51.6%</i>	<i>39.3%</i>	<i>31.2%</i>	<i>20.2%</i>	<i>12.9%</i>	<i>8.6%</i>	<i>21.9%</i>
Total internet Market	11	25	45	79	135	220	348	535	788	961	
<i>YOY growth (%)</i>		<i>131.2%</i>	<i>80.6%</i>	<i>74.3%</i>	<i>70.6%</i>	<i>64.2%</i>	<i>57.9%</i>	<i>53.9%</i>	<i>47.2%</i>	<i>21.9%</i>	<i>48.3%</i>

Source: PwC, Informa Telecoms & Media

The report further states that the new mobile device user will be very different from the past: it is expected that he or she will be poorer, younger, less educated and unlikely to have access to fixed broadband. This is typified in Kenya, where large swathes of the population remain unable to afford a computer with a fixed broadband connection and mobile presents a far cheaper and more accessible alternative way to access the Internet. Many African consumers will be using their mobile devices not primarily for communicating, but for the purpose of entertainment, accessing information or transferring money. This means the quality of the customer experience will change from concerns around network congestion and coverage, to Internet speeds and to the relevance of services on offer.

Table 2.3 East Africa 2014 Population And Internet Users Statistics For 2013 Q4

<u>EAST AFRICA</u>	Population (2014 Est.)	Internet Users 31-Dec-2000	Internet Users 31-Dec-2013	Penetration (% Population)	Internet % Africa	Facebook 31-Dec-2012
<u>Burundi</u>	10,395,931	3,000	405,441	3.9 %	0.2 %	41,900
<u>Kenya</u>	45,010,056	200,000	21,273,738	47.3 %	8.9 %	2,045,900
<u>Rwanda</u>	12,337,138	5,000	1,073,331	8.7 %	0.4 %	188,800
<u>South Sudan</u>	11,562,695	n/a	100	0.0 %	0.0 %	n/a
<u>Sudan</u>	35,482,233	30,000	8,054,467	22.7 %	3.4 %	n/a
<u>Tanzania</u>	49,639,138	115,000	6,949,479	14.0 %	2.9 %	705,460
<u>Uganda</u>	35,918,915	40,000	5,818,864	16.2 %	2.4 %	562,240
<u>TOTAL AFRICA</u>	1,125,721,038	4,514,400	240,146,482	21.3 %	100.0 %	51,612,460

**Adapted from Africa 2014 Population And Internet Users Statistics For 2013 Q4
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Table 2.3 shows the population and internet users statistics for the fourth quarter of 2013. From this table Kenya has 8.9% of total internet percentage in Africa and a 47.3% penetration rate putting it ahead of the whole of the East African Region.

2.4 Youth and the Internet

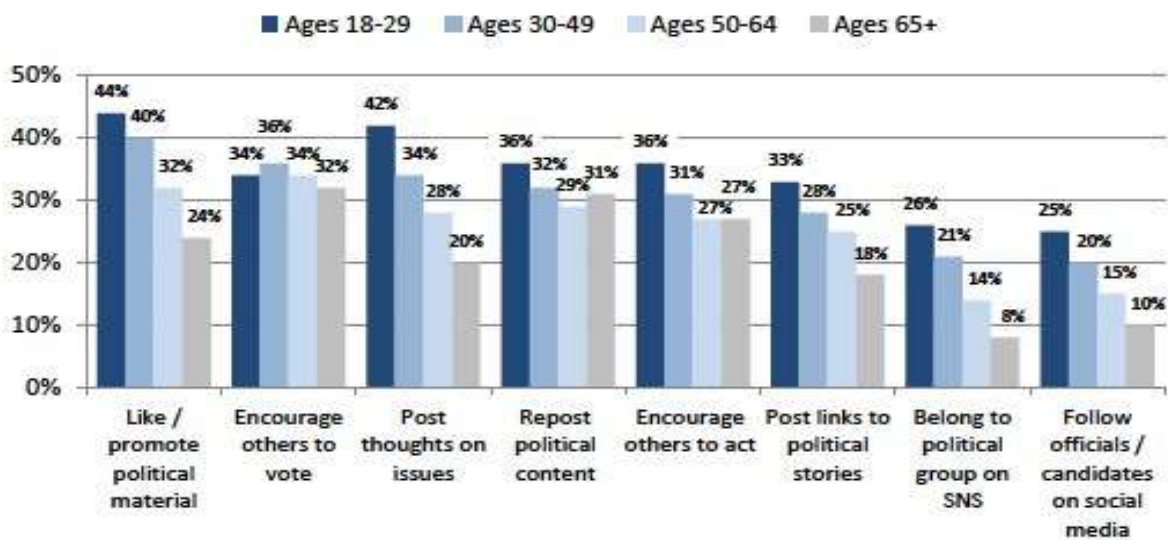
According to Pew Research Internet Project between February 2005 and August 2006, the use of social networking sites among young adult internet users ages 18-29 jumped from 9% to 49%. They further found out that, in November 2010 in a survey that explored overall social networks and how use of these technologies is related to trust, tolerance, social support, community and political engagement; That social networks sites are increasingly used to keep up with close ties; That Facebook users are more trusting than others; That Facebook users have more close relationships; Internet users get more support from their social ties and Facebook users get the

most support and that Facebook users are much more politically engaged than most people. This fact is further supported by the Pew Research Center as shown in the Figure II below which shows that younger social media users are more likely to use it for political information..

Figure II: Social Media and Younger Users

Younger social media users are more likely to use the tools for civic activities

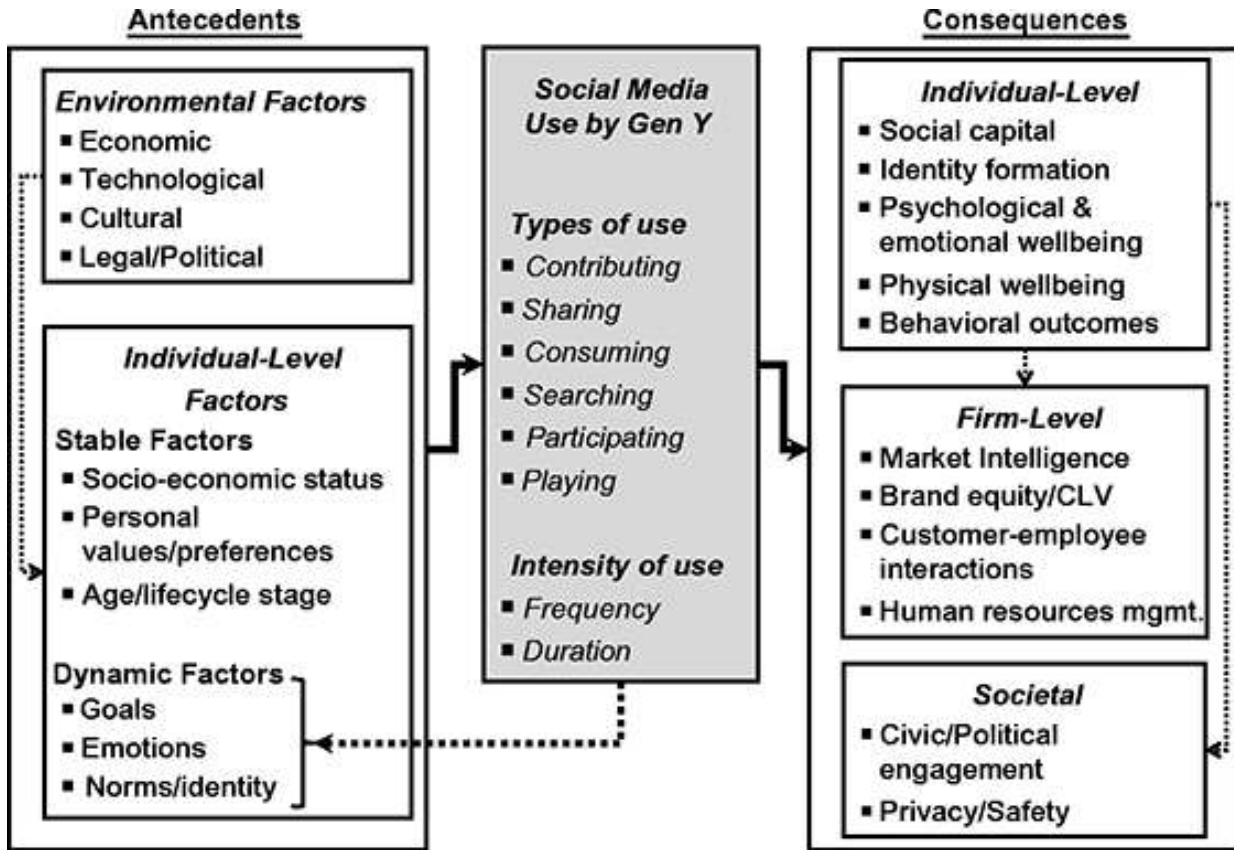
% of users of social networking sites or Twitter who use social media these ways



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Civic Engagement Survey, conducted July 16-August 7, 2012 on landline and cell phones and in English and Spanish. N for social media users ages 18-29=323. N for social media users ages 30-49=388. N for social media users ages 50-64=323. N for social media users ages 65+=167.

The research further stated that social networking sites have become an important additional arena for politics. They are a resource for political news, information, finding likeminded issue-oriented people and a tool for voter outreach in the run-up to elections.

Figure III: Social Media Use by Generation Y



Source: Journal of Service Management, Vol. 24 Iss: 3

Figure III below clearly shows the types and intensity of social media use by the youth. It further shows the relationship between the intensity and types of SNSs uses and their consequences.

2.5 Youth and Politics

Heer (1974) state that many political regimes fear their young people and work at co-opting them in governmental youth movements lest the youth get organized and become a political force in society and politics. Youth are seen as persons 12-22 years old and as young people. They

indeed have the capacity, ability and willingness to be citizens now and into their adulthood and old age.

2.6 Facebook versus Twitter

Ross and Bürger (2014) state that most politicians believe that Facebook and Twitter function in different ways and are likely to have quite different audiences, with Twitter attracting political ‘junkies’ and Facebook being used by a more diverse community. They further state that Twitter posts are much more likely to be taken up and published by journalists than anything on Facebook.

Hoffman (2014) supports the view Facebook is the most frequently researched social medium. While Ross and Bürger (2014) identified Facebook as having the potential to provoke action either political or social. In their research found out that there was also the view that social media are a young or at least a person’s media and while there are doubtless a number of nonagenarians using Facebook and Twitter, most MPs believed that they are not the typical demographic.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

A number of communication theories become relevant to this study of the role played by the social media networks in disseminating political information. These include; the Uses and Gratifications theory, the Agenda-Setting theory and the Two Step Flow of Information theory.

2.7.1 The Uses and Gratifications Theory

Originated in the 1970s as a reaction to traditional mass communication research emphasizing the sender and the message. The uses and gratifications theory stresses the active audience and user instead. The core assumptions of the uses and gratifications theory attempts to explain the uses and functions of the media for individuals, groups, and society in general. There are three objectives in developing uses and gratifications theory: to explain how individuals use media to gratify their needs - “What do people do with the media”; to discover underlying motives for individuals’ media use and to identify the positive and the negative consequences of individual media use. At the core of uses and gratifications theory lies the assumption that audience members actively seek out the media that satisfies individual needs. McQuail’s (1983) classification of the common reasons for media use is information, personal identity, integration/social interaction and entertainment. The uses and gratifications theory has been widely used for studies of Internet use. In the Internet environment, users are even more actively engaged communication participants, compared to other traditional media. The theory also suggests that people consciously choose the medium that could satisfy their needs and that audiences are able to recognize their reasons for making media choices (Katz et al., 1974).

2.7.2 The Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda setting theory describes a very powerful influence of the media – the ability to tell us what issues are important. As far back as 1922, the newspaper columnist Walter Lippmann was concerned that the media had the power to present images to the public. McCombs and Shaw investigated presidential campaigns in 1968, 1972 and 1976. In the research done in 1968 they

focused on two elements: awareness and information. Investigating the agenda-setting function of the mass media, they attempted to assess the relationship between what voters in one community said were important issues and the actual content of the media messages used during the campaign. McCombs and Shaw concluded that media exerted a significant influence on what the public considered to be the major issues. The core assumptions of the agenda-setting theory is the creation of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. Two basis assumptions underlie most research on agenda-setting: (1) the press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it; (2) media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues. One of the most critical aspects in the concept of an agenda-setting role of mass communication is the time frame for this phenomenon. In addition, different media have different agenda-setting potential. Agenda-setting theory helps us understand the pervasive role of the media for example on political communication systems.

The traditional media's agenda setting power is no longer universal or singular within citizen media outlets. The independent platforms are redistributing power between traditional media and citizen media. Traditional media agenda setting is now just one force among many competing influences. Unlike traditional media platforms, social media networks are allowing citizens more influence and power in setting news agendas. Agenda setting seems to be the media effect that is being affected most by the new media environment. The time period when traditional media could truly act as a gatekeeper for what we could see and think about was short and there are multiple edges that connect us, greatly reducing the power of old media especially now with the ability for anyone to publish on the web making gatekeeping nearly impossible.

The agenda-setting theory is applicable to this study by following the dictum by Bernard Cohen that “the media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think but it is successful in telling them what to think about”. Nowhere is this evident than in social media where debate emanates from the day’s media coverage of political information. A close look at the topic of the day on the social media networks especially Facebook one is likely to see information on an issue carried by the media especially on political issues. Visitors to these sites are likely to be interested in how an issue is given meaning by politicians and others. As states by Kaid (2004) agenda setting investigations cast light on how people organize and give meaning to the political world around them with agenda-setting research stimulating interpersonal communication which can in turn often trigger behavior change. Agenda-setting has proven to be one of the most robust theories in political communication.

2.7.3 Two Step Flow of Information Theory

The two-step flow of communication hypothesis was first introduced by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet in *The People's Choice*, a 1944 study which focused on the process of decision-making during a Presidential election campaign. These researchers expected to find empirical support for the direct influence of media messages on voting intentions. They were surprised to discover, however, that informal, personal contacts were mentioned far more frequently than exposure to radio or newspaper as sources of influence on voting behavior. Armed with this data, Katz and Lazarsfeld developed the two-step flow theory of mass communication. The core assumptions of this theory assert that information moves in two distinct stages. First to the opinion leaders who then pass on their own interpretations in addition

to the actual media content. Opinion leaders are quite influential in getting people to change their attitudes and behaviors and are quite similar to those they influence. The two-step flow theory has refined the ability to predict the influence of messages on audience behavior, and it helped explain why certain media campaigns may have failed to alter audience attitudes and behavior.

The two step flow of information theory is applicable to this study as it puts the political class in directed contact with their constituents without the use of the traditional gatekeepers. The political elite is thus able to engage freely with ruled and receive feedback on any policy they intended to put in place. What delineates the Internet from traditional print and broadcast media, at least in theory, is that its communication network offers ordinary citizens unrestricted access and ability to voice their political agenda to a worldwide audience. One of the primary reasons that the Internet is so widely appealing to political candidates and political organizations is that this medium offers a source-controlled form of communication. Researchers at Rutgers University completed a comprehensive analysis of the content of political websites and presented an overview of the possibilities and impediments impacting the Internet's potential to contribute to a more participatory, direct democracy (Barber et al., 1997). Their overview demonstrates that the Internet contains the following structural possibilities for electronically enhanced democracy: inherent interactivity; potential for lateral and horizontal communication; point-to-point and non-hierarchical modes of communication; low costs to users; and rapidity as a communication.

CHAPTER THREE: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The research design used by the researcher is case study which has been defined by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) as an in-depth investigation of an individual, group institution or phenomenon. Its primary purpose is to determine factors and relationships that have resulted in the behavior under study. Case study further allows for the investigation that makes a detailed examination of a single subject, group or phenomenon. The main advantage of the case study method is its applicability to real-life, contemporary, human situations. The researcher chose Embakasi West Constituency which was carved out of the former larger Embakasi Constituency which according to IEBC with 164,227 registered voters (as at September 2012) was the most populous constituency in Kenya. Embakasi Constituency is also an area with quite a high urban population. The researcher further chose the youth as she felt they form at least half of the population and are therefore in a position to make a difference in our society and affect how political decisions are made.

3.2 Research Methodology

The research method used was descriptive research which is a fact-finding investigation with adequate interpretation. It is more specific as it focuses on the particular aspects or dimension of the problem studied. The main purpose of the descriptive research is the description of the state of affairs as it exists at present. The main characteristics of the descriptive research is that the

researcher has no control over the variables and can only report what has happened or what is happening. The data is collected by using one or more appropriate methods i.e. observation, interview, and questionnaire. For the purpose of this research questionnaires were used.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

The researcher used questionnaire which was distributed to the sample population with a request to answer the questions and return the questionnaire. Its main advantages are that it is faster than other methods, cheaper as no field staff are required and has a high response rate while allowing for replies without embarrassment to respondents. Its disadvantages include the fact that little time is given to respondents making it therefore not suitable for intensive survey where comprehensive answers are required and in addition bias information may be more. The researcher used both structured and unstructured questions to allow for a balancing of responses. The structured questions limited the respondents to answer according to the researcher's choices while the unstructured questions gave an insight into the respondents' interests and decisions and stimulate the respondents to think and express what they consider most important.

The researcher also used observation method as a way of discovering how often politicians and government officials comment on the social media and also what type of information is contained in their comments. For this study, the websites of the popular political parties was looked at to find out if they provide a link to the social media. This study further looked at particular emphasis on the activities of the two major coalitions in Kenya that is the Jubilee

Coalition and the Cord Coalition from which majority of the politicians currently serving in the executive and legislative arms of government are drawn from.

This study also gauged whether individuals were likely to join social media pages whose views they already agree with and what leads to the selection of which social media networks to belong to – for example was it out of interest or to gain more information. Also did self-interest rather than public good influence the topics of online discussion on social media or was it the case of the current political occurrence in the country. It was also important to find out whether in the 2013 national election the public opinion changed or affirmed by what they read on social media

3.4 Target Population

This study focused mainly on the Embakasi West Constituency in Nairobi which is one of the constituencies in Nairobi County. According to a report published in the last half of 2013 by Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), Nairobi County has the highest proportion of households that is 62.4 % with 3 or less members, also the dependency ratio of Nairobi County is 0.465 which is the lowest in Kenya. It further stated that Nairobi has the lowest poverty gap at 4.1% with the richest constituency being Embakasi West Constituency where only 10.3 % of the people are poor (The poverty gap measures the intensity of poverty). Further the share of residents with secondary education or higher in Embakasi West Constituency, Nairobi County is 63%.

The report further stated that the Kenya's youth population is 35% with a working age population making up 53.4%. Also there are slight differences between rural and urban areas.

The youth and the working age population is more in urban than in rural areas by 10.6% and 11.5% points respectively. The Nairobi County also has a high youthful population where 15-34 year olds constitute 49% of the total population.

According to the Embakasi West Constituency, Nairobi County Five Year Strategic Plan (2014 – 2018) before the Embakasi West Constituency was established it used to be part of Embakasi and Kamukunji Constituencies. It has four wards, Umoja One, Umoja Two, Mowlem and Kariobangi South/Uhuru. The total population of Embakasi West Constituency as per the 2009 population census stood at 187,020 comprising of 50,739 in Umoja One Ward, 50,738 in Umoja Two Ward, 22,983 in Mowlem Ward, and 62,560 in Kariobangi South/Uhuru Ward. Most of the inhabitants are people who have migrated from rural areas to seek for job opportunities in Nairobi.

3.5 Population Sample

For the purpose of this study, the research concentrated on the youth population between the age of 20 years and 40 years. This was because this age group is technological savvy as they have grown up around computers and are extremely active on the internet and particularly on the social media. From this population the researcher chose a sample size of 90 youth who were resident in Umoja One Ward which is part of Embakasi West Constituency. The reason for choosing this sample size was that this group could be easily reached and were representative of the total population in the area.

3.5 Sample Selection Process

Due the urgency of the research in terms of time, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to the sample size of the target population. The researcher used cluster sampling as the sampling technique involving the clusters; those residing and operating small businesses in the area; professionals residents in the area and students reside in the area. The questionnaire was given to a random group of the accessible sample population who are resident within Umoja One Ward of Embakasi West Constituency. The questionnaire was distributed in residential homes and small businesses frequented by the youth such as hair salons, movie shops and second hand clothing stalls in Umoja One Ward as per the table below;

Table 3.1: Cluster Sampling of Target Population

#	Cluster	Targeted Number
1	Youth residing and operating small businesses in the area	15
2	Professional Youth resident in the area	50
3	Students Youth resident in the area	20
4	Youth who have been brought up in the areas and are registered voters but who do not necessary reside in the area	5
	TOTAL NUMBER	90

Source: Researcher 2014

3.6 Data Collection Methods & Procedure

The researcher used the questionnaire and observation methods of data collection. The researcher used questionnaires as the main means of obtaining data. This was done by circulating questionnaires to the population sample as all of the sample was literate and were able to complete the questionnaire without any help. The respondents were given ample time to give well thought out answers. The questionnaire included two sections; one with structured questions with multiple chose responses and unstructured questions which allowed the respondents to give independent answers.

The research also used observation as a means of collecting data. This was mainly done through the analysis of individual political leaders pages. In this way, the researcher was able to obtain information which was current and uninhibited.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis procedures (DAP) helped the researcher to arrive at the data analysis. The uses of this procedures put the research project in perspective and assisted in testing the research questions stated in the research. The use of DAP, helped to convert data into information and knowledge, and explored the relationship between the variables. While there are a number of software packages available that facilitate data analysis which include statistical packages like SPSS, SAS and Microsoft Excel. The researcher used Microsoft Excel. Similarly tools like

spreadsheets and word processing software were very useful for the data analysis. After the questionnaires have been administered the raw data collected was organized in a spreadsheets as a manner to facilitate analysis. This meant that the data from the various sources gathered was reviewed and then analyzed to form the findings and conclusions.

The researcher used tables and charts to analyze data collected. The data was organized in Tables under various topics; here the information received from the respondents was tabulated to allow for easy understanding. Further the information tabulated was represented through Charts that included pie charts, bar graphs and line graphs to represent the data collected from the respondents.

**CHAPTER FOUR:
DATA ANALYSIS AND REPRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the quantitative and qualitative data analyses for the research questionnaire administered. The researcher administered 90 copies of the Questionnaire (Appendix 1) to the target population as shown in the table below. Out of this 60 copies were returned which represents a 86% response rate. All the respondents issued with the questionnaire were literate and therefore were able to respond to the questions without any assistance.

4.2 Quantitative Analysis

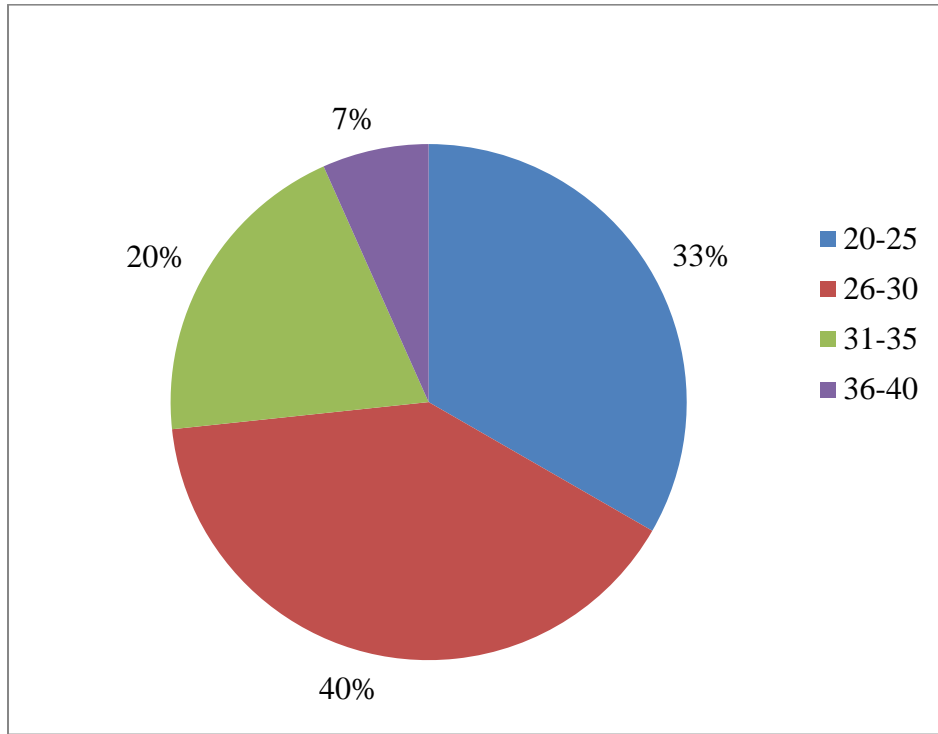
Table 4.1: Demographics of the Respondents

Age	Gender		Total	Percentage
	Male	Female		
20-25	16	4	20	33.3%
26-30	16	8	24	40.0%
31-35	5	7	12	20.0%
36-40	1	3	4	6.7%
Total	38	22	60	100%

Source: Research Data

It was noted that majority of those who responded to the questionnaire were between the ages of 20 years and 30 years and also that majority of the respondents were male.

Chart 4.1: Demographics of the Respondents According to Their Ages



Source: Research Data

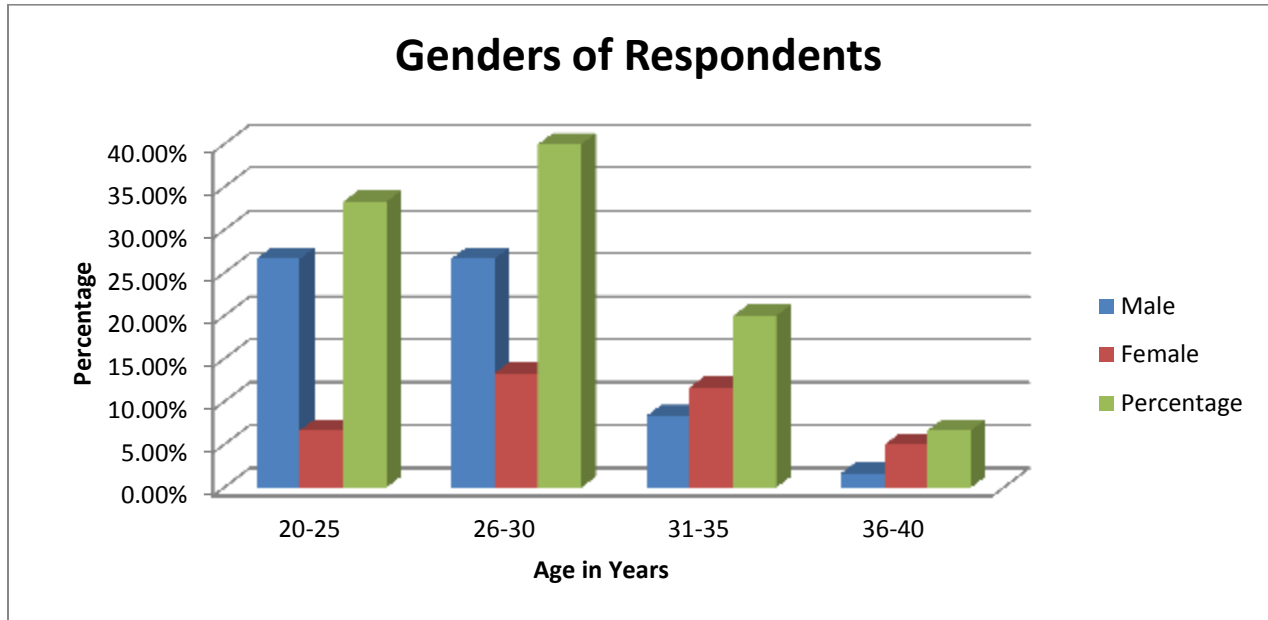
Majority of the respondents were in the 26 – 30 years age group making up 40% of the total respondents followed closely by those in the 20 – 25 years age group who made up 33% of the total respondents.

Table 4.2: Demographics of the Respondents According to Their Ages (Gender)

Age	Gender				Total	Total Percentage
	Male	Male %	Female	Female%		
20-25	16	26.665%	4	6.67%	20	33.3%
26-30	16	26.665%	8	13.33%	24	40.0%
31-35	5	8.33%	7	11.67%	12	20.0%
36-40	1	1.67%	3	5%	4	6.7%
Total	38	63.33%	22	36.67%	60	100%

Source: Research Data

Graph 4.1: Demographics of the Respondents According to Their Ages (Gender)



Source: Research Data

As seen in the Tables 4.3 and represent the genders of the respondents interviewed according to their ages. 63.33% of the respondents interviewed were male while 36.67% were female. This is further represented in Chart 4.1.

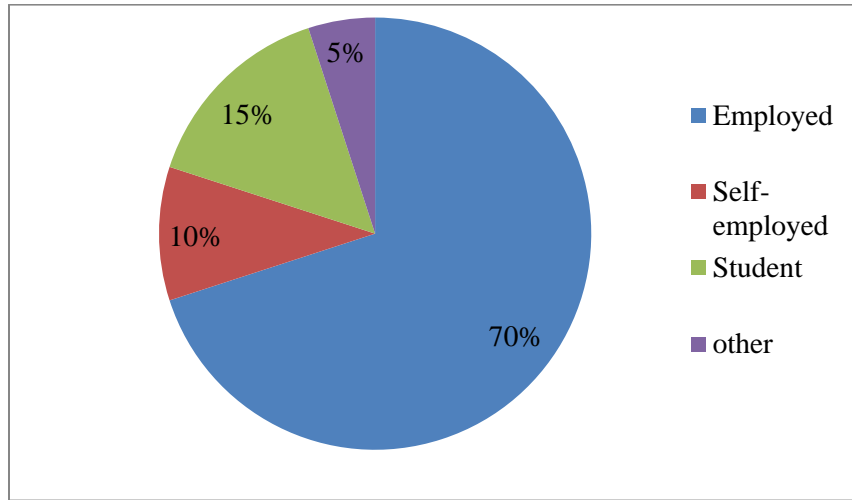
Table 4.3: Professions of the Respondents

Age	Employed	Self-Employed	Student	Other	Total
20-25	9	2	8	1	20
26-30	21	2	1	0	24
31-35	9	2	0	1	12
36-40	3	0	0	1	4
Total	42	6	9	3	60
Percentage	70%	10%	15%	5%	100%

Source: Research Data

Majority of the respondents (70%) are employee as seen in the table. This further confirms the statement that majority of the residents are those who have migrated to the city in search of employment.

Chart 4.2: Professions of the Respondents



Source: Research Data

Above is the graphical representations of the professional status of the respondents.

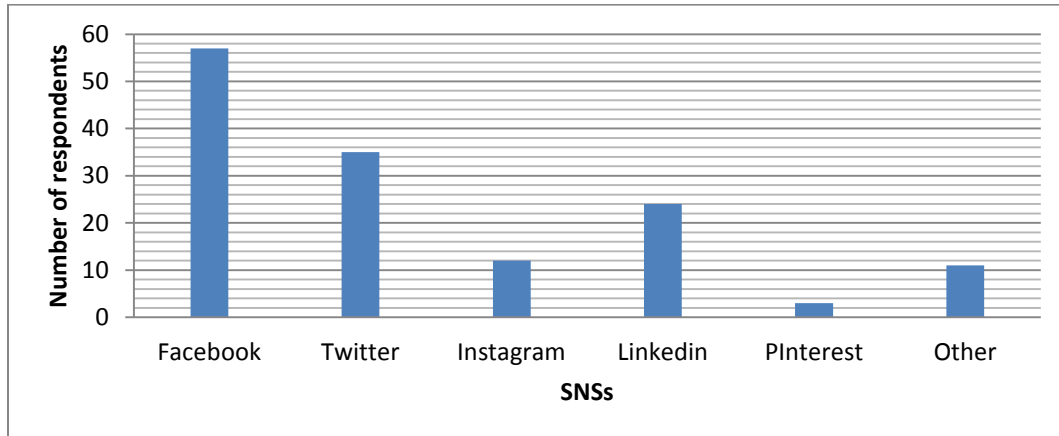
Table 4.4: Subscription To Social Networking Sites

SNSs	No of Respondents	Percentage
Facebook	57	95%
Twitter	35	58%
Instagram	12	20%
LinkedIn	24	40%
Pinterest	3	5%
Other	11	18%

Source: Research Data

From the above table majority of the respondents (95%) subscribe to Facebook. In addition more than half of the respondents (58%) subscribe to Twitter. From the table above the most subscribed to social networking sites are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn respectively.

Graph 4.2: Subscription To Social Networking Sites



Source: Research Data

Graph 4.2 is a graphical representation of the respondents subscription to social networking sites. From this the most subscribed to SNSs was Facebook.

Table 4.5: Areas of Interest On Social Media

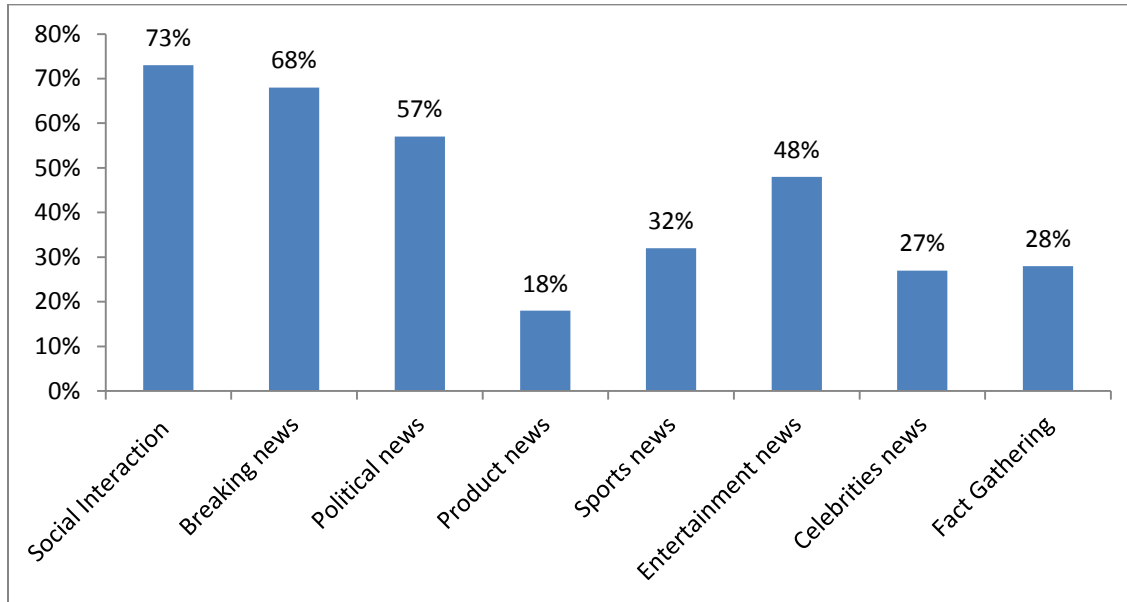
SNSs Areas	Number of Users	Percentage
Social Interaction with close friends/ family	44	73.3%
Breaking news	41	68.3%
Political news	34	56.7%
Product news	11	18.3%
Sports news	19	31.7%
Entertainment news	29	48.3%
Celebrities news	16	26.7%
Fact Gathering	17	28.3%

Source: Research Data

Table 4.5 shows the respondents’ reasons for use of social media. From the above table majority (73%) of the respondents use the SNSs for social interaction with close friends and family. The

percentage of the respondents who use of SNSs for political information was 57% ranking it third in the areas of interest after social interaction with close family/friends and breaking news.

Graph 4.3: Graphical Representation of Areas of Interest On Social Media



Source: Research Data

Table 4.6: Frequency of SNSs Usage

Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Once daily	8	13.3%
Several times daily	46	76.7%
Weekly	5	8.3%
Monthly	0	0%
Rarely	1	1.7%
TOTAL	60	100%

Source: Research Data

From the tables above it is noted that 76.7% which form majority of the respondents use SNSs several times daily thus making SNSs a good avenue to dissemination of political information and messages even in non-election times.

Table 4.6.1: Frequency of SNSs Usage According to Age

Age	Once daily	Several times daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Total	Percentage
20-25	3	18	2	0	0	23	38.3%
26-30	3	17	2	0	0	22	36.7%
31-35	1	8	1	0	1	11	18.3%
36-40	1	3	0	0	0	4	6.7%
TOTAL	8	46	5	0	1	60	100.0%
Percentage	13.3%	76.7%	8.3%	0%	1.7%	100%	

Source: Research Data

The highest number of respondents that use the SNSs several times daily was in the 20-25 years and 26-30 years age groups. This therefore means SNSs are a good means of distributing information and especially political news as it occurs.

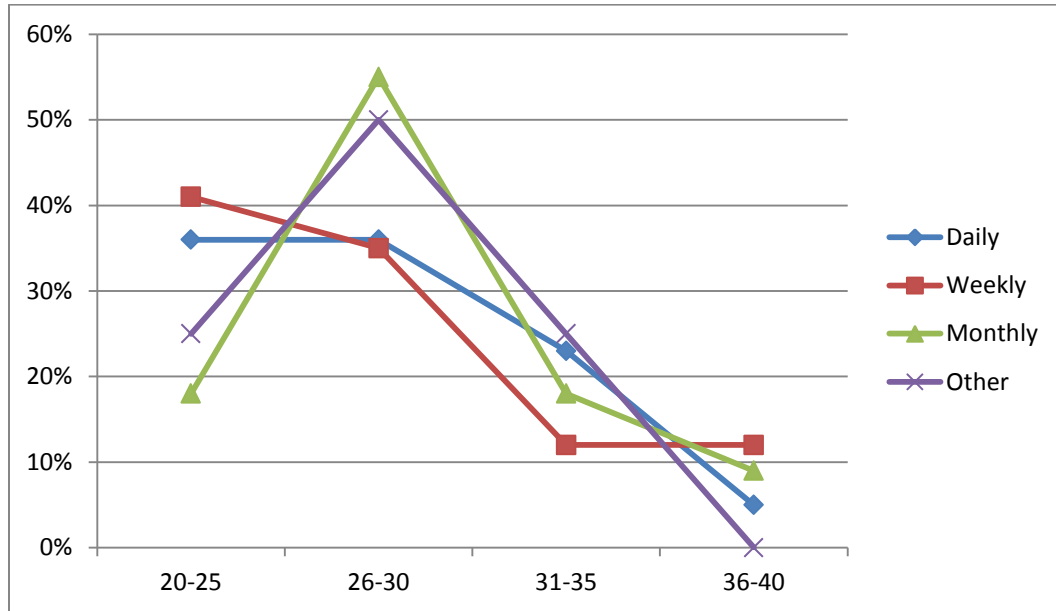
Table 4.7: Share Content Sharing On Own Profile By Age

Age	Daily	%	Weekly	%	Monthly	%	Other	%	Total	%
20-25	8	36%	7	41%	2	18%	2	25%	19	33%
26-30	8	36%	6	35%	6	55%	4	50%	24	41%
31-35	5	23%	2	12%	2	18%	2	25%	11	19%
36-40	1	5%	2	12%	1	9%	0	0%	4	7%
Total	22	100%	17	100%	11	100%	8	100%	58	100%
%	37.9%		29.3%		19%		13.8%		100%	

Source: Research Data

37.9% of the respondents share content on SNSs daily as compared to 29.3% who share content weekly. This further shows that about 67% of the respondents share content on their own profiles. Further those who share content are between the ages of 20 years and 30 years.

Graph 4.4: Share Content Sharing On Own Profile By Ages



Source: Research Data

Above is a graphical representation of the respondents use of social networking sites.

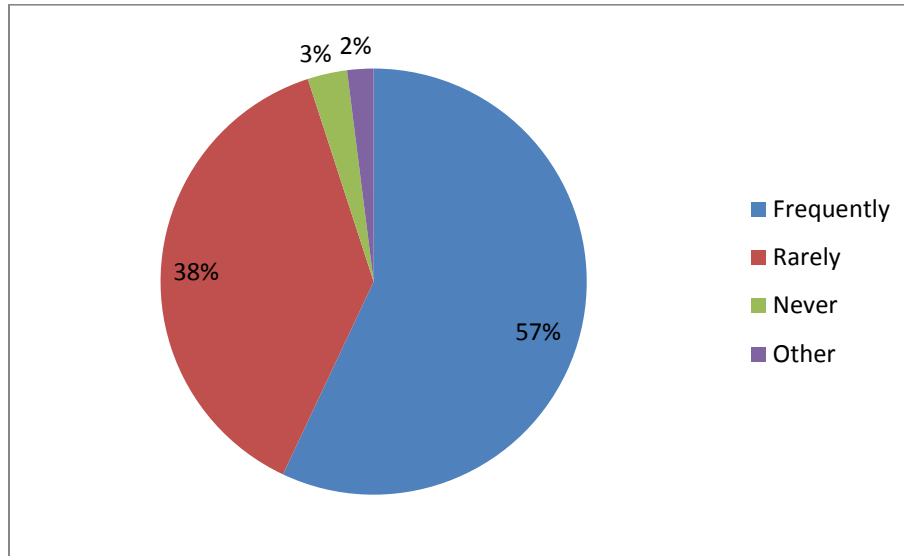
Table 4.8: Comment On Postings From Friends

Age	Number of Respondents				TOTAL
	Frequently	Rarely	Never	Other	
20-25	10	8	2	0	20
26-30	13	10	0	1	24
31-35	8	4	0	0	12
36-40	3	1	0	0	4
TOTAL	34	23	2	1	60
Percentage	57%	38%	3%	2%	

Source: Research Data

From the above table it appears that respondents who were more likely to comment on postings from friends were between the ages 36 – 40 years, followed by those between 31 – 35 years age group. This shows that a majority of those older in age actually used the social media as a forum for interaction and giving their views.

Chart 4.3: Comment On Postings From Friends



Source: Research Data

More than half of the respondents 57% comment on postings from friends with only 3% not doing so. This shows a high percentage of respondents likely to comment on any post on social media especially when it comes for friends.

Table 4.9: Social Media As A Forum For Interaction With Elected Leader By Age

Age	Number of Respondents				Total	Percentage
	Yes	%	No	%		
20-25	15	35%	5	29%	20	33.3%
26-30	16	37%	8	47%	24	40%
31-35	9	21%	3	18%	12	20%
36-40	3	7%	1	6%	4	6.7%
Total	43		17		60	100%
Percentage	72%		28%			

Source: Research Data

From Table 4:9 majority of the respondents (72%) see social media as a forum for interaction with their elected leaders.

Table 4.10: Question Or Comment Posting On Government’s Official Page Or Politician’s Profile By Age

Age	Number of Respondents		Total	Percentage
	Yes	No		
20-25	8	13	21	34.4%
26-30	8	16	24	39.3%
31-35	5	7	12	19.7%
36-40	1	3	4	6.6%
TOTAL	22	39	61	100%
Percentage	36%	64%	100	

Source: Research Data

It was interesting to note that majority of the respondents (64%) have not posted any question or comment on the government’s official page or on a politician’s profile. While an equal number between the age group of 20-25 and 26-30 had posted a comment or question. While it was noted in Table 4.9 that majority of the respondents between 36-40 years regarded social media as a forum for interaction with their elected leaders minority of them had ever posted a question or comment.

Table 4.11: Adequacy of Response to Queries By Government Officials Or Politicians

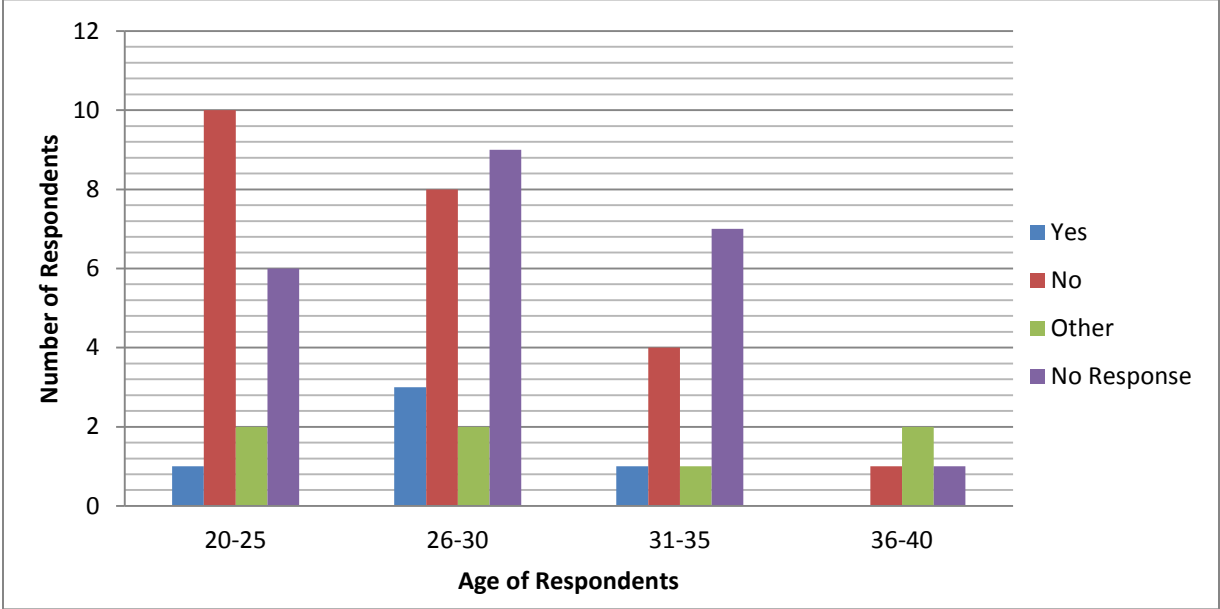
Age	Number of Respondents				Total	Percentage
	Yes	No	Other	No Response		
20-25	1	10	2	6	18	31.6%
26-30	3	8	2	9	22	38.6%
31-35	1	4	1	7	13	22.8%
36-40	0	1	2	1	4	7%
TOTAL	5	23	7	23	57	100%
Percentage	8.8%	40.35%	10%	40.35%	100%	

Source: Research Data

As noted in the previous page majority of the respondents have not posted any question or comment on the government’s official page or on a politician profile which therefore leads to a

surprising response as seen in table 4.11. Here a high number (40.35%) felt that they had not received adequate response to queries while a similar percentage did not respond to this question.

Graph 4.5: Adequacy Response To Queries By Government Officials Or Politicians By Age



Source: Research Data

From the above graph those in the 20-25 years age group felt that they did not receive adequate response to their queries while majority of those aged between 26-30 years opted not to respond to this question.

Table 4.12: Perception Changed By Government Officials Or Politicians

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	25	41.7%
No	27	45%
Other	4	6.7%
No Response	4	6.7%
TOTAL	60	100%

Source: Research Data

For majority of the respondents 45% their perception was not changed by government officials or politicians. However on the other hand the perception of 41.7% of the respondents changed by the same Government officials or politicians.

Table 4.13: Engagement With Online Political Communication Likely To Prompt Offline Conversations With Family And Friends

Age	Number of Respondents				Total	Percentage
	Yes	Percentage	No	Percentage		
20-25	15	36.6%	5	29%	20	34%
26-30	16	39%	6	35%	22	38%
31-35	8	19.5%	4	24%	12	21%
36-40	2	4.9%	2	12%	4	7%
Total	41		17		58	100%
Percentage	70.7%		29.3%		100%	

Source: Research Data

70.7% which was quite a high percentage of respondents stated that their engagement with online political communication was likely to prompt offline conversations with family and friends. This should therefore be seen a major motivation for the involvement of government officials and politicians with social media platforms. Further as seen before the group likely to do so was again between 20 years to 30 years.

Table 4.14: Reliance On Social Media Content In Face-To-Face Discussions By Ages

Age	Number of Respondents				Total	Percentage
	Yes	%	No	%		
20-25	11	39%	7	24%	18	32%
26-30	12	43%	11	38%	23	40%
31-35	4	14%	8	28%	12	21%
36-40	1	4%	3	10%	4	7%
Total	28		29		57	100%
Percentage	49.1%		50.9%		100%	

Source: Research Data

From the table above there is no big difference between those who rely more on social media content in face-to-face discussions and those who do not. The difference being between 49.1% those who relied on social media content in face to face discussions as opposed to 50.9% who did not.

Table 4.15: An Analysis of Individual Twitter Accounts as at 19th June 2014.

Kenyan Politician	Twitter handle	No. of Tweets	No. of Followers
Uhuru Kenyatta	@UKenyatta	2,596	453000
Raila Odinga	@RailaOdinga	2,678	319000
William Samoei Ruto	@WilliamsRuto	768	268000
Dr. Evans Kidero	@KideroEvans	2,306	174000
Kalonzo Musyoka	@skmusyoka	2,445	114000
Margaret G Kenyatta	@M_Kenyatta	43	67900
Martha Karua	@MarthaKarua	18.1K	26200
Mike Sonko	@GideonMbuvi	3,726	25000
Peter Kenneth	@Peter_Kenneth	13.2K	19900
Rachel Ruto	@RachelRuto	335	14900
Rachel Shebesh™ ©	@Rachealshebesh	6,442	5426
Hon. George Theuri	@EmbakasiWest	86	209
Raphael Tuju	@Raphael_Tuju	19	180
George Theuri	@GeorgeTheuri	8,322	60

Source: Research Data

From the table on page 46, the President Uhuru Kenyatta is the most followed political leader in Kenya followed by former Prime Minister and leader of the Official Opposition Party Raila

Odinga as at June 2014. It is interesting to note that the political leaders like Dr. Evans Kidero, the Nairobi Governor; Mike Sonko – Nairobi Senator; and Rachel Shebesh – Nairobi Women’s Representative do not have a high following on Twitter. George Theuri the MP for Embakasi West had such a low following at only 269 followers.

Table 4.16: Facebook Top 10 Political Pages in Kenya as at 31st January 2014

#	Page	Local Fans	Total Fans
1	Uhuru Kenyatta	733326	843644
2	William Samoei Ruto	374628	415299
3	Martha Karua	292904	330092
4	Peter Kenneth	285463	309820
5	Barack Obama	231068	38710056
6	Raila Odinga	172425	185927
7	State House Kenya	104873	113144
8	Nelson Mandela	46777	3642433
9	Kofi Annan	33221	647483
10	Raphael Tuju-Official	29219	31042

Incidentally Uhuru Kenyatta’s Facebook page was the leading page with 733326 local fans as at 31st January 2014 followed by the Deputy President William Ruto with 374628 local fans during the same period.

4.3 Qualitative Analysis

From the qualitative responses received from the respondents to the questionnaire distributed (Appendix 1) the main reasons giving for content sharing and comment posting on social media were to share ideas; express opinions; raise discussion on current issues; for education; for entertainment/fun and to be fully updated on current news.

Further most of the respondents stated that the role social media plays in the provision of political information was creating awareness, providing or creating a forum or platform for discussion of political views, enlightening people on current affairs as well as enabling there to be new agendas by playing the role of agenda setting besides helping negate bias. One respondent for example stated that social media deliberately merges the thoughts of the public to a single thought implying that social media converges thoughts.

One respondents for example cited that social media plays a critical role when it comes to accountability because instead of relying on rumours social media users are now able to get information direct from the source. But like with most research studies done before there are always two sides to the coin. The particular opposing roles cited as the role of the social media is that of incitement and spreading of propaganda.

When respondents were asked if they believed that more political information is available on social media than previous years majority agreed that they believed so. In particular, they cited the availability of blogs and political pages whose links are provided in the social media especially in Facebook which give citizens the right to discuss political issues openly and freely.

Many of them agreed that social media has created more accountability and transparency in government operations that since it is open to everyone thus providing a forum where they can air their opinions; question political leaders actions and many secret issues are aired especially by opposition politicians. Further they felt that the government is held to account on social media because citizens' responses are prompt. However there was a feeling that most information

posted on government social sites is not 100% transparent and is not significantly different from what is available on broadcast and print media. Meaning that Kenya is not yet there and more needs to be done.

However, there was a conflict on opinions on the issue of whether the social media create political issues that are of relative importance to the Kenyan settings with some feeling that it brings to the fore issues which are swept under the rug by broadcast and print media on the one hand especially as it is been embraced by players in the political scene. While on the other hand, some of the respondents felt that the sometimes social media was irrelevant and issues are biased based on the writer or account owners. It further stated that sometimes it can be used to bring about incitement and raise political tensions.

Also political activism creates an impact through social media that can be used to promote peace and unity among Kenya. An example of this is Simama Kenya.

Some of the suggested areas which respondents would like to see given more prominence include:-

- Efforts to Enhance the Cost of Living for the Common Man
- Insecurity in the Country
- Efforts being made to Ensure the Growth of County Government
- Activities done by Political Aspirants for the Citizens before their Appointment to Government
- Issues Affecting Common Man like Unemployment, Health sector

- Accountability of Resources Usage
- Cohesion And National Unity
- Government Tendering Process & Transparency
- Industrialization
- Government Planning

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study in relation to the research objectives. The chapter presents the summary and discussion of findings, conclusion and recommendations on the role of social media as a source for political information for theory as well as for further research.

5.1 Summary of Major Findings

The main finding of this study from the data collected indicated that majority of the respondents viewed political information as the information given by mainly by those in government.

The data collected this study found out that respondents of the male gender more than the female gender were more open to answering the questionnaires distributed this is evidenced by the fact that majority of the respondents were male at 63.33% while 36.67% were female. Further majority of the respondents (70%) were employees which confirms the fact stated in chapter 3 that majority of the target area youth residents are those who have migrated to the city in search of employment.

Further from the data collected it is clear that Facebook is the most subscribed to SNSs at 95% followed by Twitter at 58% which confirmed the earlier assertion that the youth engage a lot with the Internet and particularly SNSs. This research project further found that majority (73%)

of the respondents use the SNSs for social interaction with close friends. Political information ranked third at 57% in the areas of interest after social interaction with close family/friends and breaking news. From the qualitative responses received from the respondents the main reasons given for content sharing and comment posting on social media were to share ideas; express opinions; raise discussion on current issues; for education; for entertainment/fun and to be fully updated on current news. In addition most of the respondents stated that social media plays a role in the provision of political information by creating awareness, providing or creating a forum or platform for discussion of political views, enlightening people on current affairs as well as enabling the creation of new agendas by playing the role of agenda setting besides helping negate bias. One respondent for example stated that social media deliberately merges the thoughts of the public to a single thought implying that social media converges thoughts.

The study also found out that 76.7% which form majority of the respondents access SNSs several times daily thus confirming that SNSs can be used effectively to get the youth interested in political issues and reduce youth apathy to political information and messages even in post-election seasons. This study also found out that 37.9% of the respondents share content on SNSs daily as compared to 29.3% who share content weekly. This further shows that about 67% of the respondents share content on their own profiles. Further those who share content are between the ages of 20 years and 30 years. Meaning that SNSs can be very effective in receiving feedback from the youth on issues affecting them and this would be very useful in policy formulation.

More than half of the respondents 57% comment on postings from friends with only 3% not doing so. This shows a high percentage of respondents likely to comment on any post on social

media especially when it comes for friends. Majority of the respondents (72%) see social media as a forum for interaction with their elected leaders. This is a fact that can be harnessed in the development of the use of SNSs to reach the youth.

Further it was interesting to note that majority of the respondents (64%) had not posted any question or comment on the government's official page or on a politician's profile. While an equal number between the age group of 20-25 and 26-30 had posted a comment or question. While it was noted that majority of the respondents between 36-40 years regarded social media as a forum for interaction with their elected leaders minority of them had never posted a question or comment. Further the study showed that it appears that respondents who were more likely to comment on postings from friends were between the ages 36 – 40, followed by those in the 31 – 35 years age group. This shows that a majority of those older in age actually used the social media as a forum for interaction and giving their views. If this happens it can help in the establishment of accountability and transparency in the conduct of government business by the political elite.

Another reason for engaging the youth through SNSs is the fact that the younger respondents felt that they did not receive adequate response to their queries by the political elite and also that majority of the respondents (45%) perceptions were not changed by government officials or politicians. However on the other hand the perception of 41.7% of the respondents was changed by the same Government officials or politicians. This stresses the need for more reliable information and communication between the elected and their constituents.

Further quite a high percentage of respondents (70.7%) stated that their engagement with online political communication was likely to prompt offline conversations with family and friends. Further this group was likely to be between 20 years to 30 years. This should therefore be seen a major motivation for the involvement of government officials and politicians with social media platforms.

The report however also found out that there was no big difference between those who relied on social media content in face-to-face discussions and those who do not. The difference being between 49.1% those who relied on social media content in face to face discussions as opposed to 50.9% who did not. In order for SNSs to play the role of agenda setting it will be important to grow this area by ensuring that the youth are given more information which would greatly contribute to the creation of a more actively engaged citizenry.

The study further found out that SNSs play a critical role when it terms of accountability because instead of relying on rumours SNSs users are now able to get information direct from the source. But like with most research studies done before there are always two sides to the coin. The particular opposing roles cited as the role of the social media is that of incitement and spreading of propaganda.

The respondents also stated that they believed that more political information was available on SNSs than previous years citing in particular, the availability of links to blogs and political pages provided in SNSs especially in Facebook which gave citizens the right to discuss political issues openly and freely. They further agreed that SNSs had created more accountability and

transparency in government operations especially due to their open nature thus providing a forum where they were able to air their opinions and question the actions of the political elite. They felt that the opposition politicians had also had a forum to expose many secret issues to the public therefore allowing for the government of the day to be held to account. However there was a feeling that most information posted on government SNSs was not as transparent and also was not significantly different from what was available on the broadcast and print media. Meaning that Kenya is not yet at the level of accountability and transparency of the developed countries and that a lot more needed to be done in this aspect.

The study however, further found out that there was a conflict on opinions on the issue of whether SNSs create political issues that were of relative importance to the Kenyan settings. This is evidenced by the fact that some felt that SNSs brings to the fore issues which are swept under the rug by broadcast and print media especially as it is been embraced by players in the political scene on the one hand while on the other some of the respondents felt that SNSs were irrelevant and that issues were biased based on the writer or account owners. This bias they felt makes it easy for SNSs to be used to bring about incitement and raise political tensions. However the respondents felt that through SNSs can be used to create an impact to promote peace and unity among Kenyans.

5.2 Recommendations

Facebook should be harnessed as an avenue for the sharing and exchange of political information in Kenya by both the public and the political elite. This is especially true as Facebook is a tool that be used to reach, engage and interact with the youth.

SNSs are a great avenue for the dissemination of political information given the frequency with which the urban youth also use the sites as shown from the findings of this study.

To reduce youth apathy to political information, the political elite need to use SNSs for the circulation of credible information and not the spread of propaganda. In addition, SNSs should be used in the way it was originally supposed to be, that is as a two-way communication system. This can be done by adequately responding to raised queries and also giving relevant information that would inform and educate the youth thus creating a more engaged citizenry. There is need for the government to adopt an effective and efficient social media strategy which the citizens have confidence in. The political elite further need to come up with ways in which to influence traditional communication media through social media.

5.4 Conclusion

Despite recent press news on the diminishing role of use of social media in the world today this study showed it is still highly embraced in the country. Especially with the browsing of the internet on mobile phones gaining more widespread use in the country.

The Kenyan youth make up 60% of our population and they are great influencers of what the older generation spend their money on making them a force to reckon with, a fact supported by Consumer Insight. It would therefore be apparent that the social media is utilized to the maximum to not only spread propaganda but to ensure transparency and accountability in government operations through the proper utilization of social media as a two way rather than one directional distribution of information by openly sharing information and collaborating with citizens.

5.5 Areas of Further Research

The researcher recommends the need for further research as a contribution to the growth of Social Media use for Political information in the country. More intensive research would go a long way in raising and increasing the use of SNSs. Research could go it widening the scope of this particular research to cover more the whole of the urban population and the whole country.

Other possible areas of further research are:-

- Use of the social media for political information among the older generation in Kenya.
- Government Control on the use of Social Media for Political Information.
- The role of Gender, Social-Economic and Ethnicity Variables in the use of Social Media.

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APPENDIX : QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is designed for the purpose of obtaining data for a Masters' Project on **The Role of Social Media as a Source for Political Information**. Please note that the information sought is purely for academic purposes only and will be treated with strict confidentiality.

It is important that you answer each question as thoughtfully and frankly as possible if it is to be helpful and accurate in providing information for future research.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Age Bracket: [20 -25]
 [26-30]
 [31-35]
 [36-40]

Gender [] Female [] Male

Profession [] An Employee [] Self-Employed [] Student [] Other.....

IN THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS PLEASE TICK (✓) ALL THAT APPLY

1. Which social networking sites do you subscribed to?
 - i. Facebook
 - ii. Twitter
 - iii. Instagram
 - iv. LinkedIn
 - v. Pinterest
 - vi. Other.....

2. Which of the following areas on social media are of interest to you?
 - i. Social interaction with close friends/family
 - ii. Breaking News
 - iii. Political News
 - iv. Product News
 - v. Sport News
 - vi. Entertainment News
 - vii. Celebrities News
 - viii. Fact Gathering

3. Which of the following Kenyan political personalities do you follow on social media?

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------|
| i. Uhuru Kenyatta | ix. Raphael Tuju |
| ii. Raila Odinga | x. Rachel Shebesh |
| iii. William Ruto | xi. Margaret Kenyatta |
| iv. Martha Karua | xii. Rachel Ruto |
| v. Peter Kenneth | xiii. Your Local Member of
Parliament |
| vi. Kalonzo Musyoka | |
| vii. Evans Kidero | xiv. Other ----- |
| viii. Mike Sonko | |

PLEASE TICK (✓) THE MOST APPROPRIATE ANSWER

4. How often do you use social networking sites?

- ONCE DAILY SEVERAL TIMES DAILY WEEKLY MONTHLY
 RARELY

5. How often do you share content on your profile on social media?

- DAILY WEEKLY MONTHLY OTHERS.....

6. How often do you comment on postings from friends?

- FREQUENTLY RARELY NEVER OTHERS.....

7. Do you believe that the social media has provided a forum for interaction with your elected leader? YES NO

8. Have you ever posted a question or comment on the government official page or politician profile? YES NO

- 9. If so, did the government official or politician adequately respond to your queries?
 YES NO OTHER.....
- 10. Has your interaction on social media with government officials or politicians changed your perception of them? YES NO OTHER.....
- 11. Does engaging with online political communication prompt you to talk about politics in offline conversations with family and friends? YES NO
- 12. Do you rely more on social media content in face-to-face discussions? YES NO

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN YOUR OWN WORDS

13. What is your reason for content sharing and comments posting on social media?

14. Do you believe that the social media plays a role in the provision of political information? -----

 If so, which role?

15. Do you believe that more political information is available on social media than previous years? -----

16. Do you believe that the social media have created more accountability and transparency in government operations? -----

17. In your opinion, does the social media create political issues that are of relative importance to the Kenyan settings? -----

18. Is there a direct link between the social media and public perception on political issues in Kenya? -----

19. Which area of politics would you like to see given more prominence?

Thank you for your time and co-operation in answering this questionnaire.