UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

INSTITUTE OF DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA REVOLUTION ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: THE CASE OF UNITED STATES OF AMERICA EMBASSY IN NAIROBI

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DECLARATION

I Judy Wanjiru Kinyanjui hereby declare that this research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

Signed …………………………………………. Date…………………………………………….

Kinyanjui, Judy Wanjiru

This Research Project has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor

Signed ………………………………………… Date………………………………………………

Dr. Patrick Maluki

DEDICATION

To the memory of my late Father

Lawrence Kinyanjui Kamiti (1952-2014)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I'm deeply grateful to God for blessing me with breath that sustained me enough to see the completion of my studies. Without His ever sufficient grace, mercy and favor I would not have managed to achieve half of what I have achieved in my life.

A big thank you to my parents Mr. and Mrs. Kinyanjui for taking a special interest in my education, the enormous sacrifice and support they have given me all my life, I will be forever indebted. And to my dad (RIP) who I lost in the course of pursuing this degree, I know that you have been looking down on me and encouraging me to soldier on even when it was too difficult for me to pick up the pieces and move on. I would like to thank my son Juan Kinyanjui, for being ever patient with me during the many days and nights I had to combine school and work. My siblings for always being my source of strength and support and ensuring everything went well at home as I studied.

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To my classmates and friends whom we exchanged notes and literature throughout our study at the Institute, I am glad that we have finished this race together.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CMC- Computer Mediated Communications

CCK- Communications Commission of Kenya

FGD- Focus Group Discussion

ICT- Information Communication and Technology

PD- Public Diplomacy

SNS- Social Networking Sites

UGC- User Generated Content

USAID- United States Aid for International Development

VICOPS- Virtual Interactive Communications Platforms

ABSTRACT

The importance of social media as a tool of public diplomacy has gained traction in U.S. foreign policy initiatives. In the wake of emerging new and sophisticated technology in the world, embassies and consulates have increasingly adopted the use of social media as a diplomacy tool. The audience all over the world change quickly forcing embassies and consulates to adapt to their needs and interests promptly. It is clear that audiences have influenced the continuous growth of media as well as the merger of social media with traditional media. Engagement is an important part of diplomacy and using social media is one way to promote a positive image. Enhancing public diplomacy initiatives abroad requires a deeper look at the international arena and the current discourse around international communications. With the addition of new media, such as social media, public diplomacy strategies must evolve to incorporate the new tools dominating communication worldwide. Therefore, there is a need for a more symmetrical approach to global communications by public diplomacy practitioners. This research study examined how traditional media utilizes social media. It therefore sought to find out what impact the social media revolution has created on the public diplomacy field using the case study of the US Embassy in Nairobi. It has been often said that theory is a construct that assists us in selecting and interpreting facts. In this sense this study adopted the Realistic approach to public diplomacy. Realists think that humankind is not inherently benevolent but rather self-centered and competitive. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used and it enabled the researcher to understand the deeper structure of a phenomenon and to increase understanding of the phenomenon within cultural and contextual situations by immersing oneself in the world in which they occur, with a desire to uncover the story behind the statistics. It was clear from the study results that the most important social networking sites commonly used in the Embassy for social media communication are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr. The number of comments, retweets, replies, favorites and linked contents were some of the methods used in measuring social media communication in the Embassy. Majority of the respondents mentioned diplomats, youth, students, community groups and the business world, public officials as the target groups target for social media communication in the Embassy studied. Over half of the respondents cited strengthening ties between the two countries, high interactivity in real-time, speed of delivery, enhancing information sharing, promotion of public engagement, a global visibility platform, feedback from the citizens and promotion of US Embassy activities as benefits of social media communication to the Embassy. The study revealed the major challenges experienced while using social media in communication as vulnerability to hacking, cyberbullying, negative and irrelevant comments, potential hecklers, credibility of information content, difficulties in managing different section accounts, inadequacy in monitoring accounts, not constantly updating accounts and not able to answer some questions. The global story of social media has been one of empowerment. Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that social media has already established its position as an integral part of organization communication of the Embassy and it will continue to do so. As the demands of the public increase, the Embassy will have no other choice but to respond by ensuring flow of communication. Social media is constantly changing. However, it is believed, also in this study, that the essence of communication is remaining but the change is in the speed, channels, interactivity and impact of the communication.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

New technologies are impacting policy and changing the landscape of diplomacy, governance and international relations. Social media has become an important immeasurable resource to connect and inform people, transcending borders and impacting all demographics. It presents a real-time stream of information in which one source can instantaneously broadcast to many sources and stimulate debate on a personal level. These developing communication methods have dramatically changed politics: democratizing the flow of information, exponentially increasing awareness and quickly globalizing ideas and concepts. In the Arab Spring, social media facilitated action in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, providing a free and accessible method of organizing and coordinating demonstrations.

While uprisings throughout history have been successful without the internet and smart phones; technological advancements from the printing press to the guillotine have enabled opposition groups to make gains on existing regimes. Social media is one such advancement that has played an important role as an informative organizational tool, both within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and also externally, as an unedited information resource circumventing government censors and directly informing foreign actors. Although a digital paper trail can be exploited, manipulated or used to repress, there is an overall benefit from open accessibility. Just recently that the United Nations, drawing from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[1], stated that all people have the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

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[1] 1949, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The conscientious technology of social media should be embraced and supported by actors at all levels. Social media technologies represent a significant development for US public diplomacy: both in practice and in conceptualization[2].

1.1 Background to the study

Technology connects people all the time and has thus reduced the world into a global village. Through technology, people are able to interact using the various forms of media available. Thus, media is considered to be a combination of radio, television, films, music in addition to a variety of technological devices. Over time, what constitutes the media has not only expanded but also proliferated, thanks to technological changes. These technological changes in connection to media have affected media content produces as well as the platforms used, sources of information, and media ownership among others. There is now increased growth of media due to convergence and digitalization of media. The merging of social media with electronic media seems like an inevitable venture in the wake of all these technological advancement. Social media is therefore increasingly being used to support electronic media as a medium of communications.

Social media is defined as the array of digital tools such as instant messaging, text messaging, blogs, videos, and social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and MySpace that are inexpensive and easy to use, and which enable people to create their own stories, videos, and photos and to manipulate them and share them widely at almost no cost[3]. Social media is one of the Computer Mediated Communications since communication is done through two or more

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[2] Craig Hayden, (2012). Social Media at State: Power, Practice, and Conceptual Limits for US Public Diplomacy Vol 11, No 21

[3] Kanter, (2010). The Networked Non-profit: Connecting with Social Media to drive change, Jossey-Bass, USA

networked computers. Computer Mediated Communications (CMC) has thus changed the face of communication.

Online media has brought new communication platforms such as Virtual Interactive Platforms (VICOPs) that have blurred the line between interpersonal communications and mass communication.

This has created avenues to look for information as well as socialize for instance, through the use of chat platforms on both Facebook and Twitter popularly known as being online. The upsurge of social media networks as Facebook and Twitter has grown significantly in the recent years. This growth has brought about some significant impact in diplomatic practice because social media is now commonly used a Public Diplomacy tool. Wright and Hinson have established that media professionals perceive social media positively with respect to strategic communication[4]. This possibly explains the reason why most embassies and consulates use social media as a public diplomacy tool to make their national interests and foreign policy visible by the outside world.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In the wake of emerging new and sophisticated technology in the world, embassies and consulates have increasingly adopted the use of social media as a diplomacy tool. The audience all over the world change quickly forcing embassies and consulates to adapt to their needs and interests promptly. It is clear that audiences have influenced the continuous growth of media as well as the merger of social media with traditional media.

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[4] Wright and Hinson, (2009). An analysis of the increasing impact of social and other new media on Public Relations Practice. A paper presented to 12th Annual International Public Relations Research Conference, March 14, 2009, Miami Florida

Engagement is an important part of diplomacy and using social media is one way to promote a positive image. Enhancing public diplomacy initiatives abroad requires a deeper look at the international arena and the current discourse around international communications. With the addition of new media, such as social media, public diplomacy strategies must evolve to incorporate the new tools dominating communication worldwide. Therefore, there is a need for a more symmetrical approach to global communications by public diplomacy practitioners.

This research study examined how traditional media utilizes social media. It therefore sought to find out what impact the social media revolution has created on the public diplomacy field using the case study of the US Embassy in Nairobi.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objective was to find out the effects of social media revolution on public diplomacy.

The study was guided by the following specific objectives.

1. To establish whether the audience of the US Embassy in Nairobi is captured and retained through social media.

2. To find out if social media is used by the US Embassy in Nairobi as a public diplomacy tool.

3. To examine the impact of social media as a diplomacy tool in the US Embassy in Nairobi.

4. To find out the role of social media in managing a crisis at the US Embassy in Nairobi.

1.4 Research questions

1. How do social media ensure that the audience of the US Embassy in Nairobi is captured and retained?

2. How does the US Embassy in Nairobi use social media as a public diplomacy tool?

3. What is the impact of using social media as a diplomacy tool in the US Embassy in Nairobi?

4. What is the role of social media in managing a crisis at the US Embassy in Nairobi?

1.5 Justification of the study

The study was important since it focused on new media; the use of social media as a public diplomacy tool by the US Embassy. Additionally, since media in Kenya is growing fast, the study was vital in providing insights for upcoming and already existing media that are considering or already incorporating the use of social media together with television broadcasting. The study is of service in that upon its completion recommendations will provide a better understanding of the impact of social media as a public diplomacy tool. The Embassy will realize that social media is a tool most effectively employed by the public and individuals because it enables them to speak through a popular medium at the same level hence development of social media communication is paramount.

1.6 Literature Review

1.6.1 Social media

Kanter describes social media as the array of digital tools such as instant messaging, text messaging, blogs, videos, and social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and MySpace that are inexpensive and easy to use, and which enable people to create their own stories, videos, and photos and to manipulate them and share them widely at almost no cost[5].

The internet has created the ultimate 'global village' and completely changed the news distribution to the world by allowing people to access information at any time updated minute-

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[5] Kanter, (2010). The Networked Non-profit: Connecting with Social Media to drive change, Jossey-Bass, USA

by-minute. Social media especially Facebook, ranks high in terms of social networks in the world. A research on the web trends in Kenya, done in 2010 by the TNS Research International showed that Facebook is the most visited social site by Kenyans. Before social network sites emerged, people relied on traditional media; both print and electronic as their sources of information. Social media is today being used together traditional media as a form of two-way means of communication.

Technological convergence (visual, audio and print) has made online publishing and broadcasting possible.

Feedback, an important aspect of communication, is today possible and easy to access. Boyd and Ellison's definition of social networking sites which are "web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public 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[6].

1.6.2 Why use social media?

Social media makes use of dynamism and interactivity, to appeal to a variety of audiences in order to capture and retain them. Being an interactive medium, it engages the users and takes up their opinion as part of the brand building process and as well as a retention device.

Ha & James[7] suggests that interactivity provides five key dimensions:

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[6] Boyd, D.M, & Ellison, N.B, (2007). Social Network sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. Journal of Computer Mediated Communication
[7] Ha, L, and E, James, (1998). Interactivity reexamined; A baseline analysis of early business websites. Journal of Broadcasting Electronic media

Playfulness- these include games and quizzes which the users participate in either with other online users or alone.

Choice – it provides the user with alternatives, including the alternative of terminating communication at any time.

Connectedness-it provides a rich site that involves the user. Connectedness can also build over time through repeated visits.

Information collection-There is gathering of user demographics, psychographics and sometimes personality characteristics of the users. Reciprocal communication- Interactivity provides for a two way means of communications in many websites.

All the above dimensions are present in social media since it provides room for interactivity. It also provides an excellent platform for active customer engagement. Customers become members or fans of product profiles on social sites and express themselves on the same. Social media provides an opportunity to communicate as one would in a natural setting.

According to Zarrella[8], social media comes in many forms such as blogs, and micro-blogs which include Twitter, social networks such as Facebook, media-sharing sites such as you-tube, social book marking and voting sites e.g. Digg, Reddit, review sites for instance, Yelp, Forums and Virtual worlds e.g. second life.

Social media is a neutral tool. It is a challenge and an opportunity. If left to irresponsible and cynical voices, it can create divisions. If used in positive ways, it can bring people together. By

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[8] Zarella, D (2009), The Social Media Marketing Book. O'Reilly Media Inc.

working together and using social media as a tool of positive communication, the battle for the best in humanity can be won.

1.6.3 Social Media in Public Diplomacy

The trend toward new media outreach within the U.S. government began in the early 1990s, when the Internet quickly became an everyday tool in businesses and homes. In the past few years, online social media have also become accessible worldwide. Facebook, for instance, was until recently merely a social-networking site for high school and college students, launching its debut in 2004. It was a tool for teenagers to connect beyond the reach of parental supervision. Now, however, Facebook has become a means of easy mass communication around the globe, used by teens and adults, government, ordinary citizens, and businesses alike[9].

Though the need for U.S. diplomatic engagement on the Internet was widely understood, in 2000 and 2001, the questions of what should be posted online and how best to accomplish American diplomatic objectives remained a subject of debate. The annual report of the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy in 2004 recommended that State "actively look for ways to use emerging software developments to expand...broadcast reach over the internet," but budget requests as late as 2006, which sought to increase funding for public diplomacy, still did not include funding for newer technologies, preferring instead more traditional tools such as radio.

It was not until 2006 that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice declared her intention to "set up 'virtual posts,' where people can visit a Web site and chat online with U.S. diplomats."According to Colleen Graffy, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy under President

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[9] Zarella, D (2009), The Social Media Marketing Book. O'Reilly Media Inc

George W. Bush, the first State Department blog entry was posted by senior legal adviser John Bellinger III in a guest appearance on the Opinio Juris blog in January 2007. This was followed nine months later when the State Department officially joined the blogosphere with its own blog, Dipnote, on public diplomacy.

The arrival of America.gov, the U.S. government's chief public diplomacy portal, launched by the State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs in January 2007, was much hailed by American diplomats. America.gov provides features on American life as well as the doings of the President and Secretary of State and serves as a platform for a whole host of interactive media[10] -- Webcasts, blogs, videos, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and even Second Life, a 3-D virtual world where users can socialize with free voice and text chat. One of the State Department's latest new media ventures is Co.Nx, a Web conferencing program that connects U.S. experts in a variety of fields with foreign audiences as well as U.S. embassies.

In these Internet-influenced times, people are in the business of fighting for attention, and responding ever more quickly. In the case of Twitter, we have to do it all in the space of 140 characters or less. It is hard to imagine how many things can go wrong with up to seven billion global citizens all thumb-texting from the hip. It boggles the mind. Governments and citizens must fight rumor with facts, meet tyrannical outbursts with calm arguments about freedom, and in general, speak to the best in all people. But in the 21st century, no one is waiting for anyone to play catch up. Governments and individuals have to respond in real time, with frequency, at speed, and get it right[11].

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[10] www.usa.gov.
[11] Ibid

All the appointed U.S. Ambassadors in various missions are introduced to citizens through video messages broadcast online and via local media. They hold web chats with the public. And it has become practically unthinkable for them not to have a Twitter account. In its first months in office, the Obama Administration indicated its commitment to using 21st-century technology in various forms as an integral component of public diplomacy[12].

Similar to strategies employed in the last U.S. presidential campaign, a wide variety of social networking and communication mediums have been under consideration to maximize the exposure and resonance of U.S. outreach. On his first day in office, President Obama signed a memorandum of "Transparency and Open Government," which stated that the Web 2.0 technologies are necessary to "tap into the vast amounts of knowledge in communities across the country." It became clear very soon that the Administration aspired to tap into the knowledge from communities around the world as well[13].

The 2011 uprisings in the Middle East proved that democracy retains its appeal, even to people who have long lived without it. They also illustrated how, in a high-speed, media-centric world, conventional diplomacy has become an anachronism. Not only do events move quickly, but so too does public reaction to those events. The cushion of time that enabled policymakers to judiciously gather information and weigh alternatives is gone[14].

One of the ways that digital diplomacy has benefited foreign missions to date is by enabling open-source intelligence. Where countries might previously have invested capital in monitoring radio, TV, and newspaper products from another state, governments now have access to billions of digitally connected citizens writing, and in some cases creating multimedia such as blogs and

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[12] www.usa.gov.
[13] www.usa.gov.

[14] Philip Seib, (2012). Real-Time Diplomacy: Politics and Power in the Social Media Era, Palgrave Macmillan.

micro-blogs, about events in real time. Beyond expanding the number of potential sources available to intelligence analysts, the explosion of social media analytics like Klout helps diplomats identify "influentials" in a given network and engage them.

Sometimes monitoring social media presents opportunities for direct engagement. When the NATO's Afghan mission became embroiled in a Twitter spat with Taliban supporters; the encounter gave coalition forces the chance to directly rebut the Taliban's arguments in a live, public setting.

Other examples of experimental applications of digital diplomacy have nothing at all to do with swaying public opinion. And it is these that are the most exciting. In the hours following the Haitian earthquake of 2010, U.S. digital diplomats organized a way for Americans to donate relief-effort dollars via SMS. People who texted "HAITI" to a short code could have $10 added to their mobile phone bill at the end of the month. Within weeks, the State Department reported having collected tens of millions of dollars in aid. What makes this example remarkable is how it came about; spontaneously and organically, without any precedent or prior protocols to follow.

Digital diplomacy can be described as "messy." The most committed foreign ministries of governments around the world maintain dozens of social media accounts; some to represent embassies, others to speak for specific programs, still others to broadcast on behalf of individuals[15]. Even then, a diplomat's public Twitter profile is more likely to be run by a public affairs officer than by the appointee him/herself. There's no easy way to evaluate digital diplomatic success or for that matter even to set targets for success in the first place, as compared with traditional forms of diplomacy that involve results-focused bargaining and negotiation. But

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[15] Haider, H., (2011). 'Social Media and Reform Networks, Protest and Social Movements', Helpdesk Research Report, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham.

the time is coming when governments will grow confident with their social media efforts; and when it arrives, the achievement is likely to go unremarked.

Digital diplomacy can thrive only if foreign ministries accept some uncertainty over what to do and how to behave[16]. Luckily, they won't have to forever. Diplomacy may be a profession filled with veterans, but as their ranks come to include more people who grew up inhabiting social media rather than having to learn it from scratch, the more comfortable foreign ministries will be with devolving authority to the individual, whether that means presidents and foreign ministers tweeting with their own two thumbs or the distant embassy official in a far-away land. When we will cross that threshold is hard to say. But chances are that when we do, digital diplomacy will have become so normal that nobody will think to mention it.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Realism

It has been often said that theory is a construct that assists us in selecting and interpreting facts. In this sense this study adopted the Realistic approach to public diplomacy. Realism is centered upon four propositions: that 1) the international system is anarchic. There is no actor above states capable of regulating their interactions; states must arrive at relations with other states on their own, rather than it being dictated to them by some higher controlling entity. The international system exists in a state of constant antagonism. 2) States are the most important actors. 3) All states within the system are unitary, rational actors. States tend to pursue self-interest. Groups strive to attain as many resources as possible. 4) The primary concern of all states is survival.

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[16] Gladwell, M. and Shirky, C., (2011). 'From Innovation to Revolution: Do Social Media Make Protests Possible?', Foreign Affairs, March/April.

States build up military to survive, which may lead to a security dilemma. Realists think that humankind is not inherently benevolent but rather self-centered and competitive. This perspective, which is shared by theorists such as Thomas Hobbes, views human nature as egocentric, not necessarily selfish and conflictual unless there exists conditions under which humans may coexist[17]. It is also disposed of the notion that an individual's intuitive nature is made up of anarchy. In regards to self-interest, these individuals are self-reliant and are motivated in seeking more power. They are also believed to be fearful.

The use of new media both for personal use and private industries is intensifying. Engagement on social media is potentially enlarging the effectiveness of public diplomacy too. Public diplomacy 2.0 includes a government's presence on social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs. It is important that Embassies and Consulates devote attention to the digitalization of its communication practices, due to its open and immediate character. Embassies and Consulates are representing the interests of the home country. Therefore, badly conducted public diplomacy 2.0 can backfire immensely. The Foreign Service has higher levels of accountability than the private industry does[18].

The United States is one of the only countries in the world that maintains two different official websites; one for domestic audiences and one for foreign audiences[19] (State.gov & America.gov). Prioritizing digitalization and social media involvement, relies on the approval of higher officials. If there is actual support of public diplomacy 2.0, there will be more budget

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[17] Pashakhanlou, Arash Heydarian, (2014). "Waltz, Mearsheimer and the Post-Cold War World: The Rise of America and the Fall of Structural Realism". *International Politics* 51 (3): 295–315.

[18]Bureau of Public Affairs. 'Internet Freedom in the 21st Century: Integrating New Technologies into Diplomacy and Development.'
[19] www.usa.gov.

allocated to its effectiveness. If budget is spent well, it means more specialists working on effective and demonstrable results. Traditional forms of diplomacy still dominate, but 21st-century statecraft[20] is not mere corporate rebranding –swapping tweets for broadcasts. It represents a shift in form and in strategy – a way to amplify traditional diplomatic efforts, develop tech-based policy solutions and encourage cyber activism. 21st- Century statecraft acknowledges the role of new communication technologies to reach diplomatic goals.

The use of Twitter as a tool for real-time response in crises proves its usefulness as a strategy of Public Diplomacy. The aim of the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Aid for International Development (USAID) is: Strengthen civilian capability to prevent and respond to crisis and conflict by: recognizing that civilians are the first line of defense abroad and making conflict prevention and response a core civilian mission, building conflict prevention and response capabilities by creating a new Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations at State and strengthening the Office of Transition Initiatives at USAID, integrating an effective capability to reform security and justice sectors in fragile states.

States employ the rational model of decision making by obtaining and acting upon complete and accurate information. The state is sovereign and guided by a national interest defined in terms of power. Since the only constraint of the international system is anarchy, there is no international authority and states are left to their own devices to ensure their own security.

Realists believe that Sovereign states are the principal actors in the international system, and special attention is afforded to large powers as they have the most influence on the international stage[21]. International institutions, non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations,

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[20] Craig, Hayden, (2012). "Social Media at State: Power, Practice, and Conceptual Limits for US Public Diplomacy," Global Media Journal RP1.
[21] Crawford, Robert M. A., (2000). *Idealism and Realism in International Relations: Beyond the Discipline* (2000) online edition

individuals and other sub-state or trans-state actors are viewed as having little independent influence. States are inherently aggressive (offensive realism) and/or obsessed with security (defensive realism), and that territorial expansion is only constrained by opposing power(s). This aggressive build-up, however, leads to a security dilemma whereby increasing one's security may bring along even greater instability as an opposing power builds up its own arms in response (an arms race). Thus, security becomes a zero-sum game where only relative gains can be made. Realists believe that there are no universal principles with which all states may guide their actions. Instead, a state must always be aware of the actions of the states around it and must use a pragmatic approach to resolve problems as they arise[22]

1.8 Methodology

Both Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used and it enabled the researcher to understand the deeper structure of a phenomenon and to increase understanding of the phenomenon within cultural and contextual situations by immersing oneself in the world in which they occur, with a desire to uncover the story behind the statistics. Furthermore, qualitative/descriptive method allowed the researcher to record the actual messages presented and understand how the participants felt as they were involved in the use of social media. Qualitative research is able to elicit more detailed information about a phenomenon.

1.8.1 Research Design

Oxford Dictionary 7th Edition defines Design is 'the general arrangement of the different parts of something that is made, such as a building, book, machine, etc.' Research design according to Kumar, is a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to

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[22] Donnelly; Jack, (2000). *Realism and International Relations* (2000) online edition

research questions or problems[23]. This study will use descriptive design with a case study of US Embassy's use of social media. Both primary and secondary data were used.

1.8.2 Sources of data

Secondary data were sourced from literature such as journals, magazines, government reports, and USA.gov website, newspapers, study reports, publications, and documents from research projects and books. The secondary sources helped the researcher increase the scope of the study which is important in enlarging the scope of generalization and providing additional insights. Methodologically, secondary data that is accurate and reliable provides opportunities for replication. Existing data and information was used to compliment the primary information[24].

Key informant interviews were conducted using open ended interview guide. The interviews are conversational in style and not literally question answer format. The in-depth interviews were used to provide insights in understanding the context in which social media has revolutionized public diplomacy at the Embassy. The researcher started by establishing a rapport with each one of them and will guide the conversation.

1.8.3 Data analysis

Data analysis entails examining and evaluating the data collected so as to develop detailed explanations. The researcher applied qualitative data analysis process. Before processing the responses, the completed interviews were edited for completeness and consistency. With descriptive statistics, the researcher used interpretative techniques to describe what the data

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[23] Kumar R. (2005). Research Methodology: A step-by-step guide for beginners, Sage Publications

[24] Mugenda, O.M and Mugenda, A.G., (1999). Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Nairobi: Acts Press.

showed about the study on the ground. This provided simple and straightforward summaries about the sample and the measures. It also involved attaching significance to what was found, offer explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, attaching meaning, imposing order, dealing with rival explanations, and confirming cases and data irregularities as part of testing the viability of an interpretation.

1.9 Chapter Outline

This research project is organized as follows; chapter one is the proposal providing general discussion on social media revolution and how it affects public diplomacy. Chapter two examined the impact social media as a diplomacy tool in the US Embassy Nairobi. Chapter three discussed the role the social media has played on public diplomacy in the US Embassy in Nairobi. Chapter four provided thematic approaches to the use of various social media sites, the challenges, success and obstacles. The fifth and last chapter provided the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO:

HOW THE U.S. EMBASSY NAIROBI USES SOCIAL MEDIA AS A PUBLIC DIPLOMACY TOOL

Mai'a K. Davis Cross and Jan Melissen argue that there is perceived continued global conversation in regards to public diplomacy. According to their school of thought, social media technologies aid in the realization of a web culture cemented on conversation. This implies that diplomacy is made more conversational whereby individuals spread across the globe interact, exchange ideas and critic diplomacy related issues at the click of a mouse. The United States, for example, has opened up web 2.0 accounts to revitalize national dialogue into issues related to social, economic and political growth of the country.

Integration of web 2.0 application in public diplomacy provides an influential feedback conduit. Information dissemination in the past was characterized by slow speeds channeled in bureaucratic ways such as sending mail via post offices. Governments heavily relied on their diplomatic emissaries to get information. However, the wake of globalization has adequately furnished governments and the public alike with new technological innovations. In this regard, emergence of new technologies notably web 2.0 has indelibly changed the diplomacy, governance and international relations landscape. This is as a result of not only its ability to disseminate information in quick succession but also its availability. In essence, social media transcends national boundaries. For this reason, diplomatic embassies are able feed substantial number of people with the much required information without necessarily encouraging premise visits[25].

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[25] Mai'a K. Davis Cross, Jan Melissen, (2013). European Public Diplomacy: Soft Power at Work, 2013

The widespread diffusion of the Internet, mobile communication, digital media and a variety of social software tools throughout the world has transformed the communication system into interactive horizontal networks that connect the local and global audience. New forms of social media, such as SMS, blogs, social networking sites, podcasts and wikis, cater to the flow of messages from many-to-many. They have provided alternative mediums for citizen communication and participatory journalism.

Social media has been used as a tool to support development outcomes (access to markets, financial services and employment; accountability and transparency; service delivery; and protection of human rights) and to push for social change and transformation. New media should not be seen as socially neutral tools, however. Despite the growth of information and communication technologies in the developing world, in particular mobile phones, some technologies may not be accessible to marginalized groups, which can reinforce inequalities in society.

Further, there has been little comprehensive research or rigorous evaluation of the causal influence of social media. As such, its ability to contribute to development outcomes and social change remains contested. While recent discussion on the political impact of social media has centered on the power of mass protests to topple governments, social media's real potential may lie in supporting civil society and the public sphere. The terms 'social media' and 'information and communication technologies (ICTs)' are often used interchangeably[26].

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[26] Aday, S. et. al., (2010). 'Blogs and Bullets: New Media in Contentious Politics', United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC

The use of ICTs among poor people is growing rapidly. New information and communications technologies (ICTs) are being used to enhance development outcomes. First, they have helped to improve poor people's access to markets, financial services and employment. Second, they have helped to improve the provision of services to poor people by governments, the private sector and NGOs, and to make these services more responsive to the needs of poor communities. Third, they have supported improvements in accountability, transparency and participation, by allowing citizens to publicize their concerns and grievances, share ideas, present information and hold governments to account. Fourth, they have contributed to improvements in security and supported efforts to protect human rights. Fifth, ICTs have affected the operational approaches of donors and other development actors. Many of the approaches and tools mentioned in this report are still relatively new, however, and have not been subjected to rigorous evaluation. Very few ICT for Development (ICT4D) activities have proved sustainable. Recent research has stressed the need to shift from a technology-led approach, where the emphasis is on technical innovation towards an approach that emphasizes innovative use of already established technology (mobiles, radio, and television)[27].

2.1 Social media, the public sphere and social change

The spread of affordable information and communication technologies, such as mobile phones and the internet, has broadened the public sphere; and shifted it from the institutional realm to the new communication space. The global civil society and public sphere now have the means to exist independently from political institutions.[28] Social media are used as organizing and mobilizing tools; and as a medium for debate, dialogue and collective decision-making. Non-

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[27] Walton, O., (2010). 'New ICTs for development', Helpdesk Research Report, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham
[28] Castells, M., (2008). 'The New Public Sphere: Global Civil Society, Communication Networks, and Global Governance', The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, vol. 616, no. 1, pp. 78-93

state actors rely on horizontal networks of communication and mass media to shape debate in the public sphere, influence opinions, and foster social change. Web-based media technologies have allowed for participation in a new type of public sphere that can be difficult for the state to control.

The effectiveness of new media technologies to bring about social change is highly contested. Critics such as Malcolm Gladwell dismiss new media activism as based on weak ties, which can only demand low-risk participation. In the absence of a hierarchical structure, they claim that it is difficult for social media networks to think strategically. Advocates, such as Clay Shirky, argue that ICTs enable citizens to interact and can accelerate cooperation and action. Others argue that it is the creative ways in which people have adapted the technologies, rather than the technologies themselves, that are a force for social change[29].

There are various factors at play that can contribute to the success or weakness of social media as an infrastructure for dialogue, civic activism, and social movements. These include the presence of some form of effective leadership; the way in which elites respond; and links with traditional mass media and other partners[30]. Regimes can be caught off guard or they can respond by cracking down on communication tools and protestors. In some cases, regimes have learned to use social media to their benefit. In order to reach and influence public opinion at large, it is considered important to rely on both ICTs and mass media and to link to the broader activist community.

Globalization has shifted debate from the national to the global domain, prompting the

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[29] Gladwell, M. and Shirky, C., (2011). 'From Innovation to Revolution: Do Social Media Make Protests Possible?', Foreign Affairs, March/April
[30] Ibid

emergence of a global civil society, of ad hoc forms of global governance, and of a global public sphere.[31] Public diplomacy – the diplomacy of the public, not of the government – intervenes in this global sphere, laying the ground for traditional forms of diplomacy to act beyond the strict negotiation of power relationships by building on shared cultural meaning. The global public sphere could facilitate public debate to inform the emergence of consensual global governance.

Politics and power relations have historically involved a battle over values and ideas played out in the media. The rise of new mass self-communication via new technologies provides opportunities for non-institutional forms of social movements to gain influence. Corporate media and mainstream politics recognize the power of this influence, leading to convergence between traditional and mass self-communication. The battle for power will in future be played out in non-traditional and dynamic forms[32].

2.2 Social media, information and e-governance

The widespread diffusion of the Internet, mobile communication, digital media and a variety of social software tools throughout the world has transformed the communication system into interactive horizontal networks that connect the local and global. This research looks at the role of social media in the formation and functioning of civic groups, protest and social movements, the effectiveness of social media and success factors[33]. Social media is considered to contribute to democratic processes, and to be an important mechanism for collective action, protests and social movements[34]. While many claims are made about the effectiveness of social media, there

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[31] Castells, M., (2007). 'Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society', International Journal of Communication, vol. 1, pp. 238-266

[32] Hoffmann, B., (2010). 'Civil Society 2.0? – How the Internet Changes State-Society Relations in Authoritarian Regimes: The Case of Cuba', GIGA Working Paper no. 156, German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Hamburg

[33] Haider, H., (2011). 'Social Media and Reform Networks, Protest and Social Movements', Helpdesk Research Report, Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham

[34] Gladwell, M. and Shirky, C., (2011). 'From Innovation to Revolution: Do Social Media Make Protests Possible?', Foreign Affairs Report, March/April

is little systematic research that seeks to estimate the causal effects of social media. Various factors discussed in the literature as contributing to the success or weakness of social media includes[35]: leadership, links to conventional media and other activists, elite reaction and external attention.

Social media are useful in connecting a government to a foreign public. This source of media proved effective in influencing public opinion as a public relations tool in Obama's 2008 campaign.[36]Therefore, it is beneficial to use social media platforms to facilitate U.S. interests abroad.[37] It is impossible to accomplish any foreign policy objective requiring cooperation of civilians in a country when the local population is opposed to the foreign nation's presence. In the case of Mexico, social media can be an effective and strategic tool of public diplomacy initiatives because the country as a whole has adequate access to the Internet and some social media sites.[38] These sites can be used to distribute information internationally; however, it is important that the information is available in English and at least Spanish and French, which allows for active participation by citizens and governments.[39]

Some critics perceive such efforts as propaganda.[40] Yet, theorists like Ociepka, state that it is not propaganda because public diplomacy, as it is practiced today, engages its target audience in a dialogue. Comor and Bean argue that the use of social media in U.S. foreign policy is a form of propaganda, as it only promotes a positive image but does not highlight the full policy objectives

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[35] Manuel Chavez and Jennifer Hoewe, "Reconstructing Public Diplomacy in the Context of Policy, Communication, and Technology: An Examination of U.S. - Mexico Border Relations,"
[36]Hayden, "The 'Obama Effect'"
[37] Chavez and Hoewe, "Reconstructing Public Diplomacy"
[38] Ibid
[39] Ibid
[40] Comar and Bean "America's 'engagement' delusion"

of the U.S.[41] These differing opinions bring about a discussion of the ethics of public diplomacy. Comor and Bean suggest that promotion of an image by a government through social media is undemocratic because U.S. policymakers rarely consider public opinion when making foreign policy.[42] As a result, the authors conclude the use of social media is deceptive, and a more culturally sensitive approach should be made, where the U.S. learns about the local culture and uses that friendly image to foster a favorable public opinion.

After an interview with Elliot Schrage, the vice president of public policy for Facebook, Comor and Bean maintain, "that for the Obama administration, the goal is not to truly democratize Public diplomacy. Instead, it is to use more engaging forms of public diplomacy to promote American perspectives, including liberal democratic values."[43] Schrage stated: "I would say Facebook and sites like it do three things that are really important. First, we create an opportunity for people to see the world through the wisdom of their friends. The information they get is called not by some distant, remote editor, but by the opinions and ideas of their friends. Point number two is, Facebook and sites like it create a real premium on authenticity. Who are you, and how do you express who you are in a way that I can understand it? And third, they create a whole new level of accountability, because I get to see what you care about, what you're thinking about, and it's not just static, but you see it over time."

ICTs, in particular mobile phones, are seen as providing avenues for 'e-democracy'. They have been used by politicians to gain support and by politicians and civil society to provide

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[41] Ibid
[42] Ibid
[43] Ibid

information to the electorate for decision-making[44]. In USA, the Obama campaign and political parties used SMS and social networking to communicate with their supporters ahead of the 2008 elections. Many donors argue that ICTs can positively impact on government transparency, responsiveness, and accountability and empower citizens by increasing flows of information between government and citizens.

Others caution that ICTs are not a panacea – they rely on the political will of organizations to be transparent. Furthermore, ICTs can only bring about improvements in government-citizen communication if citizens have the capacity to access and use them, and some citizens in developing countries still have limited access to ICTs, particularly in remote areas[45]. Recent research, however, is demonstrating how new social media (e.g. mobile phones) can function as an alternative medium for citizen communication or participatory journalism.

2.3 Social media in fragile and conflict-affected states

The growth of social media has changed the information space around conflict. People affected by conflict increasingly have the tools to record and share their experiences with the world and to be a part of the media through the use of a cell phone camera and internet access. Information that moves through these networks can have an impact on the course and outcome of the war by affecting public opinion and support domestically and internationally[46]. While social media can contribute to stability, dialogue, collective identity, and nonviolent political solutions in conflict-affected and fragile states, it can also have adverse outcomes. Elites and others seeking power

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[44] Manuel Chavez and Jennifer Hoewe, (2000). "Reconstructing Public Diplomacy in the Context of Policy, Communication, and Technology: An Examination of U.S. - Mexico Border Relations,"
[45] Wasserman, H., (2011). 'Mobile Phones, Popular Media and Everyday African Democracy: Transmissions and Transgressions', Popular Communication, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 146-158
[46] Sigal, I., (2009). 'Digital Media in Conflict-Prone Societies', Center for International Media Assistance, National Endowment for Democracy, Washington, DC

can use these same tools to organize for political influence, recruitment, and political violence. Citizens too may use ICTs to polarize groups, spread rumors, strengthen biases and foment violence.

Kenya provides an example of both the positive and negative consequences of new media. During the 2007-2008 presidential election crisis, the use of mobile phones made it cheap and easy to spread hateful and violent messages that contributed to mob violence. At the same time, an online human rights campaign called Ushahidi spread awareness of incidents of violence (and their location) using Google Maps and a tool for users to report incidents via mobile phone or Internet browser. Ushahidi allowed for cooperation on a massive scale and provided an outlet for frustrated citizens to become reporters and digital activists.

Despite the transformation of the media landscape, donors and policymakers have often debated and designed policies and programmes in conflict-affected and fragile states based on traditional media. This has largely been the case with evaluations of media's effect on early warning, conflict, state stability and post-conflict reconstruction and governance. Assessments and initiatives related to conflict reporting and peace journalism; and support to independent media are also largely based on conventional media despite the challenge posed to this model by new technologies[47].

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[47] Ibid

The use of Twitter as a tool for real-time response in crises proves its usefulness as a strategy of PD. The aim of the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Aid for International Development (USAID) is to:[48]

"Strengthen civilian capability to prevent and respond to crisis and conflict by: recognizing that civilians are the first line of defense abroad and making conflict prevention and response a core civilian mission, building conflict prevention and response capabilities by creating a new Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations at State and strengthening the Office of Transition Initiatives at USAID, integrating an effective capability to reform security and justice sectors in fragile states."

Crisis management abroad often involves the support of other foreign nations, especially with natural disasters, which can include endemics/pandemics, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, etc. As the world becomes more interconnected, the U.S. has stakes in the maintenance of civil order in a country due to the number of U.S. nationals living abroad.

The use of social media sites like Twitter creates a platform for discussion where information can be simultaneously exchanged among organizations, governments, and individuals. With social media as a "credible" platform for crisis management, governments or organizations are no longer the only source of information and individuals are often the first to communicate important updates. Social media platforms give organization and governments the resources to polish information shared in the media.

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[48] United States Department of State and USAID, (2010)., "Leading Through Civilian Power". The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review. (QDDR).

According to Schultz, "crisis communication via Twitter leads to higher reputation than crisis communication via blogs, which in turn leads to higher reputation than crisis communication via traditional newspapers."[49] However, this is only true with direct communication, not secondary.[50] While social media can increase the spread of false information in a shorter amount of time, they also give organizations the ability to respond to and correct false information promptly. It is important for the U.S. government to explore the effects and value of using social media in crises, as Embassy press offices often deal with crisis management. Effectively using social media to manage crises abroad will increase favorable public opinion about U.S. involvement in other countries and legitimize U.S. foreign policy abroad, since civilians perpetuate the message in social networks.

Social media sites, particularly Twitter, are important tools in enhancing public diplomacy practices. Public Diplomacy as a practice has developed a negative reputation, much like public relations, because of the traditional asymmetrical, top-down flow of information, which has dominated the practice.[51] Traditional forms of media provide a top-down flow of information, as those in power within the organization have the greatest potential to have their perspectives and information published in the paper and broadcast on the news. However, as evidenced in the case of the Haitian earthquake in 2010, social media allow civilians to have the power to control and distribute information.[52]

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[49] Friederike Schultz, Sonja Utz and Anja Göritz, (2011). "Is the medium the message? Perceptions of and reactions to crisis communication via Twitter, blogs and traditional media." *Public Relations Review* 37, no. 1 : 22.
[50] Ibid
[51] Taylor, "The Not-So-Black Art of Public Diplomacy"
[52] Smith, "Socially distributing public relations"

Furthermore, the use of social media in times of crisis by a U.S. embassy can garner public support for a U.S. presence, as it did in Japan. Foreign civilians need to know the U.S. has a vested interest in their well-being. As a result, broadcasting accurate information in times of crisis and listening to the concerns of people abroad will create a level of trust. When trust is created and people feel connected to the U.S. message, people who are active on Twitter will be more willing to risk their reputations within their network to broadcast that message.[53]

It is the job of a Department of State public diplomacy officer to influence public opinion abroad and create a positive brand, which will allow U.S. relations with the host country to run more smoothly. Popular opinion in the host country, especially in the case of democracies, can influence government decisions on major policy decisions that are of interest to the U.S. Therefore, it is imperative that Public Diplomacy officers track Twitter and other relative forms of social media to engage the public and promote a positive U.S. brand.

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[53] Ibid

CHAPTER THREE:

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A DIPLOMACY TOOL IN THE US EMBASSY

As social media platforms have grown in popularity around the world, calls for the U.S. State Department to utilize them have also increased. The perception that these new technologies "redefine how foreign ministries communicate and collaborate with publics"[54] by enabling interaction has become widely accepted, even though far fewer understand how platforms like Facebook and Twitter actually create opportunities for engagement. While the State Department has embraced the concept of using social media tools as another way to engage with audiences around the world, there is confusion about using social media as a public diplomacy tool and skepticism about whether or not its use can prove effective.

Public diplomacy includes efforts to engage, inform and influence foreign audiences in order to promote intercultural understanding and encourage support for U.S. policies. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have not fundamentally changed the objectives of public diplomacy, but are just new tools for facilitating engagement and dialogue with audiences in an evolving information environment. Whether the use of these tools is considered "effective" should be based on whether they contribute to the objectives of public diplomacy, demonstrate evidence of engagement, and strengthen potential for future interaction.

The US embassy's effective integration of Facebook into its public diplomacy efforts has generated visible engagement with its audience and developed a community that will endure due to President Obama's commitment to e-diplomacy. While the unique circumstances of President

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[54] Evan Potter, (2014). "Web 2.0 and the New Public Diplomacy: Impact and Opportunities," *Engagement: Public Diplomacy in a Globalised World.* London: Foreign & Commonwealth Audience, July 2008. (Accessed 04 Sep. 2014) http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/publications-and-documents/publications1/pd-publication/web-2.

Obama's popularity and social media's rapid expansion world over have been significant factors, the US Embassy Nairobi has succeeded thus far because its understands Facebook's potential as a tool for public diplomacy and has used its limitations to guide its decision-making. Its ability to manage the risks inherent in using Facebook without significant setbacks is a further sign of its success.

The key lessons from Embassy's experience are: Social media best contributes to public diplomacy efforts by expanding the reach of existing activities through direct informal communication and creating potential for further dialogue; Identifying the right tools to reach target audiences is critical for social media outreach, as is recognizing its online nature expands its reach beyond intended audiences; Strategic approaches to social media outreach should be shaped by local context, including developing content to encourage interaction from the community and capitalizing on trends in the target media environment; The risks of generating harmful engagement from social media outreach should be acknowledged, but allowing for more interaction improves audience investment and can create an advantage over competitors among target audiences; Effectiveness of social media efforts should be based on evidence of engagement with target audiences and the development of a foundation for long-term engagement[55].

Social media's greatest contribution to public diplomacy occurs when it creates potential for continued engagement and dialogue. Through careful management and responsiveness to users' interests, a network that developed primarily because of a single event has the potential to become a sustainable community holding an evolving conversation. Strategies for using social

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[55] Ibid

media as part of public diplomacy efforts should focus on creating engagement that will encourage interaction and foster interest in long-term dialogue.

Social media tools will likely remain part of U.S. public diplomacy efforts for the foreseeable future, but their effective use requires understanding of their role in the information environment and their ability to facilitate dialogue. Using sustainable engagement as a measure of effectiveness for social media outreach is one way to improve practitioners and policymakers' understanding about its contributions to public diplomacy. Greater appreciation of social media's ability to create engagement and strengthen potential for future understanding is critical to motivating federal lawmakers to give social media and public diplomacy efforts more financial support.

3.1 Civic Engagement

The use of social media to engage the U.S. population in political discourse has grown since 2008. In "Twitter Use by the U.S. Congress," Golbeck, Grimes, and Rogers state that the TweetCongress initiative was created to fix information sharing problems. This "grass-roots web-based campaign" aims to promote transparency in government through congressional tweets. By examining the content of posts by congressional members, they found that Congress members used their Twitter accounts to broadcast information that is usually sent to traditional media and talked about their daily routines and social events[56]. There were also members who used it for "direct communication" with other members of congress. The study showed that 75

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[56] Jennifer Golbeck, Justin M. Grimes and Anthony Rogers,(2010). "Twitter use by the U.S. Congress," Journal of the American Society for Information Science & Technology 61, no. 8 :1614.

percent of U.S. Congress members used a Twitter account and there was a positive correlation found between states with larger population and members of Congress having Twitter accounts.

When analyzing the content of the tweets, the authors found that 53 percent of tweets were information-based, 27 percent were tweets about daily activities, and external communications only accounted for 7.4 percent of tweets in the original data set. Therefore, it is not clear as to whether constituents are accessing congressional information through Twitter. Furthermore, Golbeck, Grimes, and Rogers note there is a distinction between outreach and transparency[57].

Since Congress members use Twitter as a platform to broadcast information to their constituents instead of exchanging opinion on policy, public opinion is not engaged in policy decisions. However, the current platform does provide for future civic engagement if the public would partake in the discussion. In "Squawking, Tweeting, cooing, and hooting: analyzing the communication patterns of government agencies on Twitter," Waters and Williams state that government agencies use Twitter for both asymmetrical communication and two-way communication[58]. While public relations communications has a record of one-way communication, Waters and Williams note that it is important to recognize the change in communications because of the addition of Web 2.0 media. Therefore, the structure of social networks, such as Twitter allows for symmetrical communication in public relations[59]. Furthermore, government agencies and politicians have recognized the growing usefulness of social media as a means of symmetrical communication and have applied it to the inner working

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[57] Ibid

[58] Richard D.Waters and Jensen M. Williams, (2011). "Squawking, tweeting, cooing, and hooting: analyzing the communication patterns of government agencies on Twitter," Journal of Public Affairs (14723891)11, no. 4 :358.

[59] Ibid

of Capitol Hill and election campaigns. The symmetrical orientation of discussions on Twitter can also be used in public diplomacy.

3.2 Influencing Public Opinion

In "Practicing Successful Twitter Public Diplomacy: A model and case study of U.S. efforts in Venezuela," Yepsen designs her research to create a model where the U.S. Embassy in Venezuela could successfully attempt Twitter diplomacy. According to Yepsen, an embassy needs to limit the topics it covers, using Twitter to centralize discussion and "identify the ideal network." By using web sites such as TwitterHolic and RetweetRank, Yepsen identified users in Venezuela who have more followers and the potential to influence a substantial amount of people based on a high volume of retweets. Yepsen identified six Venezuelan users who appeared at the top of 1,000 most followed users: @chavezcandanga (President Hugo Chavez), @ElUniversal (a newspaper), @la_patilla (an "information and investigation" web site), @globovision (a television news channel), @Noticias24 (a news web site), and @LuisChataing (an actor and television personality)[60].

These Twitter users were determined as an ideal target because the large amount of followers would ensure exposure if U.S. Embassy content was retweeted. Next, Yepsen expanded the list of six to "all users who were replied to or retweeted at least 10 times by one of the leaders." By setting a threshold of 30 percent for "diversified interests and relationship maintenance tweets," Yepsen was able to set a "satisfactory limit to ensure content would be worth the public diplomat's time while still allowing for opinion leaders with other topical interests to be

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[60] Erika A. Yepsen, (2012). "Practicing Successful Twitter Public Diplomacy: A model and a case study of U.S. efforts in Venezuela ," CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy Paper 6.

included.[61]" After analyzing the six original leaders, @LuisChataing was eliminated based on the 30 percent threshold requirement.

Of the100 leaders selected, only 30 leaders met the threshold and were selected to be part of the study. To strengthen the level of potential influence of the sample, Yepsen included retweet strength as a criterion and increased the number of individual networks and account holders to 47, including the U.S. Embassy in Venezuela. These 47 networks were ranked based on their networking capabilities (number of networks that can be made) and their follower strength. Yepsen narrowed the list based on rank to the top 30 Twitter users including the U.S. Embassy[62].

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[61] Ibid
[62] Ibid

CHAPTER FOUR:

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MANAGING CRISIS IN THE USA EMBASSY

4.1 The role of social media in managing a crisis at the US Embassy in Nairobi

The use of Twitter as a tool for real-time response in crises proves its usefulness as a strategy of PD. The aim of the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Aid for International Development (USAID) is: Strengthen civilian capability to prevent and respond to crisis and conflict by: recognizing that civilians are the first line of defense abroad and making conflict prevention and response a core civilian mission, building conflict prevention and response capabilities by creating a new Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations at State and strengthening the Office of Transition Initiatives at USAID, integrating an effective capability to reform security and justice sectors in fragile states. Crisis management abroad often involves the support of other foreign nations, especially with natural disasters, which can include endemics/pandemics, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, etc. As the world becomes more interconnected, the U.S. has stakes in the maintenance of civil order in a country due to the number of U.S. nationals living abroad.

The use of social media sites like Twitter creates a platform for discussion where information can be simultaneously exchanged among organizations, governments, and individuals. With social media as a "credible" platform for crisis management, governments or organizations are no longer the only source of information and individuals are often the first to communicate important updates. Social media platforms give organization and governments the resources to polish information shared in the media. According to Schultz, "crisis communication via Twitter leads to higher reputation than crisis communication via blogs, which in turn leads to higher

reputation than crisis communication via traditional newspapers." However, this is only true with direct communication, not secondary. While social media can increase the spread of false information in a shorter amount of time, they also give organizations the ability to respond to and correct false information promptly. It is important for the U.S. government to explore the effects and value of using social media in crises, as Embassy press offices often deal with crisis management. Effectively using social media to manage crises abroad will increase favorable public opinion about U.S. involvement in other countries and legitimize U.S. foreign policy abroad, since civilians perpetuate the message in social networks.

One of the objectives of the study was to establish the role of social media in managing a crisis at the US Embassy in Nairobi. Social media as an effective means for crisis communication was mentioned by (75%) of the respondents. Over half of the respondents (62.5%) stated that they used social media communication as an alternative to news channels in case of a crisis situation as they are fast means of communication to the public. Half of the respondents (50%) considered it an informative tool for creating a basis for potential crisis communication and creating a functioning network in case of crisis situations. (25%) of the respondents said they used the US Embassy social media sites to follow developing news stories in real-time in crisis situations.

A case in point is the recent media rumors that were going round indicating that the embassy was operating on minimal staff and that security had been beefed up due to terrorist activities in Kenya. The US Embassy released a press conference that was posted on its Twitter and Face book sites with the correct information that it was business as usual at the embassy. Recently, consular staffs were online on face book answering questions from clients on any issues

regarding visas, travel to the United States and the Visa application process. In less than one hour, there were over 47 comments and exchanges between users and the official staff.
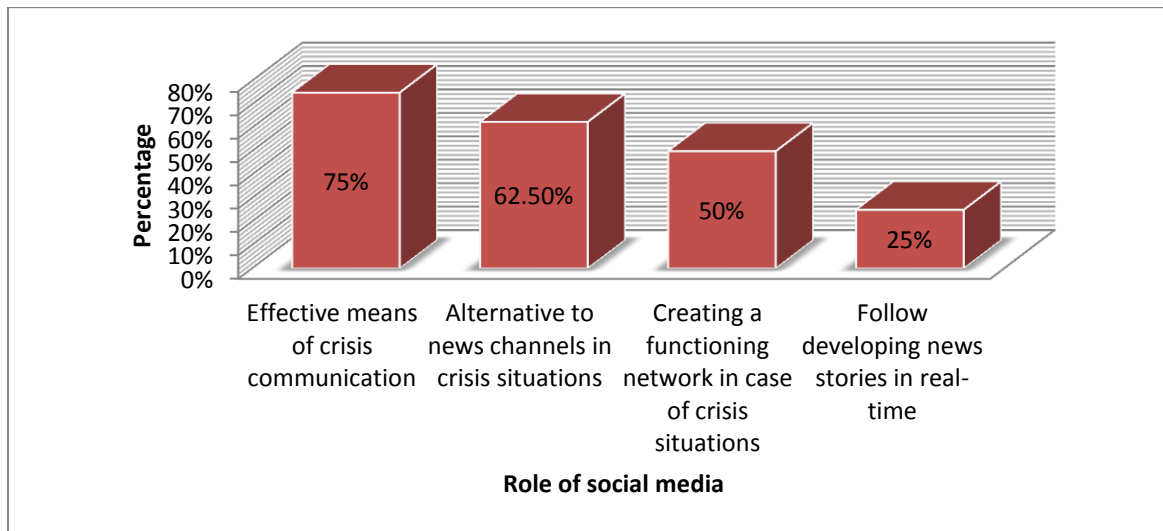

Figure1: The role of social media in managing a crisis at the US Embassy in Nairobi

The embassy wants to profile itself as an open institution that follows what's happening and operates where the citizens are. This analysis affirms the important role social media plays in crisis communication and in changing situations. Social media sites are used as a crisis management tool in the embassy.

4.2 Social networking sites used in communication

(87.5%) of the respondents said they used Facebook, (62.5%) stated Twitter whereas (75%) indicated Youtube and (25%) revealed Flickr as the social networking sites used in public communication in the Embassy studied.
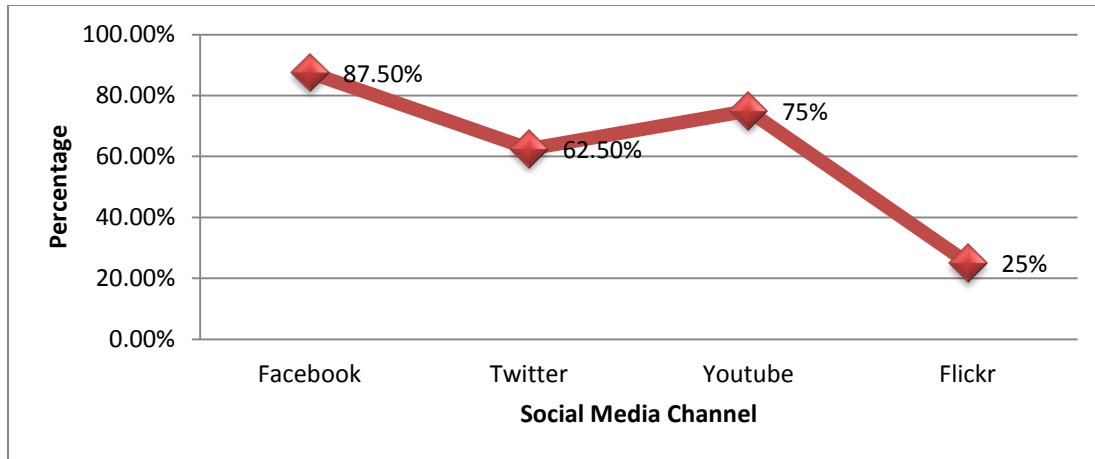
Figure 1: Social networking sites used in communication

The purpose of the question was to find out how much the Embassy uses social media on average (e.g. posts, tweets, reading and replying to comments and messages).

4.3 Frequency of using social networking sites in public communication

One of the main purposes of the study was to establish the frequency of using social networking sites in public communication in the Embassy. Out of the respondents that did answer, (12.5%) used the social networking sites several times a day, once a day and several times a month while (37.5%) accessed once a day and (25%) utilized the social networking sites several times a week
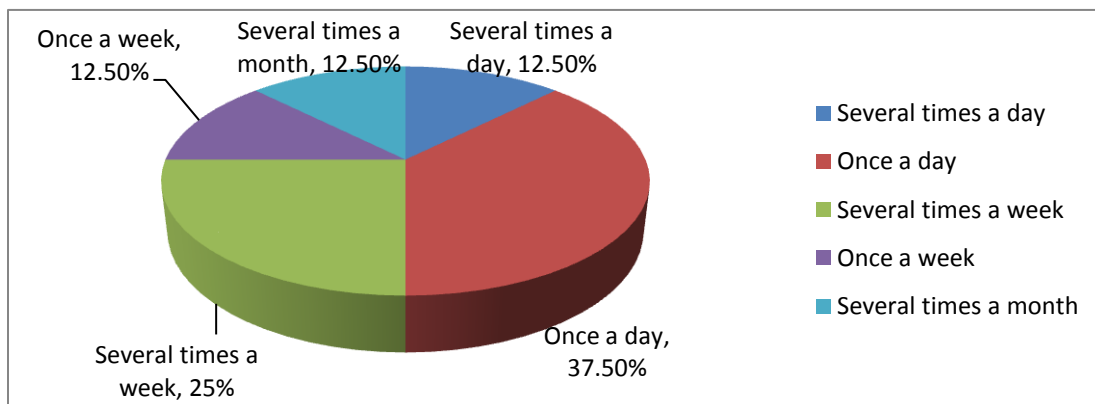

Figure 2: Frequency of using social networking sites in public communication

4.4 Frequency of measuring social networking sites

The frequency of measuring social networking sites in the Embassy was another objective of the study. In the study (62.5%) of the respondents measures the social networking sites on a daily basis whereas (25%) assesses the social networking sites once a week and (12.5%) of the respondents indicated once a month. This is summarized in figure 4.
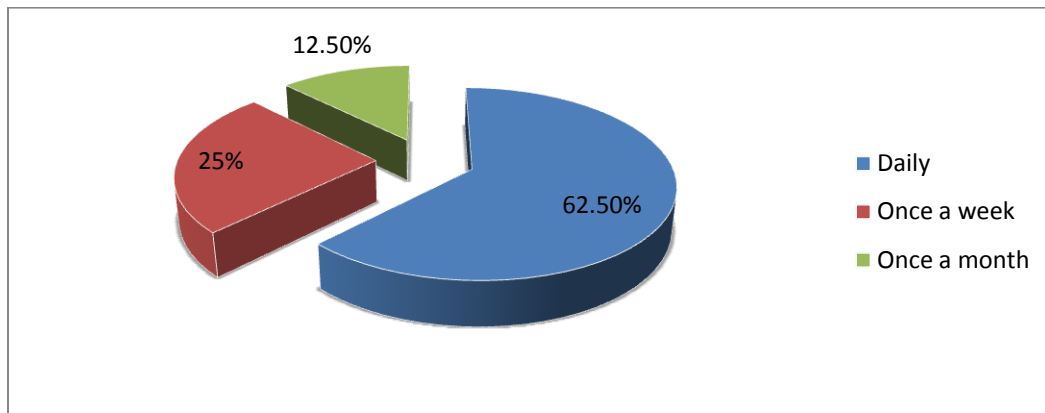

Figure 3: Frequency of measuring social networking sites

4.5 Methods used in measuring social media communication

The study revealed that social media communication in the Embassy was evaluated in different ways. In response to this, (87.5%) of the respondents used the number of likes and number of comments in measuring social media communication, (75%) of the respondents used the number of retweets and number of replies in gauging social media communication, (62.5%) of the respondents mentioned the number of favorites in Twitter, (50%) of the respondents used re-linked contents shared as a way of measuring whereas (37.5%) of the respondents used the

quantity of updates and (25%) of the respondents used the quality of the updates in measuring social media communication in the Embassy studied.
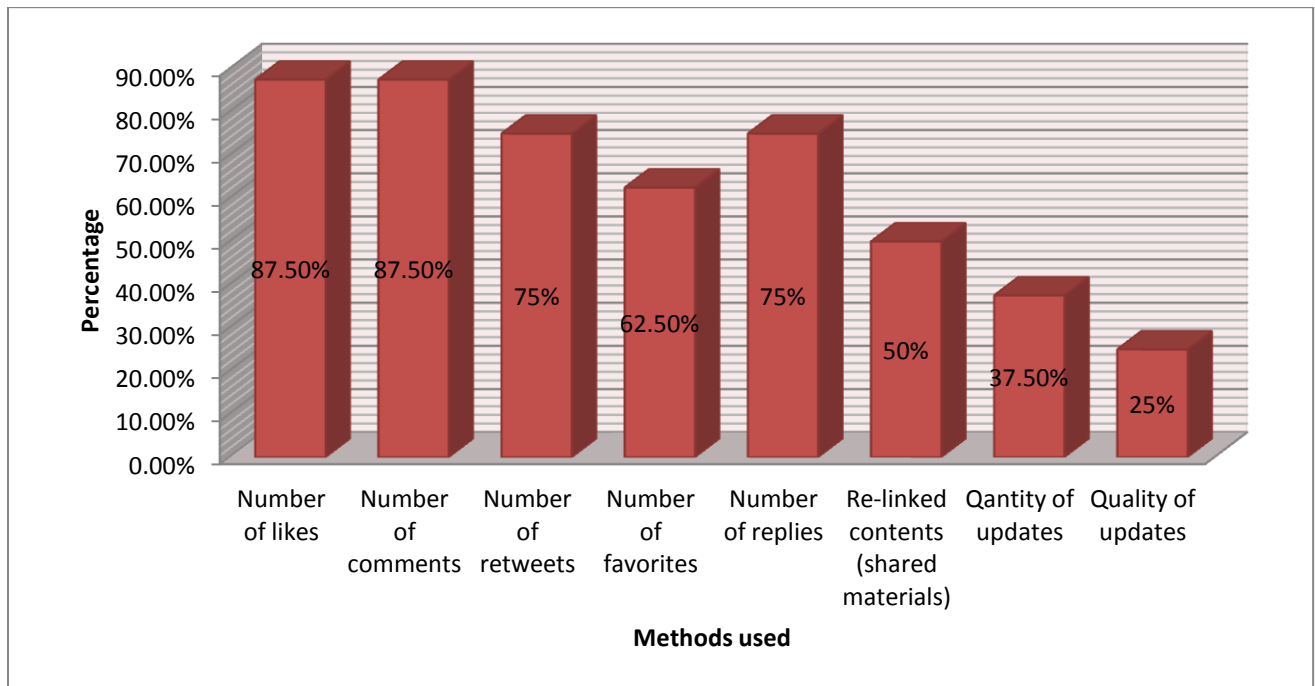

Figure 4: Methods used in measuring social media communication

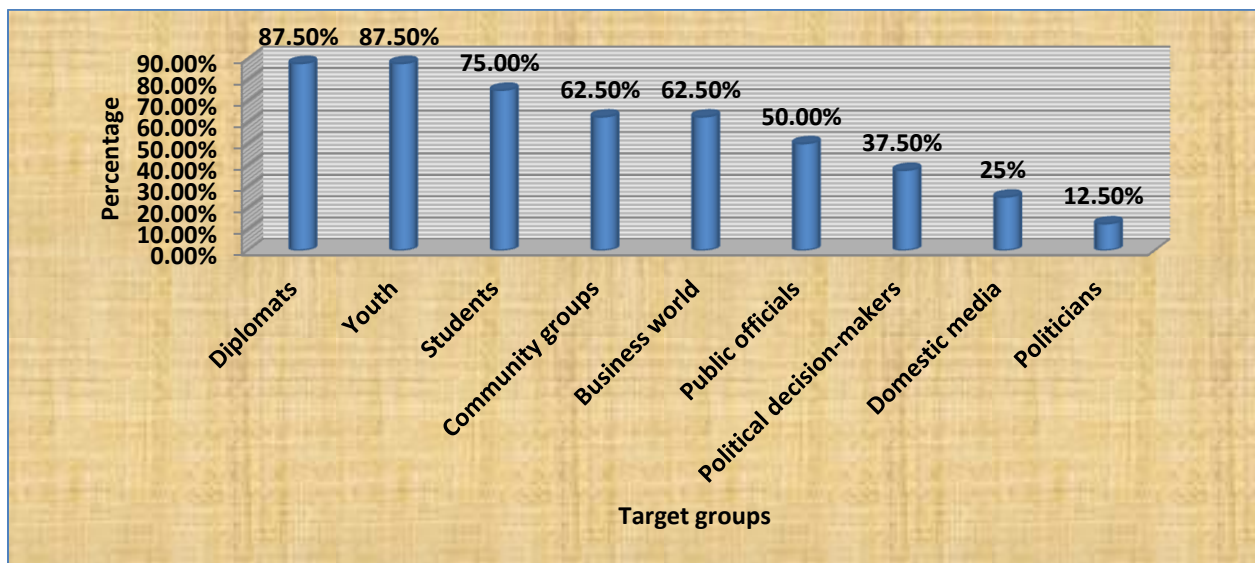## 4.6 Target groups for social media communication

Figure 5: Target groups for social media communication

The purpose of the question on target groups in social media communication was to find out how important the following target groups are in the Embassy's social media. Especially, the subject of interest was how the Embassy balance between the target groups in the host country and the American interests. Majority of the respondents, (87.5%) mentioned diplomats and youth as the target groups, (75%) of the respondents identified students, (62.5%) of the respondents revealed community groups and the business world as the target groups, (50%) of the respondents said public officials, (37.5%) of the respondents pointed out political decision-makers whereas (25%) of the respondents talked about domestic media and (12.5%) of the respondents cited politicians as the target groups in social media communication.

4.7 Benefits of social media communication to the Embassy

Application of social media in public communication has many benefits and opportunities to the Embassy. The respondents were asked to provide the major benefits of using this platform in public communication. Figures revealed major benefits of using social media in public communication in the Embassy. Majority of the respondents (87.5%) indicated strengthening ties between the two countries, high interactivity in real-time, speed of delivery while (62.5%) affirmed that it enhances information sharing, promotes public engagement and provides a global visibility platform. Enhancing Embassy goals and objectives, feedback from the citizens and promoting US Embassy activities was cited by (75%) of the respondents whereas half of the respondents (50%) mentioned social media communication promotes audio-visual communication.
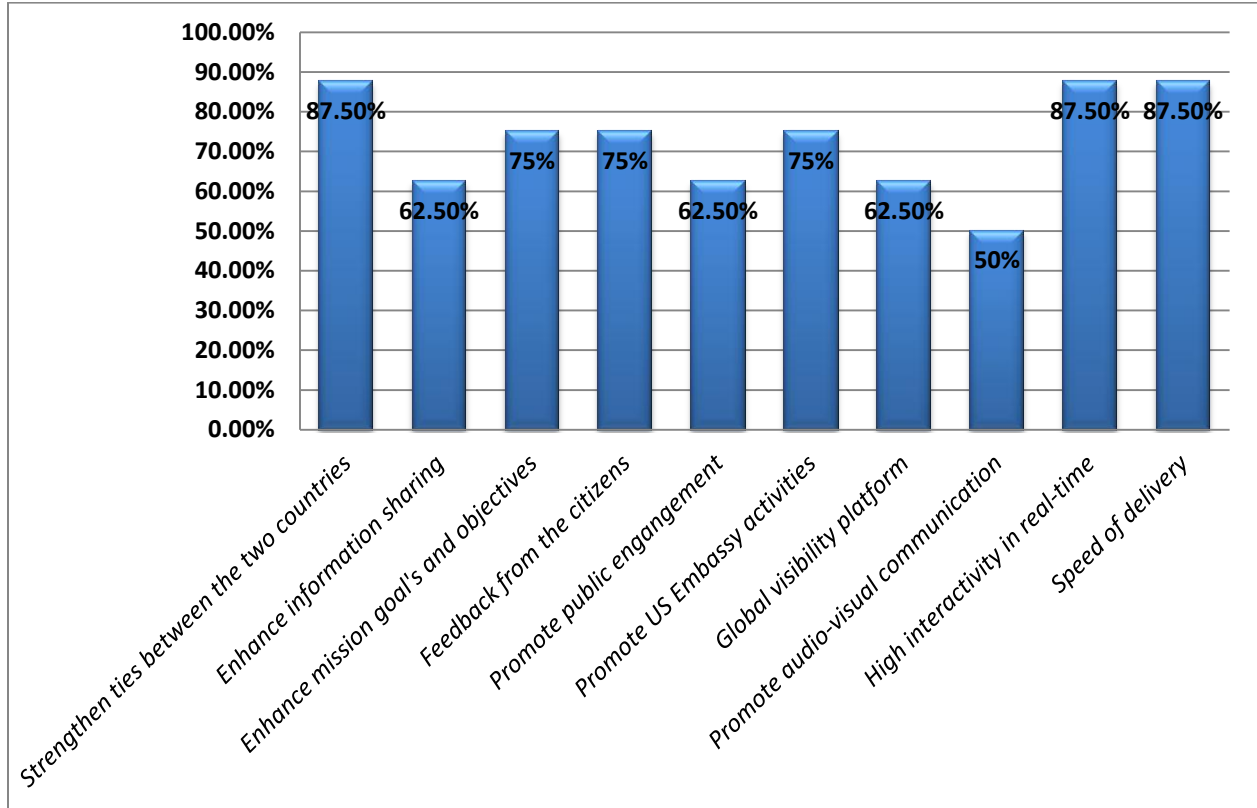
Figure 6: Benefits of social media communication to the Embassy

4.8 Challenges experienced when using social media in communication

Respondents were asked an open question on the challenges they experience in their interaction with the social media in communication. In the challenges experienced when using social media in communication majority of the respondents (87.5%) pointed out cyber bullying as a major predicament, (75%) of the respondents revealed negative and irrelevant comments and managing different section accounts as a bottleneck, half of the respondents (50%) cited not constantly updating accounts and credibility concern for information content, (37.5%) revealed inadequacy in monitoring accounts whereas (25%) indicated unanswered questions and (12.5%) revealed

vulnerability to hacking as a major challenge experienced when using social media in communication in the Embassy.
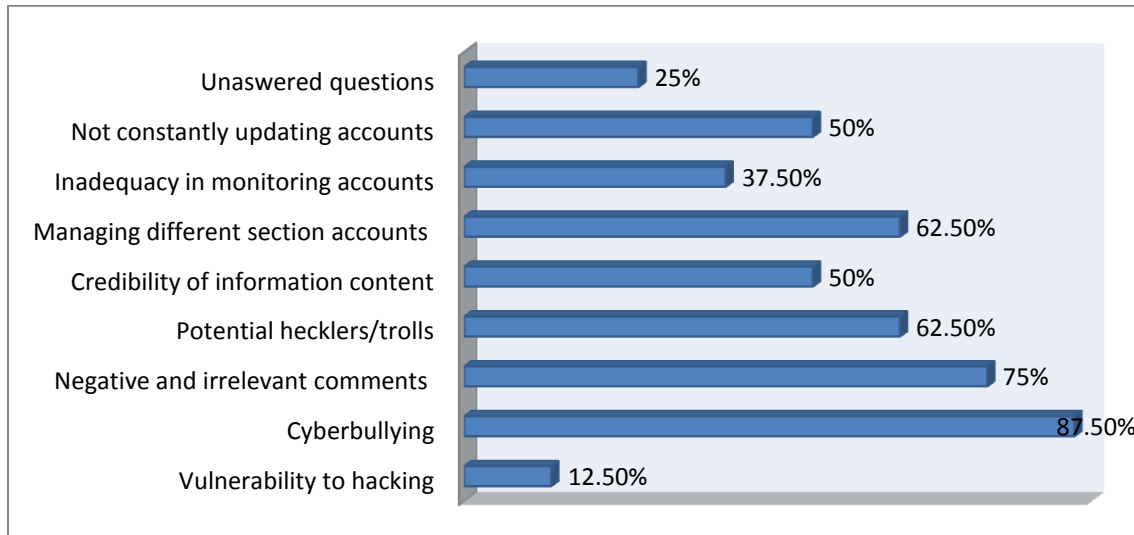
Figure 7: Challenges experienced when using social media in communication

4.9 Discussions

4.9.1 Social media monitoring and measuring

Respondents were in agreement that the online social-interactive media, more specifically social network sites, micro-blogs like Twitter, video-sharing sites like You Tube and online discussion forums like Facebook have quickly made themselves essential modern communication platforms in the Embassy studied. Tools used in measuring social media communication in the Embassy included Tweet Reach, Facebook Insights and Tweetstats.

Tweet Reach and Tweet Counter gives detailed reach analysis for any search term on how tweets about that term have spread on Twitter all in one simple report. This social media analysis tools enables comprehensive analysis against the entire stream of Tweets. They are used in the Embassy to capture, analyze and archive all Tweets about the events and campaigns in real time as the conversation unfolds. With these tools it's possible to see how many different users received tweets about your topic. Know your impact. This measurement and analysis is important to know the impact of the US Embassy tweets and is a measure of the level of public engagement and feedback in regard to the US policies and activities in the region.

Facebook Insights analytical tool was used for monitoring and measuring the US Embassy official Facebook pages. Facebook *Insights* provide measurements on your page's performance and can be used to find anonymized demographic data about your audience, and see how people are engaging with the Facebook account. This social media analytical tool provides easier-to-navigate graphs that are highly dynamic and customizable which includes page likes, post reach and page visits to the Facebook page.

Hootsuite social media management tool was also mentioned by the respondents in management of the Embassy social networking sites. HootSuite is a social media management system for businesses and organizations to collaboratively execute campaigns across multiple social networks. It's the leading social media dashboard used to manage multiple networks and profiles and measure social networks. The system's user interface takes the form of a dashboard, and supports social network integrations for Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, MySpace and WordPress among others social media platforms.

4.9.2 Communication goals in social media

The study also sought to find out if the Embassy has set objectives for their communication in social media. The promotion of US Embassy, increasing the knowledge of American programs in the host country, along with communication related to the public diplomacy country programs, were mentioned as a communication goal in social media by half of the respondents (50%). In this context, strengthening, diversifying and in some cases renewing the image of United States of America, bringing up the strengths and reaching public diplomacy target groups in a diversified environment was echoed.

75% of the respondents stated communicating about cultural and current affairs as a goal of social media communication. This includes communicating about current affairs and cultural events in addition to the relations between United States of America and that of the host country. 12.5% mentioned; communicating about foreign policy, shortness of communication, reaching a wider audience, finding information, attention, increasing online visibility, platform for communication, enhancing online communication and promoting public engagement through new media techniques.

4.9.3 Future of social media communication in the Embassy

The purpose of the last question was to find out how the Embassy perceives the future of social media in the communication sphere. This question was an open question and the phrasing of the question was intentionally impersonal because the intention was to find out about the future of social media in the Embassy in general. Also, it was thought to be easier for the respondents to evaluate social media in a general way.

Majority of the respondents, some six out of eight, were positively-oriented about the future of social media in the Embassy. Two thirds of the respondents clearly stated that the role will increase or become more important. A half of the respondents, some four out of eight thought that social media will have a significant and strategic role in the communication of the Embassy. A few of the respondents, two out of eight questioned mentioned that growth of social media is the only way to of maintaining close interaction with the public and that social media networking sites are relevant in communicating with the American citizens and the citizens of the host country. The same number of respondents reported that social media should be more planned and systematic. It needs to be developed further in the future and invested in both time and resources.

CHAPTER FIVE:

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

It is clear from the study results that the most important social networking sites commonly used in the Embassy for social media communication are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Flickr.

The number of comments, retweets, replies, favorites and linked contents were some of the methods used in measuring social media communication in the Embassy.

Majority of the respondents mentioned diplomats, youth, students, community groups and the business world, public officials as the target groups target for social media communication in the Embassy studied.

Over half of the respondents cited strengthening ties between the two countries, high interactivity in real-time, speed of delivery, enhancing information sharing, promotion of public engagement, a global visibility platform, feedback from the citizens and promotion of US Embassy activities as benefits of social media communication to the Embassy.

The study revealed the major challenges experienced while using social media in communication as vulnerability to hacking, cyberbullying, negative and irrelevant comments, potential hecklers, credibility of information content, difficulties in managing different section accounts, inadequacy in monitoring accounts, not constantly updating accounts and not able to answer some questions.

5.2 Conclusion

The global story of social media has been one of empowerment. Based on the findings of this study, it is suggested that social media has already established its position as an integral part of

organization communication of the Embassy and it will continue to do so. As the demands of the public increase, the Embassy will have no other choice but to respond by ensuring flow of communication. Social media is constantly changing. However, it is believed, also in this study, that the essence of communication is remaining but the change is in the speed, channels, interactivity and impact of the communication.

Recent years have witnessed an explosion of social media in conjunction with political upheaval around the world, causing many in the international policy community to draw an immediate connection to the perceived power of social media. The social media revolution in communication ushered in by the internet is evident not in the medium itself, but in the standards and expectations it has created around the globe. The advent of social media communication is making public diplomacy more public and more prominent, but it does not change the basic premise, conduct or goals of diplomacy. Social media is an effective tool for fortifying existing relationships. It provides a means of regular interaction during times in which parties would not normally converse.

The purpose of this study was to explore the opportunities and challenges that the use of the social media pose for the US Embassy public diplomacy, and to provoke thought about better ways to use these new media tools.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Credibility of the social media content

The limitless opportunities of social media platform that allows anyone to have their say on anything, is decreed to result in opinion and vitriol. With social media the traditional news values

are argued to be replaced by populist ranting or those more interested in self-publicity than the ethics of public value. The media house must develop a system of criteria which should be used to make decisions about the inclusion and exclusion of material.

For credibility it's really important to look at the sources that are providing information, examine their digital footprint, see where they have been, who they interact with. Credibility, accuracy, validity and authenticity of the user-generated content in the social networking sites are very important to protect the integrity of the institution.

5.3.2 Ethical standards and policies

Information professionals in the Embassy studied must adhere to ethical standards and policies. The validity, credibility and accuracy of the social media content should be given greater emphasis in every ethical code in the public communication. The Public Affairs Section must ensure that proper guidelines and policies on the usage of the social networking sites are provided to all the personnel engaged in social media to guarantee standards and professionalism.

5.3.3 Development of a social media communication strategy

Before employing social media tools, it is imperative that a public diplomacy practitioner must understand the strategic policy objective, and establish a communications goal. This will inform strategist how these tools can best be used to augment results, or whether they are the appropriate tools for the campaign at hand.

The Embassy management should be keen in developing a robust social media communication strategy to streamline social media communication. Having an engagement strategy will help to determine how much time social media personnel will devote to social media communications,

what will be the focus areas for engagement and of course, it will help to measure success. This will help in keeping communication simple, getting the right message, to the right people, at the right time and in the right way. The strategy should provide a communication framework to ensure that the Embassy regularly engages and converse with its target audiences to increase citizen participation in pertinent issues.

Best use of social media by the social media practitioners might not be to instigate or create, but rather to guide, facilitate and moderate. While the Public Affairs Section may often be unable to generate viral content in a manner consistent with its principles, it can still use its influence to help steer conversation, and it can still help provide the tools or forums that allow conversation to happen. The Embassy realizes that social media is a tool most effectively employed by the public and individuals because it enables them to speak through a popular medium at the same level hence development of social media communication is paramount.

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APPENDIX I: STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

I am Judy Kinyanjui, a Masters student of International Studies at the University of Nairobi doing a research on what effects the social media revolution has had on public diplomacy.

SECTION A

Current designation---

Occupation/profession---

Department ---

SECTION B

1. How long have you worked in the Embassy?

[ ] One year   [ ] Two years   [ ] Three years

[ ] Four years   [ ] More than five years

2. What is the role of the official Embassy social media sites in your diplomacy work?

3. Which of the social networking sites below do you use?

[ ] Facebook   [ ] Twitter

[ ] Youtube   [ ] Flickr   [ ] Others specify………………………

4. What is the frequency of use of the social media?

[ ] Several times a day   [ ] Once a day

[ ] Several times a week   [ ] Once a week   [ ] Several times a month

5. What is the impact of integrating social media in the mission's public communication?

6. Does the embassy use social media sites to manage crisis?

7. If the answer to the above question is yes, what kinds of crisis have been solved by the embassy using social media?

8. How often do you measure the social media sites?

[ ] Daily   [ ] Once a week   [ ] Once a month

9. Which tools and methods do you use to measure and monitor social media applications in the Embassy?

10. Are the Embassy's Facebook and Twitter accounts in particular, used for the same functions?

11. Who are the target groups in social media communications?

12. What are the purposes of using social media communications?

13. What are some of the benefits experienced by having the US Embassy social media accounts?

14. What are some of the challenges experienced by having the US Embassy social media accounts?

15. What measures, if any are employed to overcome the above challenges?

16. Do you have specific social media policies guiding the application of social media in public communication in the Embassy?

17. Please give any recommendations to enhance the use of social media communication in public diplomacy.

18. In your own opinion what is the future of social media in public communication?

APPENDIX II: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION STAFF

Establishing a strong online presence through the use of social media: E-diplomacy practice is not an easy thing. I am Judy Kinyanjui, a Masters student of International Studies at the University of Nairobi doing a research on what effects the social media revolution has had on public diplomacy. I appreciate your time in responding to my questions and kindly allow me to record the interview for effectiveness and efficiency.

Questions:

1. The US Embassy has an established presence on some of the main social media channels. How did it develop its social media campaign?

2. Do you feel your presence on social media has helped you in your work?

3. How do you integrate social media into your day? Is it easy or challenging to find the time?

4. How did you get started on social media?

5. Are the Embassy's Facebook and twitter accounts in particular, used for the same functions?

6. What are some of the benefits and challenges experienced by having the US Embassy social accounts?

7. Are there tools which the US Embassy uses to measure if the strategies used to capture audiences work? If yes, what are these tools and how do they work?

THANK YOU