THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN TRANSFORMING GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY OF MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original and has not been submitted for a degree or any other award in any other university.

Signature: . . . . Date:...^.

Margaret Kawira Maina

This research project report has been submitted for examination with my approval as the supervisor.

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Mr. Patrick Maluki

DEDICATION

I lovingly dedicate this thesis to my daughter my greatest inspiration and whom I derived my strength, each step of the way.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of social media in transforming government communication. The study was guided by uses and Gratification Theory which grounded in the admission that media messages are no longer considered to be directly or holistically received and engrossed by consumers. Instead of focusing on the supremacy of the message being sent, this theory eliminates the idea of the passive, receptive audience and instead empowers receivers of the media to deliberately select which messages they are exposed to. The study was also guided by the Weak Ties Theory by Manuel Castells which can be used to explain how the characteristics of social networks can be valuable for public communication, through the creation of weak ties, the obscurity provided by the Internet, and the egalitarian design of online communication. Weak ties are useful in availing information and opening up chances at a low cost. The advantage of the internet is that it allows the forging of weak ties with guests, in an egalitarian pattern of interaction where social characteristics are less influential in outlining, or even blocking communication. The sample population was purposively selected and constituted individuals from the Ministry of Information and Communications and users of ministry website. Data collection was done between August 15, 2012 and September 10, 2012. Questionnaires were used in data collection. The study measured the role of social media in transforming government communication. The findings of this study reveal that information technology has taken communication to another level despite the government lagging behind in its full adoption.

The study further revealed that the government could immediately benefit by having presence on social media (social networking Websites), principally to build or enhance citizens trust towards government by enhancing communication between the government and its citizens. Through social media information can be disseminated on a timely manner hence enabling the people to get first hand information with the click of the button.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Government use of technology and the Internet will continue to surge in the wake of their citizens' technological reception, yet there are still many questions and concerns about the development and future of electronic-governance. Social media and social networking applications, while modest to use, have become instruments of leisure, communication, and change, and should be projected to affect our world for the foreseeable future.

Social media is constituted of social networking applications such as Google+ and Facebook, microblogging services such as blogs, Twitter, wikis, and media sharing sites such as Flickr and YouTube. Social media is reflected to be a part of the Web 2.0 movement, which is categorized by user-generated content, online uniqueness creation, and relational networking (Magro, et al., 2009). Social media has a mainly attractive potential for electronic-participation. According to Bertot et al. (2010) social media has four major covert strengths: partnership, participation, enablement, and time. Social media is pooled and participatory by its very nature as it is defined by social interface. It provides the talent for users to connect with each other and form publics to socialize, share information, or to attain a collective goal or interest. Social media can be sanctioning to its users as it gives them a stage to speak. It allows anybody with access to the Internet the capacity to inexpensively publish or transmit information, efficiently democratizing media. In attractions of time, social media technologies allow users to instantly publish information in near-real time (Bertot et al., 2010).

Social media platforms like Twitter and blogs have made a considerate impact on mass media in the world. By the year 2008, the world has witnessed an enormous swell of new blogs and media

influences while the traditional media outlets have writhed cutbacks or outright liquidation (Blankenheim, 2009). This influence will of course have a permanent effect on the face of mass media in the world, but as the effects of these changes blossom the impact of social media on public opinion and shaping of individual social decision-making environment must considered.

1.1 Problem statement

Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs have made a considerate impact on mass media in the world. Up to 2008, the world has witnessed an enormous grwoth of blogs and media influences while the traditional media outlets have experienced cutbacks or outright liquidation (Blankenheim, 2009).

Social media is a progressively influential factor in the field of communication. It has become more difficult for organisations to ignore that growth thus many organisations and governments are trying to utilize social media with varied results.

Through social media the information flow increases in magnitude and speed, while giving the public a podium for interaction. For governments, this growth not only presents extraordinary opportunities but also challenges that they did not have to deal with before. One of the problems revolves around exactly that dynamic. What can the government do to adapt to this change and how can the public utilise the new medium to connect with the government. This study sought to find the processes and structures of social media, which can play a part in transformation of government communication. In finding the above, the following research objectives guided the study:

1.2 Objectives of the study

1.2.1   General Objective

The general objective of this study was to determine effects of social media on the transformation of government communication

1.2.2   Specific Objectives

i.   To establish how the participatory character of social media can enhance government communication

ii. To determine whether social media can transform communication in government

iii. To determine how the Government currently delivers information to the public

1.3 Research Question

i.   Can social media cause transformation in government communication?

ii. In what way does the participatory character of social media enhance government communication?

iii. How does the government currently deliver information to the public?

1.4 Justification of the study

Social media as a field is justly young and presents a variety of new dynamics and ways in communication. Having been labelled as ground-breaking, the field provides a vast amount of research opportunities. There are many issues that can be explored in relation to social media, as a new medium; what it means for the conventional media and how it will influence the way people and societies communicate, but also how it creates new paradigms of communication. The finding of this study are of significance to policy formulators as it informs them on how best to exploit the benefits presented by social media to reach the population. The study is also of

significance to practitioners of communication as it adds knowledge to the field of social media and communication.

1.5 Limitation of the study

This study is limited to the use of social media in the ministry of information and communication and not the general use of internet in the government.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a structured review of the relevant literature on social media and its relevance in improving Government communication.

2.1 History of social media

A mere five to seven years ago many were questioning what Web 2.0 would bring to electronic governance. The digital divide was considered "solved" by some (Couldry, 2007), at least judging by the activity put forth to address it. Though, measurable quotas of the population were still concerned about identical access, and whether they would turn into "second-class citizens" should they remain severed (Chang, 2011). Fortunately, many assumed that simply employing technology for the sake of technology would not result in greater citizen input (Breindl, 2008). Similar to the "trough of disillusionment" from Gartner's Hype Cycle, some agencies shortly found that Web 2.0 technologies can aggravate false ideas and make small populations seem bigger than they really are (Breindl, 2008). As some early Web 2.0 experimentations failed and transformative initiatives caught, early government adopters of technology found there were often more penalties than inducements for their innovative conduct (Klein, 2011).

From the citizens' viewpoint, research showed that people were positive and willing to interact with government agencies through electronic-government initiatives, and that they trusted government more than the private sector with their private material (Chang, 2011). There are many success stories too. The U.S. campaigns of Howard Dean and Barack Obama served to exemplify the power of social media to spread a message and develop a movement (Gibson,

2008). In England, feedback from political campaigns show that new media had provided a boost to citizen campaigning, as well as forging a closer linking between candidates and voters (Gibson, 2008). Outside of practice, scholars wonder whether e-government could deliver enough validation to warrant the participation government was supposing (Breindl, 2008). The general attitude according to Chang, 2011 was one of wait and see.

In 2009, the precise issues at stake became purer. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) special interest group on electronic-government published a paper to establish them. They felt that participation and assembly, accessible data, collaboration between government entities, multi-channel distribution, and identification and authentication were the areas electronic-government would need to master to have success (Freeman, 2009). Participation and engagement were the key goals of most e-government social media projects, but pursuit of them sporadically led to unforeseen penalties. For example, one local government (Los Angeles County in the United States) found triumph with social media, using Google mashups, but at the cost of *loss* of controller and authenticity of their message (Freeman, 2009). In the end, the authors recommend caution and admit that to overawed the baggage of social media will need new policies and more resources (Freeman, 2009).

Some recommended that social media had the potential to promote a positive viewpoint of government through diffusion of information and by availing a platform for citizen and government communication. For example, a successful social media strategy implemented in Seoul is hypothesized to surge trust in the government through its continued operation.

The idea of articulating new policies through social media utilization is critical to all key institutions including those of government. The use of social media for non-personal commitments has been described as a "frontier-like" environment with a lack of pure rules, and absence of control. In such an environment, the traditional rules likely don't apply, and may in fact be damaging. Realization began to dawn that the increased use of the Internet and social media called for a committed, specific policy response from government units that had designs on exploiting it (Margetts, 2009). By 2009, the verdict was still out on the use of social media in government. There were many successes, but they were still tinged with care. It was assumed that government use of social media could create more participation, or it could create individualized and uninformed citizens incapable of commitment and characterized by lack of disquiet. Still, Margetts, (2009) opines that there was a credit that power was shifting from institutions to networks.

In 2010 there were a number of researches on social media and electronic-governance. The increased focus revealed some new hitches and the first few detailed prescriptions for success were exposed. In Europe, social media was in use but were not being used to their budding. Engagement and participation were lacking. The government lagged far behind the general public in use of social media. Many began to realize that a new angle was needed, not just new technology. Government was admonished to utilize the everyday technologies the people were already using.

Changes in governance and policy were necessary to utilize social media to the fullest.

Localized problems in national e-governance were identified, and several common issues came to the fore. E-participation was still low all over the world. An analysis of 27 European countries' electronic-governance contributions in 2009 showed less than 50% utilization of online offerings in many countries, and less than 20% in various key government functions (Ferro, 2010). In Africa, where the digital divide is severe, electronic-government was seen to aggravate the departure, resulting in social segregation to the deprived. And in the United States of America as of 2009, 25% of households were still deprived of Internet access (Ferro, 2010). In summary, the digital divide still exists all over the world. Even in places like USA and Europe with a large percentage of the population online, a cultural and digital divide is still present within and among various communities which prevents full migration of public services to the internet.

As in the past, some agencies still anticipated the mere use of social media technologies to increase participation, however, digital technologies have traditionally been fraught with challenges, in fact they can intensify existing trends. Web 2.0 will never be the solution if government doesn't adjust to the changing times. Put another way, traditional government activity has followed a model of constraint and information advertisement. This approach throttles e-participation and government novelty. An information involvement paradigm needs to be adopted if any success is to ensue (Ferro, 2010).

As 2011 arrived, the perspective changed from one of cautious pessimism to a jolting revelation of the power of social media in the hands of citizens world over. An analysis of involvement in the first generation of e-government creativities around the world revealed limited usage of early

e-government contributions. Augmented use of social media was recommended as the solution to low participation, ultimately leading to a generation of wider, deeper, and more advanced online participation (Millard, 2010). The potential of social media continued to be overestimated, especially for use by rapid-response agencies in government. Some agencies bare the issues inherent in utilizing mainstream for-profit social media submissions. For example, trust becomes an issue when advertisement on a government Facebook page runs contrary to the message or objective of the page. Also, privacy on Facebook is a problem. Citizens may never know the difference between the social media source and the government organization using it (Millard, 2010). Additional worries include accessibility to the handicapped, which does not appear to be of precedence to social media vendors, and the boundaries of the format and/or design can prevent government agencies from reaching specific groups of citizens (Millard, 2010).

2.2 Social Media

Scholar's knowledge and conceptualization of social networks has been melodramatically adjusted due to the digital age and the emergence of social media. With the development of the Internet over the past seventeen years, a large number of social media networks, where people can communicate and interconnect online, have emerged. Social media has drastically changed the way the world connects, communicates, and conducts business (Moody, 2010). Studies by (Quan-Hasse et al, 2002) submits that people are adopting multiple technological tools with harmonising communication functions, understanding the role of social media in daily interactions becomes more and more important.

Kaplan and Haelein (2010) conceptualize social media as "a group of Internet based applications" with two discrete functions. These social media permit the constant adjustment of

content and applications by "all users in a participatory and concerted fashion" since they are grounded in "the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0". in addition, social media supports the democratization of information and knowledge because they "allow for the creation and exchange of user-generated content". "With the rise of social media such as Facebook, blogs, Flickr, Twitter, and Youtube, users have become constantly connected and capable of interacting with each another. They share files, ideas, and risk messages on a real-time basis, which enables them to duck institutional control of information" (Ding & Zhang, 2010).

Social media links people and information via informal networks, and is commonly denoted to as Web 2.0 (Drapeau & Wells, 2009). These technologies offer organizations of all types increased agility, effectiveness and interoperability because they are not simply tools of information dispersal. They are a means for relationship and community building and governments that harness its power and could potentially interact better with citizens and anticipate emerging issues (Drapeau & Wells, 2009).

Brian Solis offers a slightly straight-forward definition of the phenomenon in saying:

> "The democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers. It is the shift from a broadcast mechanism, one-to-many, to a many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people, and peers." (Solis).

This definition highlights two essential characteristics of social media: Communication is user-generated and it functions two-ways. It nonetheless neglects to comment on the consequences of social media such as knowledge creation, which are based on its intrinsic nature. In the same fashion most definitions are lacking in highlighting all aspects of social media, which is why this

study draws upon a description of the print revolution to highlight onto the characteristics of social media. While looking at these effects it is important to look at the growth of the Internet itself, as social media can't be viewed separate from it.

Manuel Castells, a renowned sociologist focusing on communication research, has in several books contended for the importance of the Internet's development process for generating its relevance today. I''he Internet was formed as a university and military experiment, which at no time was restricted by corporate goals or strategies, but succeeded on researcher's curiosity (Castells, 2004, p.20). The Internet could thus develop free from command or other impediments into relatively great objectivity. Additionally the growth was based on free-flowing information in open-source codes between scientists from universities, who were influenced by the social movements of the 70's in the US, which accentuated freedom of speech and autonomy (Ibid). Sharing and innovation as a result came to be at the core of the Internet, giving it a shape that founds its success today. It is not the aim here to explain every piece of the Internet, but a few points are in order to demonstrate how the Internet has laid the foundation for social media tools, which can be understood as a continuance and strengthening of these features. The Internet offers great suppleness, as information accessibility, range and timeliness have greatly increased compared to other media outlets (Shah et al.). The participatory design of the Internet has further transformed the expressive potential of the average citizens with unprecedented speed within just a short period (Ibid). Social media and its tools such as Facebook, YouTube, Wikileaks, MySpace, Wikipedia, Digg.com, Twitter, blogs etc. are all a total or partial allowance upon this user-controlled, flexible, expressive charm of the Internet. Blogs hold this the most, as they allow for knowledge production, interactivity and network formation, while Wiki-sites are built around user-controlled production of content and sites like Facebook and Twitter focus on networks and

interactivity. Social media tools consequently need to be understood in the framework of the Internet as a whole, but is it also important to keep in mind that user behaviour has a significant influence on the Internet: 'The Internet is a worldwide communication network, but its use and its evolving reality are the product of human action under the specific conditions of differential history" (Castells, 2001). The Internet and the new wave of sharing communication is therefore not a fix-all tool, but needs to be viewed in relation to societies, which are formed by country-specific events and clarifications. The Internet and social media do not have one pre-meditated effect on societies, but depend on the designs of use within each setting, as it is the members own ways that lead to results, according to the participatory standard.

Castells has invented the Internet subjugated age we live in "theNetwork society" (opposed to the information or knowledge society), as society is moulded in and through the Internet as much as the Internet is moulded by society: "A network society is a society whose social structure is made of networks powered by microelectronics-based information and communication technologies" (Castells, 2004). This establishment into networks, he posits, is fundamentally changing our society, both in terms of communication but also in relation to behavioural designs and democratic processes. Viewed in relation to social change the network structure becomes a fundamental player in the power of social media to persuade social change, in that it depends on the capabilities and strength of the network, if the promoted social change is to clasp on and be reacted upon.

23 Computer-Mediated Communication

Studies in computer-mediated communication addresses the nature of how humans interact with other humans via a third (digital or Internet-based) intermediary. Generally, computer-mediated

communication studies the addition of the computer as an intermediary machine, examining the impact *of* this non-verbal and non-visual medium on interpersonal communication (Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic, 2004). There is one recent study that directly examined the impact of computer-mediated communication on the spiral of silence theory (McDevitt, 2003) but the particular impact of social media and citizen journalism on individual opinion-forming has not been tested.

The oldest study, published in 1997, found that at the time, "media coverage does not always reveal a clear direction or shape of public view, especially with electronic news media that regularly provide short reports and sound bites without a lot of background information" (Lin and Salwen, 1997). This same idea debatably applies today to social publishing, and the complaint has been wedged by all facets of society - that blogs are unsourced and not credentialed journalists and therefore not trustworthy, that information found on Twitter is based on second-hand and not primary sources of information.

The first of these two studies focused particularly on the role of social-psychological influences in computer-mediated and face-to-face communication. Their findings are of specific interest as they confirmed that Noelle-Neumann's anticipated fear of isolation was attenuated by computer-mediated communication, supporting the belief that social publishing may establish opportunities for individuals to express opinions far afield from mainstream and reach out to others who seek the same (Ho and McLeod, 2008). The findings of Ho and McLeod further support the hypothesis that the lack of social context signs increases the social dynamics via computer-mediated communication, and backs egalitarianism in reference groups.

While the study was conducted recently - and therefore takes into account the current mass media landscape as well as the general nature of new social publishing technologies - the study was conducted wholly among undergraduate students at a major university. This group may not serve as a representation for society at large as it self-selects for increased Internet usage and might skew the usage patterns that dictate consumption patterns of the media. The other aspect of the research that raises concern is the topic measured against, mainly in the context of the sampling population of undergraduate students. The study was organized around the topic of same-sex marriage, rights and equality. While this aligns with Noelle-Neumann's credence that the morally charged topics make a tougher case for the spiral of silence (Perry and Gonzenbach, 2000), the mixture of the sampling population and topic might question the applicability of the study design to a bigger population. A more inclusive sample would be necessary to confirm the findings of Ho & McLeod.

The second study focused on the advent of interactive media providing improved access to political content and related effects on civic participation (McDevitt, Kiousis and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2003). The strength of this study lies in the fact that it is the first spiral of silence research to be done without asking questions - that is, removing the element of passivity (Neuwirth, Frederick & Mayo, 2007) by examining actual conversation in an online chat setting. The findings of the study reinforced the notion that positions taken by individuals publicly may not match exactly their personal opinions. This study did not find a link to disinhibition or increased likelihood of speaking out on a fringe topic; as a matter of fact, statistically there has been no significant difference between face-to-face and computer-mediated communication. This would afford criticism to the hypothesis that social publishing enables self-edited reference groups and, hence, greater gatherings of individuals around positions that might not be popular

opinion. Nonetheless, the study was conducted 9 years ago, and situations do change. Technology has evolved since the study was finished, and vast numbers of new entities have come online and begun using social publishing tools.

2.4 **The Government and Web 2.0**

The emergence of Web 2.0 has driven the enthusiasm about the new qualities of the Web as a platform (O'Reilly, 2004). The second stage of Internet development gave rise to a excess of web-based applications that are characterized by interactivity, partnership and information sharing. Moreover, these applications permitted Internet users to produce and publish so-called user-generated content with ease. Users have become 'produsers' which means that they concurrently consume and produce information (Bruns, 2008). Web 2.0 platforms which facilitate the production and dissemination of information have been growing tremendously over the past years. They allow for the involvement in participatory cultures to share individual perceptions or creations (Jenkins et.al, 2008). Additionally, people with similar interests and goals are enabled to connect with each other on social networking sites, blogs, video- photo- and music aggregators, social bookmarking sites and shared platforms, such as wikis.

Social media attaches people and helps build communities. Not just a tool to disperse information (Drapeau & Wells, 2009), it could also offer a means for government to engage and better interact with the public. However, the literature contend that there is a void when it comes to government leveraging existing technological systems that provide two-way communication. Government agencies are globally doing a poor job of using social media (McCarty, 2008). This seems undependable when, according to a recent Gallup Poll, half of Americans are frequent Internet users (Gallup, 2009), hundreds of thousands of people are using social networking sites

(Collins, 2009). There are an increasing number of examples of government using technology to thrust information to the public, but there are few examples of how the public can feed information to government. It is important to understand that social media users are not just browsers or readers, but also providers and participants (Drapeau and Wells, 2009). As Stephenson states, "Collaboration can be literally a matter of life and death in a disaster" (Spadanuta, 2007).

The general public may be capable of being full partners in emergency preparedness and response. People may be able to use emerging new technologies to provide otherwise unavailable situational awareness and to use existing social networks to decrease the weight on first responders (Stephenson, 2007).

2.5 Social media in government

The "best" way to use social media in government is a nebulous and subjective delinquent that does not lend itself to a single set of guidelines for every chore, country, citizen, agency, and government. A positive strategy for any particular application is not likely to be immediately discovered through simply following a previously successful execution, no matter how similar the surroundings. The most practical advice may come in the form of a warning: some believe that success with social media cannot be continued under the current structure of governments worldwide (Charalabis, 2011). They propose that continued success can only come when governments create new organizational units to manage newly created e-participation channels, and also to analyze the big quantities of both structured data (e.g., citizens' ratings and rankings) and unstructured data that will be created by them. The personnel of these new components must have dedicated skills concerning the new electronic modes of communication, and also be

engrossed in a quite different culture from the dominant "law enforcement' and regulatory culture of government agencies. The culture and control structure of government has got to be different. Liberating those long held anchors will be a daunting task which is not likely to occur either quickly or easily.

2.6 Participatory paradigm

The participatory model of development and communication evolved from the dependency theorists, who were looking for other ways to development. The fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war were the starting point for a new debate about development and social change (Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte), as it became obvious that established categories of judgement were going to be different. The participatory design is based on "development that emphasises empowerment, cultural identity and multidimensionality" (Servaes). Other factors than economic constraints thus came to gain significance in the development discussion. Empowerment and participation lay the foundation for the realisation of development, and multidimensionality painted that development could not be seen as a linear, prearranged process, but that every society had to find its own way to develop. Contrary to transformation and dependency development thus became a bottom-up method, where the participation of the citizen was necessary, "...the assumption that conceited people understand their realities much better than any "experts...and they can become the drivers of their own change" (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, p.xix) lies at the heart of this. Inherent is a strengthening of democratic processes in a society by (re-)distributing power equally between citizens (Servaes). Inside this approach, sharing communication becomes the essential tool, as it offers a way to tap into the knowledge of citizens and participants in change processes.

2.6.1 Participator)- Communication

Participatory communication is deeply different from the mass media and multi-step flow theories of modernisation and reliance, as "Dialogue is at the heart of communication for social change" (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, p.xiv) in this paradigm. Everett Rogers, who initially was known for his work within the two-step flow models, dissociated himself from the mass media approach in 1978, arguing that "development is a widely participatory process of social change in a society[...] through their (the people) gaining greater control over their environment". Thus communication control was put into the hands of citizens, making it a bottom-up model that fortified two-way communication, which in turn reinvigorated the diversification of opinions and knowledge. The relevance of this is, based on the understanding that society only exists where shared information is created "(Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte), and thus society, knowledge and communication interconnects with each other. Access to communication for citizens as suggested by the participatory paradigm thus creates a full circle in which citizen analyse and discuss their society and thereby re-create society and uncover ways and goals to development. Finally, participatory communication leads to social change, as the basis of society - the shared knowledge Pasquali refers to - is constantly re-negotiated. The underlying inherent assumption in this approach is a favouring of democratic processes and consequently a threat to the power elite and/or others interested in maintaining the status quo (Servaes).

2.7 Weak ties **model**

Manuel Castells's network theory can be excellently used to explain how the characteristics of social networks can be valuable for public communication, through the creation of weak ties, the obscurity provided by the Internet, and the egalitarian design of online communication. "Weak ties are useful in availing information and opening up chances at a low cost. The advantage of

the internet is that it allows the forging of weak ties with guests, in an egalitarian pattern of interaction where social characteristics are less influential in outlining, or even blocking communication (Castells 1996)." The strength of a tie is based on a "mixture of the amount of lime, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the give-and-take services which characterize the tie (Granovetter, 1973)." Social media networks are based on these weak ties- associates with other people whom one might share common interests or goals with, or may have reciprocal friends. The strength in weak ties lies in their ability to introduce us to new ideas and new information, and the Internet permits these ties to be forged with incredible speed over vast geographical barriers (Gladwell, 2011).

In his seminal 1973 study entitled "The Strength of Weak Ties," sociologist Mark Granovetter inspected the link between micro-level interactions and macro-level patterns in social networks, dying with the strength of weak ties lies in their potential for "diffusion, social movement, political organization, and social unity in general," across different networks (Granovetter 1973). The benefits of weak ties over strong ties lie in their ability to diffuse information and ideas across social groups. Granovetter exemplifies this theory by using the example of spreading a report. If an individual shares some information with all of his closest friends (considered strong ties) and those individuals pass the rumour to their close friends, some individuals are likely to hear the information many times, as "those linked with strong ties tend to share friends (Ibid)." Thus, the information is contained in one social group. When used in government communication, the same rule smears. Government department that have both twitter and tacebook accounts are likely to have many followers and pass information to mass of people with a click of a button. In conclusion of Granovetter's study that is relevant to the Egyptian

example is that "weak ties are more likely to link members of different small groups than are strong ones, which tend to be focused within particular groups (Ibid)." Weak ties recognized online allowed different oppositional factions to connect over a common goal.

2.8 Communication systems in the Ministry of Information and Communications

Intelligent information management is central to the work of contemporary government service. In time when information has become a commodity, focus of work can shift to "credible, user-specified analysis'" (Rana, 2007, p. 36). But to gain value out of that commodity one needs to able to overcome the 'paradox of plenty' - acquire the needed and discard the undesired information: service needs informed, not confused government officials. It is the smart management of the sources of information by the Ministry, within and outside its walls, that creates advantages. Being in position, however, to control these sources and the flow of information both on a micro level within its structures and possibly on the macro level of a country puts the Ministry of Information and Communications in position of empowerment as well.

In traditional government service strict internal protocols for delivering confidential messages, instructions and reports - such as cipher links - play an important role. Clear inner scheme for management of information and communication reflects the very structure of the Ministry of Information and Communications by setting the access privileges to various communication channels and documents. Such articulation of roles and responsibilities in a complex hierarchy allows for the efficient delivery of service, and consequently impacts the intrinsic evaluation of the ministry's work and its public assessment. In a digitalized ministry system a clear track of all

the instructions, reports, communications and documents can be managed through the intranet making it easier to regularly supervise the accomplishments.

The central part of Ministry of Information and Communications intranet should be a well planned centralized database for sharing all the documents and internal communication notes. The major challenge - organizational, not technical - is setting up the access privileges to reflect the hierarchy and internal working procedures on information management. This challenge is bigger and way more important when it comes to sharing the segments of the database - and of the communication procedures - with departments of other ministries in order to synchronise the policy efforts.

Database of documents and submissions is only one segment of the ICT-based reform. Unlike in the past, the internal communications are not based on formal notes any more. Still the general informing of servants can be done through periodical bulletins or circulars, though digital and rapidly broadcasted throughout the internal organisational structure. Direct contact among departments, or rather individuals, though internal messenger systems makes their coordinated work more effective. Permanent online relations of officers through social networks make the teams more coherent. Intranet message boards can enable easy share of more informal information of lower importance, while forum discussions, shared mind maps and hypertext annotation tools can bring in the space for ongoing brainstorming and debates on major activities and plans thereby increasing productivity. Collaboratively built wiki pages can help structuring working information a nonlinear multidimensional encyclopaedia-like form. Shared personal and

department calendars and task-lists can save time in synchronization of their work and enable feeding of ones into another work.

As a space for internal evaluation of the work of the Ministry, survey forms or intranet comments can encourage especially junior officers to provide personal feedbacks on how their work can be improved. Using all these tools for facilitating the cooperation with other ministries, non-government organizations or business representatives and encouraging public-private initiatives, or for involving external eminent persons - distinguished intellectuals - to generate new ideas on multidisciplinary issues, is one step ahead.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

2.9.1 Uses and Gratification Theory

The effects of mass media have been a contentious topic for scholars over the past period. With the rise of film and radio in the early part of the 90's, communication researchers began to study what effects media messages have on those who receive them. The early disposition of research was focused on representing media as a "hypodermic needle" that sent standardized, direct and deliberate messages to an easily influenced mass audience in order to yield uniform effects (McQuail, 2010). Though, scholars who believed in the power of the audience to select and filter messages eventually challenged the reigning ideology of the time and contested the widely accepted powerful-effects standpoint society held regarding media messages. Herzog, Blumer, and Katz ultimately helped falsify the notion of this "magic bullet" direct effects approach and expanded our understanding of media use and media effects by introducing the uses and gratifications [U & G] theory.

"The uses and gratifications approach takes spectators members' motivations for attending to mass media as its vantage point for understanding media exposure and effects" (Swanson, 1992). The U&G perception is grounded in the admission that media messages are no longer considered to be directly or holistically received and engrossed by consumers. Instead of focusing on the supremacy of the message being sent, this theory eliminates the idea of the passive, receptive audience and instead empowers receivers of the media to deliberately select which messages they are exposed to. This audience-centric tactic to media effects was revolutionary at the time of its development and truly changed the way scholars looked at mass communication.

Although the roots of the uses and gratifications method were established before 1950, the viewpoint began to take the shape it reflects today in the second half of the twentieth century due largely to researchers Blumer and Katz (1974). As noted by Katz (1959), the conceptualization and expansion of the uses and gratifications theory during the mid-20th century allowed later researchers to explore what people do with media fairly than what media do to people.

2.9.2 Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davies, 1989) is based on the theory of planned behavior (TPB) and was developed to predict technology acceptance and measure determinants of intention to use technology in the workplace. Research using TAM submits that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use both have a substantial effect on technology acceptance (Schepers and Wetzels, 2007).
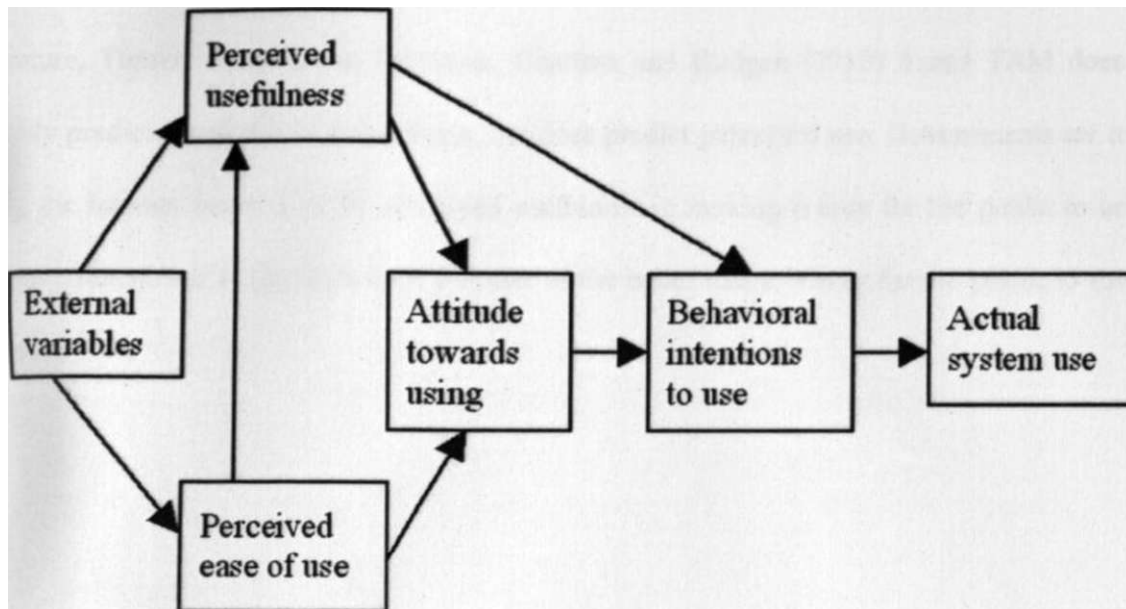
Figure 2.0 - Technology Acceptance Model (Davies, 1989)

The model has since been adapted in various ways to consider the influence of other factors and contexts including: subjective norm (Venkatesh and Davies, 2000); social influence (Malhotra andGalleta, 2008); perceived availability of resources (Mathieson, Peacock and Chin, 2001) and access barriers (Porter and Donthu, 2006). Some researchers have adapted TAM to predict adoption and usage of social media (e.g. Hsu and Lin, 2008; Kim, Kim and Kim, 2010; Liu, 2010; Shin and Kim, 2007; Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2008 and Vannoy and Palvia, 2010). These studies designate determinants of intentions to use social media differ from studies of technology use in the workplace and include Flow Theory (Shin and Kim, 2008); enjoyment and playfulness (Hsu and Lin, 2008; Sledgianowski and Kulviwat, 2008); knowledge sharing, self-efficacy, altruism and reciprocity (Hsu and Lin, 2008; Liu, 2010). To date no published studies have investigated the use of TAM to measure the intention to engage with government using

social media. As a predictive model TAM has its drawbacks. Using a meta-analysis of the TAM literature, Turner, Kitchenham, Brereton, Charters and Budgen (2010) found TAM does not reliably predict actual use of technology, but does predict perceived use. Governments are today using the internet because of its perceived usefulness in making it easy for the public to access the government and at the same time because of the belief that it is easy for the public to use the internet.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter lays down the procedures that the researcher used in conducting the study on The Role of Social Media in Transforming Government Communication with a special focus on Ministry of Information and Communications. The whole section describes the area of study, research design, study population, sampling techniques, sample size, data collection techniques and lastly data analysis and presentation.

3.1 Research Design

This is an exploratory research. It thus sought to explore a phenomenon. The study explored such basic questions as how, what, when and where about the role of Social Media in Transforming Government Communication.

According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), a survey is an effort to collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables. According to Kothari (2004), surveys are only concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, processes that are going on, opinions that are held, effects that are evident or trends that are developing. The method of data collection transpires to be either observation or interviews or questionnaire (Kothari 2004). A cross-sectional survey research includes the use of structured questionnaires and/or statistical surveys to gather data about people and their thoughts and behavior (Cooper 2001).

Survey research is suitable for this research because it seeks to obtain information that explores in order to describe a current phenomenon. It also helps to clarify and explore the current and

existing status of two or more variables at a certain point in time. Surveys are also used in data collection from a large population that is not easy to observe directly. This study will assess the role of social media in transforming government communication.

3.2 Study Population

According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), a population is a broad set of individuals, cases or objects with some common noticeable characteristics while target population refers to that population to which a researcher wants to generalize the results of a study. The population of the study consisted of both the government employees in the Ministry of Information and Communications and members of the public.

3J Sampling Technique

A sample is a subset of a particular population. A total of 40 questionnaires were administered to an equal number of respondents. A representative sample of 25 people seeking services from the Ministry of Information and Communication were interviewed. Another sample comprising of 15 Ministry employees were interviewed. Purposive sampling method was used to select the interviewees to minimise occurrence of undesired responses as well as ease data gathering, time offered and the cost involved in data collection. Different sentiments have been expressed by experts on the subject of sample size. Some researchers propose the sample should be at least Hve percent of the population while others propose it should be at least 10 percent. Nevertheless, leither is true nor false since the mere size alone may not ensure representativeness and information value. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), purposive sampling is a technique that allows a researcher to use cases that have the required information with respect to the objectives of his or her study. Cases of subjects are hence handpicked because they are informative or they possess the required characteristics. It is a form of biased sampling used

when a researcher is not interested in selecting a sample that is representative and information value of the population. Most qualitative research use non-probability samples because the focus is on in-depth information and not making inferences.

3.4 Data Collection Technique

Data collection is the process of gathering information about a phenomenon using data collection instruments (Sekaran 2000). Both primary and secondary sources of data were used to obtain information for the study. Secondary data was obtained from research reports, journals, books, and the Internet to provide a wider understanding of issues under research and complement primary data. This was done through referring to existing documents and other official reports, empirical researches in the area and any other relevant document from the libraries and Internet. Primary data was collected using the interview technique through the questionnaire tool administered to representatives of sampled public members and ministry officials. The questionnaires encompassed both closed and open-ended questions. The questionnaires was dropped and picked later from the respondents. This approach gave the respondent time to provide detailed responses to the questions without feeling being put under pressure to provide answers instantly. At the same time, it enabled the researcher to move faster in distribution and collection of filled up questionnaires because he did not have to spend too much time sitting with the respondent to fill the questionnaire.

3.5 Data Analysis and Presentation

After administering the questionnaires, the researcher coded and had the data converted into numerical codes for statistical analysis. Data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Data from the survey was analyzed using both content and conversation analyses. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software was used to

generate simple frequency tables to encapsulate them. Data from secondary sources was analyzed qualitatively by reading, coding, displaying, reducing and interpreting.

3.6 Reliability

According to Devellis (1991), as cited by Mugenda (2008) reliability is the proportion of variance attributable to the time measurement of a variable and estimates the consistency of such measurements over time from a research instrument. It is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument would yield the same results or data after repeated trials. In order to ensure reliability the researcher issued the questionnaires to the respondents, collected them and checked on the responses. After two weeks the questionnaires were re-tested by administering it again to the same respondents. This ensured internal consistency of the questionnaire and affirmed the responses from the selected sample.

3.7 Validity

Validity establishes the relationship between the data and the variable or construct of interest. It estimates how precisely the data obtained in a study represents a given variable or construct in the study (Mugenda 2008). To ensure precision of the data, the researcher pre-tested the questionnaires and analysed the results and made corrections on the questions that were not clear.

The questionnaire provided accurate data due to the process of pre-testing in the selected sample to maintain validity. The researcher visited the sampled individuals to inform them of the need of the study. This ensured validity of the data gathered.

CHAPTER FOUR:
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results obtained after the survey was conducted among the staff in the Ministry of Information and Communications and individuals seeking services from the ministry in the bid to establish the role of social media in transforming government communication. Questionnaires were administered to the staff members and the service seekers in the ministry. After collecting the filled questionnaires, they were coded; a Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used to analyze data and to generate descriptive statistics like frequency tables, pie charts and bar charts. 40 questionnaires were distributed and the response rate was 100%. All the questions were filled making the survey a 100% successful
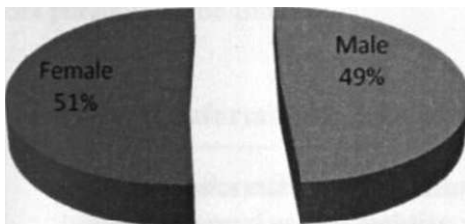
4.1 Research Findings

Fig 4.1 Age

Age
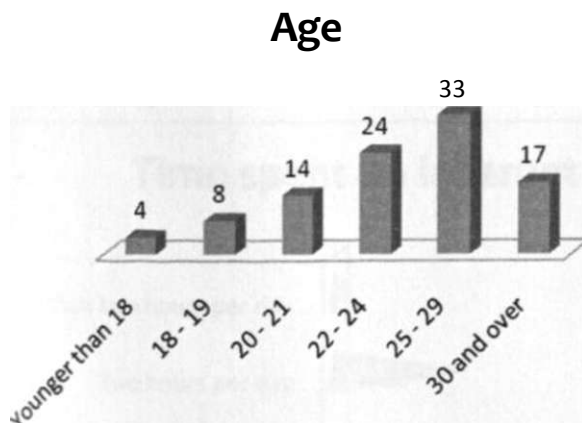
From the above chart it is evident that the age bracket for the respondents was as follows, under 18 years of age were 4% while those in the region 18-19 were 8%, those in the category 20-21

were 14% while those in the age bracket 22-24 were 24% while 25-29 were 33% and finally those with 30 years and aver were 17%.
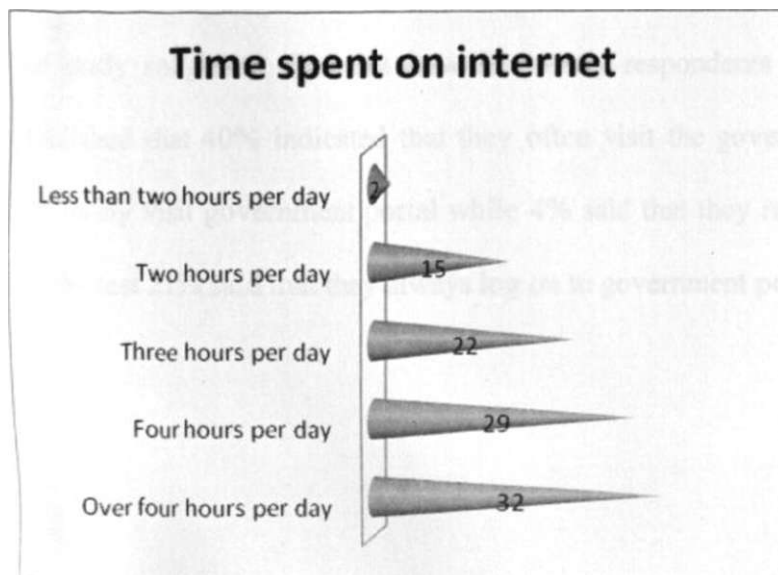
Fig 4.2 Gender

Gender

The researcher sought to determine the sexual orientation of the respondents and found out that majority were female at 51% while male respondents were 49% an indication that majority of respondents who took part in this research were females.

Fig 43 Time spent on internet

The researcher sought to find out on the time spent by respondents over the internet and obtained the following results, majority of respondents represented by 32% spent over four hours per day on the internet followed by those who spent at least four hours per day represented by 29% while those who spent three hours were 22%, those who spent two hours a day were 15% and lastly only *2%* spent less than two hours per day. This indicates that on average workers spent at least two hours per day on the internet.

Fig 4.4 Ministry of Information & Communications (Government Portal) website visit

Ministry of Information & Communications (Government portal) website visit

Always	Often	Rarely	Never
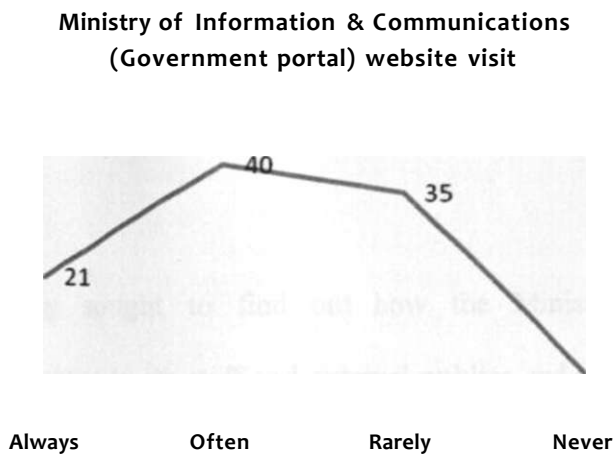
The study sought to find out how frequently respondents visit the government portal and established that 40% indicated that they often visit the government portal, 35% indicated that they rarely visit government portal while 4% said that they never visit government portal at all and the rest 21% said that they always log on to government portal.

Fig 4.5 Communication methods used by Ministry of Information & Communications

66%

31

| letters/memos | email | TV/Radio/print | social media |
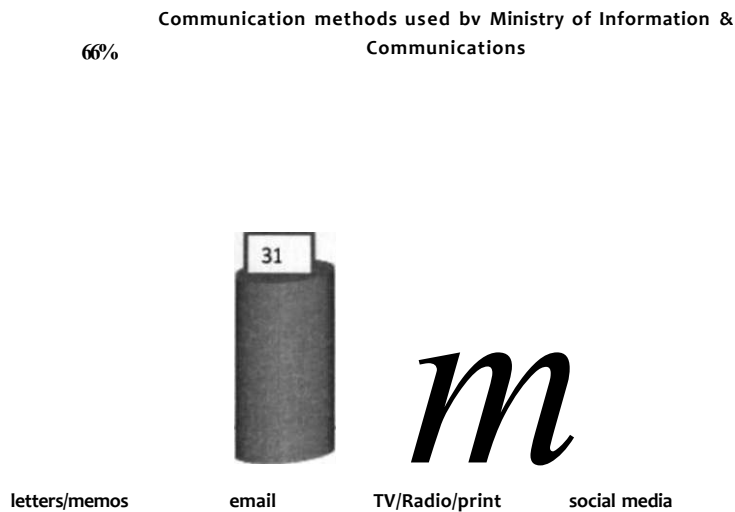
The study sought to find out how the Ministry of Information and Communications communicates to its staff and external publics and obtained the following results; 67% said the ministry used official letters and memos as the main means of communication. 31% communicate via email while 11% said they usually get information through the media, Television, Radio and or print. Only 2% said they communicate (receive or send information) through social media. This indicates that social media is hardly used for communication in the ministry.

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean
I am familiar with social media networks like Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, and Twitter	1.6000
I am familiar with the social media Network Twitter	1.4000
I am cautious about the information I share on social media networks?	4.2000
Government disseminates policy related information through their website in order to promote participatory policy making.	2.6000
I feel comfortable sharing your personal and financial information over the Internet with the Government?	4.0000
I think Ministry of Information & Communications has capacity to deliver more services through the Internet	2.0000
I am aware of privacy policy, security, and encryption standards prescribed or used by government Websites?	2.4000
I think the Ministry of Information & Communications should have presence on the Social Networking websites	1.4000
Progressive and proactive governments have social networking websites presence	2.6000
Valid N (listwise)	

Oil a five point scale the researcher sought to establish respondent's familiarity on social media with majority citing that they are familiar with social media networks like YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter

The researcher further found out that majority of respondents were not cautious about the information they share on social media networks represented by a mean of 4.2 this shows that there is a lot of freedom on the social media and people can air their views without any fear of stigmatization as shown by the descriptive statistics above.

On whether the government disseminates policy related information through their website in order to promote participatory policy making. Mainstream respondents were indifferent since the mean score was 2.6 indicating that most of those interviewed neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

On whether respondents feel comfortable sharing their personal and financial information over the Internet with the Government, majority of respondents indicated that they are not comfortable with an overall score of 4.0 indicating that majority disagreed that they are comfortable sharing their personal and financial information over the Internet with the Government.

The study sought to find out whether the Ministry of Information & Communications has capacity to deliver services through the Internet, majority of respondents approved the mean response of 2.0 indicating that majority credence that the government has capacity to deliver

services through the Internet. While on whether respondents were aware of security, privacy policy, and encryption standards prescribed or used by government Websites majority of respondents were undecided resulting to a mean of 2.4.

Finally on whether the Ministry of Information & Communications should have presence on the Social Networking websites most of the respondents concurred with this statement obtaining a mean of 1.4. likewise on whether proactive and progressive governments have social networking websites presence the mean was 2.6 demonstrating that majority of respondents were indifferent concerning the benefits of governments involvement in social networking.

Fig 4.6 Use of internet for official purposes
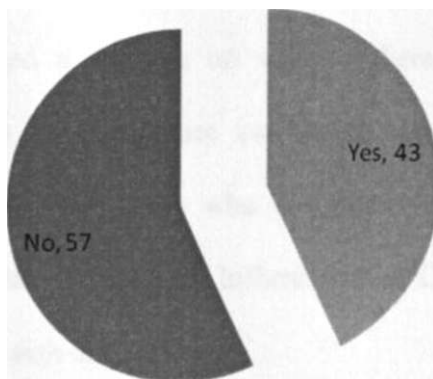
The study sought to find out whether respondents use internet for official purposes in their offices majority of respondents 57% said No while 43% said Yes an indication that majority of

those interviewed do not use office internet for official purposes only. The small percentage of use of internet for official use could be a reflection of the lack of trust of the internet to treat confidential information as such.

Fig 4.7 Need for Ministry of Information & Communications to have presence on social Network
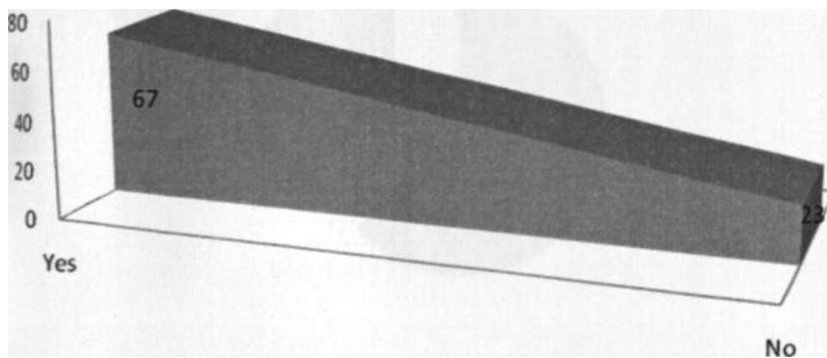

The researcher posed a question on whether there is need for Ministry of Information & Communications to have presence on social network. Majority of respondents said Yes represented by 67% while those who disagreed were 23 % an indication that majority of respondents prefer the Ministry of Information & Communications to be on social media to increase interaction with the public.

Overall, the study found out that the government can benefit a great deal by having presence in social media because the majority of the people today, are on social media and would easily get information posted by the government on social media. It was also believed that because social media gives people the interactivity function, it would therefore build more confidence on the

people when they can freely give their suggestions online through the social media and in turn have their issues quickly handled.

Fig 4.8 Presence of ministry online enhanced serv ice delivery

Enhanced service delivery
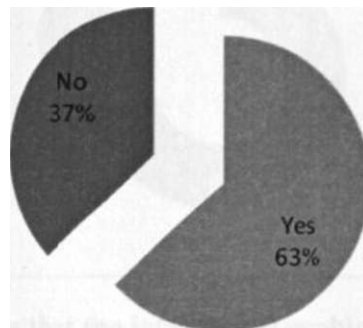

The study sought to find if the presence of the ministry of information and communication online has enhanced serci delivery, as shown on by the diagram above, the majority of the respondents 63% indicated that the presence of the ministry online has indeed enhanced service delivery sighting the time lag before the public get whatever information they sought has greatly reduced.

Fig 4.9 Easier communication through Social Media

Easier communication with the public through Social Media
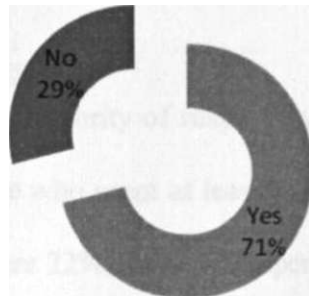
The figure above shows that the internet has enabled the ministry to easily communicate with the public. 71% of the respondents were of the opinion that social media would greatly make communication easier. Through chat facility platform provided by the social media, instant communication will be made possible.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis techniques and presentation as well as interpretation of the same. Data presentation was done through pie charts and simple bar graphs as well as tables.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study found out that majority of respondents at 32% spent over four hours per day on the internet followed by those who spent at least four hours per day represented by 29% while those who spent three hours were 22%, those who spent two hours a day were 15% and lastly only 2% spent less than two hours per day.

This study found that 40% often visit the government portal, 35% indicated that they rarely visit government portal while 4% said that they never visit government portal at all and the rest 21% said that they always log on to government portal.

This study established that majority of respondents were not cautious about the information they share on social media networks and that they feel free to share their views on social media.

The study further found that majority of respondents was indifferent on whether the government should disseminate policy related information through their website in order to promote participatory policy making. The study further established that majority of respondents are not comfortable sharing their financial and personal information over the Internet with the **Government.**

Finally, this study established that most of the respondents were in agreement with the statement that the government ought to have presence on the social networking websites while majority of respondents were indifferent concerning the benefits of governments involvement in social networking.

The study established that majority of respondents 57% do not use office internet for official purposes only while 43% use office internet for official purposes only. On whether it is essential for government to have presence on social network, majority of respondents were in settlement while those who disagreed were 23 % an indication that majority of respondents prefer the government to be on social media to increase interaction with the public.

5.2 Conclusions

From the above study it is evident that the internet has overtaken the day to day activities leaving us with no choice rather than to embrace it least we are overtaken by events despite government institutions lagging behind in terms of information and communication technology adoption there has been some notable change in paradigm since information and communication technology is widely applied in government offices. Therefore any government should be prepared to reap benefits from ICT in the following manner.

The government could immediately benefit by having presence on social media (social networking Websites), principally to build or enhance citizens trust towards government by enhancing communication between the government and its citizens. Through social media information can be disseminated on a timely manner hence enabling the people to get first hand information with the click of the button.

The government could utilize social networking websites to enhance 'digital natives' trust towards Internet in order to foster adoption of e-government services therefore enabling it to reach out to those in far distances considered to be in accessible.

The government's long term vision towards assimilating social networking sites in overall e-government strategy should be aimed at ensuring all its citizens can access public information at no cost and in the shortest time possible thereby enhancing uniformity among its citizens.

5J Recommendations

The Information and Communication Technology phase is here with us and therefore the Government should be ready to adapt to changes which come or accompany IT some of which may affect the Government's day to day activities in the short run however the benefits will be enormous in the long run.

The Government should increasingly look into leveraging social media to improve the quality of government services and elicit greater citizen engagement. Developing a social media policy should be an the first step for Government ministries and agencies in using social media in order to ultimately serve as a key enabler for responsibly and effectively leveraging social media tools.

5.4 Suggestions for further studies

There is a great deal of opportunity in social media research. Some suggested topics are how social media and official government warnings compare during disasters, how social media can most effectively direct the public to more complete warning messages and how the public utilizes social media as an emergency moves into an extended length of time—do their habits

change? There have been media reports that Twitter was inducing panic, but researchers did not **observe** the same phenomenon. A closer look at this situation would **be** valuable,

Along with future research must come a collection of smart practices and ultimately the development of a "how to" guide for homeland security and emergency management officials. **This** should not only embrace how to use the various Web 2.0 tools, but also how to integrate **social** media into existing government public information systems.

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Appendix: **Questionnaire**

Section A:

What is your approximate age?

- Younger than 18(1)
- 18-19(2)
- 20-21(3)
- 22-24 (4)
- 25 -29 (5)
- 30 and over (6)

What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

How many hours do you use Internet on a daily basis? Please select one answer.

- More than four hours per day
- Four hours per day
- Three hours per day
- Two hours per day
- Less than two hours per day

Do you visit/use the government portal?

- Always
- Often
- Rarely
- Never

	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
1 am familiar with social media networks like YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter (1)	.				
I am familiar with the social media Network Twitter (1)					
1 am cautious about the information I share on social media networks?					
Government disseminates policy related information through their website in order to promote participatory policy making.					
I feel comfortable sharing your personal and financial information over the Internet with the Government?					
I think the government has capacity to deliver services through the Internet					
I am aware of privacy policy, security, and encryption standards prescribed or used by government Websites?					
I think government should have presence on the Social Networking websites					
Progressive and proactive governments have social networking websites presence					

Section B: Government Official

Do you use Social Networking Websites?

- Yes

- No

Do you think Ministry of Information & Communications/Government should have presence on the Social Networking Websites?

- **Yes**

- No

Does the presence of the ministry of information communication online enhance its service delivery?

- Yes

- No

If YES above, explain

Has the social media made communication with the public easier?

- **Yes**

- No

If YES above explain

How does Ministry of Information & Communications to the publics

- Letters

- Social Media

- Email

- TV/Radio/Print

What do you think are some of the ways in which government could immediately benefit by having presence on social media (social networking Websites), particularly to build or enhance citizens trust towards government?

How can government utilize social networking websites to enhance 'digital natives' trust towards Internet to in order to foster adoption of e-govemment services?

In your opinion, what should be the government's long term vision towards integrating social networking sites in overall e-government strategy?