

**SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS IN  
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING: A CASE STUDY OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

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## DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other university or any other institution of higher learning for examination.

Signed.....Date.....

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This research report has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University Supervisor.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The main objective of this study is to investigate the use of social media as a tool of corporate communications in institutions of higher learning with a case study of the University of Nairobi. The study applied mixed methodologies in data collection with a key informant interview being conducted with the Web Communications Officer of the University of Nairobi. A survey of 150 students from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences was also conducted. The findings indicated that despite remarkable efforts in the use of social media to communicate with key stakeholders, institutions of higher learning have failed to fully utilize the potential of social media in advancing their corporate communications efforts. Institutions of higher learning are advised to initiate and enhance dialogue with their stakeholders on social media, create interesting and engaging content as well as monitor and evaluate the performance of their social media activities. This study adds much to the existing academic literature in the use of social as a tool of corporate communications and corporate brand building in the higher education sector.

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# **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

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

Social Media refers to web based and mobile applications that allow individuals and organizations to create, engage and share new user-generated or existing content in digital environments through multi-way communication (Davis et al, 2013). The development of electronic media in 1960s and the advent of the internet brought about tremendous revolution in the way the way the society lived and operated. Marshall McLuhan's view of the world being a "global village" is best substantiated by the social media. Courtesy of the new media, McLuhan said, "We have become global wanderers, information gatherers rather than food gatherers." In today's digital world, people can communicate with strangers from other parts of the world through the internet. Through Social Networking Sites (SNS) such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace among others, one can be informed in real time about some far away disaster or other breaking news. Research studies have indicated that many people in the world today rely on the social media for all kinds of information.

The 2013 Pew Research Global Attitudes Project revealed that 76% of internet users in Kenya use Social Networking sites and that most of the users are young people. The report further revealed that 62% of internet users access the internet on a daily basis. The study also found out that many people used Social Networking sites (SNS) to stay in touch with friends and family as well as share their views on an array of topics including popular culture, religion and politics. These statistics exponentially reveal the immense power of social media and it can therefore be

argued that social media has indeed become part and parcel of the modern society's lifestyle and culture.

Kenya's vision 2030 economic blueprint spells out the use of science and technology in order to raise productivity and efficiency across all sectors of the economy. Essentially, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is seen as being the major force and backbone of the Kenyan economy going forward. Social media as an emerging and high rising technology has been embraced by a number of sectors in the country including, the agricultural sector, government, education, manufacturing, private sector and civic society among many others.

An increasing number of studies suggest that corporate interest in social media domain keeps growing and more firms are introducing different forms of social media into their daily business routines as well as into their marketing strategies (Cymfony, 2006). Social media has become a new pathway to information and corporate bodies and organizations are essentially using social media to reach out to their clients. Social media platforms has obviously provided a new and interactive platform for organizations to be able to reach out to clients, solve their problems and understand issues affecting them in a more personal way reminiscent of face to face communication. The entire range of social media applications share the innate ability to enable social behavior through dialogue thus providing an opportunity to discover and share new information (Solis,2008).

The higher education sector is an integral part of any progressive economy. Universities and colleges have for decades played significant roles in enhancing research, teaching and innovations. The education sector has advanced human knowledge and promoted understanding.

The sector also contributes directly to national economies through foreign earnings and creation of employment opportunities. By supplying highly qualified graduates to the national workforce, the higher education has also maintained national economic development. Given the obvious benefits of higher education on the society, economy and national culture, it is important for the sector to be given all kinds of support necessary for growth and development. In this context, it is prudent to investigate and understand the size and shape of higher education as it develops. It is also very important to showcase how higher learning institutions have been adapting to various dynamic changes in the external environment.

One of the changes that have affected higher learning institutions is rapid technological development. According to a 2012 report by Universities UK, changes in technology are having significant impact on attitudes to web usage and that the cohorts of students arriving at universities now and in future are going to be increasingly socialized towards web-based communications. Prensky (2001) argued that a new generation of students; the “digital natives” coming into universities was fundamentally different from any that educators had seen before and that digital natives had spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cameras, cell phones and all other tools of the digital age. Digital natives also referred to as generation Y are said to prefer receiving information quickly; adept at processing information rapidly; prefer multi-tasking and non-linear access to information, prefer active rather than passive learning and heavily rely on communication technology to access information and to carry out social and professional interaction(Olinger,2003,Gros,2003,Frاند 2000).

The “new” digital student with a nose and eye for new media and internet communication poses a great challenge to university administrators, faculty, Public Relations offices and university departments. The main interest of this research project therefore is to investigate the use of social media as a tool of corporate communications in institutions of higher learning. The study will also attempt to measure the impact of social media interaction between students and higher learning institutions as well as measure the effectiveness of social media interaction between higher learning institutions and students.

This research will be based on a case study of the University of Nairobi. According to the 2014 editions of Webometrics ranking of world universities, the University of Nairobi was ranked as first in East Africa and ninth in Africa. The University of Nairobi is also the oldest and largest public university in Kenya. It has a multicultural and cosmopolitan population of students including international students thus providing a perfect avenue for a case study of this nature that will be able to reflect trends in social media usage in other institutions of higher learning in Kenya. A university is a particularly interesting context in which to examine how social media is used because unlike other industries, institutions of higher education have unique and diverse segmented audiences including prospective students, current students and alumni and the generational differences, styles and needs of each group tend to be very different(Stageman& Berg, 2013)

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

According to a 2012 report by Universities UK, changes in technology are having significant impact on attitudes to web usage and that the cohorts of students arriving at universities now and

in future are going to be increasingly socialized towards web-based communications. Previous studies have indicated that many young people have significantly embraced social media in their daily routines. Prensky (2001) argued that a new generation of students; the “digital natives” coming into universities was fundamentally different from any that educators had seen before and that digital natives had spent their entire lives surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cameras, cell phones and all other tools of the digital age. Digital natives also referred to as generation Y are said to prefer receiving information quickly; adept at processing information rapidly; prefer multi-tasking and non-linear access to information, prefer active rather than passive learning and heavily rely on communication technology to access information and to carry out social and professional interaction(Olinger,2003,Gros,2003,Frاند 2000).

However, Roblyer et al (2010) argues that higher education has a well established trend of non-adoption of new technologies. Failure or slow adoption of new technological changes means that higher learning institutions will not be able to understand and mutually communicate with the new “digital student” coming into their institutions. It also means that the institutions will not adequately inform and solve problems affecting the students due to the digital disconnect. Although higher learning institutions have made an effort to set up social media accounts, a casual observation of their usage reveals that many of the institutions are not proactively utilizing the power of social media to connect with students and further enhance positive images of the respective institutions. Some institutions rarely post information on social media pages for their students while others have dull or inactive social media pages. At the same time other institutions, post information on social media pages but fail to interact or initiate and promote

dialogue with the students on current affairs, institutional affairs and student welfare among other matters of interest. The goal of this work is to investigate the use of social media as a tool of corporate communications in institutions of higher learning.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

#### **General Objective**

To investigate the use of social media as a tool of corporate communications in institutions of higher learning

#### **Specific Objectives**

1. To investigate how students use social media to interact with institutions
2. To examine the effectiveness of social media interaction between students and institutions of higher learning
3. To examine how institutions of higher learning use social media to communicate with students

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The following research questions aim to interrogate the use of social media as a tool of corporate communications in institutions of higher learning. These research questions will be based on a content analysis of higher learning institutions' social media pages. The questions will also be based on a study conducted among students who will be surveyed.

**RQ1:** How do institutions of higher learning use social media to communicate with its key publics?



**RQ2:** How do students use social media to interact with institutions of higher learning?

**RQ3:** What is the effectiveness of social media interaction between students and institutions of higher learning?

### **1.5 Justification of the study**

Given the absence of sufficient research on the use of social media in higher learning institutions, this research study will be very important in filling the academic lacuna. The study will also be able to provide a set of frameworks to support critical thinking and applications of new media technologies in promoting efficient and effective communications in institutions of higher learning. This will enable universities and colleges to lead in innovations and use of new technologies and thus be able to remain relevant and compete with other global higher learning institutions. In essence, this study will be very helpful to higher education marketers, administrators, faculty, education policy makers and students among others.

### **1.6 Scope of the study**

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the use of social media as a tool of corporate communications in institutions of higher learning. The study also aims to interrogate how students use social media to interact with their institutions and also determine the effectiveness of social media interaction between students and institutions of higher learning. The study is also designed to measure the impact of social media interaction between students and higher learning institutions. In order to achieve desired results, this study will be based on a case study of the University of Nairobi. The sample of this study will be undergraduate and post graduate

students of the University of Nairobi as well as managers of the corporate website and social media sites of the University.

### **1.7 Limitations of the study**

The decision of limiting the survey to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) in main campus could possibly have left out potential valuable information from students from other campuses of the University of Nairobi who are actively engaged in social media interaction with the university. The limited timeframe of conducting this study may have limited the depth of the study. Social networking as a tool of corporate communications in institutions of higher learning is also relatively a new area of study and there was less relevant scholarly literature to review.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Introduction**

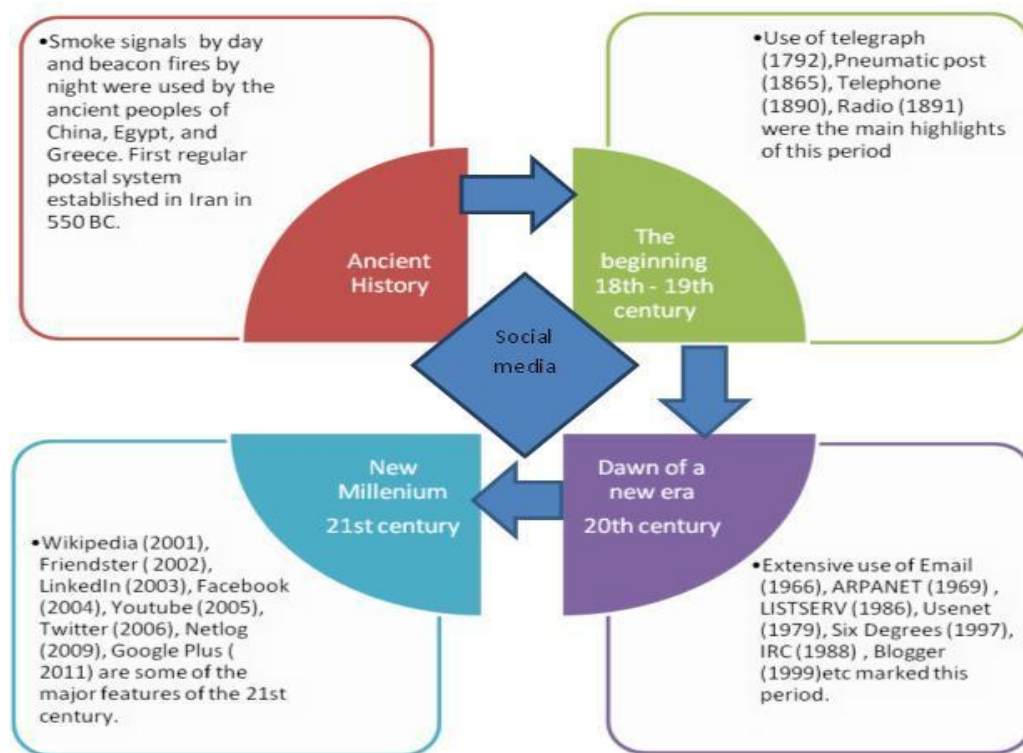
The main focus of this chapter is to review previous research studies that are relevant to this topic. This review will examine the history of social media and the use of social media in advancing corporate communications in various fields and particularly in higher learning institutions. The review will also be able to identify emerging gaps that need to be addressed. The theories as applied in the theoretical framework will be able to explain and provide possible answers to this study's research questions.

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

#### **2.1.1 History of Social Media**

The term social media was coined to describe new platforms of digital communication that continually appear in interactive electronic environment, underlining their participative and collaborative social characteristics (Vernuccio, 2014). Commonly, the phrase, "Social networking sites" is used as an umbrella term for all social media and computer mediated communication including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and MySpace as well as the inaugural social networking sites of Cyworld, Bebo and Friendster(Davis, et al,2013). Social network sites are defined as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Ellison & Boyd, 2010).

The earliest forms of communication were through audio and visual. Historical studies reveal that in ancient times, people used to communicate by using smoke signals during the day and lighting beacon fires at night in China, Egypt, Greece and Sub-Saharan Africa. Drums were also used in many ancient societies to extend the range of the human voice. The seeds of social media were sown during 550 BC when the regular postal system was established in Iran where horse riders and horse-drawn wagons carried mail. Baruah (2012) uses the figure below to illustrate the evolution of social media:



The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were significant in the development of communications technologies with the inventions of telegraphs, telephones and radios. This meant that for once in history people were able to send and receive messages over long distances. The 20<sup>th</sup> century is highlighted by the advent and development of the internet. The advent of the internet completely changed the communications landscape because people were now able to exchange messages from one person to another through the web or digitally. As illustrated on the figure above, internet based communications involved the use of Email, ARPANET, USENET and Bulletin Board System (BBS).

The internet also provided an array of social networking sites including, LiveJournal, Blogger, Six Degrees, Napster, Lister and Internet relay chat. The 21<sup>st</sup> century experienced a significant growth of social networking sites following the launch of; Facebook, Twitter, Photobucket, Orkut, Youtube, Friendstar, Fotolog, Google plus, Digg, Netlog, Ning and Myspace among others.

Social media has become a convention of the online landscape and major social networks and social media websites make changes and improvements on a fairly regular basis, so it's sure to keep evolving in coming years (Baruah, 2012).

### **2.1.2 Classification of Social Media**

Social media scholars classified social media into four main categories including, Social Networking sites (SNS), blogs, content generating and sharing sites as well as user appraisal sites.

**Social Networking Sites (SNS):** They provide web based platforms for building social networks or social relations amongst people for example shared interests or activities. SNS provides a platform for people to interact via the internet, email and mobile phones. According to Baruah (2012) the most popular websites offering social networking currently are MySpace (started in 2003), LinkedIn (started in 2003) and Facebook (started in 2006). A social network allows a user to create profiles or personal homepages online and set up a social network. What makes social network sites unique is not that they allow individuals to meet strangers, but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks (Ellison & Boyd, 2010). This can result in connections between individuals that would not otherwise be made, but that is often not the goal, and these meetings are frequently between "latent ties" (Haythornthwaite, 2005).

**Blogs:** A blog is an online journal where an individual, group, or corporation presents a record of activities, thoughts or beliefs. For one to set up a blog, one has to choose the available blogging platforms that include Wordpress.com, blogger.com and wordpress.org among others. Blogger.com and Wordpress.com offer free blogging platforms thus anyone can set up an account. A popular sub category of blogs is microblogging. A microblogging site is basically like any other blog except for the fact that it limits the number of words that once can publish in one message. Twitter.com is an example of a microblogging site. Twitter has a word limit of 140 characters.

**Content generating and sharing sites:** These sites function as sources of information for various topics. For example, there are photo sharing sites like Flickr.com, Picasaweb.google.com as well as video sharing sites like Youtube.com. There are also slide sharing sites like

slideshare.com where one can share PowerPoint presentations and document sharing sites like docstoc.com among others. Generally, these sites provide free content for all internet users thus people can search for various kinds of content, download and use the content available to without being charged a fee for accessing the content. The sites also provide a platform for users to generate and share content with others. This is mainly useful to people who are unable to access enough educational resources.

**User appraisal sites:** These serve as a platform for appraisals of various products and services. Sites such as [www.pagalguys.com](http://www.pagalguys.com) enable consumers to write reviews on various products and services. User appraisal sites provide a platform for a consumer to make appropriate decisions before buying a product or paying for a service.

### **2.1.3 Benefits of Social Media to Public Relations**

One of the coolest things about the web is that when an idea takes off it can propel a brand or a company to seemingly instant fame and fortune (Scott, 2008 cited in Wright & Hinson, 2008). Scott however laments the fact that although communicating via the web is usually free as opposed to purchasing space through traditional advertising, only a small number of public relations practitioners are effectively using blogs and other social media when communicating with their strategic publics. Scott argues that the challenge to public relations and marketing people is, “to harness the amazing power of social media-having other people tell your story drives action by having one person sending it to another, then that person sends it to yet another and on and on.”

Wright & Hinson (2007) examined the impact of new technologies on public relations and discovered that the phenomenon of social media have the potential to bring dramatic changes to many aspects of public relations. Wright and Hinson claimed that new technologies have significantly empowered a wide variety of strategic publics by giving them dynamic new media many are using to communicate effectively with a variety of internal and external audiences. The communications world is dramatically moving in a digital direction and those who understand this transformation will communicate much more effectively than those who do not (Weber, 2007). Public relations in the digital age requires understanding how your key constituents are gathering and sharing information and then influencing them at key points-doing so requires strategies that embrace the digital age (Key, 2005).

The 2005 PR Week/Burson-Marsteller CEO Survey report that, “59 % of CEOs rate blogs as a good, very good, or excellent corporate communications tool for internal audiences.” A study conducted by Wright & Hinson (2008) revealed that the emergence of social media has dramatically reduced the turn-around time when organizations are communicating with certain target publics. The study also revealed that social media has provided an opportunity to truly put the public back into public relations by providing a mechanism for organizations to engage in real-time, one-to-one conversations with stakeholders. According to Jones et al. (2008), organizations that use social media tools appear more reputable and more innovative than their competitors. This means that, the more an organization uses social media, the more it attracts and retains customers to its brand. Accessing social networking sites and social media tools enables a company to directly connect with customers and get a clear idea on what they want, where they are and what makes them tick. Additionally, Social media has the ability to save companies a lot



of money and time through enhancing traditional and online campaigns thus yielding more response rates to pitches (Swallow, 2010). However, corporate social media channels should provide relevant updates and news address customer issues or answer questions regarding the company or brand- companies which fail to address or ignore customer concerns online are damaging not only their online reputation but bottom-line sales as well( Tabellini& Yip,2013)

Freburg (2010) summarizes the main uses of social media as follows; (1) Establishing online identity. (2) Conducting research (3) Launching events and creating awareness of an issue (4) Using media relations practices in reaching both traditional and non-traditional media. (5) Engaging with customers in dialogue (6) Creating new online partnerships (7) Communications with External and Internal audiences (8) Crisis Communications and crisis management (9) Reputation management (Corporate and individual)

#### **2.1.4 About the University of Nairobi**

The University of Nairobi is the oldest higher learning institution in Kenya. It is located in the capital city, Nairobi. The inception of the University of Nairobi is traced back to the year 1956 following the establishment of the Royal Technical College which admitted its first lot of A-level graduates for technical courses in April 1956. The Royal Technical College was transformed into the second university college in East Africa in 1961 under the name of Royal College Nairobi and was admitted into special relations with the University of London. The Royal College Nairobi was renamed University College Nairobi and made a constituent college of the Federal University of East Africa. The University College Nairobi became the first national university in Kenya in 1970 and consequently renamed the University of Nairobi.

The University of Nairobi has six colleges including the; College of Architecture and Engineering, College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, College of Biological and Physical Sciences, College of Education and External Studies, College of Health Sciences and College of Humanities and Social Sciences. The University of Nairobi has an overall student population of slightly over 68000 and 5000 teaching and non teaching members of staff.

The vision of the University of Nairobi is to be a world-class university committed to scholarly excellence and its mission is to provide quality university education and training and to embody the aspirations of the Kenyan people and the global community through creation, preservation, integration, transmission and utilization of knowledge. On the university's website, the Vice Chancellor, Prof. George Magoha describes the university of Nairobi as, "one of the greatest inventions of our time." and that, "It remains one of the glories of human aspirations and one of the triumphs of the power of imagination."

#### **2.1.5 University of Nairobi's Social Media Background**

In its 2014 communications policy document, the University of Nairobi notes that, "There have been changes in the handling of corporate communication all over the world, with an implication that if an organization has to survive and thrive, then it must communicate effectively with all its stakeholders." The policy document also points out that, "A major challenge facing the university is updating the content of information and presenting it in appropriate forms to its diverse audiences. The range of audiences makes it imperative that the university develops appropriate approaches to sharing information and to gauging feedback." In the communications

policy, the university's corporate communications is spearheaded by the Public Relations Office which was set up in 2005.

The office is comprised of the Public Relations Manager, Web Communications Officer and a Secretary. The policy states that one of the responsibilities of the public relations office is to "give updates through websites and social media." This is seen as a powerful tool for communicating with the university's key audiences who include current students, prospective students and employees of the university among other stakeholders.

The University of Nairobi maintains several social media accounts including; one Twitter account, one official Facebook page, one YouTube channel and two Google+ accounts. A casual observation reveals a considerable amount of online participation with the following figures. The main Twitter account, @uonbi, has more than 5300 followers; the *University of Nairobi's YouTube* Channel has received more than 2800 video views and 72 unique subscribers, the university's *Facebook fan page* has more than 20,200 likes while the Google accounts have 4630 views and 356 followers. It is important to note that the figures stated only represent university wide accounts at corporate level and do not include social media accounts that are managed at college, schools and departmental levels.

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

### **2.2.1 Overview Social Media in Higher Learning Institutions**

Today's students are relying on mainstream technologies; computers, mobile phones and the internet for fast communication and convenient access to information and services (Kennedy et al, 2008). This may have particular implications for the administrative services provided by

universities-general student services, teaching and learning services (Caries& Kraviks, 2005).In their 2004 study, “Virtual Community Attraction: Why People Hangout Online,” (Ridings&Gefen,2004 cited in Hayes, Ruschman &Walker, 2009)state four principle reasons for the publics’ participation in online communities. They are the following:

1. Information exchange: the most frequently cited reason.
2. Social Support Exchange: The degree to which a person’s basic social needs are gratified through interaction with others.
3. Friendship: A way for individuals to search for and communicate withothers for the purpose of establishing and continuing friendships.
4. Recreation: Internet as a form of recreation, like television, and newforms of online gaming.

According to a 2009 report by Pew Internet and American Life Project, 73% of American teens use social networking sites and 65% of the teens use the social networking sites on a daily basis to send messages privately. The report also indicates that older teens are more like to use Twitter compared to the younger ones and that Facebook had a large number of profiles by teenagers. Nielson 2012 report on the state of social media revealed that on average, 47% of social media users engage on social care. According to the report, social care may refer to customer service via social media and that it has become an immediate imperative for global brands. The report also indicated that consumers turn to a wide variety of social media platforms for social care.

The report states that, “Social media users are most likely to comment on or ask a question about a company’s product or service on Facebook, both on the company’s page (29%) and on their personal page (28%).” At the same time, others will use Twitter and Youtube to express their feelings about a product or service.

A survey conducted in 26 countries across Europe, Asia, Latin America, North America and Africa in 2013 by QS global universities stated that and discovered that, “In every region, more than 50% of respondents say they use five key networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Pinterest) ‘all the time.’ The survey also revealed that “Younger respondents were more likely to report high usage of YouTube and Pinterest, while older respondents more likely to report frequent use of LinkedIn.” At the same time, “African respondents generally report lower levels of social network usage compared to other regions – with exception of Facebook.” The main motivation for social network usage in all regions was ‘keeping up to date’, except Latin America where ‘interest’ is key driver” Respondents in Asia and Africa most likely to value chance to ‘Have a say’.

Another 2013 survey conducted by the Consumer Network in Kenya revealed that 87% of Kenyan youth use the internet to access social media while 57% use the internet to download music and 55% to send email. Higher education institutions are already experimenting with social media marketing. However, the number of studies on social media marketing and their effectiveness is still limited, and very little is known about the suitability of the social media as tools for higher education marketing (Constantinides & Stagno, 2011). The lack of suitable higher education social media platform can be a reason for the low availability of contributed content.

This leads to the question how do university marketers energize present students and future students to contribute more content, preferably content that is also beneficial to their institution?”(Constantinides & Stagno, 2011). “We argue that university marketers should approach social media in a proactive way because the simple presence in the social media space is not enough for successful higher education marketing.” (Shah, 2014).

In July 2008 higher education Web, marketing, and communication professionals subscribed to the Uweb, HighEdWeb, and SUNY CUADnetlistservs were asked to complete a survey about their university’s use of social media (Reuben, 2008 cited in Kowalik, 2013).

The 148 unique responses from 4 different countries: the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, shed some light on the social media landscape in higher education.

- Over half (53.79%) of the institutions reported having an official Facebook page for their campus, and 20 of them have developed a custom application for Facebook.
- Only 21.9% report having an official presence on MySpace, with only one responder indicating they created a custom application for MySpace.
- Nearly 67% did not have an official Twitter account for their campus, and about 64% did not have an official Flickr account. • Just over half had an official presence on YouTube and nearly 60% had some form of blogs on their site.
- Only 17% reported using delicious, a community bookmark website in which users can save Web pages they find and share them with other users.

The survey also asked for input on staff time for managing these social media endeavors and what the intended purposes of these activities were. Respondents reported the overwhelming

majority of these tools were maintained by one or more individuals in their marketing, communications, or public relations office. Communication with current students and alumni was the most widely reported use and most organizations spent 1–4h a week updating their Facebook. Those respondents that reported having an official Flickr account, nearly 43% said their marketing, communications, or public relations office maintained their presence and use was split pretty evenly between sharing photos with current students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

The majority of respondents reported spending 1–4 h a week adding photos to Flickr. YouTube appeared to be used primarily for recruitment purposes (29.50%), with some using it to share videos with current students and alumni. Most reported spending 1–4h a week adding videos to their channel. Despite the survey results showing an active push in higher education to utilize social media for marketing and engagement, some may still be skeptical or skittish of investing time and resources into social media (Kowalik, 2013).

Surveys show, however, that more and more prospective students and younger alumni are joining social networks. More than half of America's teens and young adults use social networking sites, and more than one-third of all Internet users engage in social networking (Jones & Fox, 2009).

### **2.2.2 Social Media Engagement Strategies**

Given the strategically important position they occupy in society, universities owe it to themselves to implement a communications system that is "up to scratch—one that is professional and in step with the times. In such a competitive context, managing the brand of an institution

and communicating its strategy requires very sophisticated management (Canals, 2013). Directors of Communications must devise the communications policy of the university or school and be involved in the creation of its brand, they must also be constantly aware of what's going on; as informed about the activities of students and faculty as they are about what the competition is up to; they must know as much about new communications trends as they do about the buzz surrounding the institution (Canals, 2013). The Web opened up new frontiers for universities and colleges, giving them much more extensive options than they had before. But, at the same time, it has had a profound effect on the way they communicate (Jelassi, 2013). Social networks and diverse "communities" on the Web in particular will experience considerable growth.

It is reasonable to imagine that tomorrow; students all over the world will be linked through multiple networks. So higher education must prepare itself to accept that communications will no longer come from a single source and be disseminated from the top down, but that information will be produced by the recipients themselves (especially students) – and, if possible, with them. It will be co-created.” (Danos, 2013).

Beginning in 2007 academic institutions started to build a presence on social media as a strategy to connect with current students and to reach prospective students (Stageman & Berg, 2013). In November 2007, Facebook created “the fan pages concept,” which allows users to become a fan of any type of organization or course, and “many universities jumped at the opportunity to create an official Facebook presence for their university.” (Reuben, 2007 cited in Stageman & Berg 2013). Participation in two-way dialogue is one of the distinct features that differentiate social media sites from more traditional media. When social media content is successful, open dialogue



between the university and current or prospective students is often the result (Kent, Taylor & White, 2003; Mersham et al.2009).In their case study of Marquette University’s use of social media to engage with key stakeholders, Stageman& Berg (2013) report that it made sense for Marquette University to be involved with social media because:

- Good communication practice dictates that all methods are used to engage the universities’ audiences wherever they are.
- There are already conversations about Marquette in social media, and their participation allows the university to lead the discussion that defines their brand.
- Social media was an innovative communication channel and allowed the communications office to position the university as an innovator among their peers.
- Social media gave the university the ability to interact directly with their audience and connect the audience with each other, which is key to building engagement.
- Social media allowed Marquette university to drive and harness the power of word of mouth—the buzz factor—which is perceived as more credible and authentic than traditional marketing materials.

Stageman and Berg, interviewed Marquette University’s Tom Pionek, Director of Interactive Marketing & Digital strategy and it was revealed that the initial goal of the University’s social media strategy was to “be an active player in it and build a sense of community, characterizing more broadly what the Office of Marketing and Communication was about, with social media as an extension of that.”(Personal communication, September 16, 2010). However, this broad goal quickly evolved into a specific, measurable objective: to achieve interaction with five percent of the audience within a given channel in any month and to reach 35,000 people on all University

accounts. Since the social media initiatives were very recent and no prior baseline existed, the social media team created its own baseline and believed the five percent interaction was a reasonable goal. In executing the social media strategies, Marquette University used social media as an extension of what they were already doing in terms of marketing and communication. For example, when Marquette sponsored its annual “National Marquette Day” in January, social media tactics, such as a Marquette pride photo competition on Flickr, were incorporated into an integrated campaign that used many different branches of promotion. Although social media was incorporated in the promotion of National Marquette Day, there were also many traditional tactics, such as costume contests, games, reunions and prize giveaways around campus.

The combination of both online and traditional promotions helped to create a university event that engaged alumni and current students, as well as helped prospective students have interaction with Marquette University. According to Theunissen and Wan Noordin (2012), “Ideally, organizations should foster greater public interaction using the mass and new media, and have a procedural approach to dialogue by establishing practices that facilitate the organization-stakeholder dialogue”

Stageman & Berg (2013) stated that, “Not only did the marketing and communication team at Marquette University seek to create relevant and interesting content that the target audience could respond to; they also discussed the importance of creating dialogue. Whether the target audience is reacting to posted content or reaching out to the school on their own, allowing the opportunity for open dialogue was another important issue for the marketing and communication team.”Henderson and Bowley (2010), and Li (2010) have all emphasized the importance of

fostering dialogue in social media efforts, as dialogue “has become ubiquitous in public relations writing and scholarship, and even more so in the light of the ever-evolving Internet and its social media application.” In the interview with Marquette University’s director of marketing and Communications, it was revealed that the university created and fostered dialogue through the use of viral videos, “The marketing team occasionally produces content that is directly for social media, like remixed reactions from social media into a video—which I think is just brilliant on extending the dialogue. You have an event, such as Father Wild retiring, when the school makes the announcement, we post the video of the speech.

When people react online, [a marketing and communication team member] takes the reactions and makes a video, posts [that video], and people react again. It’s a great dialogue. (Personal communication, April 9, 2010 cited in Stageman& Berg, 2013). Additionally, it was noted that Marquette used Twitter to foster dialogue and connect people within the Marquette community. To determine how successful the university was, the marketing and communications team measured effectiveness based on the level of engagement, or interaction rates from each post on all social media accounts. The university also used an application called Sprout Social to track quantitative metrics. Sprout Social helps organizations manage their interactions with customers on social networks. Measurement expert Paine (2009) argues that the only way to effectively measure engagement is not by analyzing the number of stories, posts, tweets or videos that the organization publishes online, but rather how people react to that content. Thus, engagement should be tracked by number of comments, shares, mentions, ratings, followers, and fans. Grunig, (2009 cited in Stageman& Berg, 2013) cautioned about the use of new media saying, “many practitioners are using the new media in the same ways they used the old—as a means of

dumping messages on the general population rather than as a strategic means of interacting with publics and bringing information from the environment into organizational decision-making.”

Although social media was effectively helping Marquette University to engage with key stakeholders, it was also revealed that not everything was successful because sometimes some posts on pages elicited low response rates.

### **2.2.3 Emerging Gaps**

The findings of other scholars as depicted in the literature review reveals that the rapid changes in technology are having significant impact on the way the internet is used. In particular, the study reveals that the technological changes will require higher learning institutions to continually review their corporate communications strategies especially in the way they engage with students. The literature also reveals that less research has been done in regard to the use of social media as a tool of engaging students in higher learning institutions.

It is also noted that although social networking sites were continually evolving and becoming part and parcel of the modern teenagers’ lifestyle, institutions of higher learning still lag behind in terms of adopting new media technologies that would help them better understand and communicate with the modern students. Additionally, it is indicated that although some institutions do have social media accounts, they lack appropriate social media strategies that would help them succeed in their social media engagements.

## **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

This study is mainly be guided by two theories- Adaptive Structuration theory (AST) and Technological Acceptance Model (TAM).

### **2.3.1 Adaptive Structuration Theory (AST)**

Adaptive structuration theory is derived from Antony Giddens' Structuration theory. Giddens (1984) asserts that social actions are not random but rather are influenced by external and internal forces within a social system or social structure. Giddens (1984) defines "Structure" as social rules and norms that are utilized in the creation or recreation of social systems as they occur routinely. DeSanctis and Poole expand on this thought by examining this process in regards to implementation of technology hypothesizing that individuals may use technology as it was intended by design or alter its use in relation to their environment. Repetitive use of these social rules can also restrict the extent of the technology use or cause a value judgment of the technology (DeSanctis& Poole, 1994).

DeSanctis and Poole proposed adaptive structuration theory (AST) as a viable approach for studying the role of advanced information technologies in organizational change. A major strength of AST is that it expounds the nature of social structures within advanced information technologies and the key interaction processes that figure in their use. AST examines the change process from two vintage points (1) the types of structures that are provided by advanced technologies and (2) the structures that actually emerge in human action as people interact with these technologies (DeSanctis& Poole, 1994). According to Calloway (2013) researchers believe that the effects of advancing technologies have more to do with how people use the technologies

than about the technologies themselves. For this reason, the human interaction often differs somewhat from the intended impact of the technologies. Adaptive structuration theory is a framework for studying the variations that exist within organizations as they occur from the implementation of advancing technologies. According to AST, adaptation of technology structures by organizational actors is a key factor in organizational change (Orlikowski, 1992).

There are two primary schools of thought that have advanced the study of information technology and what drives organizational change and these two schools are (1) the decision making school, which has its origin in the positivist tradition of research and presumes that decision making is the “primordial organizational act” (DeSanctis&Poole,1994) as cited in (Colloway,2013) and the position that the technology should consist of structures(that is to say, data and decision models) that have as the basis for their design to overcome human weaknesses and once applied, these technologies should bring forth, efficiency, productivity, and overall satisfaction to individuals and organizations(DeSanctis& Poole, 1994 in citing Rice,1984); and (2) the institutional school, which advocates that the adaptation of technology is an opportunity for change rather than a causal agent of change.

The focus of the latter school of thought for the institutionalists is less of a concern for the structures within advancing technology and more on the social evolution within human institutions (Calloway, 2013). These two schools of thought however have a common consensus in the sense that the studies of technology and organizational change must focus on interaction and encapsulate the historical processes as social practices evolve.

Maznevski (2000) conducted a study of global virtual teams using AST to guide their research. Global virtual teams are defined as internationally distributed groups of individuals or teams with a charter to make decisions for the organizations and to implement these decisions with international components and implications. (Maznevski, 2000). These teams rarely meet in person but rather make extended use of information and communications technology as the means through which to conduct their business.

Maznevski studied three global virtual teams over a 21-month period utilizing multiple methodologies to collect data including both qualitative and quantitative to develop a theory of global virtual team dynamics and their effectiveness. Maznevski (in citing DeSanctis & Jackson, 1994) showed that the benefits from using more complex information and communication technologies increased as the tasks became more complex. This study, combined with others cited in Maznevski agree that the global virtual teams most effective use of communications technologies are shaped by the teams tasks and its context and that the team organization changed as a result of the advancing of the information and communication technologies (Calloway, 2013).

Within the Maznevski study, AST demonstrated the role of advanced information and communications technology and its appropriation by members of the team as they worked together. The theory also described how the inherent structural characteristics shaped the interaction patterns without determining the interaction in a specific manner. From Maznevski's study, AST is proven to be more associated with the study of organizational effectiveness in technology use than any other theories.

### **Relevance of AST to the study**

The adaptive structuration theory as discussed mainly implies that:

- (1) Social or organizational interactions are influenced through the implementation of technology.
- (2) People's experiences, environment or opinions about technology influence its use.
- (3) These influences alter the way technology is used either reinforcing its intended use or creating new frameworks for use.
- (4) Repetitive use within these new frameworks can result in changes in social or organizational structures or even technological designs.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the main objective of this study is to investigate the use of social media as a tool of corporate communications in institutions of higher learning. Previous research indicates that the importance of social media as a platform for social interaction, communication and marketing is growing and many businesses including higher learning institutions have already integrated or plan to integrate social media applications into their communication strategies. On the basis of AST, social media networks were created to provide interpersonal connectivity to its users. The users began using the technology to drive trends through sharing experiences with products and services or rallying behind a cause. Large organizations began following these trends and implemented the technology use for themselves despite the use being outside the scope of the technologies' original design.

Initially, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter were created for a single user who was to connect with friends. However, the alteration of the technologies by large organizations including higher learning institutions resulted in social networking sites adjusting their designs to



meet the needs of organizations to connect with their consumers. The AST will guide this study by interrogating how institutions of higher learning use social networking sites to connect with students and at the same time counteract negative feedback. Although individuals began using social media to connect with one another, organizations saw the impressive abilities of social networking and decided to utilize the system for their own benefit and as a result social media pages have adjusted themselves and their designs to meet the new needs of the organizations. In a nutshell, the AST is relevant for this study because it helps provide an understanding of how the use of social media as a tool of corporate communications in institutions of higher learning helps to establish and promote a mutual interaction between students and institutions.

### **2.3.2 Technological Acceptance Model (TAM)**

The Technological Acceptance Model (TAM) is an information systems theory that models how users accept and use a technology. The TAM was adopted from another popular theory called theory of reasoned action (TRA; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) from field of social psychology which explains a person's behavior through their intentions. Intention in turn is determined by two constructs: individual attitudes toward the behavior and social norms or the belief that specific individuals or a specific group would approve or disprove of the behavior (Rauniar et al.,2013).

Since TAM's inception in 1989, it has become the most popular theoretical model used in the information systems field worldwide to describe users' acceptance or rejection of information systems (Lee et al., 2003, cited in Munguatosha, Muyinda&Lubega, 2011). The adoption and use of social media by higher learning institutions to engage students can also be understood through

the application of TAM. According to Davis et al. (1989), “Perceived usefulness of the system” and Perceived ease of use of the system” are the key determinant factors towards “user intention to use the system.” TAM identifies causal relationships between system design variables, perceived usefulness of the system, perceived ease of use of the system, individual’s attitudes towards the use of the system and actual behavior (Munguatosha, Muyinda & Lubega, 2011).

According to Davis et al. (1989) The main idea behind TAM is that people tend to accept or reject technology to the extent they believe it is helpful in performing their job better (perceived usefulness) and if a user believes that learning to use that technology in place is free effort (ease of use). Generally perceived ease of use (PEOU) of the system, perceived system usefulness (PSU), user intention to use the system (UIUS) and user subjective norms (USN) towards the system in place are the key factors in building technology utilization models (Davis et al., 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003).

TAM has been revised in many studies to fit a particular context of technology being investigated. One important and well-received revision of TAM has been the inclusion of social influence processes in predicting the usage behavior of a new technology by its users (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000). One benefit of using TAM to understand acceptance and usage of information technology is that it provides a framework to investigate the effects of external variables on system usage (Hong et al, 2001 cited in Nasri & Charfeddine, 2012).

Despite its wide usage and benefits, TAM has also been widely criticized for its limited explanatory and predictive power. TAM has diverted researchers’ attention away from other

important research issues and has created an illusion of progress in knowledge accumulation (Chuttur, 2009). Additionally, the independent attempts by several researchers to expand TAM in order to adapt to the constantly changing IT environment has led to a state of theoretical chaos and confusion (Benbasat&Barki, 2007). According to Bagozzi (2007) TAM focuses on the individual “user” of a computer, with the concept of “perceived usefulness,” with extension to bring in more and more factors to explain how a user “perceives” “usefulness,” and ignores the essentially social processes of information systems development and implementation. Perceived ease of use is less likely to be a determinant of attitude and usage intention according to studies of telemedicine (Hu et al. 1999).

The application of TAM in this study is relevant in explaining the acceptance and usage of social media as a tool of corporate communications in higher learning institutions. More specifically, TAM will provide an insight into the perceived usefulness of social media as well as explain the ease of applying social media technologies by higher learning institutions in their routine engagement with students.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to present research strategies and the empirical techniques that were applied in this study.

### **3.1 Research site**

As mentioned in the title and previous chapters, this research is based on a case study of the University of Nairobi. Therefore, it was logical to have the University of Nairobi as the research site. In particular, the main campus of the university located in the Central Business District (CBD) of Nairobi city was the main site. The main campus is one of the biggest campuses of the University of Nairobi and it is also the main administrative centre of the entire university. Additionally, the main campus has the largest population of students and it also accommodates the university's public relations office which primarily discharges corporate communications functions that are of interest to this study.

### **3.2 Research Design**

Burns and Grove (2003:195) define a research design as “a blueprint for conducting a study with maximum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings”. Polit et al (2001:167) define a research design as “the researcher's overall for answering the research question or testing the research hypothesis”. A research design is as a plan that describes how, when and where data are to be collected and analysed (Parahoo, 1997).

This study is a case study research. Yin (1994) defines a case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Soy (1997) argues that a key strength of the case study method is the fact that it involves using multiple sources and techniques in the data gathering process and that the researcher is able to determine in advance what evidence to gather and what analysis techniques to use with the data to answer the research questions. The case study strategy has been argued to be particularly useful for practice-based problems where the experience of the actors is important and the context of action is critical (Lee, 1989; Galliers, 1991). Farhoomand (1992) shows that from 1977 to 1985 the case study was one of the most popular research methods (25.4%) from 636 papers surveyed from journals focused on or related to information systems.”

### **3.3 Study Population**

The target population of this study consists of undergraduate and postgraduate students of the University of Nairobi.

### **3.4 Pilot Study**

A feasibility study was conducted at the University of Nairobi, Main Campus. The purpose of the study was to discover the levels of social media engagement between the University and the students. The study included a survey of five students from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS).

### **3.5 Sample size and Sampling Technique**

This section consists of the sample size and sampling techniques that will be applied in this study

#### **3.6 Sample size**

The sample size for this study was 150 students.

#### **3.7 Sampling Technique**

In order to get a correct and most representative sample size, the stratified random sampling technique will be applied in this study. Stratified random sampling is a technique which attempts to restrict the possible samples to those which are “less extreme” by ensuring that all parts of the population are represented in the sample in order to increase the efficiency (That is to decrease the error in the estimation). The technique may also be defined as a random sample of a population in which the population is first divided into distinct subpopulations, or strata and random samples are then taken separately from each stratum.

The target population of this study will mainly be sub-divided on the basis of gender, levels of study (undergraduate and post-graduate), as well as colleges, schools and faculties. The sample for the study will therefore be drawn from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences located in Main campus and in particular, the school of Economics, school of Journalism and the Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies.

### **3.8 Data Collection Methods**

In order to understand how the University of Nairobi uses social media to communicate with its key clients, a key informant interview was conducted with a communications professional who is responsible for the management of the University's corporate social media accounts. Data was also collected through a survey of 150 students from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Written questionnaires were distributed to five Web Champions from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Web champions at the University of Nairobi are mainly charged with the responsibility of managing websites and social media accounts of respective schools and colleges. Therefore, the Web Champions are reliable professionals who have firsthand knowledge and experience with social media at college and departmental levels.

### **3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation**

The feedback presented from the respondents' questionnaires were analyzed and interpreted with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Findings from the Key Informant interview were presented through descriptions. The data was presented in form of tables, percentages pie charts and bar graphs.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the data analysis, presentation and interpretation of findings on the data collected from a key informant interview with the Web Communications Officer of the University of Nairobi, as regards to how the university uses social media to communicate with its publics. This chapter will also present findings from a survey of sampled 150 students drawn from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (main campus). Five Web Champions from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences were also surveyed. The data was interpreted as per the research questions of the study. The analysis was done through descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study were presented in the form of frequency tables and percentages.

#### **4.2 How the University of Nairobi Uses Social Media to communicate with its Publics**

The researcher conducted a 35 minutes key informant interview with the Web Communications Officer of the University of Nairobi. One of the responsibilities of the Web Communications Officer is to initiate and develop the university's social media communications initiatives within and outside the university. As such, the Web Communications Officer has firsthand knowledge and experience with the use of social media at the University of Nairobi. The interview was done with the possibility of follow up emails on issues that needed further clarifications.



This study reveals that the University of Nairobi viewed social media as a progressive communications technology and a way to connect with current and prospective students who were already using social media to communicate. In a similar study, Stageman & Berg (2013) discovered that beginning 2007 academic institutions started to build a presence on social media sites as a strategy to connect with current students and to reach prospective students. (p.3) Solis (2008) observed that social media gives us the opportunity to humanize stories of students and alumni of our institutions which can create loyalty and earn future business (students), and ultimately their respect. As social media continues to gain popularity, especially with the younger generations, it is important that institutions are keeping up with these trends (Kelly, 2014).

The study also revealed that the University of Nairobi mainly used Twitter and Facebook as its social media channels of communication. Vasquez & Velez (2011) found that Facebook was the social media platform most used by Puerto Rican Companies with Twitter coming second. In another study in Georgia, Kelly (2014) found that Facebook is the most commonly used social media platform by institutions with a 100% usage rate reported. YouTube was the next most popular platform and 91.7% of respondents reported using this site to communicate with stakeholders. The third most popular outlet is Twitter with 87.5% of respondents having an account for their institution. (p.6). However, the University of Nairobi still maintained other social media channels including Google+, YouTube and blogs.

During the interview, the Web Communications Officer said that the University of Nairobi was very strategic in the way it packaged information for various social media audiences and that this always guaranteed immediate success in the university's communications efforts:

*“We normally simplify and package our information depending on our target audience. For example, information on scholarships and achievements by individual students in respective areas attracts a lot of shares and interaction on our social media platforms by current and prospective students while information on available job opportunities and requirements is able to draw a lot of attraction and reactions from the alumni.”*(Research data, 2014)

In their study of Marquette University's social media strategy, Stageman & Berg (2013) found that Marquette University's social media strategy was designed to appeal to each group of stakeholders, including prospective students, current students, and alumni and as a result the university has shaped social media around the unique needs of each group. This is able to cultivate a deep relationship between universities and its stakeholders.

The University of Nairobi used social media to inform its stakeholders of key events taking place in the university such as exam dates, new semester dates, public lectures, and corporate social responsibility initiatives among others.

The Web Communications Officer also said that the university used social media to manage crises:

*“There was an incidence where someone was sending scandalous text messages to students that the university was closed down because of a student strike as a result of fee increment and we quickly countered that through our social media pages thus normal operations within the university were not interfered with.”(Research data, 2014)*

Vasquez and Velez (2011) found that social media was not employed for communicating important company messages such as corporate news, annual reports, corporate social responsibility and philanthropy initiatives among others and that social media platform were neither used to provide feedback nor to promote conversations with stakeholders. This means that the University of Nairobi unlike companies in Puerto Rico utilizes the potential of social media as both a communications tool and a marketing tool.

This study also found that the University of Nairobi uses social networking sites to compliment other modes of communications such as the websites, newsletters, notice boards, radio and television:

*“This is because not all the students are following us on social media and they still rely on the other channels of communication to get information from the university. At the same time, there are others who may not get the information from the Newspapers or other channels but will still get us on social media because they do follow us on our official social media pages. So strategically, this is a win-win situation for the university in terms of communication with our customers.”(Research data, 2014)*

Theunissen and Wan Noordin (2012) supported this idea by stating that ideally, organizations should foster greater public interaction using the mass and new media, and have a procedural approach to dialogue by establishing practices that facilitate stakeholder dialogue. (p.10)

The study also revealed that the University of Nairobi has strategically adopted social media in its official communications policy. It is emphasized that social media must always be used in communicating at not only the corporate level but also at college, faculty, schools and departmental levels. According to the Web Communications Officer, Social media communications is in fact an element that counts when negotiating performance contracts within various units in the university.

*“The University of Nairobi looks at social media as an innovative way of serving its customers in an instant. “In our social media pages, we receive messages, reactions and customer queries about our products and services and we are always ready to respond to their needs immediately” (Research data, 2014).*

The interview also revealed that social media is also used for marketing the university’s products and services. The university has income generating units which apart from advertising in the mainstream media find it useful to use social media to market their products and services to the target audience. Social media essentially helps the university save a lot of advertising costs. Vasquez & Velez (2011) found that the aim of using social media channels for the few Puerto Rican companies with a presence in social media was basically for marketing intentions and that companies were doing efforts in informing about their products and services especially through Facebook.

During the interview, it was also revealed that the University of Nairobi's Public Relations office understands the fact that social media can build or destroy a brand and thus when handling complains or negative feedback on social media, they do it responsibly with the image of the university at the forefront. In consultation with relevant departments, the Web Communications Officer is able to solve relevant customer complains presented through the social media pages. How people feel about a specific organization or brand influences how they voice opinions online, and "their willingness to share content with others is extremely useful in increasing brand engagement and relevance" (Shu-Chan & Yoojung, 2011, p.50).

In their study of Marquette University, Stageman & Berg (2013) observed that whether the target audience was reacting to posted content or reaching out to the school on their own, allowing the opportunity for open dialogue was an important issue for the marketing and communication team. Mersey, Malthouse and Calder (2010) underscored the importance of an organizations understanding of engagement as a way to create value for consumers and set its brand and social content apart from others.

When asked how the University of Nairobi measured and evaluated their social media activities, the Web Communications officer said that the Public Relations office conducted a monthly evaluation of the University's social media activities. The evaluation was usually done manually. However, the evaluation task was made easier due to the user friendly social media features:

*"Facebook and Twitter are well customized and we are able to see how many shares likes and comments we had on a single post on our pages. An*

*evaluation of our social media activities helps us devise new ways of improving our online presence.”(Research data, 2014).*

According to Burson-Masteller (2012), companies must monitor their own social media presence to ensure a consistent brand message and to measure the impact of their social media engagement. However, rather than manually evaluating the social media sites, the University of Nairobi can take advantage of free social media monitoring tools available online such as; Klout, TweetReach, Hootsuite, Socialmention, Twazzup and TweetDeck among others. The only way to effectively measure engagement is not by analyzing the number of stories, post, tweets or videos that the organization publishes online, but rather how people react.(Paine, 2009) as cited in (Stageman & Berg, 2013). Thus, comments can be measured in terms of shares, comments, ratings, fans, followers and ratings.

#### **4.3 Questionnaires Return Rate**

In the study, 150 questionnaires were distributed. Out of these 120 of them were returned and they were completely answered. The number of the questionnaires returned represents 80 % of the expected sample size. A 100 % of the questionnaires that were returned were completely filled implying that there were no spoilt ones.

#### **4.4 Composition of Respondents by Gender**

In the study, respondents were sampled in regard to their gender; consider male students and female students.

*Table 4.1 displays the respondents' participation in the survey according to their gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Male	84	70.0	70.0	70.0
Female	36	30.0	30.0	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

In the study (table 4.1) it was observed that 70 per cent of students sampled were male while the remaining 30 per cent were female.

#### **4.5 Composition of Respondents by Level of Education**

The respondents in this study were mainly classified in terms of their level of education; consider undergraduate and postgraduate students.

*Table 4.2 displays the respondents participation in the survey according to their level of education*

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Undergraduate	98	81.7	81.7	81.7
Postgraduate	22	18.3	18.3	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Data from table 4.2 indicated that 81.7 per cent had an Undergraduate level of education while the remaining 18.3 per cent had a post-graduate degree.

#### 4.6 Do you own Social Media Account

As previously mentioned, the main objective of this study was to investigate the use of social media as a tool of corporate communications in institutions of higher learning, it was therefore, important to establish the respondents' social media background before proceeding with further interrogations on the respondents' social media interactions with the university.

*Table 4.3 below displays information on respondents' ownership of social media accounts.*

Usage Patterns	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	115	95.8	95.8	95.8
No	5	4.2	4.2	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

The researcher wanted to know if the respondents had a social media account and out of those sampled, 95.8 per cent of them owned social media accounts while the remaining 4.2 per cent did not have. Consider the data displayed on the above table 4.3.

These findings correlate with Lenhart et al, (2007) who found that 72% of all college students have social media profiles with 45% of the students using social media at least once in a day. These findings reveal that an overwhelming of college and university students do actually use social media, therefore, it can strongly be argued that the best platform for an organization to currently link up with its students is through social networking sites. Given the results of the findings, it should also be stated that institutions that do not have a social media presence may not be efficiently and effectively communicating with respective key stakeholders including students.



#### 4.7 Respondents' Usage of Facebook

Table 4.4 below displays respondents' usage patterns of Facebook

Usage Patterns	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Constant User	50	41.7	41.7	41.7
Regular User	40	33.3	33.3	75.0
Occasional User	25	20.8	20.8	95.8
Past User	3	2.5	2.5	98.3
Never Used it	2	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

The respondents were asked their current usage of social media platforms and the following observations were made:

- 41.7 per cent of them are constant users
- 33.3 per cent were Regular users
- 20.8 per cent were Occasional users
- 2.5 per cent indicated that they were Past users
- The remaining 1.7 percent reported that they had never owned a face book account

In their study, Hassan et al, (2012) found that the most popular online network was Facebook, with 96% of all university students saying they use it on a typical day. From the findings of this study, it therefore can be argued that Facebook is a very popular tool of communication among university students with majority saying that they constantly use Facebook while a big number said they used it on a regular basis. It can therefore be argued that institutions which have a

strong presence on Facebook do actually communicate with a majority of their students. On the other hand, institutions with no presence on Facebook are indeed not communicating with a majority of their students. Facebook, therefore, as the most popular network, should be aggressively utilized by institutions that want to establish and enhance their online communications with their students among other key stakeholders.

#### 4.8: Respondents Usage of Twitter

Table 4.5 below displays information on the respondents' usage of Twitter

##### Twitter

Usage Patterns	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Constant User	32	26.7	26.7	26.7
Regular User	32	26.7	26.7	53.3
Occasional User	29	24.2	24.2	77.5
Past User	12	10.0	10.0	87.5
Never Used it	15	12.5	12.5	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

It was observed that out of 120 respondents to the study, Regular users and Constant users each accounted for 26.7 per cent, 24.2 per cent were Occasional users, 12.5 per cent had never user while the remaining 10 per cent of the respondents were past users of twitter account.

Hassan, et al, (2012) found that fewer students used Twitter as compared to Facebook and Youtube. Only 14% of the students used twitter as compared to 96% who used Facebook on a daily basis. (p.1). From the findings of study, not many students used Twitter constantly as such, this could be attributed to the fact that Twitter appears designed more for professionals. However, almost a quarter of the respondents said that they used Twitter occasionally and

regularly. Institutions therefore, should also use Twitter aggressively in order to communicate effectively and efficiently with the more than a quarter of the key stakeholders using Twitter to communicate either regularly or occasionally.

#### 4.9 Respondents Usage of YouTube

Table 4.6 below displays information on the respondents' usage of Youtube

##### YouTube

Usage Patterns	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Constant User	25	20.8	21.0	21.0
Regular User	30	25.0	25.2	46.2
Occasional User	42	35.0	35.3	81.5
Past User	8	6.7	6.7	88.2
Never Used it	14	11.7	11.8	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	
Total	120	100.0		

In the study, it was observed that out of 120 respondents 20.8 per cent of the respondents are constant users of YouTube, 25 per cent were Regular Users of you tube , 35 per cent were occasional users,6.7 per cent were past users while the remaining 11.7 per cent of them had never used you tube.

In their study, Hassan et al, (2012) found that 84% of the students used YouTube. Although an overwhelming number of students used YouTube, this could be similar to the findings of this study since almost half of the respondents use YouTube to communicate. (p.1).

The findings of study suggest that YouTube is also a powerful social media platform for institutions to link up and communicate with key stakeholders.

#### 4.10: Respondents Usage of Blogs

Table 4.7 below displays information on respondents' usage of blogs

Usage Patterns	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Constant User	10	8.3	8.3	8.3
Regular User	19	15.8	15.8	24.2
Occasional User	20	16.7	16.7	40.8
Past User	11	9.2	9.2	50.0
Never Used it	60	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

In the study, the researcher wanted to find how many of the respondents have blogs accounts and the following responses were obtained:

- 8.3 per cent of them were constant users
- 9.2 per cent of the respondents were past users
- 15.8 per cent of them were Regular users
- This was closely followed by 16.7 per cent of the respondents who were occasional users
- The remaining 50 per cent of the respondents had never used blogs

Hassan, et al, (2012) found that 20% of the students used blogs to communicate. This is similar to this study's findings since half of the respondents said they had never used blogs to communicate while a fraction just used blogs on occasional basis.

These findings reveal that usage of blogs is not popular among students. This is despite the many benefits that blogging can advance to learning and general communication in higher learning institutions and elsewhere. Institutions should use blogs and encourage blogging with its key stakeholders. Perhaps, institutions should explain the meaning and importance of blogs to its stakeholders and in turn develop appropriate mechanisms for the uptake of the blogging culture in the higher learning sector.

#### 4.11: Respondents Usage of Text Messaging

*Table 4.8 below displays information on the respondents' usage of text messaging*

Usage Patterns	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Constant User	77	64.2	64.2	64.2
Regular User	29	24.2	24.2	88.3
Occasional User	6	5.0	5.0	93.3
Past User	1	.8	.8	94.2
Never Used it	7	5.8	5.8	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

It was observed 64.2 per cent are constant users of Text Messages, 24.2 per cent of the respondents were regular users, 5.8 per cent of the respondents were have never used text messaging while the remaining 0.8 per cent were past users of text messaging. Text messaging was unanimously popular since majority of the respondents had mobile phones.

The findings suggest that institutions can take advantage of the popular text messaging platform to effectively reach and communicate with students. A flexible chat forum or an interactive phone number would be appropriate in this case. The implication for this would be a healthy discussion and an understanding between institutions and its key stakeholders.

#### 4.12: Respondents Usage of Flickr

Table 4.9 below displays information on the respondents' usage of Flickr

Period	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Constant User	5	4.2	4.2	4.2
Regular User	8	6.7	6.7	10.8
Occasional User	19	15.8	15.8	26.7
Past User	8	6.7	6.7	33.3
Never Used it	80	66.7	66.7	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

When asked if they were registered on Flickr, it was observed that 66.7 percent of the respondents had never used it, Regular and Past users each accounted for 6.7 percent of the respondents, 4.2 percent of them were Constant users while the remaining 15.8 percent of them were Occasional users

Hassan et al, (2012) found that LinkedIn Flickr were the least used social media platforms among university students. This is similar to the findings of this study which reveal that an overwhelming majority have never used Flickr.

Flickr is not a popular network with students, however, in order to establish a powerful and all-rounded online communications presence, institutions should still adopt and use Flickr to communicate with fractions of stakeholders already using it.

#### 4. 13 Respondents Usage of LinkedIn

Table 4.10 below displays information on respondent's usage of LinkedIn

Period	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Constant User	8	6.7	6.7	6.7
Regular User	6	5.0	5.0	11.8
Occasional User	26	21.7	21.8	33.6
Past User	19	15.8	16.0	49.6
Never Used it	61	50.8	50.8	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	
Total	120	100.0		

The researcher attempted to find out if the students who were sampled in the study had an account with LinkedIn and the following observations were made: 5% were regular users, 6.7 % were constant users, 21.7 % were Occasional users, and 15.8% were past users while the remaining 50.8 % had never LinkedIn before.

In their study, Hassan et al, (2012) found that the least number of students used LinkedIn with only 10% saying they used it. This is similar to the findings of this study where very few used

LinkedIn while a majority had never used it before. Institutions could still use LinkedIn to reach out to stakeholders for instance, alumni and industry players.

#### 4.14 How respondents frequently posted statuses on Facebook

Table 4.11 below displays information on how often respondents posted statuses on Facebook

Period	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Daily	31	25.8	25.8	25.8
Once a week	49	40.8	40.8	66.7
Fortnightly	18	15.0	15.0	81.7
Monthly	16	13.3	13.3	95.0
Never	6	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

The researcher attempted to find out how often the respondent posted a status on Facebook and the following observations were made:

- 5% have never have never
- 13.3% of them indicated that they post on Facebook monthly
- 15% indicated fortnightly
- 25.8 indicated that they post on daily basis
- 40.8 per cent of them post on weekly basis



Hassan et, al (2012) found that 96% of university students used Facebook on a daily basis. This is supported by Williams and Merten (2008), who argued that university students are often found to be obsessed with their Facebook profile or Twitter page. This is slightly differs with the findings of this study since only 25.8% of the respondents posted statuses on Facebook on a daily basis with a big number preferring to post on a status on Facebook on a weekly basis.

Facebook is still very popular and majority of the students use Facebook either daily or on a weekly basis. It is therefore important for institutions to aggressively engage stakeholders on Facebook frequently in order to promote mutual or two-way dialogue.

#### 4.15: How respondents frequently posted photos on public photo sites

*Table 4.12 below displays information on how often the respondents posted information on public photo sharing sites*

Period	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Daily	15	12.5	12.5	12.5
Once a week	29	24.2	24.2	36.7
Valid Fortnightly	12	10.0	10.0	46.7
Monthly	25	20.8	20.8	67.5
Never	39	32.5	32.5	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

When asked how often the respondents uploaded images to a public photo site e.g. Flickr or Instagram. The following observations were made: 32.5% have never, 20.8 % on monthly basis, 10.0 % fortnightly, 24.2 % once a week and the remaining 12.5 % on daily basis. These findings

are similar to Hamade, (2013) who found that 23% posted statuses on social networking sites on an irregular basis. (p.388).

Although the respondents did not aggressively post photos on the public sites, they still visited the sites occasionally or on a daily basis. It is therefore, upon the institutions of higher learning to adopt a better strategy to enhance their presence on public photo sharing sites. This will promote visibility and interaction with the stakeholders through the photo sharing sites.

#### 4.16:How often respondents commented on a Blog

Table 4.13 below displays information on how often the respondents commented on blogs

Period	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Daily	17	14.2	14.2	14.2
Once a week	17	14.2	14.2	28.3
Fortnightly	16	13.3	13.3	41.7
Monthly	15	12.5	12.5	54.2
Never	55	45.8	45.8	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

In the study, the researcher asked respondents how often they posted a comment on a blog and the following responses were obtained:

- 12.5% of the respondents indicated that they do it monthly
- 13.3% indicated that they post it fortnightly
- 14.2 % post a comments on blog on weekly as well as those who post daily each
- 45.8% never post comments on blog

Hamade,(2013) found that 33% of students posted comments more than once a day while 13 % posted once a day. This is in sharp contrast with the findings of this study since almost half of respondents said they never posted comments on blogs. (p.392).

Blogs were not popular with students. Institutions of higher learning need to be proactive while using blogs as an alternative platform. There is need to create very engaging blogs and actively marshal stakeholders to use and provide feedback on blogs.

#### 4.17: How often the respondents tweeted on Tweeter

Table 4.14 below displays information on how often respondents tweeted on Tweeter

Period	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Daily	18	15.0	15.0	15.0
Once a week	25	20.8	20.8	35.8
Valid Fortnightly	19	15.8	15.8	51.7
Monthly	21	17.5	17.5	69.2
Never	37	30.8	30.8	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

When asked how often they tweeted on Tweeter, it was observed that 15% were for daily, this was closely followed by those who tweet fortnightly at 15.8%,17.5% of them tweet monthly , 30% of the respondents have never tweeted while 20.8 % tweet on daily basis.

Although Williams and Merten (2008) postulated that university students are often found to be obsessed with their Facebook profile or Twitter page. This is not the case in the findings of this

study since very few tweeted on a daily basis-consider 15% on a daily basis and 17.5% on a monthly basis.

The findings of study are however supported by Hassan et al, (2012) who found that only 14% of university students used Twitter to communicate.

#### 4.18: How often respondents subscribed to RSS feeds

Table 4.15 below displays information on how often subscribed on RSS feeds

Period	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Daily	1	.8	.8	.8
Once a week	11	9.2	9.2	10.0
Valid Fortnightly	11	9.2	9.2	19.2
Monthly	20	16.7	16.7	35.8
Never	77	64.2	64.2	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

In the study, it was observed that respondents on subscribed to an RSS feed were in the following pattern: 0.8% subscribe daily,9.2% once a week as well as those subscribe fortnightly,16.7% subscribe on RSS Feed on monthly basis while the remaining 64.2% have never subscribed on RSS feed.

Hassan et al,(2012) found that apart from Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and MySpace, the other social media platforms recorded less than 10% usage by university students. This is similar to the findings of this study whereby an overwhelming majority of the respondents said that they had never subscribed on RSS feeds.

**4.19: How often respondents posted videos on public video sites**

*Table 4.16 below displays information on how often respondents posted videos on public video sites*

Period	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Daily	1	.8	.8	.8
Once a week	10	8.3	8.3	9.2
Valid Fortnightly	10	8.3	8.3	17.5
Monthly	23	19.2	19.2	36.7
Never	76	63.3	63.3	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

When asked how often they posted a video on a public video site (YouTube); 0.8 % on daily basis, those who post once a week and fortnightly each had 8.3% of the respondents, 19.2% post video on monthly basis while the remaining 63.3 %have never posted a video on the public site.

While an overwhelming majority of the respondents in this study said that they had never posted a video to a public video site, Hassan et al, (2012) found that majority of the university students (84%) visited and posted statues/video on public sites, YouTube in particular.

#### 4.20: How often respondents created or edited wiki entries

Table 4.17 below displays information on how often respondents created or edited wiki entries

Period	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Daily	4	3.3	3.3	3.3
Once a week	10	8.3	8.3	11.7
Valid Fortnightly	5	4.2	4.2	15.8
Monthly	13	10.8	10.8	26.7
Never	88	73.3	73.3	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

The respondents who participated in the study were asked how often they created or edited a wiki entry and it was observed that:

- 3.3% create or edit it daily
- 8.3% create or edit a wiki entry weekly
- 4.2% create or edit a wiki entry fortnightly
- 10.8% create or edit a wiki entry monthly
- 73.3% create or edit a wiki entry have never

Just like posting comments on blogs, editing entries was an unpopular social media platform for the respondents of this study. Wiki is a communication mechanism to create Web-based contents that require group collaboration (Mayfield, 2008; Pfeil, Zaphiris, & Ang, 2006) as cited in (Cho, Kyunghye & Olmstead, 2013).

#### 4.21 Respondents Overall Perception on Social Media

Table 4.18 below displays information on the respondents overall perception on social media

Overall Perception on Social Media	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
They are here to stay	37	30.8	30.8	30.8
They are powerful communication tools	64	53.3	53.3	84.2
They are interesting but mostly for personal use not organizational use	15	12.5	12.5	96.7
They will fade with time	4	3.3	3.3	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

When the respondents were asked to choose the best statement that summed up their overall perception of social media, it was observed that:

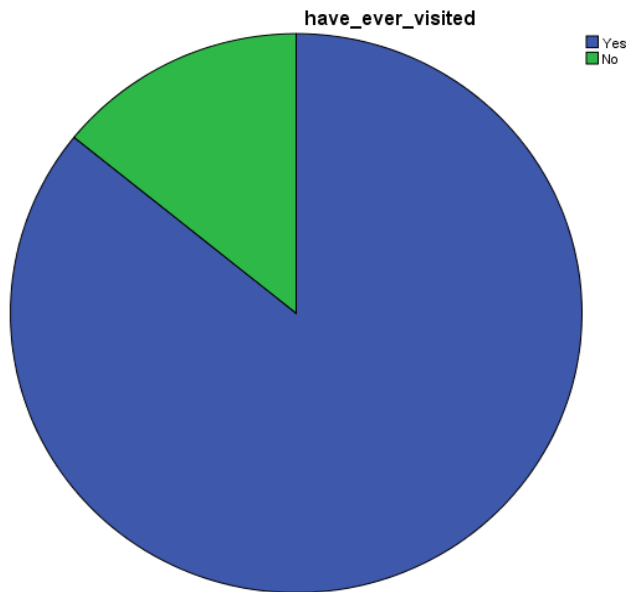
- 30.8% indicated that social media is here to stay
- 53.3% indicated that social media is a powerful tool for communication,
- 12.5% believed that social media are interesting but mostly for personal use not organizational use
- While the remaining 3.3 % were of the opinion that they will fade with time

These findings indicate that an overwhelming majority of the respondents believed that social media social was there for the long-term or social media was simply a powerful tool of communication. The way we communicate through the internet has changed and social media

has become a central tool for organizations (Kim et al, 2010) as cited in (Vasquez and Velez, 2011, p.161). In their findings, Hassan et al, (2012) found that respondents also had a positive view of social networking and its effects on their lives as students.

Given these findings, institutions of higher learning should aggressively use social media in communicating with stakeholders. Failure to use social media means that, institutions will be developing a big communication gap with the modern-day key stakeholders.

#### 4.22: Whether respondents had ever visited the University of Nairobi’s Social media pages



*Pie chart 4.1.1 shows the percentage of respondents who had visited or not visited the University of Nairobi’s social media pages.*

When asked if those sampled in the study have ever visited the University of Nairobi’s social media pages; 85.8 % reported that they have while 14.2% haven’t.

As found in research done by Sheldon (2008), majority of college students visit their social networking sites several times a day and this shows the extent of usage of social media sites is

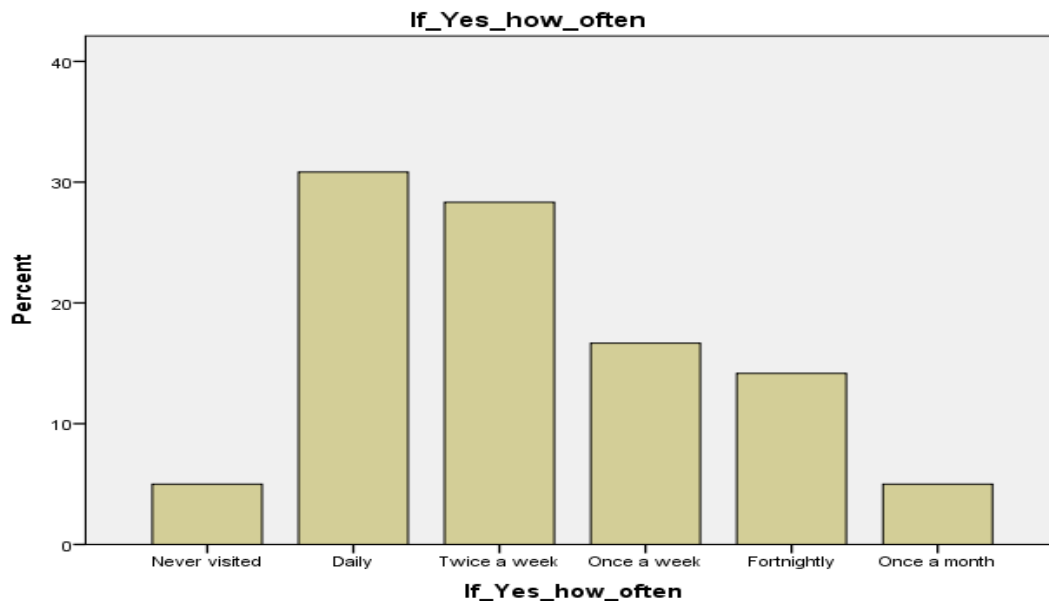


frequent. With over 90 million active users in 2009, Facebook boasted an 85% market share at universities and colleges in the United States (Hendrix et al, 2009) as cited in Ahmed& Tham, 2011).

The findings indicate that an overwhelming majority of the students visit the University of Nairobi’s social media pages. This proves how popular the university’s social sites are to the students. This also proves that the university’s social sites are useful and informative for the students to visit them. The university can take advantage of this statistics by further enhancing their social media communication efforts in order to enhance meaningful engagement and overall corporate communications with the students.

**4.23: How often the respondents visited the University of Nairobi’s social media pages**

*Bar graph 4.1.1 below describes how often the respondents visited the University of Nairobi’s social media pages.*



The researcher wanted to if the respondents had ever visited the University’s social media sites and how often they visited the sites. The following observations were made:

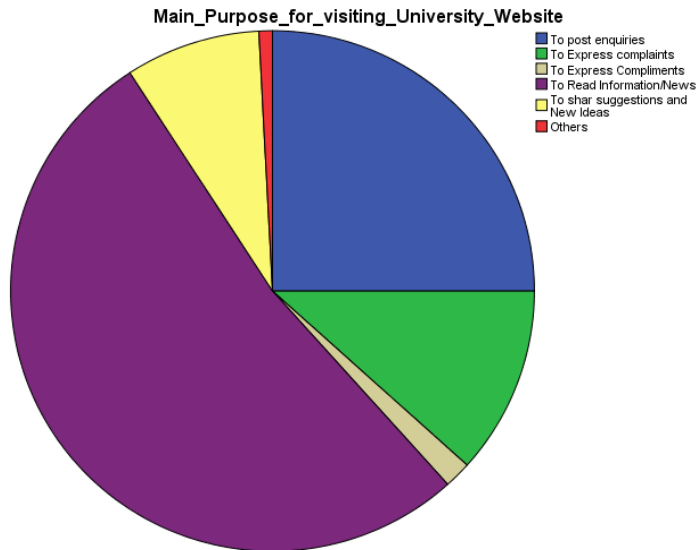
- 5% do not visit the university's social sites
- 30.8% daily basis
- 28.3% twice a week
- 16.7% once a week
- 14.2% fortnightly
- 5.0 once a month

Young (2010) found that majority of students visited social networking sites several times a day thus showed the frequent use of social media sites. In this study, although students visited social networking sites only 30.8% visited the University's social media sites on a daily basis.

These findings indicate that majority of the students frequently visit the university's social media sites. First, this proves that the sites are helpful. Secondly, the sites are frequently updated with information so that the expectation among students is, "There might be something new on the university's social media sites to warrant another visit." The challenge for the university therefore is to make maximum use of its social networking sites to encourage dialogue and mutually communicate with the students on a frequent basis. This will be able to translate into massive success in both the institution's corporate communications efforts and the students' general wellbeing in the university.

#### 4.24: The main purpose for visiting the University's social media sites

*Pie chart 4.1.2 below displays information on the main purpose for the respondents' visits to the university's social media sites.*



The main purpose for visiting University website for students is to:

- To post enquiries as indicated by 25% of the respondents
- To express compliments as reported by 1.7 % of those sampled
- To express complaints as reported by 11.7% of those who participated in the study
- To read information /News as indicated by 52.5% of the respondents
- 8.3 % of the respondents were of the opinion that they visit the website to share suggestions and new ideas.

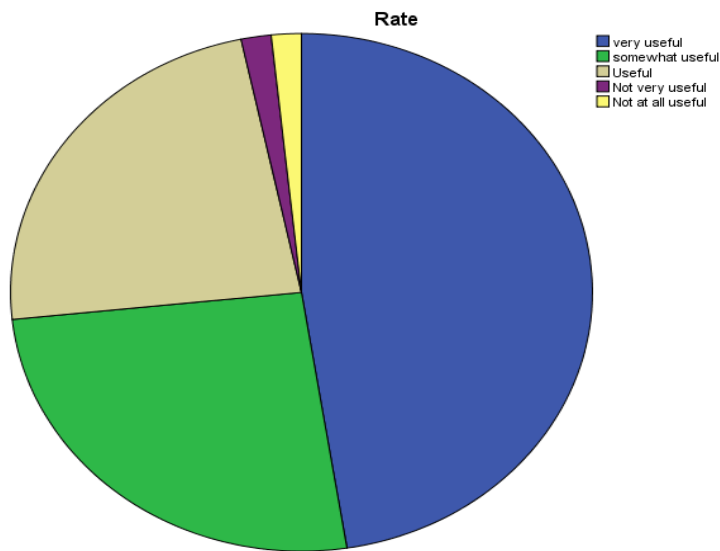
More than half of the respondents visited the university's social sites mainly to read news and information on what was taking place in the university. Communicating corporate messages and issues through social media is important and necessary in order to improve and promote

conversations between companies and stakeholders (Briones et al, 2011) as quoted in Vasquez &Velez, 2011).

Considering the fact that more than half of the students visit the University of Nairobi social media sites to read news and information on events taking place, it can be strongly argued that the university is successful in terms of communicating its corporate communication messages. The university should therefore advance further their corporate communications efforts through social media in order to develop and maintain a good rapport with the stakeholders. The fact that 25% of the respondents visit the social pages to post enquiries means that the university has a responsibility to extend service delivery through social media platforms as opposed to just posting corporate or marketing information.

**4.25: How respondents rate the information shared on the University’s social media sites**

*Pie chart 4.1.3 below displays information on how respondents rated information on the university’s social media sites*



When asked to rate the information on social media, the following observations were made:

- 1.7% felt the information was not very useful as well as those who indicated that it was not at all useful
- 23.3% felt it was useful
- 25.8% felt somewhat useful
- The remaining 47.5% felt the information on the social media sites was very useful

An overwhelming majority of the respondents rated the information shared on the university's social media sites as being useful. In their study, Vasquez & Velez, (2011) found that Puerto Rican companies were more concerned in broadcasting information than having real conversations with their fans and followers. These pointed to a lack of participation by stakeholders which could lead to lack of meaningful discussion between companies and stakeholders.

The findings suggest that information posted on the university's social media pages is helpful to the stakeholders. This means that most of the information shared on the social networking sites address the needs of the stakeholders and provides solutions to the issues at hand. However, a small number felt that the information was not helpful; the challenge then for the university is to ensure that their social media activities are useful to all. Perhaps audience needs analysis within the stakeholders will be able to help institutions to better represent the needs of all the stakeholders.

**4.26: How often respondents responded to information on the University’s social media pages**

*Table 4.23 below displays information on how often respondents responded on information on the university’s social media sites.*

Period	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percent
Very Often	26	21.7	21.7	21.7
Often	37	30.8	30.8	52.5
Sometimes	22	18.3	18.3	70.8
Rarely	24	20.0	20.0	90.8
Never	11	9.2	9.2	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

When asked how often they respond to information on the University social media pages, the following observations were made:

- 9.2% indicated never do they respond to information on the University social media pages
- 18.3% indicated that sometimes they respond
- 21.7% very often respond to information on the social media pages
- 20 % Rarely respond to information on the University social media pages
- 30.8% often respond to the information on the University Social media pages

These findings indicate that a majority of the students do respond to information shared on the university’s social media platforms. For instance, they were able to like the pages or share the information with their colleagues. The challenge for the university is to ensure they maintain the

dialogue as well as reach out to the fractions who do not respond to the university’s social media information. An elaborate social media strategy will be helpful in this case; consider, consistency in posting the messages and clarifications when prompted by the stakeholders or simply being creative and informal in the social media arena in order to better connect with the students.

**4.27: Whether the University’s social media pages were interactive**

*Table 4.24 below displays information on whether the university’s social media pages were found to be interactive by respondents or not.*

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Agree	83	69.2	69.2	69.2
Valid Disagree	37	30.8	30.8	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

69.2 % agreed that social media pages are very interactive while the remaining 30.8 disagreed to this statement

The findings suggest that the university enhanced a two-way communication between the institution and the students. For this, the respondents felt a sense of belonging and understanding. However, a fraction of respondents said the social sites were not interactive. The challenge for the university in this case is to ensure that they enhance dialogue and strive to engage all the stakeholders because that is the essence of being in social media.

**4.28: Whether the University’s social media pages are frequently updated**

*Table 4.25 below displays information on whether the respondents found the university’s social media pages to be interactive or not.*

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Agree	92	76.7	76.7	76.7
Valid Disagree	28	23.3	23.3	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

76.7 per cent of the respondents indicated that the University’s social media pages are frequently updated while the remaining 23.3 disagreed.

Consistency in updating the university’s corporate social media pages is key to the university’s corporate communication goals.

In contrast to the findings of this study, Vasquez & Velez, (2011) observed that there was little representation of Puerto Rican companies on social media and a lack of commitment in maintaining and updating an active corporate profile on Facebook and Twitter.

**4.29: Whether the content posted on the university’s social media pages was interesting**

*Table 4.26 below displays information on whether the respondents found the university social media pages to be interesting.*

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Agree	71	59.2	59.2	59.2
Valid Disagree	49	40.8	40.8	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	



59.2 per cent of the respondents agreed that the content of University’s social media pages are very interesting while the remaining 40.8 % disagreed.

While a majority said the university’s social media pages were interesting, almost half of the respondents disagreed. The argument was that the university’s social sites indeed had useful information but not necessarily interesting.

Interesting content is key to the success of social media activities, it is therefore important for the university to creatively package content in an interesting way in order to attract and retain the attention of their social media followers.

**4.30: Whether the University provided feedback when asked a question on social media pages**

*Table 4.27 shows information on whether the university’s provided feedback on its social media pages or not.*

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Agree	61	50.8	50.8	50.8
Valid Disagree	59	49.2	49.2	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

50.8 % agreed that when asked a question on social media, the University provides feedback while 49.2% disagreed with the idea

The findings indicate that half of the respondents said the university provided feedback while half said the university never provided feedback on social media platforms. Feedback is an

important element in social media communications. The challenge for the university is to provide feedback and maintain dialogue with its social media followers. Failure to offer feedback leads to communication breakdown which could jeopardize the overall image of the institution.

**4.31: Whether Social media was a good platform for the University to link up with its publics**

*Table 4.28 displays information on whether social media was a good platform for the university to link up with its publics or not a good one.*

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Agree	100	83.3	83.3	83.3
Valid Disagree	20	16.7	16.7	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

83.3 agreed that social media is a good platform for the University to link up with its publics while the remaining 16.7 disagreed to this idea.

These findings suggest that an overwhelming majority of the students feel social media is the best platform for the university to communicate with students. It is therefore, imperative for the university to not only maintain social media pages but to proactively use them as part of their wider communication tools.

The findings also mean that institutions are able to serve and reach out to many stakeholders in social media. At the same time, it can be argued that institutions with no social media presence

are not able to address the needs of the modern day stakeholders in an effective and holistic manner.

**4.32: Whether the respondents’ would recommend someone to the university’s social media pages if asked a question.**

*Table: 4.29 displays information on whether the respondents would recommend someone to the university’s social media pages or not.*

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Agree	89	74.2	74.2	74.2
Valid Disagree	31	25.8	25.8	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

74.2 % agreed that they if asked for information, they would recommend someone to the Social media pages while the remaining while the remaining 25.8 % disagreed to this idea.

The findings suggest that respondents felt confident that the university’s social media sites were updated with useful information that could benefit people. However, a fraction would not recommend someone to the university’s sites. The challenge for the university is to ensure they post timely and useful information as well as encourage and promote dialogue. This will make the social sites more reliable and preferred as a good source of information and platform to engage with the university.

#### 4.33: Whether the University of Nairobi's image was enhanced through social media

Table 4.30 displays information on whether respondents felt that the University's image was enhanced through social media or not.

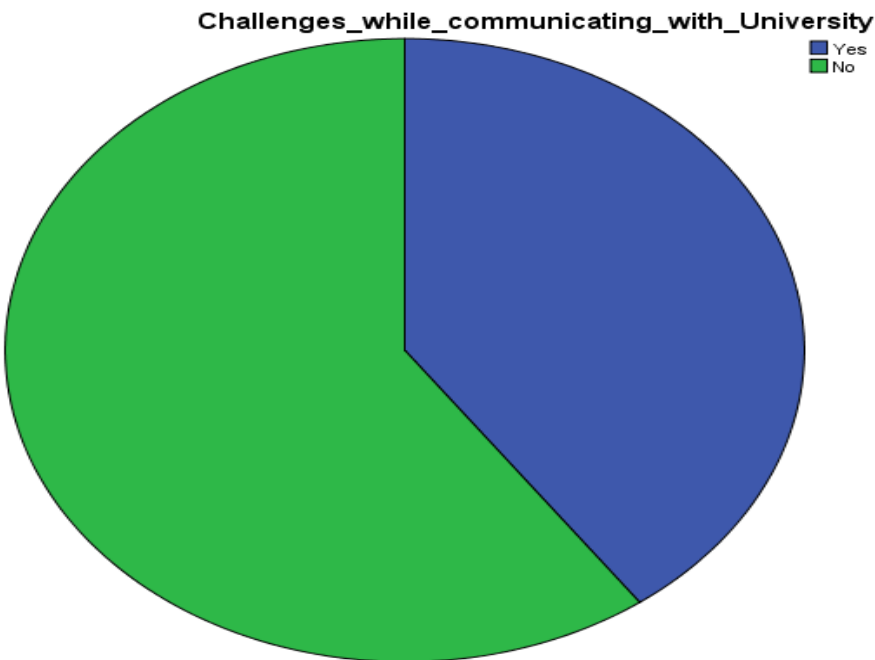
Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Agree	99	82.5	82.5	82.5
Valid Disagree	21	17.5	17.5	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

82.5% agreed that the University of Nairobi's image is enhanced through its social media platforms while the remaining 17.5% disagreed to this idea.

These findings suggest that many students feel proud to have the university on social media. The university can take advantage of its social media presence to enhance and develop its corporate communications goals. It can also be argued that institutions without a social media presence are not developing their corporate images and brands thus lagging behind in terms of corporate communications as well as addressing customer needs.

**4.34: Whether the respondents encountered any challenges while communicating with the University on social media**

*Pie chart 4.1.4 below displays information on whether the respondents had any challenges communicating with the university on social media.*



In the pie chart above 40% of those who participated in the study indicated that they encounter challenges while communicating with the University through social media platforms while the remaining 60% of them have never encountered any challenges. The 40% who faced challenges communicating with the university on social media said that lack of response or feedback from the university's social media administrators was the most challenging problem. They also said that it took a long time for one to get feedback from the university via social media. Other respondents said technical problems like slow internet connections impeded their communication with the university on social media.

When asked to state their opinions on how best the university could connect with students and other stakeholders on social media, majority of the respondents said that the university must be ready to provide feedback on social media as well as post new information on a regular basis. The respondents also stated that it was important for university create awareness of the existence of their social media pages so that new students and prospective students can easily connect with the university.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study. As discussed in the literature review section, social media is argued to be a strong tool of communication not only in institutions of higher learning but also other sectors that touch on social, economic and political welfares of the society. This study set out to investigate the use of social media as a tool of corporate communications in institutions of higher learning. The study also set to out to investigate how students use social media to interact with institutions as well as examine the effectiveness of social media interaction between students and institutions of higher learning. The other objective of this study was to examine how institutions of higher learning were using social media to communicate with students.

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

On the basis of feedback given by the respondents, the researcher came up with findings which were used to draw conclusions and make recommendations. The main findings are based on the results of data analysis presented in chapter four. Consider table 5.1

*Table 5.1 Summary of the findings*

Objectives	Findings
<p>1. To investigate the use of social media as a tool of corporate communications in institutions of higher learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutions of higher learning mostly use Facebook and Twitter to communicate with its clientele.</li> <li>• Institutions of higher learning use social media to manage crisis and safeguard their brands.</li> <li>• Social media is used to compliment other channels of communications like websites, newsletters, newspapers and broadcast.</li> <li>• Social media is used to quickly serve clients and address customer issues.</li> <li>• Social media is used to market an institution’s products and services and this helps in cost saving of advertisement fees</li> <li>• Social media is used to share news and information on events taking place in the institutions.</li> </ul>
<p>2. To investigate how students use social media to interact with institutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of the students (52%) use social media to read news and information on what is taking place in the institutions.</li> <li>• 25% of the students use social media to seek assistance by posting inquiries on various issues in the institutions.</li> <li>• 11.7% use social media to complain or express their dissatisfaction on certain services or products offered by the university while 8.3% use social media to suggest or share new ideas.</li> </ul>



<p>3. To examine the effectiveness of social media interaction between students and institutions of higher learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media is used to counter bad publicity in institutions in an instant.</li> <li>• Majority of the students (82.5%) believe that the image of university is enhanced through social media while 74.2% said that they would recommend someone to the institutions social media pages if asked for information.</li> <li>• 47.5% of the respondents felt that the information posted on the university's social media pages was very useful while 23.7% said it was just useful.</li> <li>• However, 50.8% said that when asked a question on social media, the university never provided feedback.</li> <li>• 30.8% of the respondents never responded to information posted on the university's social media pages.</li> </ul>
<p>4. To examine how institutions of higher learning use social media to communicate with students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The university uses social media to enlighten students on what is happening.</li> <li>• The university uses social media to call upon the students to rally upon an idea or support an action.</li> </ul>

### **5.3 Conclusions**

The findings of study indicate that institutions of higher learning have incorporated social media as a strategic tool of corporate communications with stakeholders. On their part, stakeholders view social media as a powerful platform to connect and communicate with their institutions.

Results also indicated that institutions of higher learning had set social media structures and mechanisms to help them achieve on their set corporate communications goals. For instance, the university not only used the social media platforms to market their products and services but also used it to inform its stakeholders on activities and events taking place at the institution. At the

same time, the university monitored and evaluated its social media activities at the corporate level. However, social media engagement activities at faculty, schools and departmental levels were not measured and evaluated. As a result of this, it is evidently hard to measure the effectiveness and success levels of the smaller units' social media activities.

Although institutions of higher learning had established their presence on social media, majority of the respondents felt that institutions did not provide feedback when prompted by stakeholders and that if they did, then it would take time before one got response from the university. Burston-Marsteller, (2010:2) observed that the value of social media was that users are highly engaged and wanted to be heard. Quoted in, (Vasquez & Velez, 2011).

At this point therefore,. it can be concluded that institutions of higher learning have not fully utilized the potential of social media in their corporate communications efforts

## **5.4 Recommendations**

Following the findings of this study, the researcher came up with several recommendations that could shade light on best practices in using social media as a corporate communications tool.

To begin with, there is need for institutions of higher learning to provide feedback on social media whenever prompted by stakeholders. From the findings of study, almost half of the respondents said that the university never provided feedback when students posted comments or asked questions on the social media platforms. Universities should strive to encourage stakeholders to participate in a two-way communication. According to Vasquez & Velez, (2011), Consumers are a powerful stakeholder group for creating real dialogues through social media sites. Failure to respond to customer questions and concerns raised online leads to misunderstandings and breakdown in communication (p.169).

Secondly, institutions of higher learning need to create interesting and engaging content that could attract traffic from stakeholders on the social media platforms. From the finding of study, 40% of the respondents felt that the content posted on the university's social sites were not interesting at all. According to Mansfield, (2009), institutions should save the traditional marketing and development content for websites, print and e-magazines while the social networks should be all about "personality inspiring conversation and building an online community.

Thirdly, institutions of higher learning need to monitor and evaluate the performance of their social media activities. Although, the university's social media activities were monitored at the corporate level, they were not evaluated at schools', faculty and departmental levels by the web champions. This leaves a gap in measuring the effectiveness of the institution's social media activities. Ideally, there should be a synergy between the social media activities at the corporate level down to individual units and departments. Burson-Masteller, (2012) argued that companies must monitor their own social media presence to ensure a consistent brand message and to measure the impact of their social media engagement.

Fourthly, institutions of higher learning need to diversify their activities across multiple social media platforms. From the findings, Twitter and Facebook are the most used social media sites in institutions of higher learning. Rather than having inactive social media accounts on platforms such as LinkedIn, YouTube, blogs and Google+ among other, the university should create awareness of the existence such social media sites among its key stakeholders.

On the stakeholders' part, there is need for students to frequently visit their institutions social media sites. From the findings of this study, an overwhelming majority of the respondents said that the information posted on the university's social sites were very useful yet only a fraction (30%) visited the institution's social media sites on a daily basis. At the same time, the stakeholders need to be actively engaged with the university on social media platforms rather than being passive consumers of the university's social media messages. This will lead to fruitful mutual engagement between students and institutions. Sweetser, (2010) argues that for stakeholders, social media also brings opportunities because it is easier for them to be watchdogs and track companies with unethical communication behaviors. Cited in (Vasquez &Velez, 2011, p.163).

### **5.5 Suggestions for Further Research**

This research study had a limited scope as stated in the previous chapters. There is a lot of research that needs to be done in order to understand the uses of social media in institutions of higher learning. In conclusion therefore, possibilities for future have been stated as follows:

- I. Future research in social media as a corporate communications tool could include more institutions of higher learning as opposed to a case study of one institution.
- II. Further studies could also focus on how stakeholders evaluate the performance of higher learning institutions in social media.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Letter of Transmittal

FRANKLINE SEWE

P.O.BOX 30197,

Nairobi.

Dear Respondent,

I am a student pursuing a Masters of Arts degree in Communications Studies at the University of Nairobi's School of Journalism. As part of my course requirement, I'm conducting an academic research project titled "Social Media as a Tool of Corporate Communications in Institutions of Higher Learning: A Case Study of the University of Nairobi." With regard to this, you are hereby requested to support this research by providing feedback to the questions below.

Please note that your responses will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. Your effort to answer all the questions comprehensively and to the best of your knowledge will be highly appreciated.

Thank your time and cooperation

Yours faithfully,

Frankline Sewe

Email:sewewenu@gmail.com

## APPENDIX2: Questionnaire for Students

### Instructions

Please tick the appropriate box and fill in the blank spaces provided for questions where elaborate answers are required.

### Section A: About the Respondents

Name (Optional).....Gender: Male [ ] Female [ ]

What is your level of study? Undergraduate [ ] postgraduate [ ]

### Section B: Social Media Perception and Usage

1. Do you have a social media account?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

2. Which of the following describes your current usage of the social media platforms listed below?

	Constant user	Regular User	Occasional User	Past User	Never Used It
Facebook					
Twitter					
YouTube					
Blogs					
Text messaging					
Flickr					
Linked In					

**3. How often have you done the following?**

	Daily	Once a Week	Fortnightly	monthly	Never
Posted a status on Facebook					
Uploaded images to a public Photo site eg/Flickr or Instagram					
Posted a Comment on a blog					
Tweeted on Tweeter					
Subscribed to an RSS feed					
Posted a video on a public video site (eg Youtube)					
Created or edited a wiki entry					

**4. Which statement best describes your overall perception of social media?**

They are here to stay	
They are powerful communication tools.	
They are interesting but mostly for personal use not organizational use	
They will fade with time	
Prefer not to answer	

**Awareness and usage of the University’s social media platform**

**5 (a).** Have you ever visited the University of Nairobi’s social media pages? Yes [ ] No [ ]

**(b).** If yes, how often

Daily [ ]      Twice a week [ ]      Once a week [ ]      Fortnightly [ ]

Once a month [ ]

**6.** What is your main purpose for visiting the University of Nairobi’s social media pages?

To post enquiries	
To express complains	
To express compliments	
To reads news/information	
To share suggestions and new ideas	
Others	

**7.** How would you rate the information shared on the University’s social media sites?

Very Useful [ ] somewhat useful [ ] Useful [ ] Not very useful [ ] Not at all Useful [ ]

**8.** How often do you respond to information posted on the University’s social media pages?

Very often [ ] often [ ] sometimes [ ] Rarely [ ] Never [ ]

9. In your own assessment, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Yes	No
The university's social media pages are very interactive		
The university's social media pages are frequently updated		
The content posted on the university's social media pages is very interesting		
When asked a question on social media, the university provides feedback		
Social media is a good platform for the university to link up with its publics		
If asked for information, I would recommend someone to the University's social media pages		
The University of Nairobi's image is enhanced through its social media platforms		

10(a) Do you encounter any challenges while communicating with the university through social media platforms? Yes [ ] No [ ]

(b) If yes please explain

.....  
 .....

11. In your own words, how best can the university connect with students and members of the public through social media?

Explain.....  
 .....  
 .....

## APPENDIX3: Questionnaire for Web Champions

### Instructions

Please tick the appropriate box and fill in the blank spaces provided for questions where elaborate answers are required.

#### Section A: Personal Information

Name (Optional).....

Gender Male [ ] Female [ ]

#### Section B: Social Media Usage and Perception

1. Does your faculty/school/department have any active social media account?

Yes [ ] No [ ] Not aware [ ]

2. (a) Do you manage a professional social media account for your faculty/department or school? Yes [ ] No [ ]

(b) If Yes; Which Social Media platforms do you use to share faculty information with students? Facebook [ ] Twitter [ ] MySpace [ ] YouTube [ ] Blogs [ ] LinkedIn [ ] Instagram [ ] Other [ ]

(c) If No, who manages your faculty's social media accounts?

Explain.....



**3. Which statement best describes your overall perception of social media?**

They are here to stay and my faculty/school/department has strategy/needs a strategy/is developing a strategy for using them.	
They have a powerful potential in communication but I am not sure how it can be applied in faculty/school/department	
They are interesting but mostly for personal use not for faculty/department/school's use	
They will fade with time	
Prefer not to answer	

**4. Which of the following describes your current usage of the electronic communications listed below?**

	Constant user	Regular User	Occasional User	Past User	Never Used It
Email					
Facebook					
Twitter					
YouTube					
Blogs					
Text messaging					
Flickr					
Linked In					

5. How often have you done the following on the faculty's/department's/school's social media pages?

	Daily	Once a Week	Fortnightly	monthly	Never
Posted a status on Facebook					
Uploaded images to a public Photo site eg/Flickr or Instagram					
Posted /responded to a Comment on a blog					
Tweeted on Tweeter					
Subscribed to an RSS feed					
Posted a video on a public video site (eg Youtube)					
Created or edited a wiki entry					

6. Do you use each of the following social media for personal use or the faculty's/department's/school's use or both?

	Personal Use Only	Faculty Use Only	Both	I don't use it
Facebook				
Twitter				
Linked In				
Blogs				
Youtube				
Youtube				
Instagram				

7. To the best of your knowledge, how often does your faculty/department/school use each of the following forms of electronic communication?

a) To communicate with staff and current students

	Regularly	Occasionally	Seldom	Never	I have no Idea
Twitter					
Youtube					
Facebook					
Linked In					
Email					
Blogs					
Flickr					
Text Messaging					

**b)** To communicate with people outside the university (prospective students, alumni, donors, partners)

	Regularly	Occasionally	Seldom	Never	I have no Idea
Twitter					
Youtube					
Facebook					
Linked In					
Email					
Blogs					
Flickr					
Text Messaging					

**8.** What kinds of information do you post for/share with students, alumni, staff and members of the public on the faculty's/schools/department's social media accounts?

News/events updates  photographs  videos  other

**9.** What kinds of information do students and members of the public post on your social media pages?

Inquiries  complains  compliments  suggestions  other

**10.** Do you encounter any challenges while engaging students, staff and members of the public on social media?

Yes  No

If yes, please explain the challenges in brief.....

**11.** How do you respond to remarks posted on your faculty's social media pages by students, staff and members of the public if you do not have an immediate answer? Please explain.....

.....

**12.** Do you monitor/evaluate the success levels of your faculty/department/school's social media communication with students, and members of the public?

Yes  No

If yes, please explain how and when you evaluate your success?

.....

.....

## **APPENDIX 4: Key Informant Interview Guide for the Communications Officer of the University of Nairobi**

- I. As the communications professional of the University of Nairobi, why did you decide to engage students on social media? What was the main idea behind it?
- II. As the social media coordinator, how do you ensure that the University's social media brand succeeds? What type of content do you share and how do you create it to ensure that your social media brand becomes and remains a popular communication alternative for your stakeholders?
- III. Does it make strategic sense for the University of Nairobi to be involved with social media? How do social media enhance your communication with publics?
- IV. What is the main goal of the University of Nairobi's social media strategy? Have you set a measurable objective as far as your social media interaction with students is concerned?
- V. Is the University's social media (communications) separate from your other forms of communications or it is a reflection of the messages from other communications platforms? Any examples?
- VI. How do you evaluate the levels of the university's social media engagement with students? Specifically for your posts-how do you monitor shares, comments, social tags? Do you use a special tool for this?
- VII. What type of content receives higher rates of interaction when posted on the University's social media pages?
- VIII. How have you incorporated social media policy into the university's entire marketing and communications policy?
- IX. What are some of the challenges you encounter when using social media to communicate with students?