

# EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ON COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION AND SECURITY ENHANCEMENT IN NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this study will be to examine the effects of social media use by public administration on community mobilization and security enhancement in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study employed desktop methodology, which involved review of existing literature relating to the study topic. The design involves a review of existing studies relating to the research topic. Based on past literature this study found out that communication between the government and the public is important in any effective political engagement. This is because citizens need to communicate to government on how they want to be governed while the government needs to communicate to the public on its many activities. Many government agencies are motivated to apply social media due to the various advantages it has chiefly, the ability to interact directly with the people. Further, this study revealed that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter can be used to promote citizen dialogue and government transparency on substantive issues. Governments are making information available to citizens and providing them with a forum to get information and ask questions. Through the utilization of social media, they are to some extent making government initiatives and activities more open and accessible. In addition, the study established social media presence is a trademark of a vibrant and transparent communications strategy, and, to that end, social media offer particular utility to public administration systems of government to have public relations. Social media tools can improve interactivity between a government and the public, and they reach populations that do not consume traditional media as frequently as others. Finally, the study found that the use of social media allows officials in government to build relationships with key stakeholders, namely the citizens it represents.*

**Keywords:** Social media, community mobilization, security enhancement, Nakuru Kenya

## 1.0 Introduction

Social media is one of the technological innovations that have greatly revolutionized different aspects of the human life. To a great extent, it has changed different processes and engagement of human interaction. Today, the adoption of social media in different dimensions including the business environment has taken great strides (Bertot, Jaeger, and Hansen, 2012). One of the main areas that social media has greatly impacted in the society is in terms of use by government agencies. The founders of the social media did not have an idea of the many ways

that this new component could greatly impact on the lives of others (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Initially, they developed the social media as a way of bridging the communication gap between people in different geographical locations. However, upon its extended use, social media has gained great significance in different field including enhancing communication between the government and the governed (Livingston, 2013).

Social media offer great opportunities for governments. The open, dialogic nature of social media eliminates many of the barriers in communication that the government has experienced in the past (Bertot & Jaeger, 2010). Bertot and Jaeger established that social media can be applied in increasing and improving access to government information. This can be achieved through offering information via the internet through multiple dynamic interactive channels, interacting with members of the public and addressing specific citizen interests and concerns. Moreover social media can be used to reach populations who might not otherwise encounter the government information, serve as information and communication outlets for whistleblowers to release sensitive information and supplement or replace corrupt or deficient information with citizen journalism.

Graham and Avery (2013) assessed how social media are used as public relations functions to serve democratic, participatory, and transparency models across a range of government contexts. They observed that social media are somewhat underutilized by local governments, with about a 70% overall use rate compared with target of attaining over 90% usage. Perceived importance of social media predicted actual use. However, the officials' perceptions of whether or not their citizens expected them to use social media did not predict use. Facebook and Twitter were the most commonly used tools; the vast majority of posts and tweets they wrote are about special events. Well over one-third used at least one research or conferencing social media tool (Graham and Avery, 2013).

Roumani (2013) studied the implications of internet based technology on policy framework and learning culture at Kenyatta University's City Campus. Mwaniki (2012) conducted a study on the influence of social media on the effectiveness of business operations of the youth operated small and medium enterprises in the municipal council of Nakuru. Yator (2014) conducted a study on the use of social media network sites on service delivery in hotels in Nakuru town. The studies that have been conducted in regard to use of SNSs in public administration have been carried out outside Kenya and those carried out in Kenya have not focused on use of SNSs on public administration.

This study will be different from the previous studies since it will focus on use of social media tools such as twitter, SMSs and Facebook in public community mobilization and security enhancement in Lanet Umoja Location. This location was selected as its public administrators who have been in the forefront of adopting and using social media in their public administration and community mobilization (Karimi, 2013; Macharia, 2013). Njiri (2013) in his study on community policing found the programme lacked adequate resources and thus recommended the need for innovative sensitization approaches for community policing to be successful. Since then various administrators in the country have adopted use of social media in as innovative communication and interactions with the public.

In Kajiado County, traditional leaders in public administration were urged to embrace technology in a bid to curb surging fears of insecurity in the country. This is according to the deputy commissioner of Kenya's Kajiado County Mwangi Kahiro. He urged chiefs and their assistants to open up accounts on social media services such as Facebook and Twitter to interact with as many locals as possible (Omanga, 2015). This call has been made by various government leaders which have prompted public administrators and state officers to adopt the social media. In another incidence, the digital wave hit Nyeri county administrative quarters,

as chiefs showed up in numbers to learn how to use the social media platform as a tool of fighting crime in the county (Murule, 2013). Famous tweeting Chief from Lanet Umoja location, Francis Kariuki, pioneered the exercise, in a move to implement community policing in the county (Mutune, 2014).

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Government communication is a major part of the political public relations domain (Stromback & Kiouisis, 2011). Although the significance of social media in enhancing government communication, community involvement and public administration has been established, there is scarce research in the field. First, as social media has been diffused among citizens and firms, government agencies have recently adopted social media to provide complementary communication and participation channels for citizens. Some scholars (Bonson, Torres, Royo & Flores, 2012; Purser, 2012; Snead, 2013) in public administration have paid considerable attention to its opportunities to restore citizen trust in government. However, little research has been conducted to empirically test the effect of citizens' use of social media and whether the government has been made more efficient and transparent due to social media adoption. Second, some empirical studies relied on earlier survey data to examine citizens' assessment of e-government at an early stage of its development (Tolbert and Mossberger 2006; Welch et al., 2005; West, 2004).

Considering the rapid development of e-government and the recent introduction of online services and social media, it is worthwhile to investigate how government has applied social media tools and to assess the impact of this adoption both to the government and the public. This study will therefore seek to examine the utilization of social media in community policing and security in Lanet Umoja location of Nakuru County. The study examined the factors that have motivated the adoption of social media, assess how social media has been applied in community mobilization and security and analyze the effects of social media utilization in community mobilization and security maintenance in Lanet.

### **2.0 Theoretical Review**

The current study will be based on the diffusion of innovations theory by Rogers (1962) and the New Public Management (NPM) theoretical approach (Gudelis and Guodis, 2011). The diffusion of innovations theory explains the role played by the political, economic and the social factors that may enable or hinder diffusion of technology in a given society. The theory seeks to explain the rate at which new technology diffuse within cultures (Pinho & Soares, 2011). The theory also explains why and how technologies and new ideas are adopted in different cultures and societies. In the theory, diffusion is defined as the process through which a technology or new idea is communicated and accepted in a social system.

In the diffusion of innovations theory, three types of decisions are made in a social system about adoption of an idea or technology. The first is the optional innovation-decision which is made by an individual, whether to adopt or not adopt the technology. The second is the collective innovation-decision which is made collectively by all individuals in the social system. Lastly, the authority innovation-decision is the decision made for the entire social system by individuals who have power or influence in the social system (Tai & Ting, 2011). This explains the reasons that lead to administrators and residents in an area adopting technology to ensure security and community policing is effective. The social, political and economic aspects of the adoption decision are explained by this theory.

Diffusion of technologies theory explains that organizations or institutions adopt new technology through authority innovation decisions and collective innovation decisions (Shittu et al., 2011). The collective innovation decision in the context of this study is where the

adoption of technology as a tool for improving community policing and security is made by the public administration led by Chief Kariuki. In this case, the decision is not formal and both the administrators and citizens in the location agree to use social media technology for security purposes.

The authority-innovation comes to play where the decision to adopt any new technology in the location is made by the public administration of the location. This means that the few people who have a position of power in an institution can make the decision to adopt the technology or not (Rodgers, 2005). This theory also explains that in reaching the decisions, the benefits and costs of the innovation is considered. The citizens will agree to use social media for security purposes when there are advantaged derived from using social media.

The other theoretical perspective which this study is grounded upon is the New Public Management approach. Gudelis and Guodis (2011) describe New Public Management as the business sector's gift to public administration. It calls for a qualitative dynamic, in clear contrast to the traditional public administration model, typically characterized by a lack of flexibility and focused on process and procedure rather than goals and results. Among the primary aims of NPM reforms are the reduction of expenses to public administration and increased effectiveness and quality in the work of civil servants (Denhart, 2004).

Since the advent of new public management (NPM) public administration around the world has witnessed considerable transformations in its various spheres. Variously referred to as managerialism, market-based public administration, and results-based management (Pollitt, 2003; Vigoda, 2003), the NPM has thus emerged as a powerful force bringing about rapid and at times unprecedented changes to public sector governance in developed as well as developing countries. While it lacks any precise definition generally, the NPM is understood to mean the application of private sector values and principles in the public sector in order to increase its efficiency, effectiveness, and general performance (De Vries & Nemec, 2013).

NPM entails wide ranging changes involving organizational structures as well as operational processes and principles of public administration. At the heart of these changes is the emphasis on outcomes and results, cost-cutting, efficiency, and flexible management, among others. Technology use epitomizes these components as it leads to results, cost cutting, efficiency and flexibility in public administration (Luke, Kearins & Verreynne, 2011; Spacek & Maly, 2010).

These two theoretical perspectives will be suitable for this study and will assist in getting an insight into the adoption and usage of technology in public administration and security enhancement in Kenya.

### **3.0 Empirical Review**

#### **3.1 Motivations towards Adoption of Social Media in Public Administration**

According to West (2004), communication between the government and the public is important in any effective political engagement. This is because citizens need to communicate to government on how they want to be governed while the government needs to communicate to the public on its many activities. As noted by Thomas and Streib (2003), some years back, the government used to communicate with its citizens through only the traditional media such as newspapers, radio and television, which is basically a one way communicate model. However, Yildiz (2007) observes that, with the advent of social media, the government saw a new platform where it can interact with its citizens.

Bryer and Zavattaro (2011) studied use of social media by local authorities in Barcelona, Spain. They noted that government public administrators in local authorities engaged public through social media in a similar way that they apply e-government and e-democracy platforms. Social

networking applications and social media, were applied in large part because of their ease of use, have become instruments of communication and change and should be expected to have a significant impact on government communication for the foreseeable future. A recent review of the literature concerning social media's impact on e-government initiatives in the public sector by Magro (2012) found that defining an ultimate goal for e-government, changes in government culture, and resource management are needed before governments can achieve success in the use of social media. However, the review by Magro (2012) indicated that many government agencies are motivated to apply social media due to the various advantages it has chiefly, the ability to interact directly with the people.

Hand and Ching (2011) examined how local governments' in the Phoenix metropolitan areas use social media and found that using social media at the local government level seems to offer promise of increased citizen engagement, reaching citizens on a common platform, and allowing for citizen comments. A similar study by Bonson, Torres, Royo and Flores (2012) that looked at local governments in Europe found that many governments have realized the opportunities that social media present and that by making their news available through social media they can vastly increase their audience reach at very little cost. In addition, local governments are using social media tools to enhance transparency, but the use of social media to promote e-participation with citizens is still underused.

### **3.2 Application of Social Media in Enhancing Public Administration**

A study by Graham and Avery (2013) in US established that Facebook (91%) was the predominant social media tool used by local governments to communicate with citizens. In this study, several trends emerged regarding Facebook use among local governments. First, the local government officials indicated that the primary reason of using Facebook was due to internal organizational pressure. These interesting finding raises additional questions to be answered in future research regarding the staffing and support of social media initiatives by local governments to respond to these internal demands. Second, for local governments using Facebook, daily posts were the most common (35%) followed by weekly posts (28%). This finding is in line with general social media usage statistics that show 35% of adults using social media make posts daily, and 25% do so every few days.

Findings from a study by Azyan (2012) on the use of social media by governments in Africa indicate that local governments are, by and large, utilizing social media to some extent to communicate with citizens and key publics. Of the 70% of users of social media, social networking tools are most used, but at least a third of these officials use networking or research tools. As evidenced by the primary focus on event information in these results in Facebook posts and Tweets, less obvious is the engagement of social media to promote citizen dialogue and government transparency on substantive issues. Governments are making information available to citizens and providing them with a forum to get information and ask questions. Through the utilization of social media, they are to some extent making government initiatives and activities more open and accessible.

Consistent with the government transparency requirements suggested in Fairbanks, Plowman, and Rawlins' (2007) model, local governments are informing, educating, and reporting about government activities, policies, and community issues through social media; however, there is room for improvement in this area based on the types of information posted. Providing this type of transparency builds trust and encourages accountability (Bertot & Jaeger, 2010). Moreover, local governments seem to support democratic and participatory citizen engagement by allowing for open communication on their social networking pages and allowing dialogic exchange of information and ideas. The current study will seek to establish what kind of

communication is carried out by public administration in Lanet Umoja location through the social media.

### **3.3 Effect of Social Media Use in Public Administration**

A social media presence is a trademark of a vibrant and transparent communications strategy, and, to that end, social media offer particular utility to public administration systems of government to have public relations. Social media tools can improve interactivity between a government and the public, and they reach populations that do not consume traditional media as frequently as others (Bertot, Jaeger, Munson, & Glaisyer, 2010). This new technology allows officials in government to build relationships with key stakeholders, namely the citizens it represents. The relationship-building potential of social media is especially valuable for public relations professionals since building relationships is at the core of public relations (Ledingham, 2003). Additionally, social media can enhance governments' abilities to interact with and engage citizens as well as to meet their expectations for transparency.

Practitioners in government public relations have more tools to engage and communicate with the public than ever before. A survey in US showed that two-thirds of online adults use social media platforms (Smith, 2011). In addition, 40% of Internet users in developing countries of Kenya, Uganda, Ghana and South Africa go online for data about government operations, and social media users are more tied to civic groups (Raine, 2011). As such, social media offer great opportunities for governmental agencies to interact and get a feel of what the opinions and views of the citizens are. The open, dialogic nature of social media eliminates many of the barriers in communication that these governments have experienced in the past (Bertot & Jaeger, 2010). Communication with constituents can be more frequent, open, and targeted.

In the past, governments have had to rely almost exclusively on traditional media (Dixon, 2010), specifically newspapers, television, and radio, to get information to citizens. Because of this, governments had limited control over what was disseminated to publics and when it would be distributed. The boom of the Internet and particularly social media has changed the landscape for communications. Traditional media are now not the only source of public government information influencing public thought and discourse. Additionally, traditional media accommodate a one-way communication model, but a one-way power over news generation and dissemination is largely obsolete (Shirky, 2008). The fundamental difference between social and traditional mainstream media is the user-to-user format as opposed to top-down news dissemination (Clark & Aufderheide, 2009). With social media, users are able to post, share, and republish information easily and quickly. Social media are a rapidly moving and vigorous domain (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The use of social media in the public sector has become a hot topic recently, and public administrators are beginning to embrace them to encourage civic engagement and build community involvement in policy and government activities.

### **4.0 Research Gaps**

Review of previous studies on the use of social media by the government revealed several research gaps. Graham and Avery (2013) conducted a study on the use of social media by the US government to communicate with citizens. This study presents a geographical gap since it was conducted in the US. The proposed study will be conducted in Kenya. Further, Bryer and Zavattaro (2011) studied use of social media by local authorities in Barcelona, Spain. They noted that government public administrators in local authorities engaged public through social media in a similar way that they apply e-government and e-democracy platforms. Similarly, the study presents a geographical gap since it was carried out in Barcelona, Spain.

Azyan (2012) carried out a study on the use of social media by governments in Africa. The study found that local governments are, by and large, utilizing social media to some extent to communicate with citizens and key publics. The study focused on a larger scope compared to the proposed study.

Dixon (2010) in his study observed that in the past, governments have had to rely almost exclusively on traditional media, specifically newspapers, television, and radio, to get information to citizens. The study focused on the use traditional media by the government to communicate with the citizens, thus presenting a conceptual gap. On the other hand, the proposed study focuses on the use of social media to communicate with the citizens.

From the above studies, it is evident that none of the studies has focused on the effects of social media use by public administration on community mobilization and security enhancement in Nakuru County, Kenya.

### **5.0 Conclusions-Policy, Practice, Theory Building**

Based on past literature this study concluded that communication between the government and the public is important in any effective political engagement. This is because citizens need to communicate to government on how they want to be governed while the government needs to communicate to the public on its many activities. Many government agencies are motivated to apply social media due to the various advantages it has chiefly, the ability to interact directly with the people.

Further, this study concluded that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter can be used to promote citizen dialogue and government transparency on substantive issues. Government is making information available to citizens and providing them with a forum to get information and ask questions. Through the utilization of social media, they are to some extent making government initiatives and activities more open and accessible.

This study also concluded that a social media presence is a trademark of a vibrant and transparent communications strategy, and, to that end, social media offer particular utility to public administration systems of government to have public relations. Social media tools can improve interactivity between a government and the public, and they reach populations that do not consume traditional media as frequently as others.

Finally, this study concluded that the use of social media allows officials in government to build relationships with key stakeholders, namely the citizens it represents. The relationship-building potential of social media is especially valuable for public relations professionals since building relationships is at the core of public relations.

### **6.0 Contribution to Policy, Practice and Theory**

The findings in this study will contribute to policy, practice and theory building. Firstly, through the findings of this study, the government agencies should be able to formulate relevant policies on the use of social media to communicate with the people. For instance, the government should pass a law that requires all public administration officers to adopt the use of social media in engaging the people they serve. Secondly, the findings of this study should motivate both the government officers and the citizens to use social media. This will enhance effective communication and information sharing between the two parties. For instance, through effective information sharing, the public administration in Nakuru and other Counties will be able to address the security problem. Lastly, the findings of this study will contribute to development of theory. Scholars will be able use the findings of this study to build on their research.

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