

**UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A SOURCE OF CO-OPERATIVE
INFORMATION AMONG THE YOUTH IN MERU COUNTY, KENYA**

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TECHNOLOGY**

AUGUST, 2020

DECLARATION

I declare that this Thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for any other degree of this or any other University.

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CERTIFICATION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to my daughters Makena Mwongela, and Mutheu Mwongela, dear wife Joan Mwongela, and to my Dad Juliano Mikwa and Mum Paulina Mukethi for their moral support.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AGCC	-	Agricultural Co-operative Community
CEO	-	Chief Executive Officers
CIC	-	Co-operative Insurance Company
CICOPA	-	Comité International des Coopératives de Production
CSA	-	Co-operative Societies' Act
FAO	-	Food and Agricultural Organization
FOSA	-	Front Office Services Activity
FSD	-	Financial Sector Deepening
G20	-	this is a group of 20 Countries forming a forum for Governments and Central Bank Governors from 19 nations and the European Union
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
HTML	-	Hyper Text Markup Language
ICA	-	International Co-operative Alliance
ICM	-	International Co-operative Movement
IT	-	Information Technology
ITU	-	International Telecommunication Union
KCC	-	Kenya Co-operative Creameries

KCC	-	Kenya Co-operative Creameries
KES	-	Kenya Shillings
KFA	-	Kenya Farmers Association
KGs	-	Kilograms
KNBS	-	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
KNFC	-	Kenya National Federation of Co-operatives
KPCU	-	Kenya Planters Co-operative Union
LLCs	-	Limited Liability Companies
MACCU	-	Meru African Coffee Co-operative Union
MOCDM	-	Ministry of Co-operative Development and Marketing
MT	-	Metric Tons
NACOSTI	-	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
NATCCO	-	National Confederation of Co-operatives
NCPD	-	National council for population and Development
NCUA	-	National Credit Union Association
SACCA	-	Savings and Credit Co-operatives Associations
SACCO	-	Savings and Credit Co-operative
SAPs	-	Structural Adjustment Programmes

SASRA	–	Sacco Societies Regulatory Authority
SCOT	-	Social Construction of Technology
SME	–	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMS	-	Short Messaging Services
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SSA	-	SACCO Societies’ Act
UN	-	United Nations
USD	-	United States Dollar
WW II	–	World War Two
WWW	-	World Wide Web
VCRs	-	Video Cassette Recorders
CIL	-	Consumer Insight Limited (CIL)
CCK	–	Communication Council of Kenya
UK	–	United Kingdom
USA	–	United States of America
STS	–	Science-Technology-Society

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Communication - This is the act of conveying intended meanings from one entity or group to another through the use of mutually understood signs and semiotic rules

Co-operative – It is a free association of people who willingly come together with a similar social, cultural or economic, needs and aspirations through a conjointly owned and a member controlled enterprise

Co-operative Information - This includes data related to management and running of co-operative societies

Cooperativism - This is an international movement to democratize the internet

Democracy – it is a system of control by all; democracy in co-operatives means members have control of their co-operative society

Demographic Dividend – this is an economic window of opportunity a country reaps from its population structure *vis-à-vis* productivity of its population

Dissemination – in the context of this study, to disseminate is to spread information about an issue or a to publicize that particular information for the purposes of a buy-in

Innovation – This could refer to the introduction of a new thing, an idea, an aspect, and a new way of doing a process or an invention.

Internet – This is an electronic network of communications that connects computer networks and organizational computer facilities around the world.

Malthusianism Principals – these are a set of population ideas advanced by Reverend Malthus on population and its potential exponential on growth of the food supply or other resources being linear.

Mpesa - an electronic money transfer system and platform, based on messaging provided by mobile service provider, Safaricom

New Media – This term refers to forms of communication that are native to computers, computational and relying on computers for distribution. Typically, new media may refer to Examples of new media are websites, mobile applications, among other. Further, this term is also used to refer to content transmitted using different forms of electronic communication made using computer technology.

Pay-Bill Number – this is a cashless payment option provided by mobile telephone money transfer service Safaricom in Kenya to allow cashless transactions: Through such numbers, one to pay for services or goods promptly using Mpesa

Platform – In this document, the term will be used to refer to the declared policy of a political group. It could also mean a basic technology of a computer system's hardware and software, defining how a computer is operated and determining what other kinds of software can be used.

Principles of Co-operatives – these are the key pillars on which a co-operative society is based on; they are also referred to as the Co-operative Philosophy

Rochdale Principles – these are a set of tenets dating 1844 that guides operation of co-operatives

Safaricom – This is a telecommunications service provider in Kenya famously known for Mpesa services

Social Media- Social media is the collective term for online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration.

Soko Huru – free or liberalized market

Youth – these are young adults; in Kenya a youth is anyone between the age of 18 years and 35 years

ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine the utilization of social media as a communication tool by co-operatives in Meru County in the dissemination of co-operative information among the youth. The researcher explored the potential of social media and examined its usage and barriers as a communication tool among the co-operatives. Largely, the study notes that the growth and usage of social media has been enabled by the internet and technological advancement. This thesis aimed at finding out the extent to which the co-operatives in Meru County use social media as a communication tool in enhancing the uptake of their services among the youth. The objectives of this study were to assess the communication tools used by the co-operatives in Meru County, to ascertain the extent to which social media is being used as a communication tool in enhancing the uptake of co-operative services and to ascertain barriers to usage of Social media as a communication tool by co-operatives. This study used positivist paradigm, which is based on facts and considers the world to be external and objective. The study was conducted in Meru County in Kenya using mixed methods. Both qualitative and quantitative data was used. The data collected was integrated in the design analysis by explaining and building it within the large data framework. The study explored the technological determinism theory and the social construction of technology theory to underpin and encapsulate how technological culture can shape the future of the co-operative movement. In this study the researcher interviewed key informants in the co-operative movement. The study found out that 83% of co-operatives under study utilized social media as a source of co-operative information. However, only few youths are members of co-operatives. From this study, co-operatives in Meru County were found to have huge ICT and communications gaps and risk to follow economies all across Africa being faced with low-paid, informal work, and youth unemployment. To address this gap, social media as a communication tool, offers one of the best solutions in line with the sector's principles. Co-operatives need to explore how digital platforms, rooted in the principles of broad-based ownership and democratic governance, could come to fruition across co-operatives in the county focusing on their potential and feasibility, global and local contexts, case studies and success stories, openness and transparency, policy and sustainability; this will further set co-operatives to radically prepare the social organization of emerging technologies among themselves aiming to re-design with community wealth in mind. This study strongly tasks co-operative and communication scholars to link radical democracy and the internet as a tool for corporate extraction, and how to reverse the process while harnessing the dividends of social media as a communication tool among co-operatives.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the basic aspects of this thesis. It presents the background of the research problem, purpose of the study, general and specific objectives, and statement of the research problem, research questions, and hypothesis of the study, research assumptions and limitations as well as justification of the study. Lastly, the research gap is presented and the reasons why the study was carried out and the reliability recommendations made.

1.2 Background to the Study

As the world is continuously evolving, Kenya has been grappling with high unemployment rates over time especially the youth. It is worth noting that, Kenya's youth unemployment situation is particularly high as noted by the World Bank. Reportedly, in the period 1998-2005, aggregate unemployment fell from 15% to 12.5%, but the share of the youth in unemployment rose from 60% to 72 % in the same period (World Bank, 2017). The National Council For Population and Development (NCPD), in their analysis, through the Kenya's Demographic Dividend Roadmap (2018), precariously notes that, whereas Kenya's history of prosperity is long, the youth, who form 35% of Kenya's total population (NCPD, 2018), have their participation in economic ventures low. Among other things, it is impeded by the limited use of technology, and business ideas involving Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) are being taken on by corporations and individual business people; a missed opportunity for the co-operative movement in Africa (Nyagah, 2014). According to a report by the International Co-operative Alliance, ICA, (2014), Kenya's co-operative

business model is the best in Africa and 7th best in the Globe. Further, the co-operative movement in Kenya mobilizes and controls over Kenya's 45% of the GDP, with about 84% of Kenyans deriving their livelihoods either directly or indirectly from the co-operatives (ICA, 2014). The statistics on youth unemployment are worrying while the statistics on co-operative ventures are encouraging. If this is so, then there is need to study what gap exists in between and what the potential is once these gaps are closed.

Accordingly, bearing in mind the existence of a dynamic youth population, and the vibrant Kenya's co-operative movement, the two can be linked and create a synergy to provide a lasting solution to the challenge of youth unemployment. However, notably, the involvement of youth in co-operative ventures remains a challenge. It is important to then find out why the youth are not highly involved in these ventures looking into the barriers that may be impeding them as well as cutting across the sector.

In the late 80s and early 90s, the Co-operative sector plummeted with the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) that liberalized the markets and reduced Government supervision. This is the period that saw the booming sector lose much of its past glory. Some of the challenges that the sector faced included, poor management, low capitalization, low adoption of ICT, exploiting middlemen cartels, unpredictable global prices, erratic weather, high cost of farm inputs, low and delayed payments and stiff competition (Nyagah, 2014).

Researchers have proven that, if co-operatives adopt ICTs, they can benefit in a huge way; For instance, they can get new customer bases, grow new and existing markets, and create visibility online among others. Further, Social Media can help energize the management of co-operatives in terms of communication management, marketing and

publicity and management practices, financial information, reporting of events, records and information management as well as create an online presence. These improvements help increase efficiency and lower operating costs (Tom, 2015).

Co-operative enthusiasts have, over time underscored the important role that ICTs play in bringing about efficiency in the sector. On the other hand, the challenges and barriers brought by and associated with ICT implementation are also teething in the Co-operative development hence hindering the uptake (Kobia, 2011). Notably, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), agricultural co-operatives are key to feeding the population of the world. Available data shows that the Agricultural Co-operative Communities (AGCC) have grown to over 6,000 members both in the private sector and civil society in more than 100 different countries worldwide. FAO further argues that adoption of Social Media tools among co-operatives can change the way co-operatives work and bring vast benefits especially in agriculture (FAO, 2012). Co-operatives providing access to information such as crop cycles, localized weather reports, farming methods and local markets, available online or directly to individuals via text messages, and or mobile money transfers, is just one example of how innovative social media tools and platforms can revolutionize the day-to-day functioning of co-operatives and benefit members (Tom, 2015).

The mobile telecommunications service provider Safaricom's 'Mpesa'- an electronic money transfer system and platform, based on messaging has transformed lives of millions of people living in Kenya and outside through a liberalized mobile money transfer in Kenya making the Nation as the leader in mobile money transfer in the world. 'Mpesa' allows immediate payments for those who live in remote areas miles from conventional commercial banks. One can deposit or withdraw liquid cash when

needed. Mpesa users are also able to pay for services via pay-bill numbers and to deposit or withdraw money from conventional bank accounts among others. Mpesa allows subscribers to transfer e-money provided they are in possession of the Safaricom telecommunications company simcard. These transactions are instant (FSD, 2015).

According to the UN International year of Co-operatives, “ICT’s are transforming co-operatives by expanding the scope of potential networks and deepening existing networks through more consistent communication.” (UN, 2012). The key argument is building communications among members and across organizations was stressed throughout the discussions by further noting the scale and uniqueness of each of the co-operatives in specific parts of the world (UN, 2012).

Co-operatives are a clearly identifiable group with an existing community of over a billion people and growing. They have unifying co-operative principles such as democratic member control, cooperation among co-operatives and concern for community which shape co-operatives approach to their members, their business and their communities (Gicheru & M’Imanyara, 2012).

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) liaison office of UN during the International Year of Co-operatives in 2012 notes that the missing link between the developed and developing world is access to communication. ICT networks are a catalyst for the achievement of all three pillars of sustainability; social, economic and environmental and ICT infrastructure is taking on a utilitarian function on par with water, energy and transportation. 26% of all GDP growth in developing countries can be attributed to the internet. Mobile telephony is almost 100% so the divide now has

shifted to access to the internet and access to mobile broadband because that's where the future is going to be (UN, 2012).

In his Book, *African Minister's Lessons for Co-operatives*, Nyagah Nthiga, argues that although the co-operative movement remains a key driver in economic empowerment, job creation and poverty alleviation, the youth are conspicuously missing (Nyagah, 2014). Further research has shown that there is increasing membership of women in co-operatives as compared to men. There is also concern regarding the dwindling number of the youths participating in co-operatives (Wanyama, 2014).

Despite the fact that co-operative enterprises provide livelihoods for millions of people around the world, and are by nature sustainable and participatory forms of businesses, they have remained invisible most probably due to lack of understanding of the actual and potential contribution they can make to sustainable businesses, and development (Gicheru & M'Imanyara, 2012; Wanyama, 2014).

It is argued that over the years Co-operatives in Kenya have experienced various challenges; among them corruption, hence, the need to introduce more Information Communication Technology (ICT) to curb such problems. The gap in the ICT component in co-operatives is one of the key factors affecting membership amongst the youth in Kenya. It is arguable that the youth have been left out adversely over years in membership, leadership, management and ownership of the co-operatives Kenya (Nyagah, 2014).

Globally, co-operatives are gearing up to internet ownership a fact that perhaps may leave African co-operatives behind in the future of co-operatives. This new dimension

of internet platforms and case in point '*platform Cooperativism*' will challenge the corporate sharing economy (Scholz *Et AL*, 2014).

1.3 Statement of the Research Problem

Economies all across Africa are faced with low-paid youth unemployment. Although the co-operative model could be rebooted through social media platforms as communication tools to address some of these issues in line with the sector's principles (Scholz, 2014), concerns have been raised over its low uptake and adoption of such communication tools by co-operatives thereby creating a huge entrepreneurial gap among members and nonmembers of co-operatives (Bwisa, 2010). This has created a debate on how the social media can be utilized as a communication tool and as source of co-operative information (Okwany, 2010).

Whereas ICT is a key component with significant positive impact in all sectors of the economy and a key driver of business enterprises in the digital world, its uptake among most sectors of the economy in Africa has not been adequately studied. For example, the impact of *Mpesa*, a recent but successful mobile money transfer service model which compared to the existence of the co-operative and banking sectors is a recent development (FSD, 2015) has not been adequately studied. Consequently, this disparity requires to be addressed so as to understand the role of social media as a communication tool within the co-operative sector in dissemination of co-operative information targeting the youth.

Researchers and co-operatives enthusiasts argue that the role of Co-operatives is to cater for the social and economic needs of society that the state, the private sector, big capitalist enterprises and small family businesses may not be able to satisfy (Gicheru &

M'Imanyara, 2012) but the big question is, are co-operatives playing this role among the youth?

1.4 Study Objectives

The main objective for this study was to investigate how social media is being utilized by Co-operatives in Meru County in Kenya as a source of co-operative information among the youth.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives

- i. To assess the extent to which co-operatives in Meru County have adopted and utilized Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth
- ii. To explore opportunities for utilization of Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in Meru County and assess how these opportunities can be accelerated to spread the co-operative movement's information
- iii. To evaluate challenges to usage and utilization of Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in Meru County

1.4.2 Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

- i. To what extent have co-operatives in Meru County adopted and utilized Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth?
- ii. What are the opportunities for the utilization of Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in Meru County and how

can they be accelerated to enhance the spread of Co-operative information?

- iii. What are the challenges to the usage and utilization of Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in Meru County?

1.5 Justification of the Study

This study sought to break the parallel trajectory between two fast growing sectors in Kenya; social media usage and adoption and growth and expansion of co-operative ventures. It is apparent from the findings of the study that with co-operatives in Kenya increasing their uptake of social media as a source of co-operative information and coupled with innovativeness; the youth are increasingly using the social media platforms to communicate especially in setting the social agenda. Although co-operatives have increasingly shown signs of adopting social media as a source of co-operative information, these messages are not specifically tailored towards wooing the youth who are the majority in the Kenyan population but are, ironically, a minority in co-operative membership. By co-operatives integrating the principles and the values they hold, they can use social media as a convenient and cost-effective platform to engage, especially the unemployed youths, in meaningful economic activities and/or employment.

The co-operative movement needs to position itself in the digital world to tap into the potential of the youth and the benefits of social media. From the research findings, it is clear that Social Media plays a big role in provision of information that would be vital in the development of co-operatives. However, there are some challenges to be overcome, namely; cost and infrastructure issues relating to access.

Despite the fact that many parts of the world have access to mobile phone technology; the internet remains a key challenge especially in the rural areas. In areas with little or no internet access, awareness of the benefits of ICT is also a challenge. Consequently, getting smaller co-operative societies or unions to bridge the digital divide would be key to growth (Nyagah, 2014).

It has been recognized that co-operative enterprises are today's main engine of social and economic growth across the world (ICA, 2012). Notably, Kenya has the best co-operative business model in Africa and 7th best in the world. According to ICA, the co-operative movement in Kenya controls over 45% of the country's GDP (ICA, 2014). However, the country is still struggling with high unemployment rates especially among the youth. The discrepancy of the potential of the ICTs and the co-operative movement in Kenya to provide solution to unemployment remains a bother bearing in mind the parallels in the membership and ownership of the co-operative movement in Kenya between the aged members of the society and the youth (Kobia, 2011).

Co-operatives in Africa have big gaps in ICT uptake, yet technology helps in enhancing linkages, social capital and coordination of activities for common interests (Nyagah, 2014) There is little data available in relation to the number of co-operatives embracing ICTs in Africa. However, the inherent opportunities and the challenges that go with this include absence of websites or social media pages, poor management of data for networking, marketing and for record purposes in any co-operatives. For instance, farming co-operative might have produce but lack buyers because the products are not adequately advertised to prospective clients (Bwisa, 2010).

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study focused on co-operatives in Meru County and investigated the extent to which they were utilizing social media as a communication tool for co-operative information among the youth. The data focused on the following:

- i. An assessment of adoption and utilization of Social Media as a communication tool by co-operatives in Meru County as a source of co-operative information among the youth
- ii. An exploration of opportunities in the utilization of Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in Meru County and how these opportunities can be accelerated to spread Co-operative information
- iii. An evaluation of the challenges to usage and utilization of social media as a source of co-operative information in Meru County.

The co-operatives ranged from producer co-operatives, marketing co-operatives to financial co-operatives. The research was based on industry data, key informant interviews and reports and findings from questionnaires. However, this analysis was limited to dynamic capabilities, organization processes, organization learning, organizational assets and organization co-specialization on communication strategies within the co-operative societies.

1.7 Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

1.7.1 Assumptions of the Study

This study made the following assumptions:

- i. That there is high usage of Social Media by co-operatives in Meru County as a source of information that the youth as respondents are aware of.
- ii. That the respondents would be willing to truthfully respond to questionnaires.
- iii. That the respondents were aware of social networking sites used by various co-operatives and that they would direct the researchers accordingly.

1.7.2 Limitations to the Study

This study was limited to the following:

- a) Sample size - the number of the units of analysis used in this study was dictated by the research problem being investigated. However, this did not affect the study or make it challenging to find major relationships from the data, as statistical tests normally require a larger sample size to ensure a representative distribution of the population under study and to be considered representative of groups to whom results would be generalized. Further the sample size is generally less relevant in qualitative research if an argument is to be drawn in the line of the research problem (Taylor & Bogdan 1998).
- b) Lack of available and/or reliable data – Data on usage of social media among co-operatives was rare. Most of the co-operatives studied had no procedures and policy on communication and social media. This lack of data, however, did not affect the research in finding a trend and a meaningful relationship over the years since social media advents in 2009 with the advent of Facebook.
- c) Self-reported data - self-reported data is limited in that it rarely can be independently verified. The researchers had to take what people said during interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires at face value. This self-reported data may have contained several potential sources of bias. However, the researchers

were keen and alert to note this as limitations. However, these biases were not incongruent with data from other sources. Some of these biases included:

- i. Selective memory – this may refer to remembering fully or not remembering at all the experiences of the past
 - ii. Exaggeration - demonstrating events as more weighty than was actually suggested from other data.
 - iii. Attribution - linking positive events and outcomes to one's own agency, but attributing negative events and outcomes to external forces and,
 - iv. Telescoping - recalling events that occurred at one time as if they occurred at another time
- d) Access – this study depended on having access to people, co-operative organizations, data, and policy documents. Some co-operative societies denied the researchers and some other instances limited access was allowed. Since the data required did not need finer details of information or companies' trade secrets, these denials and limited access did not prevent the researchers from following through on the study.
- e) Time limits - unlike other studies that may have many years devoted being studied, the time available to investigate this research problem was constrained by the due date of the assignment. However, this research problem did not require an excessive amount of time to complete the literature review, apply the methodology, and gather and interpret the raw data collected from the field.

1.8 Study Hypothesis

Social media has liberalized communication in the modern day world; the internet is reshaping public lives in communication and more so, normal lives have been restricted. With this rapidly changing technology, the world has become a global village with aspects of time and space virtually abolished. The Co-operative movement, as an enterprise, has had a long tradition especially in Africa in adopting ICTs and social media as a source of co-operative information. This assertion has left out a section of the population, the youth, in reaping the benefits of the huge movement which is a vast employer and firm on its principles and operations. For the co-operative movement to rejuvenate itself in the new communication era, it has to adopt and utilize social media as a source of co-operative information targeting the youth in a succession bid.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

This section discusses two major theories utilized in the study. These two theories relate on matters related to technology. These two theories are the technological determinism theory and the social construction of technology theory.

1.9.1 The Social Construction of Technology Theory (SCOT)

The term 'Social construction' was first used by Berger and Lukemann in 1996 in their 'treatise' in the sociology of knowledge' (Bijker, 2010). Schutz argues that the social construction should be the object of social knowledge as reality is socially constructed (Schutz, 1943). The theory helps in conceptualizing the hardness of obduracy of technology. Because we now live in a technological culture, SCOT offers a conceptual framework for putting issues on the political agenda (Wajcman, 2000).

Trevor Pinch and Wieber Bijker are the proponents of this theory since early 80's. The theory has thus gained advantages in analyzing users who are seen as agents of technological change. It is argued that a social group can consist of the media, government, communities, various consumers, technologists, communicators, etc. SCOT aims at what is counted as a successful artifact and a satisfactory test of artifact (Kline & Pinch, 1996).

SCOT grew out of three distinct combinations of works: the early science-technology-society (STS) movement, the sociology of scientific knowledge and the history of technology (Bijker, 2010).

1.9.2 Why the Theory?

This theory presents a framework which highlights the influence of humans and their activities in shaping up of various technologies. Researchers and proponents of this theory argue that in a society a number of social groups exist which might have a different interpretation of an item such as technology.

1.10 Technological Determinism Theory

Marshall McLuhan is the proponent of this theory he molded. He argues that changes in the way human beings communicates shapes their existence. Various schools of thought assert that Technological determinism theory is a reductionist theory. It is argued that a society's technology drives the development of its social structure and cultural values (Smith & Marx, 1994).

Karl Marx, the German philosopher and economist, initially, elaborated this theory from whose theoretical framework was based upon the idea that changes in technology and productive technology are the primary influence on the organization of social relations,

and that social relations and cultural practices ultimately revolve around the technological and economic base of a society. From Marx's arguments, it has become common knowledge, that fast-changing technological world alter human lives (Smith & Marx, 1994).

The basic idea behind the theory mounded by Marshal McLuhan is that changes in the way humans communicate are what shape our existence. McLuhan further argues that that culture is molded by how humanity is able to communicate. Thus, inventions in communication technology cause cultural change world over. Further, changes in modes of communication shape human life in its entirety. According to McLuhan, human beings shape their tools, and they in turn shape human beings. Therefore, Technological Determinism is distinctly a humanistic theory (McLuhan, 1964).

McLuhan suggests that it was the development of the phonetic alphabet that brought about the emergence of mathematics, science, and philosophy as well. This new 'literate age' was brought to an end by the development of the printing press. Gutenberg's printing press moved society into the 'print age', making visual dependence more widespread (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1985). When people see ideas in print as opposed to word of mouth, the words take on a whole new meaning. The ability to print ideas meant the ability to shape the views and opinions of people worldwide (McLuhan, 1964).

McLuhan describes technological determinism in terms of what each society considers the appropriate way to communicate (McLuhan, 1964). However the more you look into it, the more you will be unable to overlook the multitude of holes in the theory. Communications professionals consider technological determinism theory little more than cartoon art in that many of McLuhan's ideas invoke notions about societies that we have no way to check without the invention of a time machine (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1985).

To argue that technology alone is responsible for creating all that we are today is a rather narrow minded view; it is important to natural evolution, politics, and religion, then claim there is a single cause of human development would be ignorance. However, human progression, out of the hands of God and the society puts it into the hands of engineers and computer experts (McLuhan, 1964)

1.11 Comparison between the Two Theories

Communication technology has rapidly grown over time. This growth can be credit to virtually all parts of the world and especially the creation and laying of the Atlantic Cable from Newfoundland to Ireland, first attempted in 1857. The technological determinism theory is seen by scholars as a reductionist view while the social construction of technology, which, as the title suggests, is the view to argue that society and humans drive the development of new technologies (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1985).

Proponents of technological determinism theory argue that the development of technology follows a predictable path outside of culture or political influence; it also proposes that technology is a driving force of social and economic change. This theory claims that technological advances are the central element in modernity, without needing an interaction with the environment (McLuhan, 1964). This lack of reciprocity with anything un-scientific holds true with the empirical observation made by Gordon Moore in 1965 about how the digital universe would develop. Moore identified early on with the trend that has continued into the contemporary era; that every two years the physical size of a necessary component (for example a computer memory chip) would half, while its capacity would double (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1985). Many skeptics have predicted the demise of this proposition for years, however as yet society has not been able to prevent the rise of technology, thus emphasizing Moore's law. To explain this law further the

Intel Corporation states that; ‘Transistor density on integrated circuits doubles about every two years’ or the size of each transistor on an integrated circuit chip will be reduced by 50 percent every twenty-four months (Kurzweil, 1999).

Determinism is largely assumed to be the view that free will cannot exist alongside it, however compatibilist believers in soft determinism see it as a guiding but not entirely omnipotent force in society. Therefore, while technology largely controls our evolution, it is perhaps not the only explanation (Kurzweil, 1999). It can be pointed out on determinism, despite technology being the leading force; society can still adjust to the consequences of major inventions even if this only occurs after a period of cultural lag.

Hard determinism is seen without the openness of soft determinism’s collaboration with society, although still with the capacity to effect significant change. Ever increasing uses of technology are assumed by many to elicit positive changes in society, however, following experience, this has not always been found to be so. Unfortunately our dependence on technology in the twenty-first century often causes problems in everyday life. Technological Determinism however does not account for human learning and error, as some view the adoption of technology by society as ‘raising more problems than it solves (Ellul, 1964).

The decision to ban the use of mobile phones while driving in the UK and USA for example, has only occurred as a result of several fatal vehicle crashes, while in many US states it is still legal. Leading twentieth-century philosopher Jacques Ellul realized in this vain that each innovation creates; ‘pernicious effects that are inseparable from favorable effects,’ (Ellul, 1964). For example the very contemporary problem of not being able to ‘switch off’, be it from work, family, the media etc. Journalist Thomas Friedman spent 4 days in the Amazon jungle in 2006. He described it as a liberating experience away from

modern life and realized that in the contemporary era one only ever has “continuous partial attention” to the outside World.

Neil Postman wrote in his book - *Technopoly: The Surrender of culture to technology* about the alarming rate at which individuals, especially in the USA, are adopting technology without considering its ill-effects is alarming. He further expanded on Ellul's critique that technology was being 'deified' without any precaution (Postman, 1993). However, it cannot be said that technology has not significantly enhanced the modern world with a view to medical, transport and communication improvements, however the control and possession threatened by the Technological Determinist perspective is alarming without its limits. Bimber explained Ellul's view of technology; it is the domination of social, political, and economic life by the adopted goals of logic and efficiency (Bimber, 1994).

It is arguable that following concerted efforts in the late 20th and early 21st Century, in creating awareness, scientists have become increasingly concerned about the detrimental effects that technological development could have to society (Bimber, 1994).

Proponents of technology have argued that the challenge of an ever-evolving human mind and body contributes immensely to the worry of our inability to control development especially technology wise (Ellul, 1964). Furthermore, it is impractical that the contemporary world will ever evolve backwards to naivety of before; that is why researchers have argued that the theory of technological determinism must also be reign in to prevent society being unable to control itself (Bimber, 1994).

It has been observed that Society and technology are entirely different in their cultural and lifespan development. However, the two have a close interaction needed by the modern

world. In contrast to the view of technological determinism, that technology is the driving force behind social change, the social construction of technology, theory asserts that technology develops as a result of and after societal changes (Postman, 1993).

It is arguable that the theory of technological determinism is scary; it argues that the human race, at some point in time will have little or no control over employment, the economy and themselves in possibly as short as a lifetime (Bimber, 1994) while the social construction of technology theory appears much more conceivable since it asserts that the society has very obviously been effected and influenced by technology, however it is also clearly very much still under the constraints of human creativity for its development (Postman, 1993).

1.12 Relevance of the Theories to the Study

1.12.1 Social Construction of Technology Theory

The Social construction of technology (SCOT) helps us organize our activities by conceptualizing the hardness of obduracy of technology. We now live in a technological culture, therefore, SCOT offers a conceptual framework for putting issues on the political agenda. (Wajcman, 2000). A society, including politics, is technically built as technology since technology is socially and politically constructed (Wajcman, 2000).

In this study therefore, this theory helps the researcher to underpin the technology culture and its prospects for the co-operative movement in enhancing uptake of the services. Conversely, the youth are at the center of technological leverage. Therefore, then, the social construction of technology theory encapsulates the basic tenet of how technology and co-operatives auger.

1.12.2 Technological Determinism Theory

The technological determinism as molded by Marshall McLuhan asserts that changes in the way humans communicate are what shape our existence. It is worthwhile to note that Technological determinism is a reductionist theory presuming that a society's technology drives the development of its social structure and cultural values. The term is believed was coined by Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929), an American sociologist (Smith & Marx, 1994).

To this study, this theory sums the UK and USA study on use of new media's contribution to change in communication dynamics and its influence in shaping the future of the business ventures and organization dynamics among co-operatives.

1.13 Conceptual Framework

This research will be guided by a conceptual framework that represents the interrelationship among the variables to be used in the study. Various factors will act in combination to determine whether a co-operative society will use new media as a communication tool to enhance uptake of their services among the youth in Meru County.

The dependent variables used in this study include reasons for using new media technologies as a communication tool to enhance uptake of co-operative services; for example growth of technology in the world, competition in the market, ageing population of old cooperators, education levels of the youth, international trends on the adoption of ICTs in co-operatives, financial strengths of a co-operative society, ICT infrastructure of the co-operative society among others. The above factors contributing to use of new media technologies in co-operatives either independently or interdependently predispose a co-operative society to use of new media technologies as a communication tool.

The independent variable in this study is the co-operative information passed through the social media to enhance uptake of co-operative services by the youth.

The intervening variables in this study includes; Type of a co-operative and computer literacy of the management staff and management board while the dependent variables included Communication Process , Efficacy , ICT Infrastructure and Human Resource Policies (HRP) of the co-operatives.

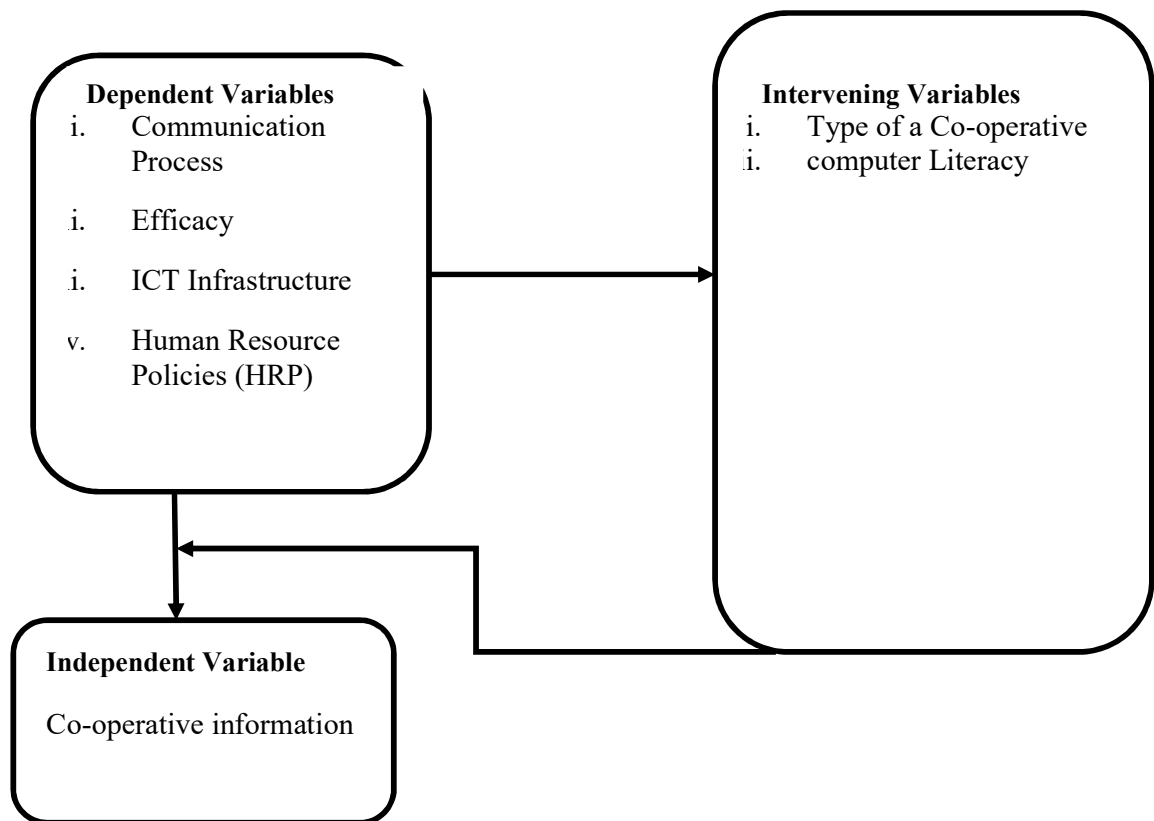


Figure 1. 1: Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces all related information to the concept under investigation. It involves detailed examination of available literature and works of other scholars on their views, opinions, attitudes and feelings about the subject matter. The chapter is aimed at enabling the reader to comprehend what other scholars and researchers have found out about the various concepts in this study, get their background and to appreciate their efforts towards knowledge generation.

2.2 Communication

Communication is a two-way process of reaching an agreed understanding between parties; this is according to business dictionary. Participants in the communication process not only exchange information, news, ideas and feelings but also create and share meaning. In business, it is a key function of management. There are two types of communication: verbal and non-verbal communication; of these, there is interpersonal communication which is the communication between two or more people (McQuail, 2002). Interpersonal communication includes various forms of communication, whether electronic, nonverbal or verbal key in any organization (Griffin, *Et al*, 2014). The key elements in interpersonal communication are the communicator, the receiver, the perceptual screens, and the message. In communication, perceptual screen share defined as windows through which we interact with people that impact the quality, accuracy, and clarity of the communication (McQuail, 2002). The message contains the thoughts and feelings that the communicator intends to evoke in the receiver. Feedback in

communication is an important loop, which occurs when the receiver provides the communicator with a response to the message (Griffin, *Et Al*, 2014).

This study, in particular singles out communication as a key concept in the research gap under investigation. Inasmuch as co-operatives communicate, it is important they do so in the context of the environment they live in. it would be imperative for co-operatives to identify their key audiences which will intern lead them to the best channels suited for each of the messaging frame. It is in this background that social media, regarded as one of the most popular communication tools comes into play. The fundamental question is how these channels are being utilized by these co-operatives under study to fit into the concept of communication as defined and as is.

Communication scholars assert that listening is an important aspect of communication process. There are two types of listening: active and passive listening. Active listening is a skill that helps the receiver and communicator clearly and fully understand the message sent. Usually it is characterized as personal, feeling oriented and responsive (McQuail, 2010). However, active listening techniques cannot be used in electronic mail because nonverbal cues are absent and written affirmation is delayed (Griffin, *Et AL*, 2014).

A positive response is a verbal recognition by the receiver that he/she is following the topic (McQuail, 2002).

One of the specific objectives of this study is to assess the extent to which co-operatives in Meru County have adopted and utilized Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth. From the above argument of the ‘listening’ concept as a key aspect of communication process, in this context, listening will not be literal as it were in the direct meaning of the word. This will be looked into in the way co-operatives scan the communication environment and adapt to what is usable to them. A case in point

is a co-operative that chooses to use Instagram as a social media channel in place of twitter, Facebook or snap chat; they choose to utilize that channel based on how they 'listen' to their customer. This could go to the extent of how they have done their customer segmentation among other factors like costs involved, their human resources capital among others.

Another key element we examine in this concept of communication is the message and feedback. Various arguments have been advanced by various scholars on packaging of a message to achieve its intended purpose. Richard & Lynn, (2013) argue that when an individual paraphrases what has been heard, it helps clarify the information for one as well as clarifying for the presenter what was not expressed well. It has, however, been observed that different cultures use silence in a communication context differently; to some, it is an approach to increase the ability for active listening (Griffin, *Et AL*, 2014).

It is argued that eye contact is a strong nonverbal communication device that requires delicate balance. Too little eye contact suggests lack of attention; too much eye contact conveys intimidation. Two-way communication is more desirable in organizations because it allows for reflective listening. For instance, Problem solving and decision making is a two-way communication. In a One-way communication, a message is sent to another person with no direct opportunity for clarifications, questions, feedback, or interaction. In contrast, two-way communication allows the communicator and receiver to interact (McQuail, 2010).

Studies have shown that good communication skills are critical for managers; managers who score high on communication have also been found to be higher performing managers. Further, it is been observed that there are five keys to effective managerial communication (Debra, 2016). Better managers tend to be more comfortable expressing

their thoughts and feelings than are other managers (Griffin, *Et AL*, 2014). It is argued that empathetic listeners are able to determine the feelings and emotional dimensions of others, as well as their content regarding the ideas and issues. This communication skill depends heavily on active listening (McQuail, 2002).

The above textual analysis of what communication is and what it is not will give this study a general direction towards providing answers to the research questions and closing into the study gap. The texts have put into clear perspective why communication fails most of the time. A key element worth noting in the communication process is the feedback. A co-operative society may adopt social media sites, have the messages well-crafted to suit the audience and in this specific case the target population is the youth, but do they respond to queries raised online? What time do they take to respond to issues raised? Does this project or shape perceptions about co-operatives hence influencing membership of the society?

2.2.1 Barriers to Communication

In communication, there could be several barriers in the process. For instance, McQuail (2010) argues that we cannot not communicate; what happens is miscommunication brought about by various barriers; however this happens when these barriers are misused. The barriers to communication include physical separation, status differences, gender differences, cultural diversity, and language that can impair effective communication in a workplace (McQuail, 2010).

In light of the above argument by McQuail, the study underscores that whether a co-operative adopts and utilizes social media or not, still, communications happens. What does a co-operative with seemingly idle social media sites imply as compared to one with

a vibrant sites? This will definitely create perceptions and attitudes among the target audiences and in turn affect how their information will be consumed thereafter.

Sometimes, physical separation in the workplace makes it difficult, and often awkward, for employees to interact. This is one of the primary arguments against telecommuting. Some organizations use meetings and after work gatherings to overcome the separation created by some of our technological advances (Richard & Lynn, 2013).

Human resource experts argue that employees must feel that they can honestly relate thoughts and ideas upward in the organization. If they are conscious of status differences and fearful that those differences will be used against them, they will be reluctant to criticize or suggest to a supervisor. Effective communication skills make supervisors more approachable and can diminish the negative effects of status differences (Debra, 2016). Research indicates that men and women employ different conversation styles when communicating, and these different styles may result in serious communication problems. Further, differences in value systems may cause confusion and misinterpretation in employee interactions with other employees or with supervisors (McQuail, 2002).

The increasing cultural diversity brings with it challenges in communication related to differences in values and interaction patterns. Obviously, employees who speak different native languages may have difficulty understanding each other or their supervisors; Differences in interaction patterns can also result in confusion and misinterpretation (Richard & Lynn, 2013).

A greater percentage of meaning in a message (about 65-90%) is borne through nonverbal communication which includes all elements of communication that do not involve language. It is important to note that nonverbal behavior varies greatly from one culture

to another. In a nonverbal communication, perception and use of space, varies among individuals of different ages, and especially from of different cultures (Richard & Lynn, 2013).

Drawing from the above textual arguments and discussions on the barriers to effective communication, we now contextualize and relate this to the study and the gap identified by the researcher; the fundamental question is, what are some of the probable barriers to co-operative communication in enhancing uptake of co-operative services by the youth? This communications being looked into by the study being an online communication, we may not authoritatively cut it off from ineffectiveness. As the study tries to underpin some of these barriers to effective communication among co-operatives, we seek to underscore that, retrospectively, issues analyzed in the texts above falls into perspective.

2.3 Language and Social Media

Language is one of the greatest inventions that man ever had in civilization and during prehistory. It is this discovery that over the years has made communication an innate aspect of humanity. Channels of communication however, have been in constant evolution just as language has been. Further, scholars have argued that Media, has, emerged out of growth of humanity and development since antiquity (McQuail, 2002). It has become one of the major channels of communication henceforth; that notwithstanding, mainstream media has been a domineering communication channel, which include broadcast media (Television and Radio) as well as print media like newspapers, reviews, magazines among others (McQuail, 2002).

Although this study majorly looks into the adoption and utilization of social media by co-operatives to enhance uptake of co-operative services by the youth in Meru County, the issues around the language as a conveyor belt for the messages used cannot escape a

textual analysis. Since the medium of communication is social media and the target is the youth, the language that co-operatives use to pass their messages remain key. Nobly, the language of social media can be varied depending on use; we would observe and assume that if ‘sheng’ is used to draw a particular caliber of youth in an urban set up, perhaps it might work better than if some local dialect is adopted to draw a different caliber of youth in a local rural set up. The language that these co-operatives are going to use, based on the above textual analysis would be key to their success in getting their information consumed by the youth.

Social Networking Sites popularly known as Social media is completely revolutionizing communication in terms of time, and content. It has complemented mainstream media in relaying information to the masses. The mostly used social media platforms include; Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp, Google chat, Skype, Yahoo chat Instagram, MySpace, LinkedIn among others (Kaplan, and Michael, 2010). In March 2010 there were a little over two million Facebook accounts according to the Communication Council of Kenya CCK; in 2014, this number doubled to slightly over 4 million accounts in Kenya. This accounts for about 9 percent of the entire population. A great majority of those on social media are the youth of great note is that according to a CCK, report, as of September 2017, a total of 12 million Kenyans were on Whatsapp with 7.1 million of them being on Facebook (CCK, 2018).

It would be paramount for the co-operative movement to take the above figures more adherently and calculatedly knowing that technology grows and the world changes. Noting that as generations and cultures undergo changes and revolutions every day, they need to adapt without which they would be edged out of the market. What would be most important to them as body corporates is to track growth in terms of numbers and project

the future numbers. In this they would be able to fit into any new innovations while entrenching their services to all generations. More importantly is to look into how each one of them was operating in terms of communication in batches of years; this will make future projections and presence on social media viable channels.

The popularity of Facebook has been attributed to the easy access from cell phones and other gizmos; there is a Short Message Service SMS to Facebook for instance, that sends a text to the users on every time something happens on Facebook. There is also an application called Facebook zero, a text only free version of Facebook launched in 2010 in collaboration with mobile providers, which has brought Facebook to a larger number of people who prior to that did not have access to it (CCK, 2018).

Computer literacy level in Kenya has grown tremendously in the 21st century. According to the 2008 Consumer Insight Limited (CIL) study showed that 74 percent of the population in Nairobi had used a computer at least once in their lifetime (CIL, 2008). Back in 2009, Synovate, on other hand had estimated that in 30 percent of the Kenyan urban population used the internet weekly (ITU, 2010).

In this study one other variables the researcher underpins is computer literacy. This will go a long way noting that the geographical area of study is a rural set up, we assume that computer literacy is not only likely to affect the sender of the message but also the consumer. If a co-operative society has poor ICT infrastructure or a negligible or incompetent IT staff, this is likely to a large extent affect how they infiltrate the field and package their messages; in the same vein, if the consumers of the information are computer illiterate, then they may not be able to access such information supplied online.

Twitter is a social networking site more or less like Facebook; the only difference is that Tweets, (twitter messages), have a maximum of 280 characters long in all languages except Chinese, Korean and Arabic; this is contrary to earlier 140 characters signifying growth and development. Facebook has a limit of 5,000 friends for every member account, there are no such limits on followers on one's Twitter handle. However, on Facebook, one can have a fan-page with limitless likes or a group which can also have many likes (ITU, 2010).

Arguments by media enthusiasts assert that the mainstream media remains a powerful tool in shaping opinions and drawing perceptions while setting public agenda; likewise social media has taken cue as a powerhouse in shaping opinions and setting public agenda. As such, on political undertones, social media can ignite violent conflicts in a nation. The discourse surrounding social media has been characterized as a duel of anecdotes between cyber utopians and cyber skeptics (Makokha, 2010).


Tapping from the above argument, this study fully agrees that any venture especially in this context of co-operative enterprises need to usurp this power and draw the gains of the same. Notably, the costs implications for using social media remains low. Let us randomly examine two co-operative enterprises one drawn from an urban set up, Nairobi and the other from the geographical area of study; we look at *Mwalimu National SACCO* and an *Dhabiti SACCO (which was among studied)* Facebook pages and draw their utopic and skeptic presentation on social media:


08:27 4G 30.0 KB/S 31 WhatsApp


Mwalimu National


Revised Rates (per month)

Current	Revised		Current	Revised		Current
1.41%	1.29%	12 MONTHS ADVANCE	1.50%	1.25%	INDIVIDUAL	1.41%
1.33%	1.20%	24 MONTHS ADVANCE	2.00%	1.50%	GROUP	1.50%

 **Mwalimu National**
Organization

 Liked

 Send Message

 Joseph, Mwenda, Nicholas and 21,737 others like this

Home Posts Reviews Videos Photos Ab

Figure 2.1: Screenshot of Mwalimu National SACCO Facebook Page 25th June, 2020

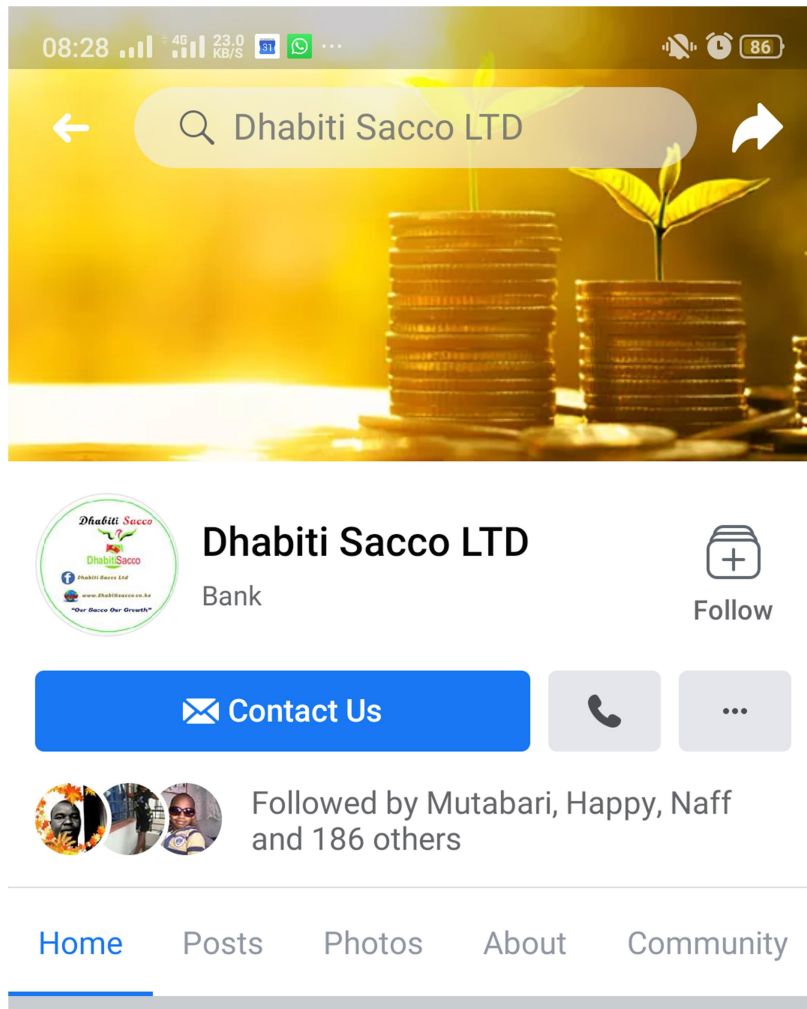


Figure 2.2: Screenshot of Dhabiti SACCO Facebook Page Taken on 25th June 2020

We would like to draw an example from the above two SACCOs making assumptions that they are all competing for the to send the same co-operative information targeting the youth; Mwalimu National SACCO has a total of 21,737 hits while Dhabiti SACCO has a total of 186 hits on their page. Holding that social media draws power to influence and shape perceptions, Mwalimu SACCO will influence a higher audience on this channel as compared to Dhabiti SACCO. In relation to this study, the extent to which a co-operative

adopts and utilizes social media draws into the opportunities to enhance consumption of co-operative information by target audiences.

Building on the above argument, we further analyze text on social media growth: respectively, they view the social media's rapid growth in popularity as a catalyst that will inevitably lead to more transparency in governance and democracy, and conversely the elitist protagonists, only see the danger that uncontrolled communication might pose to a country, nation or a society. Notably, the Arab spring and uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa in early 2011 has prompted calls on the need of rigorous study into the potential role social media can play in the economic, social and political lives (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Recognizing the power of social media, in that their contents are uncensored, the governments made asserting controls over social media platforms a top priority as a reactionary measure to coil violence. For instance, Former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak banned access to Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Google in the first few days of the protest, he then shut down internet on 28th January 2011. Former Libyan ousted leader President Gaddafi's security officers blocked all internet traffic in and out of the country, in response, the international community redirected funds towards programs that aimed at strengthening media in the North African region. These leaders, viewed social media wave as the trailer to hate messages spiking revolts to their unprecedented revolutionary fate and imminent ousters (Makokha, 2010).

Drawing from the above two paragraphs on the power of social media information on the political aspect, we can link this to what economic and social revolution this can be if the same is tapped on the co-operative sector. Later on in this study, we look into the

membership of the co-operative movement where data from the international co-operative alliance shows that the movement draws about 1.5 billion members across the world in a population of about 7 billion people in the world. What power could this be if these 1.5 billion people could engage in dissemination of co-operative information? Couldn't it cause a great change in perception of what the co-operative movement is all about?

2.3 Social Media

Social media refers to the means of interaction among people in which they create share and or exchange information ideas in virtual communities or networks using technology based applications. Micheal Haenlein defines social media as a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of the web and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. The content might include text, video, images, podcasts and other multimedia communications. The most prominent examples of social media include, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Reddit, Google + Google talk, Yahoo chat, Skype, Whatsapp (Kaplan & Michael, 2010).

Facebook is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends' family and colleagues. Twitter is a free micro blogging service that allows registered members to broadcast posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other user's tweets by using multiple platforms and devices. Wikipedia is a free, open content encyclopedia created through the collaborative effort of a community called the 'Wikipedia's'. Anyone registered on the site can create an article for publication. Registration is not required to edit articles (Kaplan & Michael, 2010).

Social media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share co-create discuss and modify user generated content. It introduces substantial and persuasive changes to communication between organizations communities and individuals. It is argued that social media has introduced positive effects such as allowing the democratization of the internet while also allowing individuals to advertise and form friendship. Much of criticism of social media has been that it has decreased face-to-face interactions, there have been issues of trustworthiness and reliability of information presented, concentration, ownership of media content, and the meaning of interactions created by social media (Kaplan & Michael, 2010).

2.4 Communicating Through Technology

In this section, we explore how communication is done through technological medium and the type of mediums used. It has been observed that many people avoid written communication perhaps because they do not believe they are skilled in expressing their thoughts in writing. It is also considered less personal in many situations. Written communication has the advantage of high to moderate information capacity, but may also have the disadvantage of moderate to low information richness (McQuail, 2002).

MacQuail (2002) argues that the medium is the message; drawing from the argument and in the context of the subject under study, whatever the medium co-operatives choose to communicate through will define the message frame. In fact, Communication Technologies include electronic mails, voice mail, fax machines, tablets, iPads and cell phones. While these technologies greatly enhance the speed of communication, they

cannot convey the nonverbal cues that make up a significant portion of the message therefore limiting sometimes the understanding of a message (Richard & Lynn, 2013).

Researchers have observed that communication technologies affect human communication behavior and continue to do overtime. For instance, these technologies are typically more impersonal, and may result in less patience with one-to-one communication as a much slower form of communication. New technologies provide the opportunity for us to multitask, which may have drawbacks when we need to focus closely on one problem at a time (McQuail, 2002). We can be overloaded with information and will need to be more conscious of filtering information (Richard & Lynn, 2013).

2.5 New Media as a Communication Tool

One of the new media enthusiasts, Robert Logan, in his book, *Understanding New Media: Extending Marshall McLuhan* defines new media as mediums that are interactive, incorporating two-way communication and involve some form of computing. He further argues that New media is “very easily processed, stored, transformed, retrieved, hyperlinked and, perhaps most radical of all, easily searched for and accessed.” He argues that a distinction between new media and old media is that old media is for the most part mass media. In addition, each form of new media is highly interactive, while mass media is not. Users of new media are active producers of content and information, whether sending an email or using Internet collaboration tools (Logan, 2010).

New media theorist Lev Manovich describes new media as being native to computers or relying on computers for distribution: websites, human-computer interface, virtual worlds,

virtual reality, multimedia, computer games, computer animation, digital video, special effects in cinema and interactive computer installations (Manovich, 2001).

Contrasted with the old media, the “old media,” consists of mainly print, radio, and television/movies, we see that their presence in our lives and our societies was limited to a few places. For example, television and radio have long been key technology meant for mass consumption while new media are, however, more personal and more social than old media (McQuail, 2002).

In the book *New Media, 1740–1915*, media is examined as “a cultural process that involves not only the actual transmission of information but also the ritualized collocation of senders and recipients,” according to editors Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey Pingree. Thus, new media reflects societal values and societal transformation. Manovich outlines eight possible concepts about new media in his essay “New Media from Borges to HTML,” from the book *The New Media Reader*. These theoretical considerations build upon new media as digital and cultural expressions (Murray & Manovich, 2003).

This study is in its entirety not about the new media; however, it is important to underscore that new media is a predecessor to social media and both have intricate commonalities. We draw some focus on this and as marked below, we look at some aspects of new media as argued by Murray & Manovich, (2003) in relation to other concepts around technology and the internet.

Let us take a close look on what Murray & Manovich, (2003) observes about New Media:

New media as using computer technology as a distribution platform: it is argued that New media uses digital computer technology for distribution.

New media versus cyber culture: *Cyberculture is defined as the study of various social phenomena associated with the Internet and other new forms of network communication, such as online communities, cell phone usage in various communities and issues of gender and identity in Internet usage while new media is concerned with the new possibilities that network communication technologies and all forms of computing present.*

New media as an articulation of similar ideas in post-WW II art and modern day computing: *New media further develops ideas contained in the new art of the 1960s, including active participation of the audience, artwork as a temporal process rather than a fixed object and artwork as an open system. Also, “combinatorics” — creating images and/or objects by altering a single parameter or creating all possible combinations of a small number of elements — in 1960s computer art and minimalist art can be linked conceptually and historically to new media. It illustrates that algorithms, which are an essential part of new media, do not depend on technology but can be performed by humans.*

New media as the mix between existing cultural conventions and the conventions of software: *New media becomes a combination of old data and new data; old data relies on visual reality and human reality, and new data relies on digital data.*

New media as digital data controlled by software: *New media being digital data that can be manipulated by software allows automation for media operations to produce multiple versions of the same object. For example, a picture can be altered or generated automatically by running algorithms like sharpen, blue and colorize.*

New media as the aesthetics that accompany the early stage of every new modern media and communication technology: *Instead of looking at how digital computers function as media creation, media distribution and telecommunication devices, the*

focus can be on aesthetic techniques that accompany every new media and telecommunication technology. It is worth noting that filmmakers in the mid-1990s used small, inexpensive digital cameras for films characterized by a documentary style so that they could focus on the authenticity of the actors' performances and a more intimate approach.

New media as faster execution of algorithms previously executed manually or through other technologies: *Digital computing can be thought of as a way to massively speed up manual techniques that already exist. Modern video games use an algorithm for linear perspective that originated during the Renaissance in Italy; in a first-person shooter video game, digital computers animate views and recalculate views for all objects in the frame many times per second. The modern digital computer can be thought of as a faster calculator.*

New media as the encoding of modernist avant-garde; new media as metamedia: *The 1920s, or specifically 1915 to 1928, is more relevant to new media than any other time period in history. Artists in this period invented a new set of visual and spatial languages and communication techniques still used today. New media represents the new avant-garde, which is no longer concerned with seeing or representing the world in new ways; rather, it seeks to access and use previously accumulated media. Thus, new media is post-media or metamedia.*

From the above text, deductions can be made that new media has undergone various growths and revolutions over time. These are affected by environment, culture and global events that from time to time push innovations in a bid to providing solutions to humanity. In relation to the subject under investigation, this pushes adequate utilization of

the available technological platforms when in reign. It also signals that technologies bequeaths each other; one generation leads to another.

2.6 The Future of New Media

Arguments have been put forth that new media has shortened the distance among people all over the world through electronic communication; people can interact with each other anytime and anywhere. It is further argued that as a result of the evolution of new media technologies, globalization occurs (McQuail, 2002). Observations have been made that new media will continue to evolve in the information technology age. For instance, content could transform from a passive object that is acted upon by the audience to an intelligent, responsive and reactive item. This real-time content could be able to “read” the audience and use real-time feedback to change what is delivered to readers, listeners and viewers. Specific technologies, such as virtual reality, are also expected to shape the future of new media (Murray & Manovich, 2003).

The above arguments are nothing short of the factual world we operate in. with technology, one doesn't need to physically present in a meeting or a conference when you can watch it live on YouTube, follow live updates on social media sites like Facebook Live among others. What one requires is internet connectivity and functioning gadget able to surf. These benefits of the internet and the new media growth are some of the opportunities that co-operatives can adopt and utilize to mop up the youth into consuming their messages.

2.7 The Evolution of New Media

New media has emerged from old media's analogue concept; Communication scholars argue that New Media couldn't exist without the move from analogue to digital technology since all the types of new media are digitally based (Siapera, 2012). Digital media are designed to read numerical codes. Analogue media are created by encoding information onto a physical object that must then be paired with another device capable of reading that specific code (Lüders, 2008). So what mostly distinguishes analogue media from digital media are their physicality and their need to be matched with a specific decoding device (Siapera, 2012). Analogue media are a combination of mechanical and physical parts, while digital media could be completely electronic (Murray & Manovich, 2003).

Further, new media has changed how music is consumed; for instance music files are stored electronically and can be played on many different platforms, including iPods, computers, and smart phones. Analogue media like videocassette recorders (VCRs) are only compatible with specific media objects that have been physically encoded with information (Siapera, 2012).

The term New Media itself has been critiqued for setting up a false dichotomy between new and old (Siapera, 2012). The technology that made new media possible has been in development for many years. The Internet has existed in some capacity for more than forty years, and the World Wide Web (WWW), which made the Internet accessible to the masses (Murray & Manovich, 2003).

Despite the rapid changes in technology, the multiplatform compatibility of much of new media paradoxically allows for some stability (Murray & Manovich, 2003). Whereas new technology often made analogue media devices and products obsolete, the format of much of the new media objects stays the same even as newer and updated devices with which to access digital media become available. Key to new media is the notion of technological convergence (Lüders, 2008). Most new media are already digital, and the ongoing digitalization of old media allows them to circulate freely and be read/accessed/played by any digital media platform without the need for conversion (Siapera, 2012).

It is clear from the above that technology is not static; it grows from one leap to another causing disruptions in the way of life and the way we communicate and lead normal lives. Once a new innovation comes into force as far as technology is concerned, we can deduce that there will always be a 'new normal' that has to be adopted. In the case of subject under study, it is important for co-operatives to understand that the way they managed to get the youth of earlier days into the movement, it cannot work now; they got to move with new trends of lives and in this case, the newest takes the social media sites.

2.8 Personal Media

The term personal media is used because users are more free to choose the content to which they want to expose, users are free to generate their own content, to comment on other users' contents, to share content with others, and more so generally to create personalized media communication environments (Murray & Manovich, 2003). Personal computer is one of the devices that are used in a personal media context. In the late 1970s a personal computer was first produced and plans were in the works to create even more personal (and portable) computing devices (Lüders, 2008). The 1980s saw an explosion of

personal media devices such as the walkman, the VCR, the camcorder, the cell phone, and the personal computer. At some point in time, personal media devices lacked the connectivity that later allowed personal media to become social media. Then, people created personalized media environments that allowed for more control over the media messages with which they engaged. While the portable radios had been around for years, the ‘walkman’ allowed people to listen to any cassette tape they owned instead of having to listen to whatever the radio station played (Siapera, 2012).

Beyond that, people began creating mix tapes by recording their favorite songs from the radio or by dubbing select songs from other cassette tapes (Lüders, 2008). Although a little more labor intensive, these mix tapes were the precursor to the playlists of digital music that we create today. Additionally, VCRs allowed people to watch specific movies on their own schedule rather than having to watch movies shown on television or at the movie theater (Siapera, 2012).

While mass media messages are the creation of institutions and professionals, many personal media messages are a creation of individuals or small groups ranging from amateur to professionals (Lüders, 2008). Personal computers allowed amateurs and hobbyists to create new computer programs that they could circulate on discs or perhaps through early Internet connections as camcorders allowed people to create a range of products from home videos to amateur or independent films (Siapera, 2012). These unprofessional personal media creations weren’t as easily distributed as they are today, as the analogue technology still required that people send their messages on discs or tapes (Lüders, 2008).

Personal media crossed the line to new and social media with the growing accessibility of the Internet and digital media. As media products like videos, music, and pictures turned digital, the analogue personal media devices that people once carried around were no longer necessary. New online platforms gave people the opportunity to create and make content that could be accessed by anyone with an Internet connection. For example, the singer who would have once sold demo tapes on cassettes out of his or her car might be now discovered after putting his or her music on MySpace (Siapera, 2012).

The various arguments drawn by scholars and researchers point to a clear direction; technological advancements and its effects on communication. We can note on the arguments of McQuail (2002) that the medium is the message, we can assert that as technology grows and takes effects on communication it equally does so to the message and its consumption as well as adoption of the medium. In the context of this study, with several advancements on social media development, there are an innumerable opportunities that co-operatives need to tap out of this growth to tap the youth and maximize on their potential.

2.9 Social Media Today

In the context of the subject under study, it is paramount to explore the status of the social media aspects as is now. This will aid in drawing clear understanding of this concept and drawing of clear understanding of the concept under investigation. We will also in this text examine the aspect of the internet and the interconnectedness with the social media. At the end of this section, we may ask the big question, who owns the internet and who holds the growth of technology?

Media and more often mass media has for a long time been discussed and viewed as a unifying force in the society owing to the roles that it plays. However, scholars and researchers have noted that inasmuch as the media continues to play these roles, it can be abused. Large audiences are most of the time connected to the same radio or television broadcast, newspaper story, book, or movie via a one-way communication channel sent from one place to many. It is worth noting that online media connects mass media outlets to people and allows people to connect back to them (Siapera, 2012).

The internet can be singled out as the basis for this connectivity; it connects individual computers, smart phones, and other devices in an interactive web, and it is this web of connected personal media devices like computers, mobile phones and smart phones that facilitates and defines social media (Lüders, 2008). Arguments have been advanced that technology has allowed for mediated social interaction since the days of the telegraph, but these connections were not at the mass level they are today. So even if we think of the telegram as a precursor to a “tweet,” we can still see that the potential connection points and the audience size are much different. While a telegram went to one person, a tweet can instantly go to millions of online people (Siapera, 2012).

The potential for social media was realized under the conditions of what is called Web 2.0; a new way of using the connectivity of the Internet to bring people together for collaboration and creativity—to harness collective intelligence (O’Reilly, 2012). This involves using the web to collaborate on projects and problem solving rather than making and protecting one’s own material (Boler, 2008). It is worth noting that much of this was achieved through platforms and websites such as Napster, Flickr, YouTube, and Wikipedia that encouraged and enable user-generated content. It is important to note that user-generated content and collaboration have been a part of the World Wide Web for

decades, but much of it was in the form of self-publishing information such as user reviews, online journal entries, and later blogs, microblogs, which cross over between the “old” web and Web 2.0 (O’Reilly, 2012).

The most influential part of the new web is social networking sites (SNSs), which allow users to build a public or semipublic profile, create a network of connections to other people, and view other people’s profiles and networks of connections (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Although SNSs have existed for over a decade, earlier iterations such as Friendster and MySpace have given way to the giant that is Facebook. Facebook, which now has more than 2.07 billion active users per month as at 3rd quarter of 2017 (Facebook, 2017); this number had been predicted to be one billion by the end of 2012 (Hunter, 2012).

More specific SNSs like LinkedIn focus on professional networking. In any case, the ability to self-publish information, likes/dislikes, status updates, profiles, and links allows people to craft their own life narrative and share it with other people (Lüders, 2008). Likewise, users can follow the narratives of others in their network as they are constructed. The degree to which we engage with others’ narratives varies based on the closeness of the relationship and situational factors, but SNSs are used to sustain strong, moderate, and weak ties with others (Richardson & Hessey, 2009).

Social media enable interactivity between or and among individuals that share a social network. It also allows people to broadcast or narrowcast their activities and interests (Lüders, 2008). Over the years, social networking sites have grown tremendously as a form of open source publishing. Open source publishing first appeared most notably with software programs (O’Reilly, 2012). The idea was that the users could improve on openly

available computer programs and codes and then the new versions, sometimes called derivatives, would be made available again to the community.

The advent of these new, collaborative, participative, and democratizing media has been both resisted and embraced by old media outlets. The increased participation and feedback means that traditional media outlets that were used to one-way communication and passive audiences now have to listen to and respond to feedback, some of which is critical and negative (Lüders, 2008). They want to encourage audience participation, but they also want to be able to control and predict the media consumption habits and reactions of audiences (Siapera, 2012).

In virtually all careers, one is likely to interact with something that is “open source.” It maybe some type of open source software, since that is the area in which open source product development is most commonly applied (Brabham, 2008). When something is open source, its essential elements are available to anyone who may want to use and/or improve on the product. When software is open source, for instance, the code is available to anyone who may want to edit it as long as they continue the open philosophy of product development by then making their version, often called a derivative, available to anyone who may want to edit it (Lüders, 2008). Within this philosophy, the synergy that is created when a group of people with different levels of knowledge, experience, and expertise work collaboratively leads to innovative ideas and products that are then shared with the commons rather than kept as proprietary. Mozilla’s Firefox web browser is an example of free open source software (O’Reilly, 2012).

After examining the social media today, as it were, the social philosophy of this channel and the social philosophy of co-operatives as will be examined in the next round of discussions, there is a close relationship in the end of the two. The synergy drawn by

social media in bringing people together virtually and the role co-operative play in bringing people together physically and socially through the co-operative principles is worth exploring. The two, we can deduce, shows the power of association or coming together albeit different means.

2.10 The Concept Co-operatives

This section will provide a clear and a detailed analysis of the concept of co-operatives from several perspectives. The researcher will provide clear cut and overall principle of co-operatives also known as the philosophy of the co-operative movement. The scope of the co-operative movement will also be provided from the country perspective and an international angle. Further, the section will provide details of the challenges faced by the co-operative movement, on a wider scope in Kenya and also under the geographical area of study. Some statistics imploring the success of the movement in Kenya and at the international level. At the end of this section, one will be able to understand why this research is essential especially in tackling inherent challenges that face Africa, Kenya and the youth of the world. The section will explore and show the potential of the movement in providing reliable solutions to government and individuals especially during the times of financial crisis and depressions.

2.10.1 Definition of a Co-operative

There are several definitions of a co-operative which various scholars of the concept have put across. For instance, according to the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), a co-operative is defined as a business voluntarily owned and controlled by its members and operated for them and by them on a non-profit or cost basis (ICA, 2014). Consequently, the persons who own a co-operative also use it. Ouma argues that a co-operative is

organized and incorporated to engage in economic activities with certain ideals of democracy, socio-consciousness and human relations included (Gicheru and M'Imanyara, 2012).

The International Co-operative Alliance argues that Co-operatives are autonomous associations formed and democratically directed by people who come together to meet common economic, social, and cultural needs. Founded on the principle of participatory governance, co-operatives are governed by those who use their services; its members. As such, co-operatives are based on the principles of member empowerment, education, and community; co-ops operate laterally promoting participation both within their own organization, and through a focus on community interaction, and support (ICA, 2004).

In other spheres, a co-operative is defined as an organization established for the purpose of purchasing and marketing the products of its members, i.e., shareholders, and/or procuring supplies for resale to the members, whose profits are distributed to the members (in the form of patronage dividends), not on the basis of the members' equity investment in the co-operative, but in proportion to their patronage of it, i.e., the amount of business that each member transacts with it. In a workers' co-operative, the members jointly manufacture a product and share in the profits of the enterprise based on the amount of labor they contribute (Kimberly & Robert, 2004).

Deducing from the above textual definitions of a co-operative, we can conclude that the definition of co-operative varies depending on whether one is looking at it from the perspective of a co-operative activist, a co-operative scholar, a government official or such. A co-operative activist would perhaps argue that any organization that is committed to and practices co-operative principles is a co-operative. However, a corporate lawyer

would probably say that a co-operative must be formed under a co-operative laws and principles. In the context of this study, various definitions will be used but most important, this study will be guided by the definition of the international co-operative alliance; the global umbrella body for the co-operatives.

2.10.2 How to Identify a Co-operative

Co-operatives are identified in various ways. This term can refer either to a specific type of business entity recognized under the law or to the internal governance structure of such an organization (Kimberly & Robert, 2004). It may also refer to a specific type of corporation, recognized under the law. The legal requirements for forming a co-operative corporation vary from nation to nation around the world (Kim, *Et AL*, 1995).

There are several organizations that operate like co-operatives, but, for a number of reasons, chose an entity other than a co-operative society. For example, worldwide, some co-operatives are formed as Limited Liability Companies (LLCs) or Nonprofit Mutual Benefit Corporations, and incorporate co-operative principles and practices into their Articles of Organization, Articles of Incorporation, Operating Agreement, and/or Bylaws (Kimberly & Robert, 2004).

Co-operative scholars and researchers have found out that some organizations or groups call themselves “co-operatives,” without having formed a co-operative corporation, or for that matter, without having formed an independent legal entity at all. For instance, a group of tenants might create housing co-operative, perhaps by simply adopting highly participatory and democratic ways of operating. Similarly, workers at a non-profit organization or fiscally sponsored project may elect to operate through co-operative, democratic principles, such as one-person one-vote for their democracy. This type of co-

operative organization may or may not have the other co-operative attributes of joint ownership and co-operative distribution of earnings, described above (Kim, *Et AL*, 1995).

There are several types of co-operatives; the co-operative model is as flexible as any organizational structure and may be applied to the social services sector, used to create shared infrastructure, as well as to pursue business ventures. The Common types of co-operatives include (Kim, *Et AL*, 1995).

Retail Co-operatives, whose members are, more often than not, the very owners of their establishment, buying a share in the co-op as a prerequisite to shopping. These co-operatives tend to be governed by a board of directors elected by the membership annually or bi-annually. Credit Unions (in the case of United States of America), whose members similarly invest in a share in the organization as a prerequisite of participation, and generally elect a board of directors. Service Provider Co-operatives, whose members generally share in the costs of renting or purchasing the space, and materials necessary for their work as a co-operative; in these instances, direct democracy is usually the prevalent method of decision-making. Housing Co-operatives often spring up in areas where residential costs are high and offer a method for increasing living standards, one's sense of community, and safety. These co-operatives work similarly to service provider co-operatives in that they are usually directed by first-person democratic exchange; often they work on the consensus model (Steven *Et AL*, 2009).

There are many more types of common co-operatives, as well as a disparate array of goods, services, and infrastructure that are provided to people all over the world through the co-operative model (Kimberly & Robert, 2004).

2.10.3 Co-operative Principles

The philosophy, values and principles of co-operative enterprises have great possibilities to impact positively, speedily and equitably the economic development of large masses of people because co-operatives are people-centered business organizations. Co-operatives have great advantage and are significant enterprises in developed and developing countries because of their traditional values, ethical practices, principles and socio-economic impact (ICA, 2014).

Scholars argue that the co-operative principles cumulatively are the life blood of the movement. This is because they serve as the guidelines through which co-operators strive to develop their co-operative organizations; They guide co-operatives to decide the nature of the democracy of their institutions, the roles of different stakeholders, and the allocation of surpluses/profits that are created; They make co-operatives distinct and the co-operative movement valuable; They are the essential qualities that make co-operators effective; They are elastic and applicable with different degrees of detail to different kinds of co-operatives in different kinds of situations and they serve as a basis for co-operative legislation (Steven *Et AL*, 2009).

In relation to the above, we now explore and examine these seven principles of the co-operatives. The hub of the global co-operative movement, the International Co-operative Alliance, has accepted seven principles that guide all co-operative organizations: The International Co-operative Alliance's Co-operative Principles (derived from the Rochdale Principles) are (Steven *Et AL*, 2009):

The first principle of co-operatives is **Open and Voluntary Membership**; members of a co-operative form and join without being coerced. As such, all members of a co-operative

society operate under voluntary entry- voluntary exit philosophy. In relation to the context of this study, the co-operative information disseminated by co-operatives is not meant to hoodwink or coerce anyone to join the society, it is meant to inform such that anyone willing to join can do so at own volition.

The second principle of the co-operatives is **Democratic Member Control**: members vote in their leaders; one man one vote rule. Members of a co-operative society run their society through their elected leaders who should be members of the society. It is also important to note that every co-operative has its own bylaws made by the members. Resolutions of a society are passed during an annual general meeting attended by delegates who represent members of the society.

The third principal of co-operatives is **Member Economic Participation**: all members participate in economic empowerment. Co-operative revolves around pooling resources together. These resources are not necessarily hard cash; it depends on the type of a co-operative; for instance we could have a service co-operative offering cleaning or security services where each member offers themselves to do this job. In the context under study, if the youth of Meru County or Kenya would be members of such worker co-operatives, they would provide practical solutions and a case of job creation and how unemployment among the youth can be curtailed.

The fourth principle of co-operatives is **Autonomy and Independence**: co-operatives operates independently. Governments do not control the operations of co-operative society. Although they may provide some regulations, co-operatives operate as independent entities devoid of stringent government regulations. Each co-operative society is an independent entity in itself.

The fifth principle of co-operatives is **Education, Training and Information**: co-operatives members are informed, educated and communicated to on the operations and

day-to-day running of the co-operative. It is this aspect of information on which this study is based on. An assumption has been drawn that the youth are not members of the co-operative societies because they do not have any information about them; and even some of those who are members, do they know much more than the nonmembers?

The sixth principle of co-operatives is **Cooperation among Co-operatives**: co-operatives support each other. In this regard, all co-operatives are to tag each other along and not compete. Co-operatives do not engage in cutthroat completion amongst themselves.

The seventh and the last principle of co-operatives is **Concern for Community**: they do community support and social responsibilities. Co-operatives do not operate in a vacuum. Inasmuch as they take concerns of their members and other co-operatives, they are also called upon to carry our corporate social responsibility duties. (Kimberly & Robert, 2004; ICA, 2014).

In relation to this study, a clear understanding of the co-operative philosophy underscores the fundamental role that they play in the society. From the principal number five on education, training and information, this forms the basis upon which the study is based. It is important to note that these principles are interpreted from time to time on need basis depending on an array of factors including political, social, economic, environmental and other situations.

2.10.4 Co-operative Members

The users of the services that the co-operative provides are known as patrons. Co-operatives can be formed for many and or different purposes and by different types of patrons. They can be formed by consumers, producers, workers, and sometimes by a combination of those groups. Patronage is the term that describes how the consumers use

the co-operative society. So, for example, the patronage of a consumer co-operative is the purchase of goods from the co-operative; patronage of a producer co-operative is the transfer of goods to the co-operative to be marketed by the co-operative; patronage of a worker co-operative is the work performed for the co-operative (Kim, *Et AL*, 1995). There is a great deal of flexibility for co-operatives to define patronage and how it is measured. For instance, one worker co-operative might define patronage as the number of hours worked in a fiscal year while another might define patronage as the amount of money earned by a worker in a fiscal year (Steven *Et AL*, 2009).

Beer co-operative example: Here's an example to help explain what patronage is in different types of co-operatives. The phrase "beer co-operative" can mean many different things, depending on the relationship between the members and the co-operative. It can be:

A consumer co-operative: The member/owners are people that enjoy taking and they have formed a co-operative to purchase bread collectively and obtain bulk discounts. A member's patronage is measured by how much beer one buys from the co-operative.

A producer co-operative: The member/owners are individual home beer brewers that have formed a co-operative to jointly market their beer. The co-operative may, for example, operate stands at various consumer markets. A member's patronage is measured by how much beer one sells to the co-operative.

A worker co-operative: The member/owners are workers in a single brewery. A member's patronage is measured by how much time one spends working for the co-operative or by the value of the work one contributes to the co-operative.

Not all of the co-operative's patrons are necessarily members (Steven *Et AL*, 2009). Generally, it is up to the co-operative members and or board to decide which patrons will be admitted as members. Co-operative members get various benefits such as the right to share in dividends, discounts on products, invitations to member-only events, loans, buy shares etc. The exact benefits of membership are generally up to the co-operative to decide (Kimberly & Robert, 2004).

2.11 History of Co-operatives in the World

In this subsection, we investigate and trace the first co-operative in the world and examine the first philosophical thought that has brought about 1.5 billion people together on a course today. As discussed elsewhere and pointed out in this text on the principles of co-operatives, this subsection will provide a detailed genesis of such principles and why they have remained intact to date. In relation to the study, this subsection will offer a logical historical knowledge on the concept of co-operatives from early beginnings to virtually all corners of the earth.

Research has shown that in 19th century, the co-operative movement began in Europe, primarily in England and France (Holyoake, & George, 1893). This was brought about by the industrial revolution and the increased mechanization of the economy transforming the society and threatening the livelihoods of many workers (Miller, 2004).

It is documented that by the start of the 19th century in the UK, the age of child labor, exploitation and poverty were rampant. High population produced cheap labor and those who failed to find work in the new factories were forced to rely on meager parish relief for the poor or to starve. By the early 1800's, food prices were high and wages were being

reduced; this in turn made much of the population to suffer extreme poverty and deprivation (Sajama & Gerald, 2000).

At the same time, the prevailing economic philosophy was a capitalist free-market of Adam Smith, who claimed that through the impersonal mechanism of the free market, self-interest would automatically lead to the public good. In his book “The Wealth of Nations”, Adam Smith argues that this market economy is the one in which human relations were reduced to the buying and selling of labor and that workers could never improve their lot through industrial or political action (Holyoake & George, 1893). At that time, labor, and the poverty and starvation that go with unemployment, was simply a market commodity subject to the free market rules of supply and demand (Miller, 2004).

Scholars argue that, added to this debate, were the population theories of the Reverend Thomas Malthus, of the Malthusianism principals which suggested that any attempt to help the poor would simply increase the population and make matters worse in terms of feeding population. However, these individualistic theories removed any incentive from those with wealth and power to seek to improve the conditions of the majority who were poor (Miller, 2004). It is worth noting that, there were however, a small number of enlightened individuals appalled by the poverty and ill health of the poor who had an alternative vision (Holyoake & George, 1893). History has attributed two of these enlightened individuals as the founders of the co-operative philosophy that eventually underpinned the development of the international co-operative movement. These two enlightened individuals were a wealthy industrialist, Robert Owen, and a Brighton medical practitioner, Dr William King (Sazama, 2000).

Early attempts to form co-operatives failed for various reasons; some external and others internal; for instance: the working poor placed more faith in achieving political change rather than investing their energies in practical economic co-operation (Miller, 2004); there was no legal status for a co-operative, thus coops had no legal standing (Goddard *Et AL.* 2002). It is also documented that some co-operatives failed because of fraud or because they traded by giving members credit and rapidly encountered cash-flow difficulties (Holyoake & George, 1893).

During the same period, strikes by the weavers in Rochdale had failed to have any lasting effect on their wages and living conditions (Hoyt, 1982). The weavers, wondering if there was a better way of improving their situation, turned to the ideas of Owen and King. It was the Rochdale Pioneers who solved the structural problems with early co-operative trading in a crucial way. They saw the need to distribute some of the fruits of co-operative trading to the members who saw an immediate benefit from co-operation (Hoyt, 1982). Available literature shows that the Rochdale Pioneers admitted unlimited number of members and distributed part of the co-operative's profits as dividends on purchase. With only 28 members, the Rochdale pioneers started not the first, but the first successful co-operative enterprise, the Rochdale Equitable Pioneer Society at their shop in Toad Lane Rochdale, now the Rochdale Pioneers Museum. They began trading in December, 21st 1844, the date now recognized as the birth-date of the International Co-operative Movement (NCUA, 2007).

Historians and co-operative scholars argue that the Rochdale Pioneers began in a very modest way. They traded the basic necessities to their members; for example: butter, candles, soap, flour and blankets. Their aim was to supply proper quality of goods, cheaply and to return any profit to members of the co-operative. The Rochdale Equitable

Pioneers succeeded because of their own harsh experience of poverty and the theories of Owen and King. They believed that to succeed, their co-operative enterprise must work on a number of key principles which are now recognized internationally as the Seven Co-operative Principles (Hoyt, 1982).

By the 1870's the co-operative movement had its own wholesale and insurance societies and accumulated capital of over £300,000; the success of the Rochdale Pioneers was remarkable. Today, despite intense competition in food retailing, UK retail co-operatives still have a total turnover of over £7.7 billion and there is a renaissance of interest in all forms of co-operative (National Research Council, 2006). The co-operative movement spread rapidly, by the end of the last century it was already an international movement. The International Co-operative Alliance was founded and held its first congress in Manchester in 1896 (Hoyt, 1982). To date, the National Confederation of Co-operatives (NATCCO Network) is the lone representative of the Philippine co-operatives in the alliance (National Research Council, 2006).

Today the co-operative principles are successfully applied throughout the world to a vast array of co-operative enterprises, farming co-operatives, fishing co-operatives, credit unions, retail co-operatives, manufacturing co-operatives, even co-operatives providing internet access services (National Research Council, 2006).

The above historical narrative of the co-operative movement story provides clear challenges that made the co-operative movement fail at first start; it also provides the reason why on the 2nd attempt the Rochdale brothers succeeded. This study is looking into the possible future drawback of the co-operative; why are the youth not in the movement? How can co-operatives harness the benefits of social media and entice the youth with

information to create understanding of what all this movement is about? The challenges that faced the people in 19th century during industrial revolution, aren't the same facing the youth in Kenya now? Can't the youth borrow the co-operative concept as applied in 19th century, revamp it and solve the challenges of unemployment, poverty, exploitation among others? These are some of the intriguing questions this historical anecdote pricks into the mind of this research.

2.12 Scope of Co-operatives in the World

According to the 2017 ICA annual report, Co-operative enterprises worldwide directly employ about 280 million people while generating 2.1 Trillion USD in turnover (ICA, 2017). Evidence has also shown that co-operatives provide services and infrastructure to the society needs to thrive (CICOPA Report 2014 / 2017).

The report argues that the co-operative model of business is based on ethics, values and principles that put the needs and aspirations of their members above the simple goal of maximizing profit as compared to other models of businesses and entrepreneurship (ICA, 2017). Through self-help and empowerment, reinvesting in their communities and concern for the well-being of people and the world in which we live, it is known that co-operatives nurture a long-term vision for sustainable economic growth, social development and environmental responsibility (CICOPA Report 2014 / 2017).

A co-operative is a member-owned, member-run and member-serving business, which empower people to collectively realize their economic aspirations, while strengthening their social and human capital and developing their communities (CICOPA Report 2014 / 2017). Co-operatives also contribute to sustainable economic growth and stable, quality employment, employing 280 million people directly; this does not include

indirect and induced employment. Records show that within the G20 countries, co-operative employment makes up about 12% of the total employed population (CICOPA Report, 2014 / 2017).

Worldwide, the over 2.6 million co-operatives in records have membership of over one billion persons (CICOPA Report 2014 / 2017). As such, the global strategy for the co-operative business model is to be, by the year 2020, acknowledged as the leader in economic, social and environmental sustainability, the model preferred by people and the fastest growing form of enterprise. The world's top 300 co-operatives operate in different sectors: insurance (41%), agriculture (30%), wholesale and retail trade (19%), banking and financial services (6%), industry and utilities (1%), health, education and social care (1%) and other services (1%) (CICOPA Report, 2014 / 2017).

At the 2014 Summit of Co-operatives, the study *Co-operatives and Employment: A Global Report* carried out by CICOPA showed that the Alliance's sector for industrial and service co-operatives, discusses the significance of co-operative employment globally, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Its second edition published in September 2017 and based on data from 156 countries, shows how co-operatives contribute to resilient employment, a sustainable economy and the well-being of people at work, making up almost 10% of the entire employed population (CICOPA Report, 2014 / 2017).

The large segments of the population, employment and membership in co-operatives, ranges high, for instance, In Finland, 72% of the population is a member of a co-operative, In the United States, there are more than 40,000 co-operative businesses with 350 million members (many people belong to more than one co-op) (<http://reic.uwcc.wisc.edu/default.htm>), for instance, In Canada, 50% of the population,

about 18 million, are members of co-operatives, in Uruguay, about 30% of the population are members of co-operatives, representing about 1 million individual members, in Singapore, about 25% of the population is a member of a co-op, with about 1.4 million members (CICOPA Report 2014 / 2017).

Figures from the International Co-operative Alliance show that there are close to one billion individual members of co-operatives in the world today. Basing on this argument, the Alliance (ICA), the global representative body for co-operatives, may be classified as one of the largest non-governmental organizations in the world today by the number of people it represents. According to available figures (CICOPA Report 2014 / 2017), ICA directly represents over, 700 million individuals through its approximately 306 members from 105 countries in the world (CICOPA Report 2014 / 2017).

Nations with the largest number of members represented by the ICA are the United States, Japan, India, Iran, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Germany, and Canada. However, there is no global-level comprehensive database of co-operative statistics because statistical offices analyze co-operatives differently from country to country. This makes it is difficult to get a complete picture (CICOPA Report 2014 / 2017).

The above statistical figures denoting majorly the worth of co-operative ventures in developed nations are to dispel any perceptions the youth might be having about co-operatives. Kobia (2011) argues that one of the major reasons and challenges that affect the entry of youth into Kenya's co-operative movement space is the perception that this is a poor man's lonely space. We get information to the contrary in the above literature review as provided by the international co-operative alliance and its allied partners on the scope of the co-operative movement in the world.

2.13 The History Co-operatives in Kenya

This subsection will provide a step by step, blow by blow account of the co-operative movement in Kenya from the colonial period to date. Various historical backgrounds will be tackled and this will make the researcher appreciate why the study is being undertaken in Meru County. As noted and discussed in the introduction of the study, Meru county remains a curious case study to co-operative researchers due to its success story especially agricultural co-operatives in coffee, tea and dairy as will be discussed in this subsection. It is in this backdrop that the study identified this county as well as other factors.

2.13.1 The Colonial Era

Over the years, the growth and development co-operatives in Kenya has been influenced by two major factors: the British colonial rule in the pre-independence Kenya which excluded the majority of Africans from the monetary economy until the late 1950's and the extensive involvement of the government of Kenya in the affairs of the co-operative movement after the colonial rule in the 1960's. Co-operatives in Kenya trace their origin to registration of the first co-operative society at Lumbwa - Kipkellion in 1908. Initially there were no legal and policy structures in place, co-operatives expanded through white colonial farmers' agitation (Kobia, 2011).

It has been observed that in the pre-1945 period, the white settlers in Kenya consolidated their farming by forming settler organizations. Some of these included the Kenya Planters Co-operative Union (1923), Kenya Farmers Association (1923), and Kenya Co-operative Creameries (1925). They were originally registered under Business Law and only became registered as co-operatives in 1931 when the first Co-operative Ordinance was promulgated. The Government's formal involvement in co-operatives started in 1931 when the first co-operative ordinance was enacted in order to regularize the operations of

co-operative societies. However, in 1944, available literature shows that the colonial government needed Africans to participate in the economy through co-operatives which were an improvement of the existing rudimentary marketing systems (Kobia, 2011).

In 1946, a new Co-operative Societies' Ordinance allowed Africans to form co-operatives. However, Africans' capacity to participate in co-operatives was minimal since there were restrictions against African participation in growing cash crops and keeping improved animals. Following the Swynnerton Plan in 1955, the colonial government allowed Africans to grow cash crops paving way for formation of more co-operatives. This milestone in African Agriculture between 1932 and 1969, led to registration of about 1,894 societies. They were basically marketing-oriented societies in cereals, coffee, cotton, fruits and vegetables, pyrethrum, sisal, sugarcane, dairies, eggs and poultry, pigs and others involved in ranching and farm purchase. These co-operatives also provided auxiliary services like farm inputs, credit and other services (Kobia, 2011).

This analysis of the colonial period provides the framework under which co-operatives were established in Kenya; this is in legal frameworks and economic participation of members. Accordingly, this account provides knowledge for the basis of making conclusions and recommendations where needed in the study.

2.13.2 The Post-Independence Era

The Government of Kenya, at independence, embarked on Africanization of the economy whose major policy thrust was contained in the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*. This policy paper supported for principles similar to those adopted by the co-operative movement; thus co-operatives were considered as suitable vehicles with an appropriate framework to achieve the

aspirations of the majority of Kenyans in participating in economic development. Various legislations were enacted by the government and reviewed existing ones to ensure that the regulatory and supervisory framework was in line with the new objectives (Kobia, 2011).

The Co-operative Societies' Act [CAP 490] Laws of Kenya was enacted in 1966 under which the Government used co-operatives as a medium to realize its socio-economic development agenda. The commissioner for co-operative development was given powers to control growth and development of co-operatives including approval of the budgets for co-operative societies and removal of management committees which failed to manage coops satisfactorily. The Government got into agreements with a number of development partners among them the World Bank, United States of America, Germany and the Nordic countries to assist in technical expertise, financing in the form of loans and grants to needy societies (Nyagah, 2014).

The other post-independence Co-operative Development Policy was contained in *Sessional Paper No. 8 of 1970* whose main goal was the consolidation of co-operative activities. This included improvement of management of societies, intensification of education and training for members, committees and co-operative employees with provision of Government support staff as supervisors. Another review of the Co-operative Development Policy was undertaken in 1975 in which the Government stated its continued recognition of co-operatives as vital institutions for mobilizing materials, human and financial resources for national development (Kobia, 2011).

The Government reiterated its commitment to pursue and promote expansion of co-operative activities in all the productive spheres of the economy. During the 1980's, the Government started implementing Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP's) for a market economy. The Sessional paper No. 1 of 1986 on *Economic Management for*

Renewed Growth emphasized the importance of unfettered private sector led economic development. The government, through Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1987 on *Renewed Growth through the Co-operative Movement*, reiterated its commitment to enhance the participation of Kenyans in the economy through co-operatives (Kobia, 2011). The responsibility of organizing and managing co-operatives was left to members and their management committees while the Government played an advisory role and that of assisting them to maximize member benefits. In realizing this objective, co-operatives were required to fully participate in mobilizing domestic resources for reliable and productive investment through co-operatives for their livelihoods (Nyahah, 2014).

2.13.3 The Post Liberalization Era

The Sessional Paper No. 6 of 1997, on *Co-operatives in a Liberalized Economic Environment* further re-defined a new relationship between the Government and the co-operative movement with the role of Government being restricted to that of creating a conducive environment for growth and development of co-operatives through formulation of effective co-operative development policies, overseeing the development and administration of the co-operative legislation and regulations. It was felt then that government's involvement in co-operatives affairs needed to be substantially reduced and re-oriented in order to democratize and professionalize the management of co-operatives, to enable them to conform to the definition of a true co-operative and to be operated and managed in accordance with the internationally accepted co-operative values and principles. More importantly, however, the Policy called for a gradual process of government withdrawal from the day to day management of societies (Kobia, 2011).

Policy implementation was supposed to be gradual allowing for attendant measures by government to assist co-operatives to adjust and cope with the resulting effects of liberalization and competition (Kobia, 2011).

Prior to SAP's, the Government had supported the co-operative movement through direct financial and technical assistance and subsidized services. That ceased with the enactment of the Co-operative Societies' Act in 1997 according to whose interpretation the Government had no role in the co-operative movement. The fundamental assumption was that ordinary members would be fully involved in approving major transactions, investments and appropriation of resources. Little effort was made to reform the leadership and management of co-operatives to safeguard members' rights and interests. As a result of the Government's withdrawal from its supervisory responsibilities, the movement was at the mercy of ill equipped and sometimes dishonest leaders (Kobia, 2011).

This prompted poor and costly decisions like sub-division of societies that resulted into dismal performance of many co-operative enterprises and eventual collapse. For instance, a large number of coffee co-operatives accumulated huge debts with financial institutions resulting in high indebtedness. The resulting loss of confidence in those co-operative institutions was principally due to failure to make payments promptly for the produce delivered by members since much of the money went into repaying debts. Farmers could no longer access credit facilities and the small co-operative units had heightened credit unworthiness (Kobia, 2011).

Political interference also accounted for mismanagement of key co-operative institutions leading to the near collapse, for example, the Kenya Farmers (Co-op) Association (KFA), and the Kenya Co-operative Creameries Limited (KCC), which has now been revived by

the Government (Kenya yearbook, 2010). Coupled with reduction of donor support for co-operative development programmes in mid-1990's, resources for capacity building, training and education and material development dwindled resulting into heightened co-operative unawareness among the management, leaders and members leading to poor governance and reduced appreciation of the co-operative principles and values (Kobia, 2011).

Thus what began as well intended liberalization measures gradually translated into irreversible weakening of commodity marketing institutions; as a result, co-operatives' share in the commodity market declined and the membership got impoverished and the co-operative movement suffered a confidence crisis. To complicate matters further, the prevailing low world commodity market prices culminated in low prices of produce delivered by farmers, lower payments, costly farm inputs, low quality of produce, negligence of coffee trees, inter-cropping, high levels of indebtedness and increased poverty levels and massive importation of goods such as the dairy, the weakened performance of sugar and cereals co-operatives made the situation worse (Kenya yearbook, 2013/14).

The government of Kenya recognized the urgency to preserve and maintain a prominent role of co-operatives in national economic and social development the Government re-established the Ministry of Co-operative Development and Marketing (MOCDM) in 2003. It amended the Co-operative Societies' Act in 2004 and prepared new Co-operative Societies' Rules. The new legal framework provided for Government intervention to restore members' confidence in the co-operative model and also provided for stiff penalties on co-operative leaders who mismanaged their co-operatives. The move aimed

at the key objectives of reviving the sector and ensuring that all societies were well governed and managed for the benefit of members (Nyagah, 2014).

However, efforts to revive key co-operative institutions and organizations that hitherto supported agriculture e.g. KCC Limited, KFA, KPCU, and the Kenya National Federation of Co-operatives (KNFC) were partially successful due to unresolved issues regarding their outstanding debts and ownership. The enforcement of provisions of the Co-operative Societies' Act on timely remittances by employers to SACCO societies led to recovery of outstanding arrears to the tune of Kshs. 3.8 billion by 2010 out of the Kshs. 4.3 Billion that was outstanding in 2004. In recognition of the growing importance and sophistication of SACCO's, a SACCO Societies' Act was enacted to enforce prudential standards for SACCO's with FOSA's (Kobia, 2011).

The Government then aimed to make the co-operative movement a gateway to economic growth with the following objectives as at 2003 (Kenya yearbook, 2013/14):

To increase active membership of co-operatives by 15% annually and support establishment of new co-operatives in agriculture, micro-credit, promising high growth activities;

To increase and maintain the average domestic market share of agro-commodity co-operatives to 70% by the year 2015;

To increase savings mobilization through SACCO's and other co-operatives by 20% annually by the year 2015;

To improve the main co-operative performance indicators, namely total sales, share capital, and total assets, etc. by 10 % annually by 2015;

To achieve a net increase of 600,000 additional direct jobs within the co-operative movement and 2 million indirect jobs by 2030;

To increase growth in co-operative investments by 15% annually by 2015;

To increase survival of co-operatives and maintain a high co-operative survival rate in agriculture, housing, financial services, industry, wholesale and retail trade, ICT, energy, SMEs and other formal sectors from the current 38% to 98% by 2030; and

To broaden partnerships and networks with the private investors and development partners.

The participation of the government through various interventions shown above towards providing a conducive environment for growth of co-operatives is key to this study. Information such as this is what the study is keen to find out if co-operatives share out with the youth through their social media sites; it may not be that the youth hate co-operatives; the reverse could be true. The cause of low numbers may be attributed to little or no information about co-operative ventures. From the intervention measures and guidelines above, the study takes this with a mind of an opportunity for co-operatives to rejuvenate and foster growth; take for instance this item on ICT, *'To increase survival of co-operatives and maintain a high co-operative survival rate in agriculture, housing, financial services, industry, wholesale and retail trade, ICT, energy, SMEs and other formal sectors from the current 38% to 98% by 2030'*. The study affirms that co-operatives have a great opportunity to leverage on the goodwill of the government in increasing ICT penetration in co-operatives from the then 30% to 98% in 2030. This taken by co-operatives, will promote innovations and increased youth participation as well as change perceptions on the co-operative ventures.

2.14 Status of the Co-operatives in Kenya

This section gives a brief overview of the co-operative movement in Kenya. As noted elsewhere in the text, after the enactment of the constitution of Kenya in 2010, it led to creation of county governments and a number of functions were devolved. One of those functions was the co-operative function. We take a brief preview of what this means to the co-operative movement and after the section, the study takes a deeper and a closer look at the co-operative movement in Meru County from an historical success story to the current re-awakening phase albeit challenges of youth involvement among others.

The enactment of Kenya's Constitution in the year 2010 brought about fundamental changes in the management of Government affairs by creating two levels of Government, namely the National Government and the forty-seven County Governments. Under the Fourth Schedule, the Co-operative Societies are classified as a devolved function thus necessitating a change in their governance. This significant change, as well as the legislative amendments of the co-operative sector legislative and regulatory frameworks such as Co-operative Societies Act (2004) and SASRA Act (2008), in addition to the introduction of the Kenya Vision 2030 necessitated the review of the co-operatives policy framework. These changes were necessary towards ensuring that the co-operative sub-sector continues to sustain its critical role in its contribution to the socio-economic development of both the National and County Governments (Kenya yearbook, 2013/14).

The Kenya's co-operative movement has grown immensely over the years; for instance, by the end of 2015, Kenya had 19,200 registered co-operative enterprises with a membership of 14 Million active members. It is important to note that at the same time,

SACCOs had mobilized Kshs.600 Billion as deposits and had given out Ksh.329 Billion in loans and advances. By the end of the same period, SACCOs had an asset base worth Kshs. 470 Billion (National Coop Policy, 2017).

Kenya is recognized to have one of the most vibrant and successful co-operative movement in the world. It is ranked number seven in the world and number one in Africa in terms of the number of co-operative enterprises, their capital base, membership and contribution to the national economy (ICA, 2014). 2015 statistics from the National Government show that in Kenya about 50% of Kenyans benefit directly or indirectly from over 19,000 registered Co-operative enterprises that are owned by about 14 million members. These Co-operatives have employed over 550,000 people directly and another 2 million people indirectly and contribute about 45% to GDP. The SACCO sub-sector alone continues to mobilize huge savings in Kenya, currently standing at 33% of national savings (KNBS, 2016).

Meru is among the top Counties with the most vibrant co-operatives in Kenya, alongside other Counties such as Kiambu, Nyeri, Murang'a, Kisii, Kericho and Bungoma. The co-operative movement in Meru has grown by leaps and bounds and reached the highest threshold of success in 1960s/70s and 1970s/80s when coffee and milk production through co-operatives reached unprecedented levels. During these golden years, the socio-economic and political development of Meru County revolved around the co-operative movement. People took their children to school, obtained medical care and made investments using payments from their co-operatives enterprises, mainly coffee and dairy. During this period, co-operatives invested heavily in property market by acquiring, among

others, Nyambene House, Igoji House and Imenti House in Nairobi and MACCU Building in Meru (Kobia, 2011).

Meru was also on the national map in terms of co-operative leadership by early pioneer managers including Mr. Henry Kinyua and Jason Kimbui rose from being managers Meru African Coffee Co-operative Union (MACCU) at different times to manage and start, respectively, KPCU and Co-operative Bank of Kenya. The other pioneer manager at national level was Mr. Silas K. Kobia, one of the founder managers who successfully steered the growth of Co-operative Insurance Company from a small insurance agency into a successful national co-operative insurance company (Kobia, 2014).

During mid-1980s and 1990s the co-operative movement in Meru County became weak. Co-operative members became disillusioned, started reducing their investments in coffee and dairy choosing to invest in alternative farm enterprises. This led to unprecedented decline in the production of coffee and milk that were the pillars of the co-operative movement and its economy in Meru. (Kobia, 2011)

2.15 The Co-operative Movement in Meru County

This section presents an historical narrative of the co-operatives in Meru County which was earlier on Meru District in the early 1990s. Meru County is the geographical scope for this study. It is therefore important that various key historical anecdotes are keenly observed and linked with the key findings of the study. More importantly, in this section, available literature shows that the builders of the giant Kenya's co-operative movement were from this region and their contributions have been key in success and they remain venerated by the movement for remarkable progress intermittently.

The earliest co-operative enterprise in the present day Meru County was registered in the year 1900. Nkuene Farmers' Co-operative Society Limited was registered in 1948. The coffee Co-operatives formed Meru African Coffee Co-operative Union (MACCU) to handle and market coffee as well as provision of credit advances and provision of inputs. The Coffee Co-operatives kept growing and by 1970 there were 14 of them in the Imenti region and 3 in Meru North region giving a total of 17 in the County (Kobia, 2011).

In 1987 when Kenya produced the highest quantity of coffee (130,000 MT) all the 14 coffee Co-operatives in the Imenti region produced 40,832,428 kilograms of coffee. The highest quantity produced by the same Co-operatives was 63,113,226 kilograms in 1985. The figures for the 3 coffee Co-operatives from Meru North region were not available because Meru North Co-operative Union lost them in 1996 when migrating from the Meru to Maua office. The coffee Co-operatives through their Unions were instrumental in the massive investments owned by Meru Co-operatives e.g. MACCU building in Meru town, Nyambene house, Igoji house and Imenti house all in Nairobi among others. Imenti House was acquired in 1975 while Nyambene House was acquired in 1974. The coffee Co-operatives were also instrumental in educating people in Meru, individual developments and rapid growth of towns like Meru, Nkubu, Maua and other smaller market centers like Kanyakine, Mikinduri, Igoji, Kariene, Ruiru & Muthara which grew at slower rates following the decline in the coffee sector. The glory days for Meru County were in 1970s and 1980s when coffee was doing well (Kobia 2011).

The earliest dairy Co-operatives like Katheri, Abogeta and Miirigamieru were registered in 1963. They formed the Dairy Union which was registered in 1967. More dairy Co-operatives were registered. The Dairy Co-operatives were also performing well and were major contributors to the massive economic developments witnessed in Meru in 1970s

and 1980s. This was in line with the Government directive of having one Union in a district. However the two separated in 2005 following the restructuring (Gicheru, & M'Imanyara, 2012)

The Meru African Coffee Co-operative Union (MACCU) was the first Union to be registered from Meru in early 1900 with affiliate Co-operative societies from the current Meru and Tharaka/Nithi Counties. Other unions like Meru Dairy Union (1967) and Meru North Co-operative Union (1970) were registered later. Coffee and Dairy Co-operative Unions were doing very well when their affiliated coffee and dairy primary Co-operative enterprises were performing well. Those Co-operative Unions were able to acquire prime properties like Imenti House, Nyambene House and Igoji House all in Nairobi and MACCU building in Meru town during the glory (Kobia, 2011).

Meru was also on the national map in terms of Co-operative leadership by early pioneer managers including Mr. Henry Kinyua and Jason Kimbui rose from being managers Meru African Coffee Co-operative Union (MACCU) at different times to manage and start, respectively, KPCU and Co-operative Bank of Kenya. The other pioneer manager at national level was Mr. Silas K. Kobia, the founder manager who successfully steered the growth of Co-operative Insurance Company from a small insurance agency into a successful national co-operative insurance company (Kobia 2011).

The Co-operative Movement in Kenya and its economy suffered a series of setbacks from mid-1980s culminating in almost total collapse in the 1990s as a result of poorly phased out Government support in line with the conditions of the so-called SAPs dictated by the World Bank. Government reduced its level of supervision of Co-operatives thus creating a lacuna in management and governance of Co-operatives characterized by widespread mismanagement and corruption. Co-operatives faced stiff competition in a “*soko huru*” or

free-market environment, hawkers bought coffee and milk at farm gates, at the same time producers received low and delayed payments. Although members are the supreme authority of their Co-operatives, they did not have the required experience, knowledge, skills and confidence to ensure effective and efficient management for profitability and sustainability of their co-operatives. This was partly as a result of many decades of dependence on Government support to Co-operatives in Kenya (Nyagah, 2014).

During this period of decline (mid-1980s and 1990s) the Co-operative Movement in Meru County became weak and people could only remember the good old days with nostalgia. Co-operative members became disillusioned, started reducing their investments in coffee and dairy choosing to invest in alternative farm enterprises. This led to unprecedented decline in the production of coffee and milk that were the pillars of the Co-operative Movement and its economy in Meru (Kobia, 2011).

2.15.1 Challenges Facing the Co-operatives in Kenya

Over the years, it has been observed that co-operatives have been faced by a number of challenges in Kenya. Majority of these challenges are not specific to a particular co-op society but cuts across the sector. However, others are unique. These challenges have faced the entire sector covering crop, financial and other co-operative enterprises include (Nyagah 2010):

Low uptake of ICTs in their operations: With few exceptions of Financial Co-operatives, most cop societies especially in rural areas and semi-urban Kenya are still on manual (paper- based) operations. In addition, many co-operative enterprises, lack sufficient trained and experienced ICT personnel to effectively deliver ICT solutions.

Youth involvement: the youth have not fully embraced co-operatives in Kenya; the co-operative membership is comprised of an aging population. Majority of the members are in their late 60s and have not been able to adapt to new technology and modern business practices;

Inadequate research: One of the major challenges facing co-operative enterprises is the inadequate research in emerging co-operative products and services. Additionally, there is lack of reliable sources of information and data pertaining to co-operative enterprises in Kenya;

Legal and policy framework: The Kenya's New Constitution, 2010 introduced a devolved structure of governance, and co-operatives were one of the devolved function. This left coops in legal doom since devolution had not been catered for in the two operational legal frameworks of the Co-operative Societies Act (CSA) and the Savings and Credit Societies Act (SSA) have not been amended to conform to the assignment of devolved functions; further, The co-operative sector has experienced incidences of dual legal incorporation of co-operative enterprises under both the Companies Act, and the CSA. E.g. the Kenya Planters Co-operative Union (KPCU) thus complicating supervision of such entities;

Interest rates: Kenya's financial system has consistently maintained a high interest spread of between 7% and 13%, thereby making credit availability quite expensive. The introduction of the interest rate capping in 2016 has lowered the spread, but has had a negative effect on accessibility of lending due to high risk SME and personal sectors;

Poor savings' culture: The prevailing low savings culture hinders the development of financial co-operatives and require policy interventions directed towards addressing these challenges;

Poor physical infrastructure: Most fresh produce are destroyed because of lack of quick access to markets because most members of co-operatives have farms located far from the trading centers, with undeveloped feeder roads where they face transportation challenges and high costs that affect profitability;

Governance issues: Weak governance is an inherent challenge in co-operatives. The adoption of good governance practices is a challenge to the Co-operative sector that requires deliberate efforts to put in place governance structures and enforcement mechanism;

Caliber of workforce: Many of the co-operative enterprises are unable to employ and retain high caliber management staff; the burden of due diligence is left to the co-operative members through the directors of the management committees, who are often have limited education on co-operative operations.

Huge historical debts: Co-operative enterprises especially those involved in commodities and agricultural produce have over the years accumulated huge debts with financial institutions, and other government financial institutions. This has slowed the growth and development of such co-operative enterprises, discouraged members from patronizing them and caused some of them collapse;

Poor production technology: Most commodity based co-operative enterprises such as those involved in marketing, production or processing have been and are using obsolete equipment and machinery in bulking, milling, processing and marketing their commodities that increases the cost of processing and of the final product;

Competition in the market: Co-operative enterprises are at various stages of development; some are at the nascent stage, transition stage, while others are slowly attaining mature stage. Many co-operatives enterprises have not been able to fully

cope with intense competition precipitated by economic liberalization;

Education and training: Provision of education and training in co-operative enterprises has not been regulated leading to proliferation of service providers with questionable credentials.

Poor publicity: Whereas co-operative enterprises play a critical role in the development of the Kenya economy through poverty reduction, employment and wealth creation, their significant contribution has not been given the prominence it deserves (National Coop Policy, 2017).

The above textual analysis has identified by the draft Kenya National Co-operative Policy (2017), gives a wide view of the challenges that are facing the co-operative movement. This part of the text remains the axle to this study. The concept under investigation on youth involvement in the co-operative movement and adoption of ICTs, which social media is part of, makes an intriguing and interesting part of the study. We will refer to this closely in drawing conclusions and making key recommendations to the study at the end of this thesis.

2.16 Integrating ICTs in Co-operatives

Research has shown that Information and Communication Technology is a major driving force for economic development and has potential to facilitate achievement of the Millennium Development Goals that were set by the UN during the start of the 21st century. Further, ICT is a major catalyst for globalization (UN, 2012) and has turned the world into a Global Village (McLuhan, 2012). ICT advances continue to impact heavily on all sectors of the economy and have been recognized as an essential tool in the management of present-day co-operatives. Effective and quick response to this

technological challenge will facilitate the co-operative movement to reap maximum benefits from the fast growing ICT industry (UN, 2012).

Arguments have been advanced that the sector's Policy on ICT would be crucial because it would be one of the ways through which government funding could be used to improve leadership and management capacity in agricultural co-operatives and strengthen their competitive edge through improvement of both internal and external information flow for decision-making. However, installation of ICT infrastructure is expensive and beyond the reach of most co-operatives societies (Bwisa, 2010).

2.17 New Media in Co-operatives

New Media are ICT tools that enhance communication and the processing and transmission of information by electronic means. Such tools have big impacts in facilitating information flow in an organization and amongst a population. It is important to note that new media technologies are emerging as an important medium for communication and exchange as well as a tool for development. New media technologies, whether older ICTs such as telephone, radio and television, or the newer ICTs such as VCDs, computers or the Internet, have completely liberalized the communication terminology in the society (Gunga, 2013).

As shown in evidence from developed countries, new media technologies take a key position in enhancing economic and social development by acting as a production sector for economic growth and an enabler for social development (The Ministry of Information & Communications 2006). Web-based applications have enabled developed countries to make substantial improvements in both productivity and quality in agriculture,

manufacturing, infrastructure, public administration and services such as finance, trade, distribution, marketing, education and health (Gunga, 2013).

The Kenya's Government key objective is to transform its economy through ICTs by promoting and facilitating the private sector to serve as the driver for economic development through innovation in the ICT sector. The strategic focus of Kenya's ICT strategy for economic growth is to simultaneously target the development of the ICT sector and to use ICTs for employment creation, poverty reduction as well as a broad-based enabler for economic recovery and the achievement of national development goals (Gunga, 2013).

It is argued that due to its dynamism, ICTs and new media technologies promise fundamental change in all aspects of human life including knowledge dissemination, social networking, economic and business practices, political engagement, education, health, leisure, and entertainment (Duncombe & Heeks, 2005). Further ICTs are also useful either as tangible goods in their own right or as value-adding services that improve efficiency and effectiveness (Stiglitz, 1989; Romer, 1993; World Bank 1998). More specifically, ICTs can provide reliable access to markets (local, regional and international) through increased use of affordable communications (phone, fax, email). New media technologies, broadly, enhances communication flow within and without the organization, allows for a reduction in transactions costs, improved access to timely and usable knowledge, improved communications with markets and within the supply chain, acquisition of appropriate skills for enhancement of productivity and improved information about new opportunities (Gunga, 2013).

Scholars have drawn arguments that New Media may be used to assist the co-operatives

especially in rural areas in the following aspects among others (Benkler, 2007). In the context of this study, we are concerned about social, however, we evaluate few aspects of new media, a precursor to social media to give the study a wider interrogation of the concepts; we examine of ways in which new media can be of use to different types of co-operatives:

Market access: producer co-operatives may have better access to market and other production technology information such as prices for their inputs and outputs in different regions across the world. Its impact is measured in terms of improved incomes, profits and sales, lower costs for all business transactions, increased efficiency, competitiveness and market access. This in turn will increase earnings to individual members of the coops (Gicheru, & M'Imanyara, 2012)

Improved communication: a co-operative society that has high uptake of new media technologies is likely to be efficient in communication. It is argued that how an organization communicated, defines its growth, thus Improved information flows and communication services. The impact is felt through availability, cost effectiveness, quality, diversity, spread and relevance of information.

Education: Improved strategy for education and training through strategic application of technologies and ICT enabled skills development and in-service support. The impact is measured in terms of availability of quality educational materials/resources that improves input, process and product.

Improved services: a co-operative society that has adopted new media technologies in its operations is likely to have better understanding of the distribution systems, rights and policy enforcement mechanisms. The impact is measured in terms of improved access and quality of the services obtained.

Partnerships and linkages: a co-operative society which has enhanced use of the

web based applications, social networking sites, telephones, SMS text, beeping and creation of a telephone address using mobile communication facilities, for instance is likely to create a solid communication base with its potential and current customers. Those who are in the service provision such as communication kiosks would be able to create partnerships with coops within and without the nation and forge with world trends in co-operatives.

Improved Networking: Better enhancement of social networks measured in terms of improved perceptions of connectedness, empowerment and reduced isolation.

Enlightenment: members and or staff of a coop society using new media technologies will get exposure to the E-mail services, Internet and Websites appropriate to the livelihoods of the members of the particular co-operative society or group.

Strong database for reference: Increased awareness of the links between traditional and modern ICTs. For instance, entrepreneurs may create a database which has the telephone numbers of potential customers saved in a mobile phone or in the cloud in the case of cloud computing (Benkler, 2007).

Efficacy: Improved social interaction which contributes to efficiency. The impact is that services will be rendered promptly and regularly: For instance, the rural nurses and doctors would be able to receive information and render timely services (Benkler, 2007).

Accountability: Record keeping is easier and retrievable in a coop society that has adopted new media technologies in its operations; this creates confidence between the management of the co-operative society and its members (Gunga, 2013).

This study, in totality agrees with the above benefits of new media to co-operatives. Central to these benefits is the internet which binds the new media and social media as well. The study has argued elsewhere that the internet completely revolutionized the

world, beating aspects of time and space. This without doubt conveniently rubs and puts social media in the same vein with the new media; the only difference comes in interactivity. In relation to this study, the researcher will closely link these benefits and seek to draw a common platform on which the two are mutually exclusive to each other.

2.18 Platform Cooperativism

This study is keen on examining, communication through new media technologies and specifically social media in one sphere of economy that is co-operatives. To narrow down to a new concept being examined on some parts of the world like United States of America, Japan, Korea, we give a glimpse of what platform cooperativism is and its future. This being an online platform to bring together co-operatives and specifically based on such principles as co-operatives subscribe, platform cooperativism can be explored to provide a glimpse into the solution and the knowledge gap this study seeks to close.

Best practices worldwide and technological advancements have pushed organizations to adopt ICTs in their operations especially communication within and without the organization. As a growing sector, the co-operatives are facing the wave of low-wage work hence the need to come up with solutions to these emerging challenges. The platform Cooperativism is about the convergence of the 21st-century technologies and the rich, global heritage of Cooperativism. This platform is comprised of online mediums that support production and sociality, digital labor brokerages, web-based marketplaces that are collectively owned and democratically governed, and all those initiatives that directly support the co-operative economic model (Scholz, *Et AL* 2017).

The platform Cooperativism is set to radically prepare the social organization of emerging technologies among coops, which it aims to re-design with community wealth in mind (Scholz, *Et AL* 2017).

This Platform is a holistic model to deliver better outcomes than the corporate “sharing economy,” which will fail the ecology, workers, and consumers over the long haul. The emerging experiments in the co-operative platform economy ought to be taken seriously, nurtured, and grown by communities and policymakers alike (Silberman, 2016).

Co-operative researchers argue that radical democracy and the internet are not mutually exclusive; the internet became a tool for corporate extraction, and how to reverse the process. Combining the rich heritage of co-operatives with the promise of 21st-century technologies, the platform Cooperativism is a call for a new kind of online economy, one free from the economics of monopoly, exploitation, and surveillance (Scholz, *Et AL*, 2017).

2.18.1 The Future of Platform Cooperativism

The prospect of platform Cooperativism is at once new and old among the cultures surrounding the internet. Early software and hardware hackers employed certain co-operative-like practices as they assembled the rudiments of the personal computer and the means of networking them; as such they shared source code; they developed structures of democratic governance across great distances; they resisted corporate enclosure in the process (Scholz, *Et AL*, 2017).

It has been argued that the technological sophistication necessary to build online enterprises, in any case, has surely seemed prohibitive for many kinds of communities that might adopt co-operative strategies. However, recently the Internet could be

considered an optional realm of activity; co-ops tend to appear when people have unmet needs, not to furnish a mere accessory or curiosity (Scholz, *Et AL*, 2017). Evidently, it is becoming harder and harder, around the world, to secure a livelihood without taking part in the online economy. This has, forced the re-emergence, in the past few years, recognizable platform co-ops (Schneider, 2014).

Platform Cooperativism can likewise be taken to mean a broad invitation to a fairer online economy through shared ownership and governance; platform co-ops, however, are strictly those platforms that are also bona-fide co-ops by widely agreed-on standards (Sutton *Et AL.*, 2016). Platform Cooperativism inclines towards a different approach, one in which the people contributing value co-own the platforms and help decide to what ends they operate.

This platform Cooperativism seeks to add a more fair and explicit economic layer to peer-production, prevent corporate value capture, and facilitate cooperation among co-operatives (Scholz, *Et AL* 2017). Some of the more restrictive proposals could come at the cost of losing the broad user and contributor base that corporate adoption can offer (Sutton *Et AL.*, 2016). Yet each of these experiments represents a plausible innovation in its own right as well as a constructive critique of the Free Software and open-source legacies.

In her abstract for the 2015 Platform Cooperativism conference, New York City Council member Maria del Carmen Arroyo wrote, ‘Worker co-operatives offer a viable method to address the long-term challenge of reducing the number of chronically unemployed and underemployed residents and the number of workers trapped in low-paying jobs’ (Scholz, *Et AL*, 2017).

A vibrant platform co-op sector will require a variety of financing mechanisms. An opportunity for platform co-op investment that often goes overlooked is the existing offline co-operative sector. While some large, well-capitalized co-ops have begun investing in platforms, they often face a learning curve in doing so. Just as the tech sector is still learning how to develop online co-ops, the co-operative sector must learn how to apply its financial resources and know-how online (Barnes, 2006).

Finally, honest platform Cooperativism should extend its gaze beyond the platform economy itself to its material substrates – in particular, the human conditions surrounding the mineral extraction and assembly of the hardware on which platforms depend (Barnes, 2006). This has been neglected territory for the emerging platform co-op ecosystem, which has remained software-oriented. But there are some promising points of departure to consider (Scholz, *Et AL*, 2017). Perhaps platform coops, by building other co-ops into their supply chains, can help set high standards for sourcing and labor (Baran, 2002).

2.19 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has explored various and available literature around the concepts under investigation. The materials looked into and the textual analysis provided brought to generation of various arguments advanced by scholars and researchers on the concepts under study and related to the study.

The scope of this chapter viewed concepts and practices at the international level, local level also referred to as the Kenyan perspective and more importantly to the geographical scope of the study. In particular, the concept of co-operatives was looked into in the perspective veering into the history since inception in 19th century to the current status internationally and in the Kenyan perspective, the researcher explored available texts

from the colonial era, post-colonial era, the liberalization period and current status. Under the same concept, the study relooked into the success story of the co-operatives within the geographical area of study. Available literature did show a story of a resilient and a successful co-operative movement from independent up to the period of structural adjustment programs that dwindled the sector. The period spelt doom but a re-awakening phase set in in the early 2,000 but strangely, as the sector grows, the future is not quite promising due to the absence of the youth in the movement. This underscores the gap under the study.

The chapter equally explored the concept of technology in relation to its prospective benefits to the co-operative movement. Available textual materials analyzed showed that technology cannot be wished away by any sector or subsector of the society and economy. We also noted strongly that technology changes and ushers in new generations, tears into cultures and transforms. Over time, various aspects of communication have changed; so are some aspects of the co-operative movement. From the arguments drawn by various scholars, this continuous flux stands out as irresistible.

Platform cooperativism as a concept was explored as an opportunity that co-operatives can use in the new information age to bridge the ICT gap in the sector. The other concept looked into in this chapter is the internet. From an analysis in a co-operative angle, enthusiasts of a democratized internet space ask the big question, who owns the internet and who controls it? What if the internet was owned by a co-operative? Is there an alternative to the internet? What if the internet fails? What becomes of the world?

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

Research methodology refers to how each of logic, reality, values and what counts as knowledge inform research (McGregor & Murnane, 2010). This section outlines the sampling design techniques the researchers used in selecting the sample, describes the data collection procedures, tools used in obtaining the data, the process of data analysis, the design, the target population and size together with sampling technique (Crowther & Lancaster, 2008).

3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

This research adopted positivism philosophy. This means the role of the researcher was independent; objective collection and interpretation of data. Using the deductive approach, the researcher gained knowledge using scientific methods of inquiry. This Scientific approach is based on assumption that A causes B under certain circumstances. Here the researcher, when following the scientific approach discovers specific nature of cause and effect relationships (Crowther & Lancaster, 2008).

Research with positivist paradigm is based on facts and considers the world to be external and objective (Wilson, 2010). Positivism depends on quantifiable observations that lead themselves to statistical analysis and research being empirically observable via human senses and inductive reasoning used to develop statements (hypotheses) to be tested during the research process (Collins, 2010).

3.2 Geographical Area of Study

The study was conducted in Meru County. The county is located to the East of Mt. Kenya whose peak cuts through the Southern boundary of Kenya. The county borders several other Counties including Laikipia to the West, Nyeri to the South West, Tharaka Nithi to the East and Isiolo to the North. The county has a total area of 6,936 km² (KNBS, 2016).

The County comprises of eight administrative sub-counties: Igembe North, Igembe South, Tigania East, Tigania West, Imenti North, Meru Central, Imenti South and Buuri.

3.3 Research Design

This was a mixed methods research; both qualitative and quantitative data was collected and used by the researcher in the response to the research problem. The two forms of data collected were integrated in the design analysis through merging the data, explaining it and building it within the large data framework (Creswell, 2018). The term “mixed methods” refers to research methodology advancing integration, or “mixing,” of quantitative and qualitative data within a single study. The premise of this methodology is that such integration permits a more complete and synergistic utilization of data than do separate quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The study, utilization of social media as a communication tool to disseminate co-operative information among the youth of Meru County among co-operatives in Meru utilized this method to gain insight into the subject matter. This method originated in social science and in the last decade, its procedures have been developed and refined to suit a wide variety of research questions (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011).

The core characteristics of a well-designed mixed methods study in this study included the following:

Collecting and analyzing both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data. Using rigorous procedures in collecting and analyzing data appropriate to each method's tradition, such as ensuring the appropriate sample size for quantitative and qualitative analysis, Integrating the data during data collection, analysis, or discussion and Using procedures that implement qualitative and quantitative components either concurrently or sequentially, with the same sample or with different samples (Creswell, Et AL 2004).

Framing the procedures within philosophical/theoretical models of research, such as within a social constructionist model that seeks to understand multiple perspectives on a single issue—for example, what the youth, co-operative societies, senior co-operative employees, and staff would characterize as “efficient social media communication is” in their contexts (Creswell, Et AL 2004)

Using a mixed methods study had several advantages to this study, which is as discussed below:

It compared quantitative and qualitative data: The researcher used mixed methods in understanding contradictions between quantitative results and qualitative findings.

It reflected on the participants' point of view: Mixed methods gave a voice to study participants and ensured that study findings are grounded in participants' experiences.

It fostered scholarly interaction. In this study, mixed method gave breadth to multidisciplinary team research by encouraging the interaction of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods scholars.

It provided methodological flexibility. Mixed methods gave great flexibility and are adaptable to many study designs, such as observational studies and randomized trials, to elucidate more information than can be obtained in only quantitative research.

Collection of rich, comprehensive data: this method mirrored natural data collection by integrating quantitative and qualitative data. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data in the form of a mixed methods study had great potential in strengthening the rigor and enriching the analysis and findings of this study (Creswell and Plano, 2011).

3.4 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study focused on the understanding the utilization of social media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in Meru County.

3.5 Unit of Observation

The study utilized individual co-operative societies in Meru County and various in the study as its units of observation.

3.6 Target Population

This study conducted in Meru County targeting various co-operative leaders in Meru County including Chief Executive Officers (CEO) and or any other senior managers of Co-operative Societies.

3.7 Sampling Frame/ Group

The sampling frame was registered co-operative societies under the registrar of co-operatives in Kenya. A sampling frame has properties that can identify with every single element being looked for by the researcher. And this has to be included in any of his/her samples (Taylor & Bogdan 1998). For this study the sampling frame included all types of co-operatives offering co-operative services. All co-operatives were assumed to be utilizing social media as a source of co-operative information among the youth.

3.8 Sampling Procedure

The researcher employed both probability and non-probability sampling methods in the study. Stratified random sampling, which involved subdividing into the existing nine sub counties to ensure equal proportions in the sample of the study, was used (McGregor & Murnane, 2010). Stratified Random Sampling, further was used to separate co-operatives according to their specialization. In probability sampling every unit has a chance greater than zero of being selected and thus the sampling procedure produces unbiased estimates of the population totals (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Stratified random sampling generally has more statistical precision than random sampling (Creswell, 2018). A sample size of 70 co-operatives is considered appropriate for the study, given the large population of the study area and the limited resources the researcher has at his disposal for this research. In this category, there are 146 SACCOS registered in Meru County, spread across. However, 70 questionnaires were issued by the researcher to get at least a minimum return of 60 questionnaires. Each of the co-operatives in the study was considered as a distinct element of each quota in the study, while the entire county is the quota for the study. A total of 63 filled-in questionnaires were returned.

It is observed that purposive sampling is a technique which allows a researcher to use cases that have the required information with respect to the objective of the study (Creswell, 2018). The researcher also held two focus group discussions with organized and registered youth groups. These focus discussion groups were selected through purposive sampling.

3.9 Data Collection Methods and Tools

This study mainly relied on interviews and focus group discussions as methods of data collection while using questionnaires as the tools of data collection.

3.10 Use of Questionnaires

Given the relatively large and vast number of co-operatives who will participate in this research, using questionnaires as instruments of data collection was ideal. The researchers considered this instrument since it will ensure that confidentiality is upheld and it saves time (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The questionnaires mostly consisted of structured questions and fewer open ended questions. Structured questions compel the respondents to provide specific answers, while the few open ended questions allow for diverse responses, both approaches are essential for variety and getting the respondent's perception of the phenomena being investigated. Administering questionnaires generally allow for information to be collected from a large sample and in diverse locations (Creswell, 2018).

3.11 Key Informant Interviews

The researchers used face to face interview method to collect a wide range of information on the utilization of social media as a source of co-operative information among the youth of Meru County in Kenya. . An expert and a Professor of Co-operatives and Organizational Development from was interviewed. An interview was sought with the

Chief Officer for Co-operatives, Tourism and Trade in Meru county government. A co-operative enthusiast from USA and editor of *Ours to Hack and to Own; The Rise of Platform Cooperativism, A New Vision for the Future of Work and Fairer Internet* was also interviewed.

Marshall and Rossman state that qualitative data is often dependent on key informant interview. These interviews allowed the researcher to understand the statistical data collected from quantitative research by explaining the figures and giving further information beyond the figures (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

3.12 Focus Group Discussions

The researcher held 2 focus group discussions. Each focus constituted 5 youths. These groups allowed the researchers to get the participants' perspective, attitudes, experiences and reactions on the phenomena of interest by way of interaction and discussion with the participants. Focus groups have a high apparent validity since the idea is easy to understand, the results are also believable. The costs are low and help in getting quick results (Creswell, 2014)

3.13 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data (Marshall and Rossman 1999). In order to bring order, structure and interpretation to the collected data, the researcher systematically organized the data by coding it into categories and constructing matrixes. After classifying the data, the researcher compared and contrasted it to the information retrieved from the literature review.

After administering the questionnaires, the researcher used codes and had the data converted into numerical codes for statistical analysis, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics will be computed for all the variables to ensure quality of data. The results from the sample was then generalized to the study population of the co-operatives. The researcher organized the results around the objectives of the study. The researcher used descriptive statistics to show distribution, relationships between variables under study, proportions in terms of texts, percentages, charts and tables (McGregor & Murnane 2010).

3.14 Pretesting Research Instruments

The pretesting method will be conducted using 4 questionnaires to managers of SACCOS which will be 0.05% of the total respondents (70) of the study. The 4 questionnaires were be coded and input into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for running the Cronbach reliability test. The reliability of the questionnaires were tested using the Cronbach's alpha correlation coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The closer Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1, the higher the internal consistency reliability (Kothari *Et AL* 2010).

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents data analysis, interpretation and discussion of the research findings. The chapter is arranged as follows: The first section addresses the demographic of respondents and the co-operative society; the second section looks at the communication process of the co-operative society, the third section explores the efficacy of the channels of communication, the fourth section looks at the ICT infrastructure in a co-operative society and lastly the fifth section looks at the human resource capacity and policies within the co-operative society. Out of the 70 questionnaires that were distributed, 63 questionnaires were returned signifying 90% responses.

Further, the chapter presents analysis of findings of the study as set out in the research methodology. The data was gathered exclusively from the questionnaire as the research instrument which was designed in line with the objectives of the study.

4.1.1 Response Rate

The study targeted 70 members of various SACCOs within Meru region. Out of that, 63 respondents filled and returned the questionnaires. This commendable response rate was made a reality after the researcher made personal visits to remind the respondent to fill-in and return the questionnaires.

Table 4. 1: Response Rate

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Responded	63	90
Not responded	7	10
Total	70	100

4.2 Demographic Information

The general information of the respondents forms the basis under which the study can rightfully access the relevant information. The investigation centered on this information of the respondents so as to classify the different outcomes according to their knowledge and responses. In order to capture the general information of the respondents' issues such as gender, years worked in the Co-operative society and academic qualifications were captured in the first section.

4.2.1 Designation

Table 4. 2: Respondent's Designation

Designations	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Assistant Manager	6	9.5	9.5	9.5
Assistant supervisor	1	1.6	1.6	11.1
CEO	5	7.9	7.9	19.0
Chairman	3	4.8	4.8	23.8
Credit Officer	2	3.2	3.2	27.0
Customer service	2	3.2	3.2	30.2
Field Officer	1	1.6	1.6	31.7
Manager	25	39.7	39. 7	71.4
Marketing Officer	1 9	1.6 14.3	1.6 14. 3	73.0 87.3
Operations	1	1.6	1.6	88.9
Supervisor	7	11.1	11. 1	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the respondents, 39.7% who were the majority indicated they were SACCO managers, 14% cited that they were officers, 11.1% indicated supervisors, 9.5% cited

assistant managers, 7.9% cited CEOs, 4.8% indicated chairman and 3.2% indicated credit officers and customer service respectively and lastly 1.6% cited operations, marketing, field officers and Assistant supervisors respectively.

The response rate from the managers scored higher because the researchers targeted a senior member of staff to provide the information required. The researchers assumed that a higher level manager would be well placed to respond on the various policy issues and have a broader view and knowledge of the co-operative society. In essence all the respondents in this research qualified to be managers since different co-operative societies have different establishments in terms of human resource management.

4.2.2 Gender of the Respondents

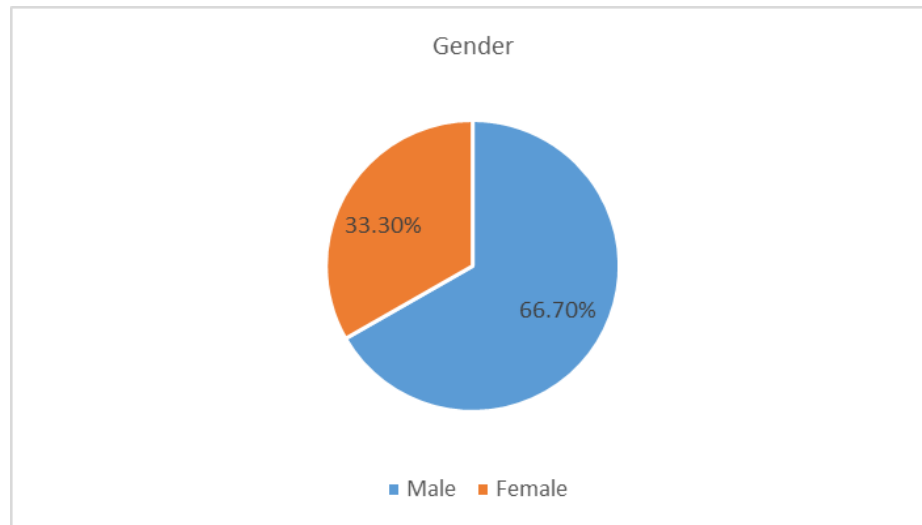


Figure 4. 1: Gender Composition

On the gender of the respondents, the study found out that there were more males as shown by 66.7% than females shown by 33.3% of the respondents. This is depicted in the figure above. In this study, more males responded to the study than the females depicting that most of the top managerial positions are occupied by men. However this doesn't necessarily translate that there are more men than women working in the co-operative

societies; this implores the researchers to pose the question why there are few female top managers in co-operative societies yet demographically, there are more women than men.

A percentage of 66.7% of top managers being composed of one gender still, although meeting the one third gender rule provided for by the constitution of Kenya on gender equity, remains a concern in a sector that drives the economy of Kenya. This could be by default, policy issues or the daunting tasks of the works involved and the patriarchal society the Meru County is assumed to be.

4.2.3 Age Bracket

Table 4. 3: Respondent's Age Bracket

Age Brackets	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Below 25 Years	4	6.3	6.3	6.3
25 - 30 Years	29	46.0	46.0	52.4
31 - 35 Years	20	31.7	31.7	84.1
36 - 40 Years	5	7.9	7.9	92.1
41 - 45 Years	1	1.6	1.6	93.7
46 - 50 Years	3	4.8	4.8	98.4
Over 51 Years	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 46% of the respondents who were majority indicated they were in age bracket of 25-30 years, 31.7% cited they were in age bracket of 31-35 years, 7.9% cited 36-40 years, 6.3% indicated below 25 years, 4.8% cited 46-50 years, and 1.6% indicated 41-45 years and over 51 years respectively.

At the age of 25-35 years, the SACCOs have managers totaling to 77.7%. This age bracket is dubbed to be active and prime in their life. Most of the co-operatives studied

(about 42%) were established within the last 10 years. This may explain why staff who are above 50 years of age are few; a percentage of 1.6% is negligible. Co-operative societies being a vibrant sector and the sector having taken entrepreneurial business model, there is expected cut-throat competition in the already competitive market.

4.2.3 Level of Education of the Respondents

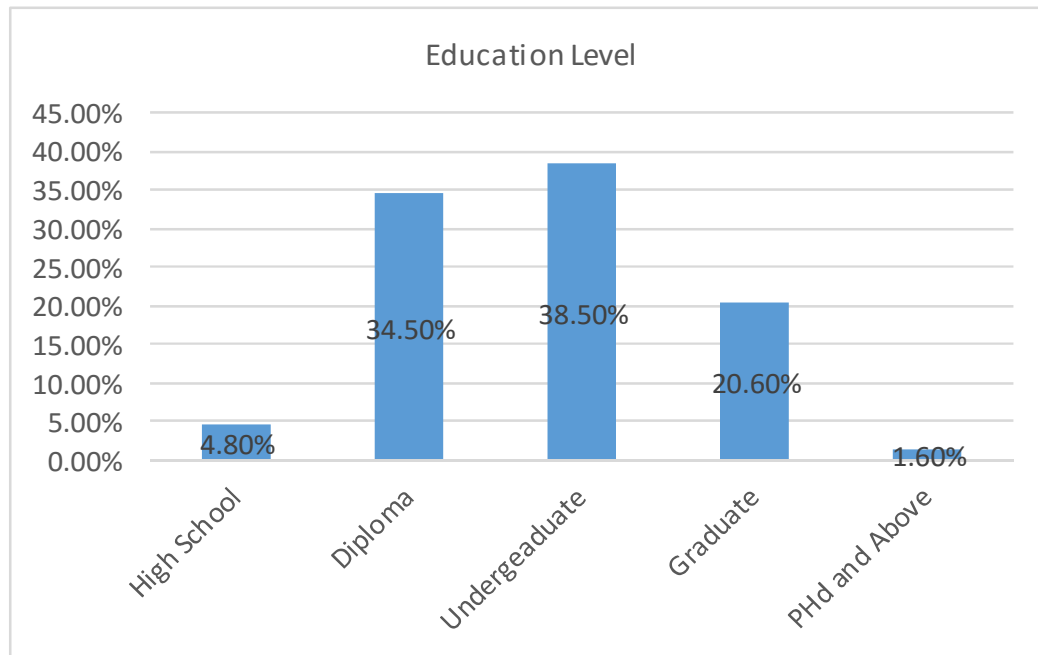


Figure 4. 2: Education Level

According to the study, the researchers found out that 38.5% of the respondents who were the majority cited that they were undergraduates, 34.5% cited they had diploma/certificates, 20.6% indicated they were graduates, 4.8% cited they had high school certificates and lastly 1.6% indicated they had PHD and above.

It is worth noting that a bigger chunk of the respondents have an undergraduate level of education standing at 34.5% and about 38.5% with at least a diploma and certificate level of education. Having a fairly educated mass at the management level, may most likely make co-operative societies adopt new media technologies in their operation. At this very

basic level, it is assumed that they are familiar with computer operation and therefore information provision about a co-operative society world has a gate.

The researchers found out that two extremes of education levels are at primary level of education some who is 4.8%. However, from the data gathered most of these are board members in their various co-operative societies. The 1.6% who have PhD levels remain at senior management levels in the co-operative society either as a director of board or chairperson of the co-operative society.

It is worth concluding, As a result, that, with this blend and mixture of personnel in a co-operative society, change management and communication through various platforms has a huge potential for take-off and a fertile ground for understanding various policies and programmes towards the achievements of the end means.

4.2.4 Number of Years the Co-operative Society has been in Operation

Table 4. 4: Number of Years the Co-operative Society has been in Operation

Operational Years	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
1 - 10 Years	27	42.9	42.9	42.9
11 - 20 Years	20	31.7	31.7	74.6
21 - 30 Years	12	19.0	19.0	93.7
Above 30 Years	4	6.3	6.3	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 42.9% of the respondents who were the majority indicated their SACCOs had operated for a period of 1-10 years, 31.7% stated 11-20 years, 19% cited 21-30 years and lastly 6% who were the minority stated above 30 years.

With about slightly half of the co-operatives studies having been in existence for less than ten years (42.9%), the researchers can deduce that these societies have a huge potential to adopt new media communications strategies. The about 6.3% of the co-operative societies that are above 30 years, were found out to be unions of co-operatives which were found out to have existed for a very long time and most have aged members of staff.

4.2.5 Respondents' Department

Table 1: Respondent's Department

Departments	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Marketing	9	14.3	14.3	14.3
Sales	9	14.3	14.3	28.6
Human Resources	10	15.9	15.9	44.4
Information Technology	4	6.3	6.3	50.8
Corporate Communications	3	4.8	4.8	55.6
Others	28	44.4	44.4	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study 44.4% of the respondents who were the majority stated that they worked in other departments, 15.9% stated human resource department, 14.3% indicated sales and marketing respectively, 6.3% cited information technology and lastly 4.8% who were the minority cited corporate communications.

The researchers mainly targeted officers in departments that are points of information dispatch. However, due to policies and procedures and various establishments in Co-operative societies, about 44.4% of the respondents came from other departments notably the accounts, credit control departments among others. It is worth noting that about 15.9% of the respondents were from the human resources departments. In most of the events that

this happened, the researchers found out that those co-operative societies did not have communications departments to respond to such issues.

4.2.6 Level of Organization

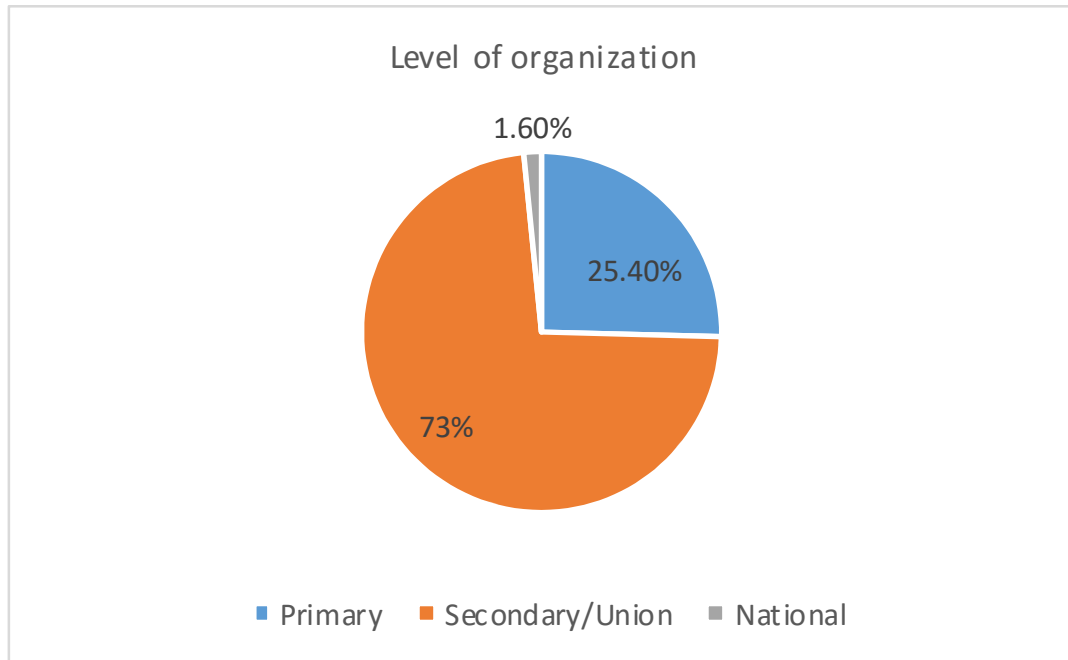


Figure 4. 3: Level of Organization

According to the study, the researchers found out that 73% of the respondents, who were the majority, cited that the organization was in secondary/union level, 25.4% indicated primary level and lastly 1.6% who was the minority cited national level.

The larger percentage 73% of the co-operatives indicated to be secondary co-operatives. Being a rural set up, most of the time various small primary SACCOS have their members belong to a bigger and similar co-operative society. Further, this explains why the researchers found that only 1.6% were national co-operative societies. These were mainly found to belong to teachers, police or civil servant co-operatives whose members are found across the country.

4.2.7 Services Provided

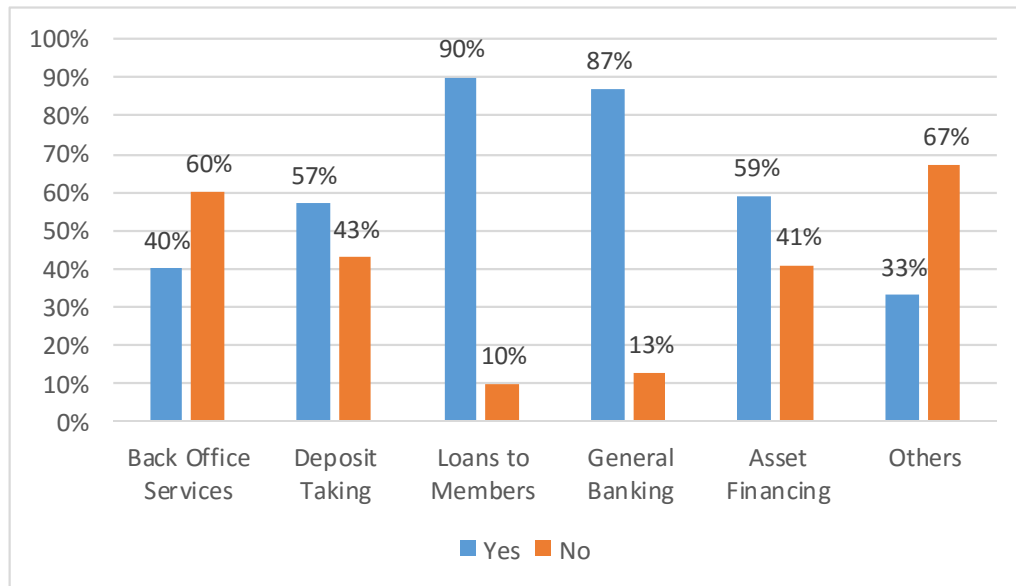


Figure 4. 4: Services Provided by a Co-operative Society

According to the study, 90% of the respondents (co-operative societies) who were the majority indicate they provided loans to members while 10% cited not at all, 87% cited they provided general banking services while 13% cited not at all, 59% indicated they offered asset financing while 41% cited not at all, 57% indicated they offered deposit taking while 43% cited not at all, 40% cited they provided back office services while 60% cited not at all and lastly 33% indicated they offered other services while 67% cited not at all.

The respondents studied provided more than one services. Of all the services that the researchers were biased towards, 90% of the co-operatives offer credit facilities and 87% offer general banking. However, it was found out that 67% of the Co-operatives did not offer other services outside of the back office services, deposit taking, loan services, general banking and asset financing.

4.3 Communication Process

4.3.1 Co-operatives Effectiveness in Communicating With the Publics

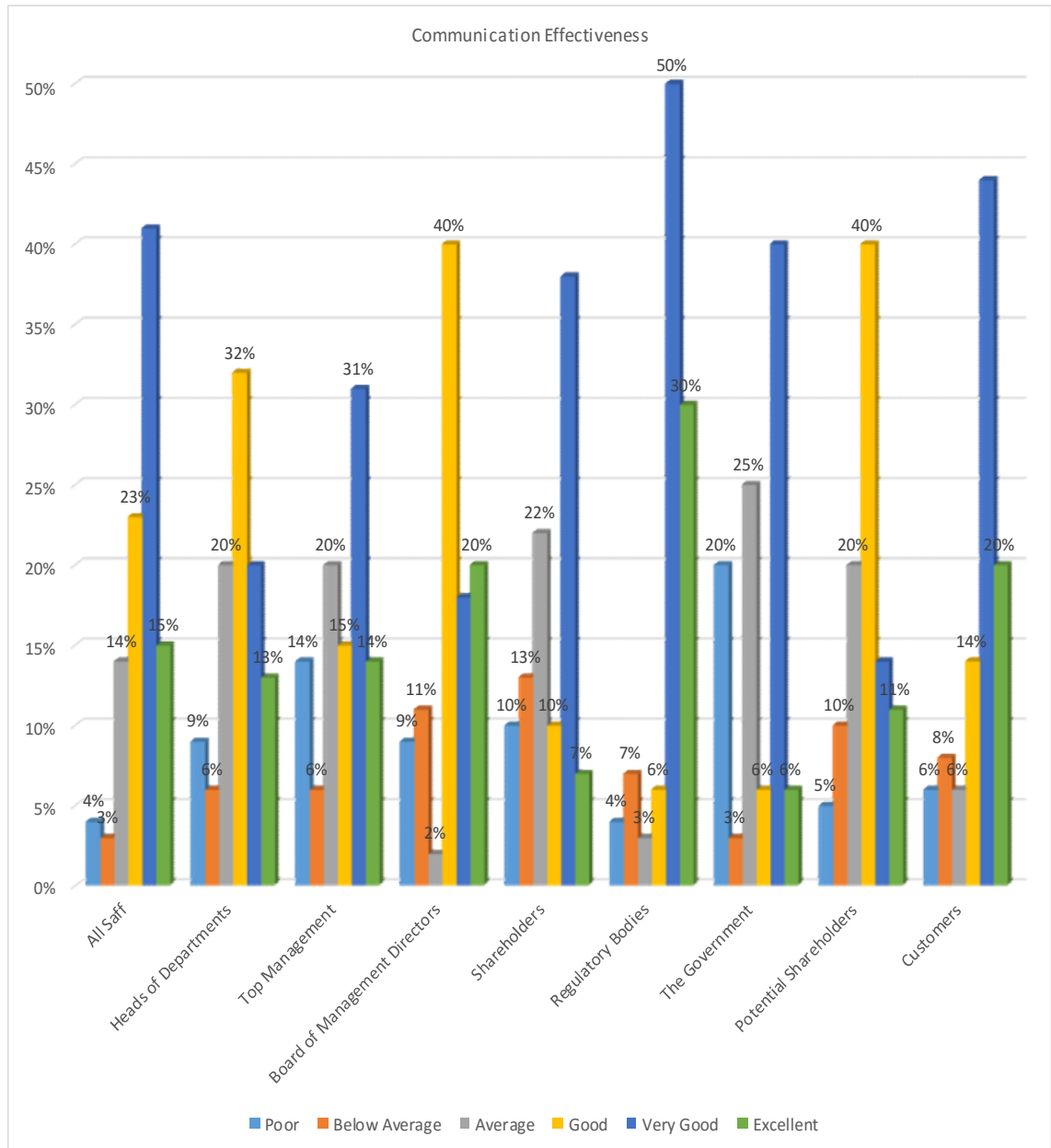


Figure 4. 5: Co-operatives Effectiveness in Communicating With the Publics

According to the respondents, on the co-operatives' communication to the staff 41% indicated very good, 23% cited good, 15% indicated excellent, 14% stated average, 4%

poor and 3% below average. On the co-operatives communication to the heads of department, 32% cited good, 20% average, 20% very good, 13% excellent, 9% poor and 6% below average. On top management communication, 31% indicated very good, 20% average, 15% good, 14% excellent, 14% poor and 6% below average. On board of management director's communication, 40% cited average, 20% excellent, 18% very good, 11% below average, 9% poor and 2% average. On shareholders communication 38% cited very good, 22% average, 13% below average, 10% poor, 10% good and 7% excellent. On regulatory body's communication, 50% cited very good, 30% excellent, 7% below average, 6% good, 4% poor and 3% average. On the government communication, 40% indicated very good, 25% average, 20% poor, 6% good, 6% excellent and 3% below average. On potential shareholders communication, 40% indicated good, 20% average, 14% very good, 11% excellent, 10% below average and 5% poor. Lastly, on customer's communication, 44% cited very good, 20% excellent, 14% good, 8% below average 6% average and 6% poor.

From the above findings, the researchers can deduce that co-operative societies are above average in communicating with their various key publics. It is prudent for researchers to conclude that co-operative society's internal communications are well managed.

4.3.2 Co-operatives use of Communication Channels

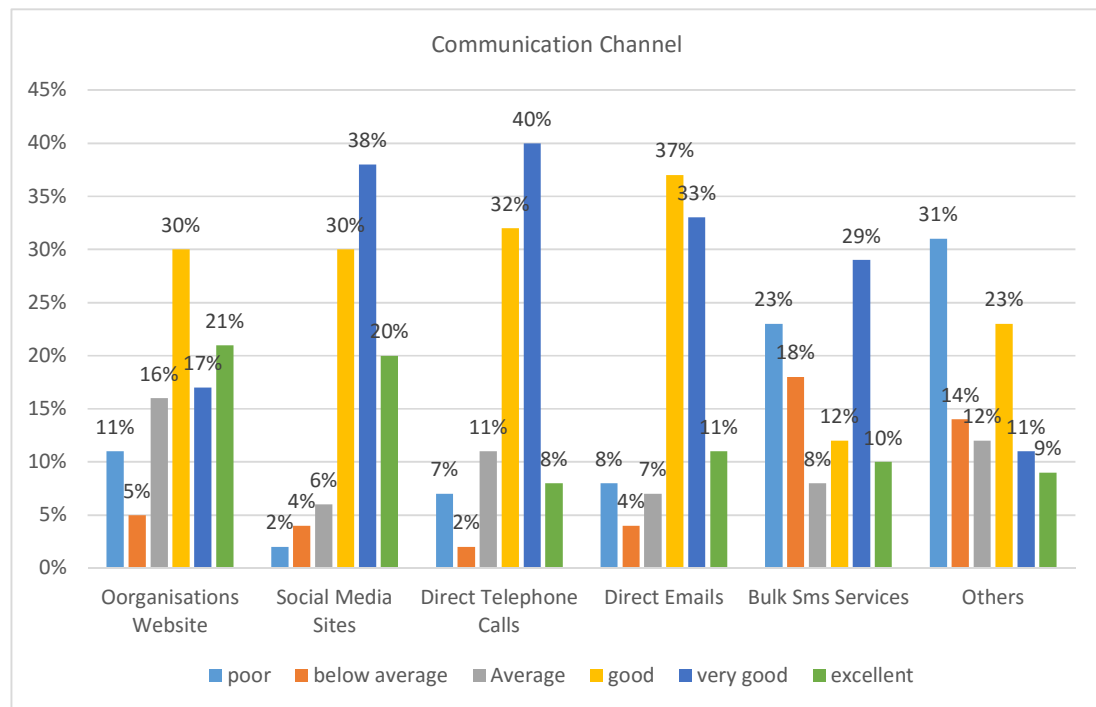


Figure 4. 6: Co-operatives use of Communication Channels

According to the study on use of organization’s website, 30% of the respondents stated it was good, 21% stated excellent, 17% very good, 16% average, 11% poor and 5% below average. That a small number rate their website as poor and below average; combined percentage of 16% however should not be taken for granted. This percentage bearing in mind the technologically constantly changing world should be taken as a matter of concern. However the other 84% that rate their websites as above average is a pointer towards improvement. Perhaps further studies need to be carried out in this respect to find out whatever gaps are in the area.

On social media sites, the researchers found out that 38% indicated very good, 30% good, 20% excellent, 6% average, 4% below average and 2% poor. These findings, the researchers deduce that co-operatives in Meru County have adopted the use of social

media sites as channels of communications both for internal and external publics. The researchers can deduce that social media are a commonly used tool because of availability of gadgets and internet. In that most of the social media applications are easy to navigate, information is easy and simple to comprehend, anyone can air their opinions and also the tools for accessing the sites especially mobile telephone are , most of them internet enabled.

On direct telephone calls, 40% indicated very good, 32% good, 11% average, 8% excellent, 7% poor and 2% below average. This is a rather traditional but effective method of communication. It has however grown and developed with time owing to accessibility and penetration of mobile telephone in rural areas. About 72% of the respondents termed it as very good and excellent. This is perhaps of the personal touch and immediacy in getting feedback. This method is not limited to literacy levels of the users and seems to be the most effective according to the research findings.

On direct emails, 37% cited good, 33% very good, 11% average, 8% poor, 7% average and 4% below average. On bulk SMS services, 29% stated very good, 23% poor, 18% below average, 12% good, 10% excellent, 8% average. On other communication channels, 31% cited poor, 23% good, 14% below average, 12% average, 11% very good and 9% excellent.

The researchers can conclude that Social media communication channels are vibrant in most of the co-operative societies. This is used to communicate with internal and external clients of the co-operatives. Such sites can also be used to reach out to both members and non-members of the co-operative society.

4.3.3 Customer Complaints / Compliments Handling Mechanisms

Table 4. 5: Customer Complaints / Compliments Handling Mechanisms

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	35	55.6	55.6	55.6
No	28	44.4	44.4	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 55.6% of the respondents who were the majority stated that their co-operative society have customer complaints/compliments handling mechanisms while 44.4% cited not at all.

Proper handing and resolution of customer complaints is a communication function of getting feedback from the clients. From the study, most of the co-operatives at 55.6% have put in communication strategy to handle customer complaints. Of concern is the 44.4% who have literately no mechanisms of handling customer complaints. It cannot be authoritatively concluded that they do not at all handle customer complaints; the gap is they do not have mechanisms or a structured way of handling the complaints and having them concluded.

4.3.4 Communication Channels Used

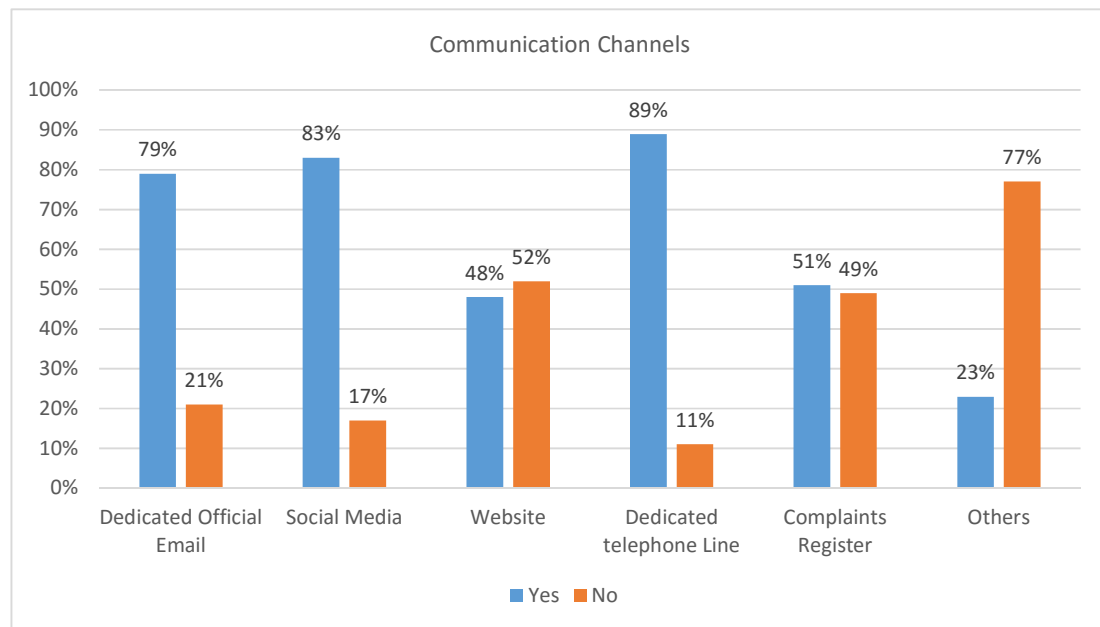


Figure 4. 7: Communication Channels Used by The Co-operative

From this study, it has been found out that co-operatives use various channels of communications. The most commonly used include dedicated telephone line, social media and dedicated email. Some also have a complaints register and websites as a channel of communication. According to the study, communication channels used, 79% of the respondents stated that their organizations used dedicated official email while 21% cited not at all, 83% indicated they used social media while 17 stated not all, 48% stated they used websites while 52% indicated not at all, 89% stated they used dedicated telephone line while 11% cited not at all, 51% stated they used complaints register while 49% stated not at all and lastly 23% cited that they used other forms of communication while 77% indicated not at all.

4.3.5 Use of Website

Table 4. 6: Use of Website

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	40	63.5	63.5	63.5
No	23	36.5	36.5	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, the researchers found out that 63.5% of the respondents who were the majority stated that their co-operatives had a website while 36.5 cited not at all. It can be deduced that co-operatives may not be having websites because of the technical support and the IT infrastructure required to build a website and maintain it. Also the human resource required and skills may not be at the reach of the co-operatives and also the availability of the internet bandwidth. With a huge percentage of the co-operatives literally operating without a website, intervention measures perhaps need to be put into place by policy makers to address this gap.

4.3.6 Use of Social Networking Sites to Enhance Uptake of Services

Table 4. 7: Use of Social Networking Sites to Enhance Uptake of Services

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	37	58.7	58.7	58.7
No	26	41.3	41.3	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the respondents, 58.7% who were the majority stated they used social networking sites to enhance uptake of services while 41.3% stated not at all. Co-operatives use social media sites for various reasons. This question tested, specifically the use of social networking sites to enhance uptake of co-operative services. This means the social networking sites are populated with co-operative information that would enhance uptake of the services.

The 42.3% of the respondents who use social networking sites not for enhancing increased uptake of co-operative services perhaps us social media for other information purposes.

4.3.7 Social Networking Sites Used

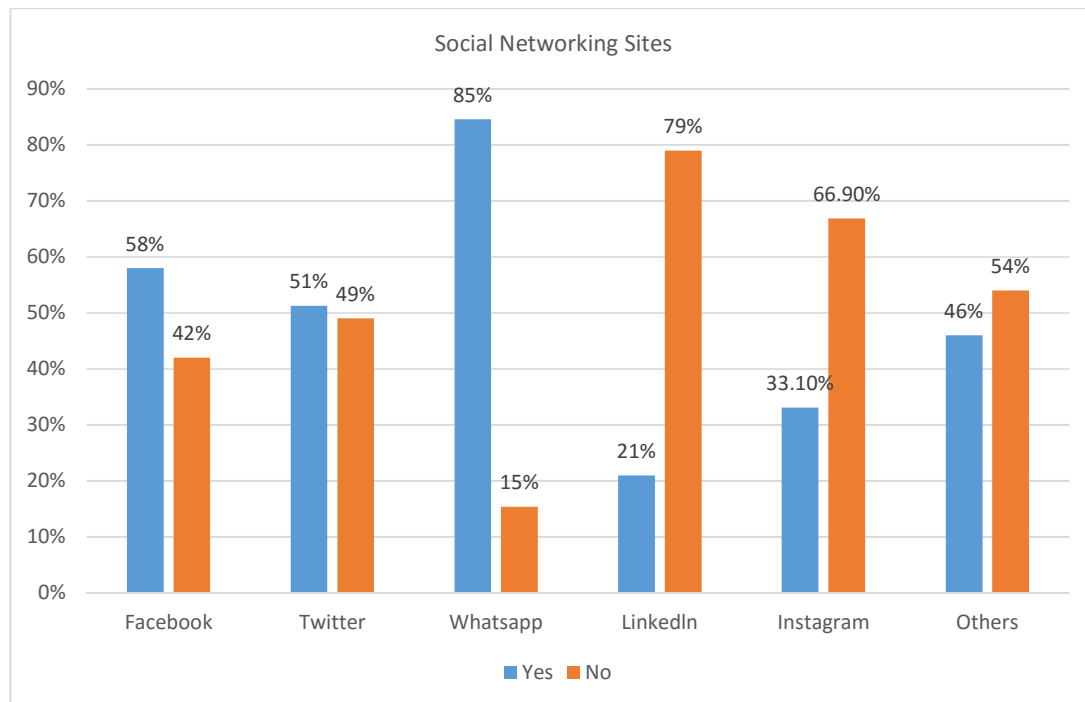


Figure 4. 8: Social Networking Sites Used by a Co-operative

According to the study, 58% of the respondents who were the majority stated that they used Facebook as a networking site while 42% stated not at all, 51% indicated that they used twitter while 49% indicated not at all, 85% stated they used Whatsapp while 15% indicated not at all, 21% cited they used LinkedIn while 79% stated not at all, 33.1% indicated they used Instagram while 66.9% cited not at all and lastly 46% stated they used other networking sites while 54% indicated not at all.

4.3.8 Use of Social Networking Sites to Attract New Clients

Table 4. 8: Use of Social Networking Sites to Attract New Clients

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Poor	9	14.3	14.3	14.3
Below Average	8	12.7	12.7	27.0
Average	32	50.8	50.8	77.8
Good	13	20.6	20.6	98.4
Very Good	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 50.8% of the respondents who were the majority stated that there was an average use of social networking sites to attract new clients especially in the youth as compared to the others in the same industry, 20.6% stated good, 14.3% cited poor, 12.7% indicated below average and lastly 1.6% indicated very good.4.4: Efficacy

4.4.1 Website Aspects

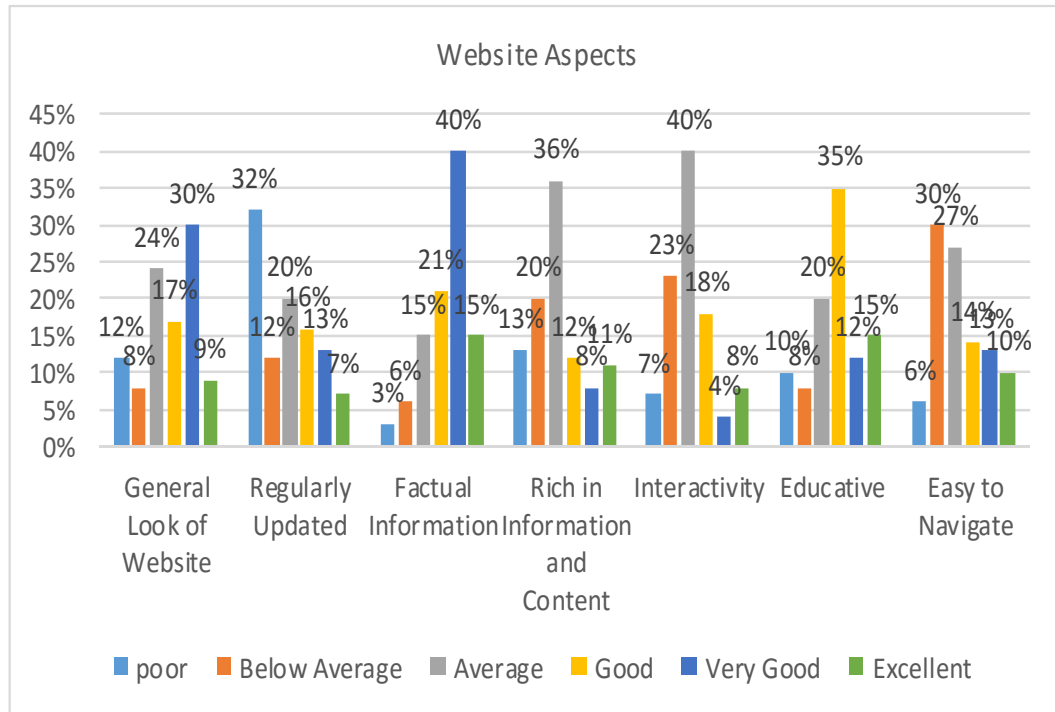


Figure 4. 9: Website Aspects of a Co-operative

According to the study on website aspects, on the general look of the website, 30% stated it was very good, 24% cited average, 17% good, 12% poor, 9% excellent and 8% below average. On website regular updating 32% cited it was poor, 20% average, 16% good, 13% very good, 12% below average and 7% excellent. On factual website information 40% indicated very good, 21% good, 15% average, 15% excellent, 6% below average and lastly 3% poor. On the website being rich in information and content 36% cited average, 20% below average, 13% poor, 12% good, 11% excellent and 8% very good. On interactivity on website 40% indicated average, 23% below average, 18% good, 8% excellent, 7% poor and 4% very good. On the website being educative 35% cited good, 20% average, 15% excellent, 12% very good, 10% poor and 8% below average. On ease to navigate 30% cited below average, 27% average, 14% good, 13% very good, 10% excellent and 6% poor.

4.4.2: New Media Communication Tools

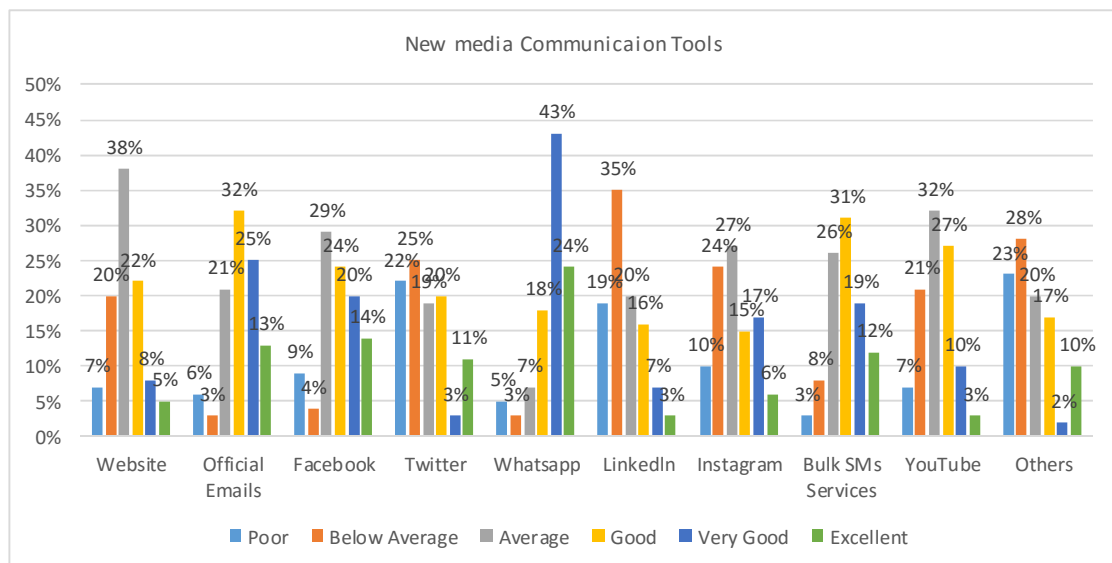


Figure 4. 10: New Media Communication Tools

According to the study on the use of new media communication tools, 38% of the respondents cited the use of website was average, 22% cited good, 20% below average, 8% very good, 7% poor and 5% excellent. On use of official emails, 32% of the respondents indicated it was good, 25% very good, 21% average, 13% excellent, 6% poor and 3% below average. On the use of Facebook, 29% indicated average, 24% good, 20% very good, 14% excellent, 9% poor and 4% below average. On use of Twitter 25% cited below average, 22% cited poor, 20% good, 19% average, 11% excellent and 3% very good. On use of Whatsapp 43% cited very good, 24% excellent, 18% good, 7% average, 5% poor and 3% below average.

On use of LinkedIn 35% cited below average, 20% indicated average, 19% poor, 16% good, 7% very good and 3% excellent. On the use of Instagram 27% cited average, 24% below average, 17% very good, 15% good, 10% poor and 6% excellent. On the use of bulk SMS services, 31% indicated good, 26% average, 19% very good, 12% excellent, 8% below average and 3% poor. On the use of YouTube, 32% of the respondents stated average, 27% good, 21% below average, 10% very good, 7% poor and 3% excellent. On the use of other new networking sites 28% of the respondents stated it was below average, 23% indicated poor, 20% good, 17% very good, 10% excellent and 2% very good.

4.5: ICT Infrastructure

4.5.1 Computer-Based System

Table 4. 9: Use of a Computer-Based System (Software)

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	37	58.7	58.7	58.7
No	26	41.3	41.3	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 58.7% of the respondents who were the majority agreed that their Co-operatives used a computer based system while 41.3% indicated not at all.

4.5.2 Laptop/ Desktop Possession

Table 4. 10: Desktops/ Laptop Possession

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	51	81.0	81.0	81.0
No	12	19.0	19.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 81% of the respondents who were the majority stated that they possessed a desktop/laptop computer at work stations. This is used as a working tool for their daily routines. It concerns the researchers that 19% of the respondents interviewed do not have computers as a working tool. What operations they carry out that doesn't require computers points to a direction of future studies.

4.5.3 Access to Reliable Internet Connections

Table 4. 11: Access to Reliable Internet Connection at Workstation

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	50	79.4	79.4	79.4
No	13	20.6	20.6	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study 79.4% of the respondents who were the majority agreed that they have access to reliable internet connections at work while 20.6% stated they don't have.

4.5.4 Computer Software Updating

Table 4. 12: Computer Software Updating

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Daily	9	14.3	14.3	14.3
Weekly	14	22.2	22.2	36.5
Monthly	17	27.0	27.0	63.5
Rarely	23	36.5	36.5	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 36.5% of the respondents who were the majority stated that their computers software updating was rarely done, 27% argued updating was done monthly, 22% stated weekly and lastly 14.3% who were the minority indicated daily.

Specialized Mobile Applications

Table 4. 13: Specialized Mobile Application to Enhance Uptake of Services

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percent
Yes	34	54.0	54.0	54.0
No	29	46.0	46.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 54% of the respondents who were the majority agreed that their Co-operative societies had specialized mobile applications to enhance uptake of the services while 46% indicated not at all.

4.5.6 Youth Recruitment

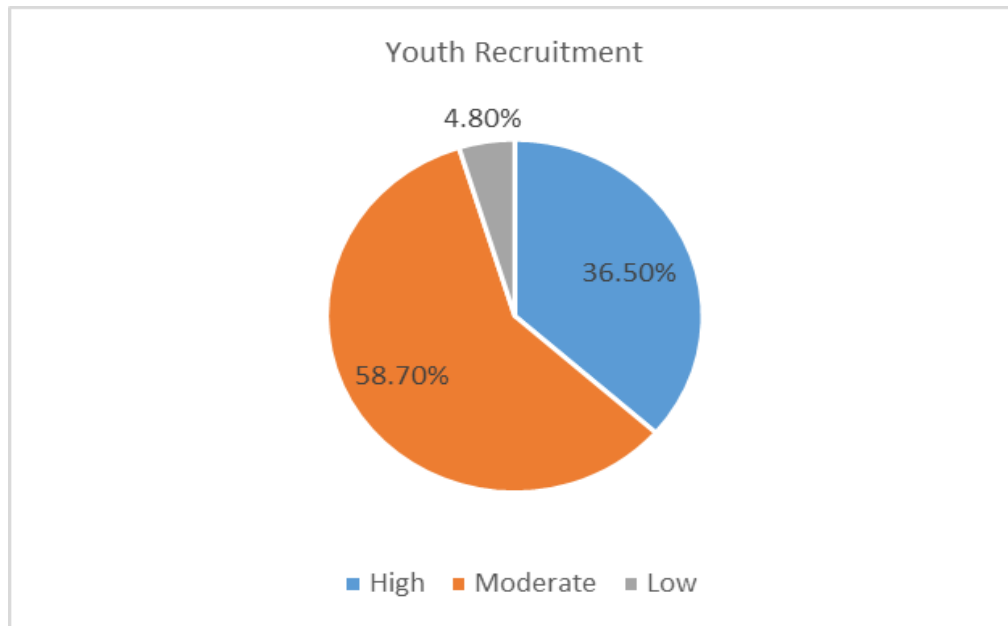


Figure 4. 11: Youth Recruitment

According to the study, 58.7% of the respondents who were the majority stated that their Co-operatives recruited youth to a moderate extent, 36.5% indicated to a high extent and 4.8% cited to a low extent.

4.5.7 New Media Tools in Fostering Competitive Positioning

Table 4. 14: Use of New Media in Competitive Positioning

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	37	58.7	58.7	58.7
No	16	25.4	25.4	84.1
Not sure	10	15.9	15.9	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 58.7% of the respondents who were the majority stated that the new media as a communication tool fostered a competitive positioning for their Co-operative societies, 25.4% indicated not at all and lastly 15.9% indicated they were not sure.

4.5.8 New Media Communication Tools in Attracting Customers

Table 4. 15: New Media as a Communication Tool in Attracting New Customers

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Not Frequent	22	34.9	34.9	34.9
Frequent	40	63.5	63.5	98.4
None of the above	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 63.5% cited that their Co-operatives frequently used new media communication tools in attracting customers, 34.9% indicated not frequent and 1.6% stated none of the above.

4.5.9 Use of New Communication Tools on Customer Management

Table 4. 16: Use of New Media as a Communication Tool on Customer Management

	Frequency	Percent age	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percent
Effective	24	38.1	38.1	38.1
Not effective	7	11.1	11.1	49.2
Exploitative	16	25.4	25.4	74.6
None of the above	16	25.4	25.4	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 38.1% indicated that the current use of new media as a communication tool by the organization on customer management was effective, 25.4% indicated it was exploitive, 25.4% indicated it had no effect and 11.1% stated not at all.

4.5.10 Platform Cooperativism

Table 4.17: Knowledge of Platform Cooperativism

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	16	25.4	25.4	25.4
No	38	60.3	60.3	85.7
Not sure	9	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 60.3% stated that they were not aware of platform Cooperativism, 25.4% indicated they were aware and lastly 14.3% cited not at all.

4.6 Human Resource and Policies

4.6.1 Policies in the Institution

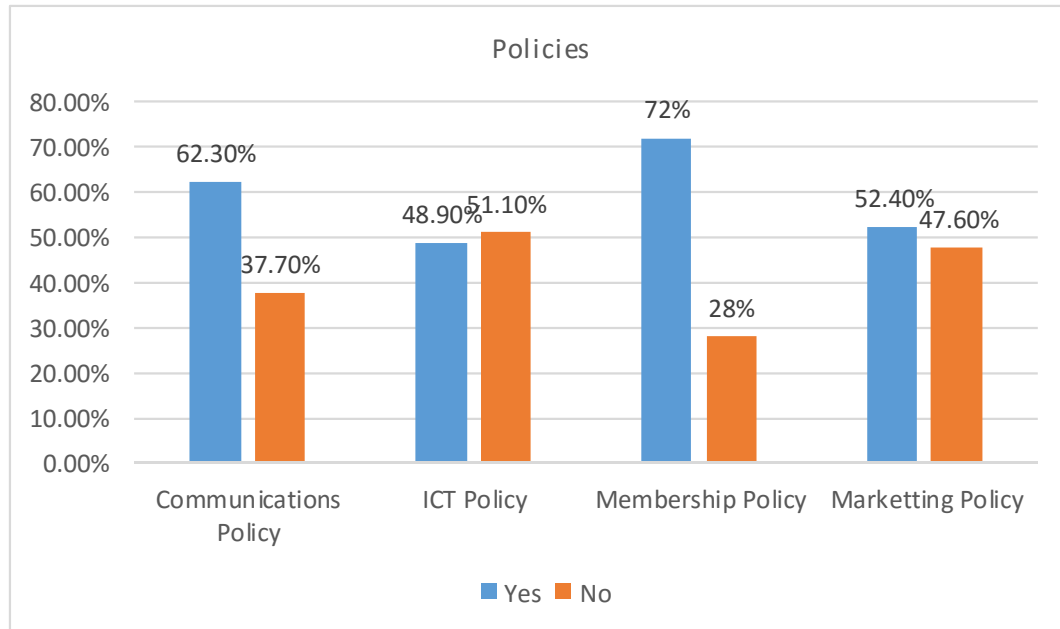


Figure 4. 12: Institution Policies

Figure 4.12 Co-operative Policies

According to the study on the policies, 62.30% indicated their co-operatives had communication policies while 37.70% cited not at all, 48.90% agreed they had ICT policies while 51.10% stated not at all, 72% cited they had membership policy while 28% cited not at all and lastly 52.40% indicated that they had marketing policies while 47.60% indicated not at all.

4.6.2 Dedicated Fulltime Staff

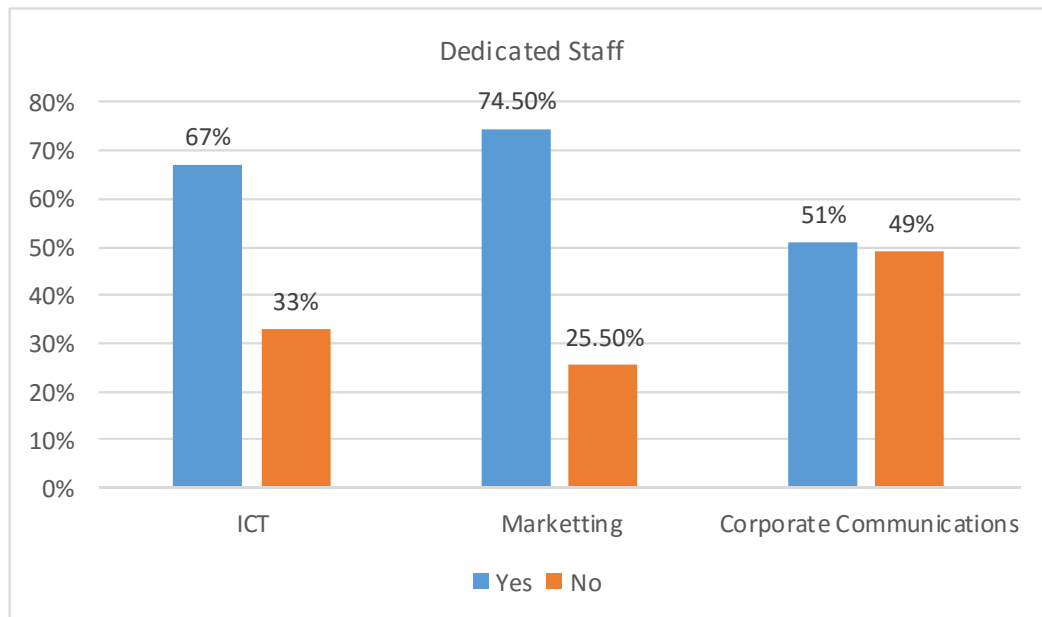


Figure 4. 13: Dedicated Fulltime Staff

According to the study on fulltime dedicated staff, 67% of the respondents stated their Co-operatives had ICT fulltime dedicated staff while 33% stated not at all, 74.50% agreed they had marketing fulltime dedicated staff while 25.50% stated not at all and lastly 51% indicated that they had corporate communications fulltime dedicated staff while 49% cited not at all.

4.6.3 ICT Innovations on Youth Customer Growth

Table 4. 18: Use of ICT Innovations to Increase Youth Customer Growth

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	44	69.8	69.8	69.8
No	10	15.9	15.9	85.7
I don't know	9	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the respondents, 69.8% of the respondents who were the majority stated that the use of ICT innovations helped to increase customer growth especially the youth, 15.9% cited not at all and 14.3% indicated that they didn't know.

4.6.4 Recent Innovations

Table 4. 19: Most Recent Innovation(S) Adopted By the Co-operative Society.

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Bulk SMS	1	1.6	1.6	1.6
Facebook groups	15	23.8	23.8	25.4
Mobile Banking	7	11.1	11.1	36.5
n/a	3	4.8	4.8	41.3
Online loans application	1	1.6	1.6	42.9
Social media	18	28.6	28.6	71.4
Whatsapp and Facebook groups	1	1.6	1.6	73.0
Whatsapp groups	17	27.0	27.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study on recent innovations, 28.6% of the respondents who were the majority argued that used social media platforms, 27.0% stated Whatsapp groups, 23.8% indicated Facebook groups, 11.1% stated Mobile banking, 4.8% stated not applicable, 1.6% stated bulks SMS, online loan application and both Whatsapp and Facebook groups.

4.6.5 Internet Series

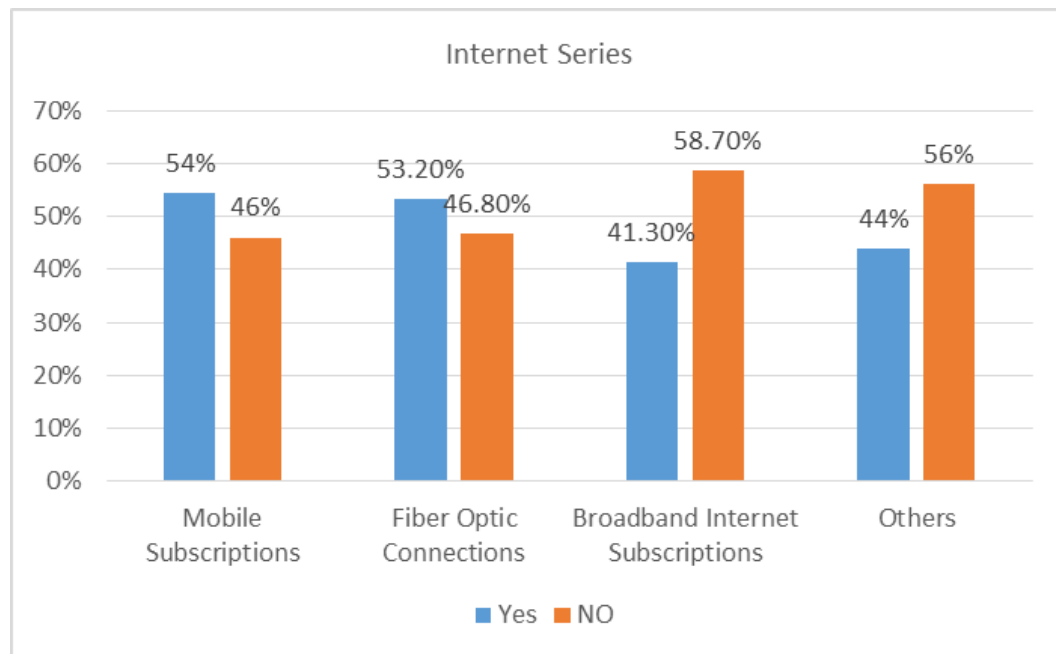


Figure 4. 14: Internet Series used by the Co-operative

According to the study on internet series used in the Co-operatives, 54% stated they used mobile subscriptions while 46% stated not at all, 53.2% indicated they used fiber optic connections while 46.8% indicated not at all, 41.3% stated they used broadband internet connections while 58.7% indicated not at all and lastly 44% cited that they used other internet series while 56% stated not at all.

4.7 Summary of Key Findings as Per Specific Objectives

This section presents a discussion of the data according to the specific objectives of the study. The section will also attempt to make a correlation between the literature review and findings of the study and link it to the chapter 5 with key recommendations of the study. We now discuss and present data as per objectives of the study.

4.7.1 Objective One

The objective one of this study was to assess the extent to which co-operatives in Meru County have adopted and utilized Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth. This objective sought to find out the extent to which co-operatives have adopted and utilized social media as a source of information. It addressed two issues; adoption and utilization. On the information aspect, it was addressed in two ways; information requested for by the youth in terms of enquiries and purpose information sent out by the co-operative society.

4.7.1.1 Co-operatives Use of Communication Channels

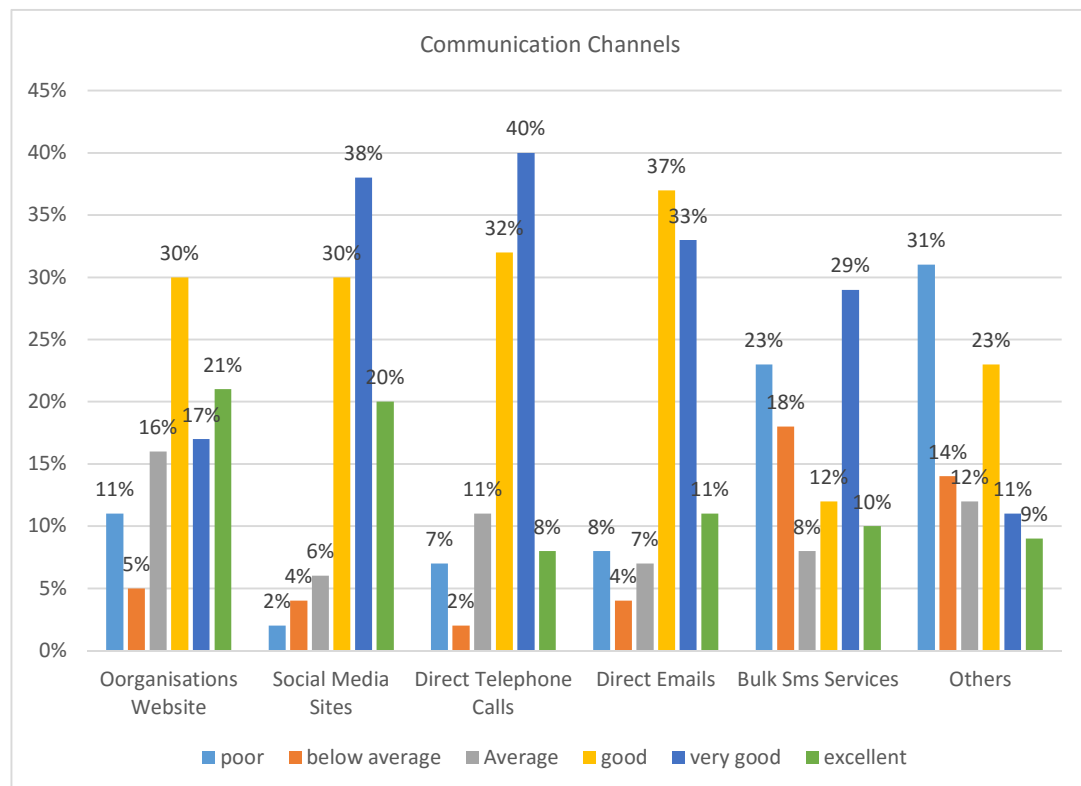


Figure 4. 15: Co-operative's Use of Communication Channels

According to the study on use of organization's website, 30% of the respondents stated it was good, 21% stated excellent, 17% very good, 16% average, 11% poor and 5% below average. That a small number rate their website as poor and below average; combined percentage of 16% however should not be taken for granted. This percentage bearing in mind the technologically constantly changing world should be taken as a matter of concern. However the other 84% that rate their websites as above average is a pointer towards improvement. The study concludes that co-operatives in Meru County have adopted the use of social media with 84% of them on board.

On social media sites, the researchers found out that 38% indicated very good, 30% good, 20% excellent, 6% average, 4% below average and 2% poor. These findings, the researchers deduce that co-operatives in Meru County have adopted the use of social media sites as channels of communications both for internal and external publics. The researchers can deduce that social media are a commonly used tool because of availability of gadgets and internet. In that most of the social media applications are easy to navigate, information is easy and simple to comprehend, anyone can air their opinions and also the tools for accessing the sites especially mobile telephone are , most of them internet enabled.

On direct telephone calls, 40% indicated very good, 32% good, 11% average, 8% excellent, 7% poor and 2% below average. This is a rather traditional but effective method of communication. It has however grown and developed with time owing to accessibility and penetration of mobile telephone in rural areas. About 72% of the respondents termed it as very good and excellent. This is perhaps of the personal touch and immediacy in getting feedback. This method is not limited to literacy levels of the users and seems to be the most effective according to the research findings.

On direct emails, 37% cited good, 33% very good, 11% average, 8% poor, 7% average and 4% below average. On bulk SMS services, 29% stated very good, 23% poor, 18% below average, 12% good, 10% excellent, 8% average. On other communication channels, 31% cited poor, 23% good, 14% below average, 12% average, 11% very good and 9% excellent.

The study shows that Social media communication channels are vibrant in most of the co-operative societies. This is used to communicate with internal and external clients of the co-operatives. Such sites can also be used to reach out to both members and non-members of the co-operative society.

4.7.1.2 Communication Channels Used

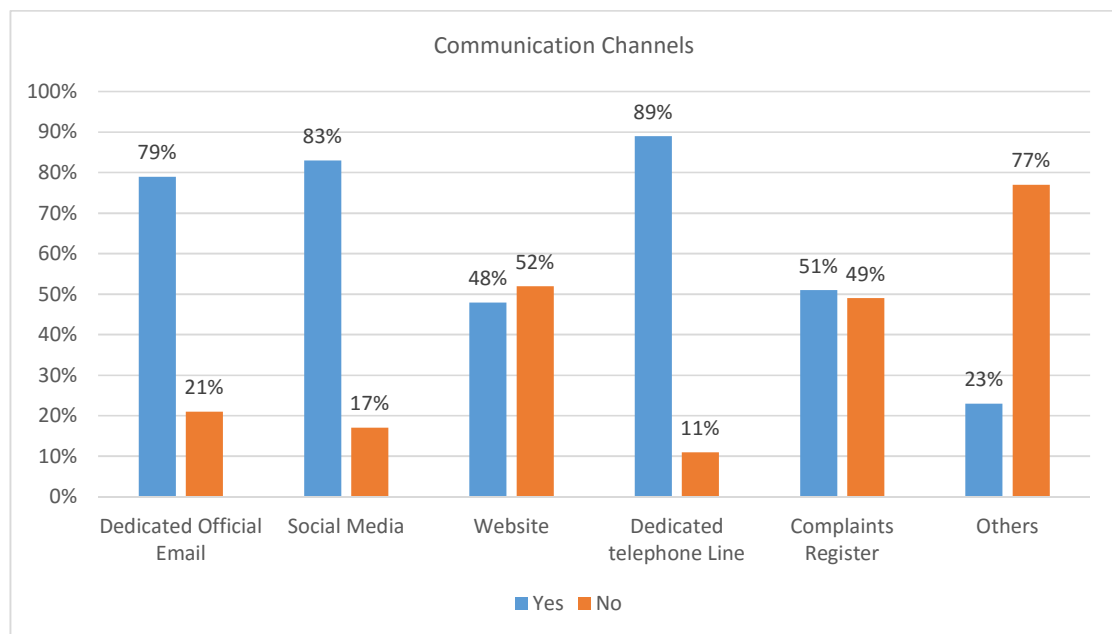


Figure 4. 16: Communication Channels Used

From this study, it has been found out that co-operatives use various channels of communications. The most commonly used include dedicated telephone line, social media and dedicated email. Some also have a complaints register and websites as a channel of

communication. According to the study, communication channels used, 79% of the respondents stated that their organizations used dedicated official email while 21% cited not at all, 83% indicated they used social media while 17 stated not all, 48% stated they used websites while 52% indicated not at all, 89% stated they used dedicated telephone line while 11% cited not at all, 51% stated they used complaints register while 49% stated not at all and lastly 23% cited that they used other forms of communication while 77% indicated not at all.

4.7.1.3 Use of Social Networking Sites to Enhance Uptake of Services

Table 4. 20: Use of Social Networking Sites to Enhance Uptake of Services

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	37	58.7	58.7	58.7
No	26	41.3	41.3	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the respondents, 58.7% who were the majority stated they used social networking sites to enhance uptake of services while 41.3% stated not at all. Co-operatives use social media sites for various reasons. This question tested, specifically the use of social networking sites to enhance uptake of co-operative services. This means the social networking sites are populated with co-operative information that would enhance uptake of the services.

The 42.3% of the respondents who use social networking sites not for enhancing increased uptake of co-operative services perhaps use social media for other information purposes.

4.7.1.5: Social Networking Sites Used

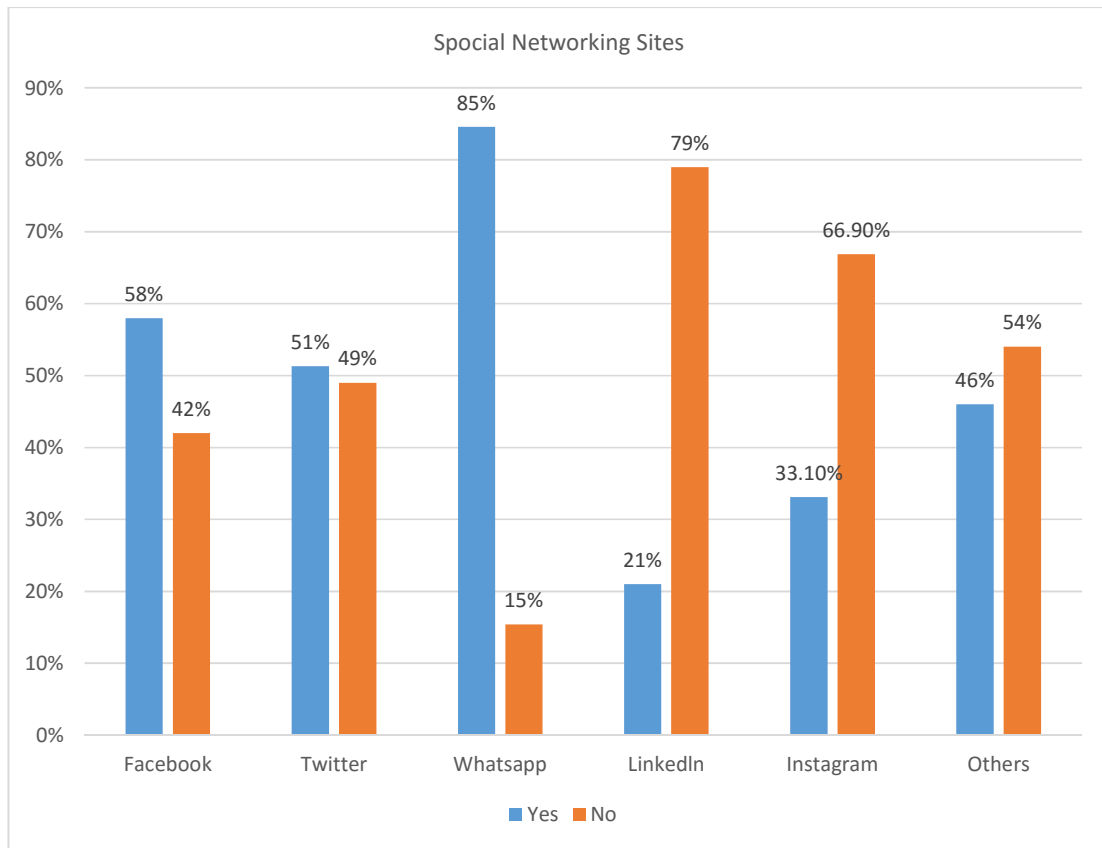


Figure 4. 17: Social Networking Sites Used

According to the study, 58% of the respondents who were the majority stated that they used Facebook as a networking site while 42% stated not at all, 51% indicated that they used twitter while 49% indicated not at all, 85% stated they used Whatsapp while 15% indicated not at all, 21% cited they used LinkedIn while 79% stated not at all, 33.1% indicated they used Instagram while 66.9% cited not at all and lastly 46% stated they used other networking sites while 54% indicated not at all.

4.7.1.6 Use of Social Networking Sites to Attract New Clients

Table 4. 21 : Use of Social Networking Sites to Attract New Clients

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Poor	9	14.3	14.3	14.3
Below Average	8	12.7	12.7	27.0
Average	32	50.8	50.8	77.8
Good	13	20.6	20.6	98.4
Very Good	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 50.8% of the respondents who were the majority stated that there was an average use of social networking sites to attract new clients especially in the youth as compared to the others in the same industry, 20.6% stated good, 14.3% cited poor, 12.7% indicated below average and lastly 1.6% indicated very good.4.4: Efficacy

4.7.1.7: New Media Communication Tools

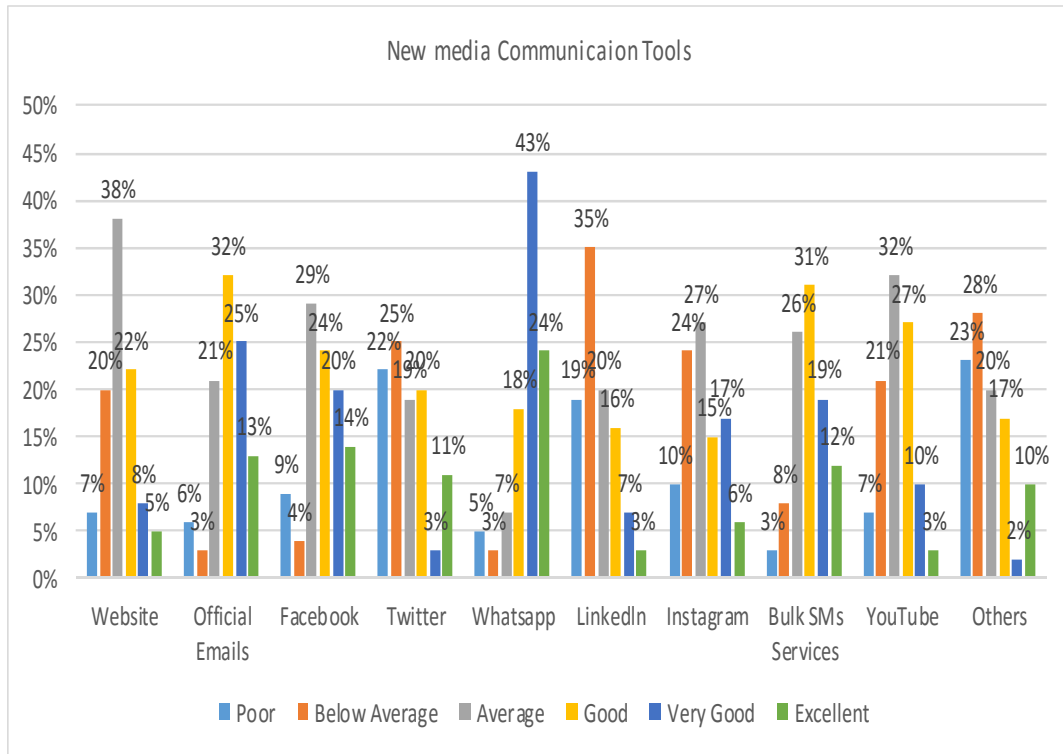


Figure 4. 18: : New Media Communication Tools

According to the study on the use of new media communication tools, 38% of the respondents cited the use of website was average, 22% cited good, 20% below average, 8% very good, 7% poor and 5% excellent. On use of official emails, 32% of the respondents indicated it was good, 25% very good, 21% average, 13% excellent, 6% poor and 3% below average. On the use of Facebook, 29% indicated average, 24% good, 20% very good, 14% excellent, 9% poor and 4% below average. On use of Twitter 25% cited below average, 22% cited poor, 20% good, 19% average, 11% excellent and 3% very good. On use of Whatsapp 43% cited very good, 24% excellent, 18% good, 7% average, 5% poor and 3% below average.

On use of LinkedIn 35% cited below average, 20% indicated average, 19% poor, 16% good, 7% very good and 3% excellent. On the use of Instagram 27% cited average, 24%

below average, 17% very good, 15% good, 10% poor and 6% excellent. On the use of bulk SMS services, 31% indicated good, 26% average, 19% very good, 12% excellent, 8% below average and 3% poor. On the use of YouTube, 32% of the respondents stated average, 27% good, 21% below average, 10% very good, 7% poor and 3% excellent. On the use of other new networking sites 28% of the respondents stated it was below average, 23% indicated poor, 20% good, 17% very good, 10% excellent and 2% very good.

4.7.2 Objective Two

The second objective of this study was to explore opportunities for utilization of Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in Meru County and assess how these opportunities can be accelerated to spread the co-operative movement's information. From the data, we find out that there are many opportunities that lie in to be exploited by co-operatives in the county. From the data, about 83% of co-operatives use social media sites; this is a big opportunities for exploring towards ensuring co-operative information gets disseminated to the youth. The study noted that there are notable human resource infrastructures in place and policies which need to be used to the benefit of these co-operatives as discussed below.

4.7.2.1: Human Resource and Policies

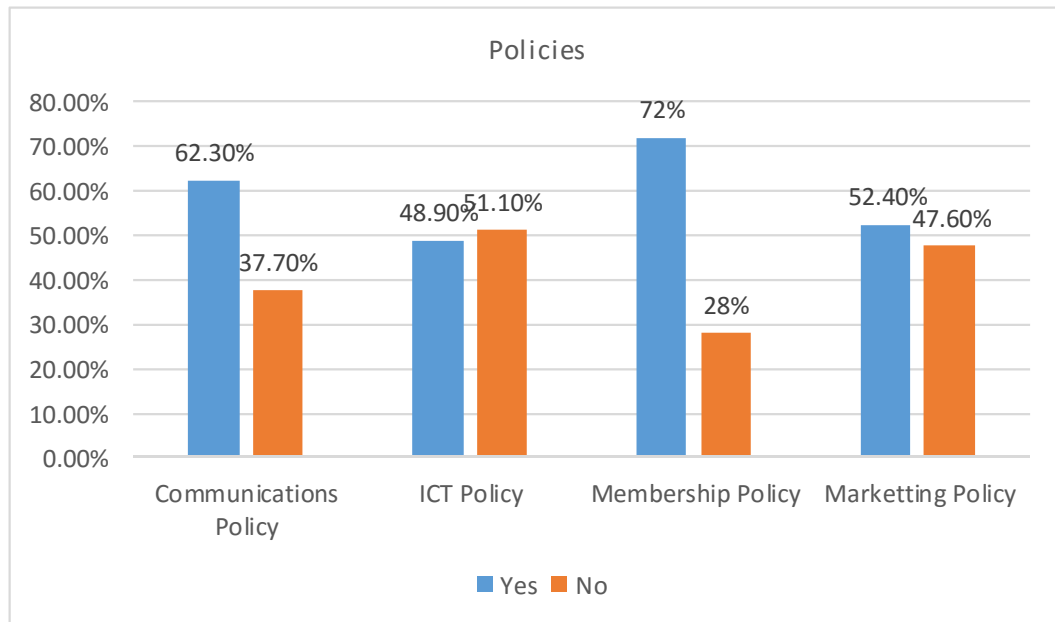


Figure 4. 19: Co-operative Policies

According to the study on the policies, 62.30% indicated their co-operatives had communication policies while 37.70% cited not at all, 48.90% agreed they had ICT policies while 51.10% stated not at all, 72% cited they had membership policy while 28% cited not at all and lastly 52.40% indicated that they had marketing policies while 47.60% indicated not at all.

4.7.2.2 Dedicated Fulltime Staff

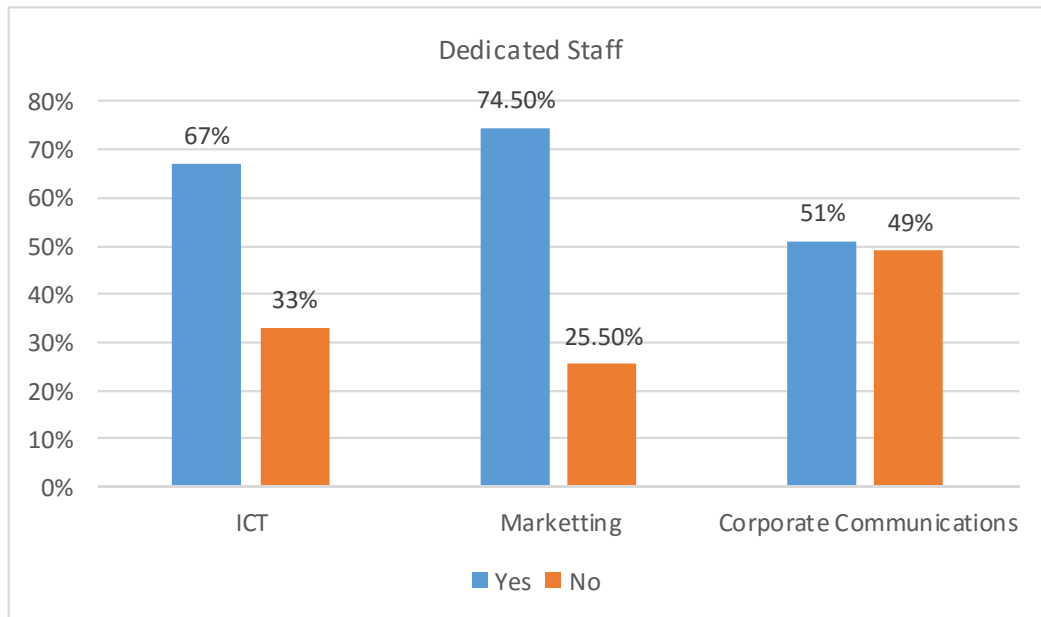


Figure 4. 20: Dedicated Fulltime Staff

According to the study on fulltime dedicated staff, 67% of the respondents stated their Co-operatives had ICT fulltime dedicated staff while 33% stated not at all, 74.50% agreed they had marketing fulltime dedicated staff while 25.50% stated not at all and lastly 51% indicated that they had corporate communications fulltime dedicated staff while 49% cited not at all.

4.7.2.3: ICT Innovations on Youth Customer Growth

Table 4. 22: Use Of ICT Innovations to Increase Youth Customer Growth

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	44	69.8	69.8	69.8
No	10	15.9	15.9	85.7
I don't know	9	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the respondents, 69.8% of the respondents who were the majority stated that the use of ICT innovations helped to increase customer growth especially the youth, 15.9% cited not at all and 14.3% indicated that they didn't know.

4.7.2.4: Recent Innovations

Table 4. 23: Recent Innovation(s) Adopted by the Co-operative Society

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Bulk SMS	1	1.6	1.6	1.6
Facebook groups	15	23.8	23.8	25.4
Mobile Banking	7	11.1	11.1	36.5
N/A	3	4.8	4.8	41.3
Online loans application	1	1.6	1.6	42.9
Social media	18	28.6	28.6	71.4
Whatsapp and Facebook groups	1	1.6	1.6	73.0
Whatsapp groups	17	27.0	27.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study on recent innovations, 28.6% of the respondents who were the majority argued that used social media platforms, 27.0% stated Whatsapp groups, 23.8% indicated Facebook groups, 11.1% stated Mobile banking, 4.8% stated not applicable, 1.6% stated bulks SMS, online loan application and both Whatsapp and Facebook groups.

4.7.2.5 Internet Series Used By a Co-operative

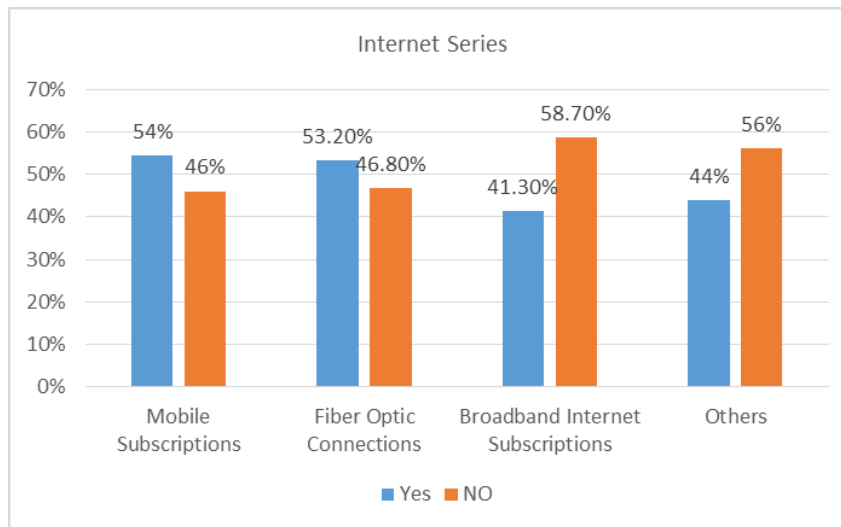


Figure 4. 21: Internet Series used

According to the study on internet series used in the Co-operatives, 54% stated they used mobile subscriptions while 46% stated not at all, 53.2% indicated they used fiber optic connections while 46.8% indicated not at all, 41.3% stated they used broadband internet connections while 58.7% indicated not at all and lastly 44% cited that they used other internet series while 56% stated not at all.

4.7.3 Objective Three

The third objective of this study was to evaluate challenges to usage and utilization of Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in Meru County. The literature review of this study has pointed to various challenges that face the co-operative movement in Africa. The biggest challenge was low adoption of ICTs in their operations. This study went further to find out what the key issues in this bigger challenge is. As will pointed in the next notes, the biggest issues include; low education levels of board members, poor ICT infrastructures, lack of ICT policies and no well-trained and dedicated human resource for the ICT and communication departments. This in turn

cumulates to poor or no usage at all, no innovations and poor choice of well thought out communication channels and messages.

% indicated poor, 20% good, 17% very good, 10% excellent and 2% very good.

4.7.3.1: ICT Infrastructure

Table 4. 24: Use of a Computer-Based System (Software)

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	37	58.7	58.7	58.7
No	26	41.3	41.3	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 58.7% of the respondents who were the majority agreed that their Co-operatives used a computer based system while 41.3% indicated not at all.

Table 4. 25: Desktops/ Laptop Possession

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	51	81.0	81.0	81.0
No	12	19.0	19.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 81% of the respondents who were the majority stated that they possessed a desktop/laptop computer at work stations. This is used as a working tool for their daily routines. It concerns the researchers that 19% of the respondents interviewed do not have computers as a working tool. What operations they carry out that doesn't require computers points to a direction of future studies.

Table 2: Access to Reliable Internet Connection at Workstation

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	50	79.4	79.4	79.4
No	13	20.6	20.6	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study 79.4% of the respondents who were the majority agreed that they have access to reliable internet connections at work while 20.6% stated they don't have.

Table 4. 26: Computer Software Updating

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Daily	9	14.3	14.3	14.3
Weekly	14	22.2	22.2	36.5
Monthly	17	27.0	27.0	63.5
Rarely	23	36.5	36.5	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 36.5% of the respondents who were the majority stated that their computers software updating was rarely done, 27% argued updating was done monthly, 22% stated weekly and lastly 14.3% who were the minority indicated daily.4.5.5
Specialized Mobile Applications

Table 4. 27: Specialized Mobile Application to Enhance Uptake of Services

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative e Percent
Yes	34	54.0	54.0	54.0
No	29	46.0	46.0	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 54% of the respondents who were the majority agreed that their Co-operative societies had specialized mobile applications to enhance uptake of the services while 46% indicated not at all.

4.7.3.2: Youth Recruitment

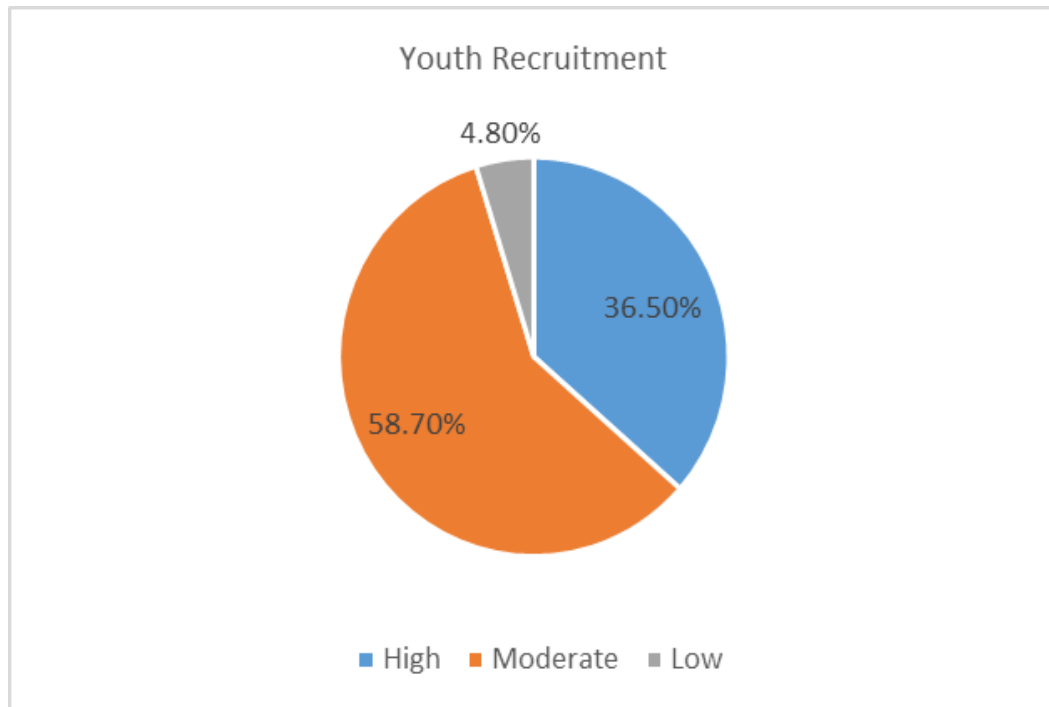


Figure 4. 22: Youth Recruitment in the Co-operative

According to the study, 58.7% of the respondents who were the majority stated that their Co-operatives recruited youth to a moderate extent, 36.5% indicated to a high extent and 4.8% cited to a low extent.

4.7.3.3 New Media Tools in Fostering Competitive Positioning

Table 4. 28: Use of New Media in Competitive Positioning

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	37	58.7	58.7	58.7
No	16	25.4	25.4	84.1
Not sure	10	15.9	15.9	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 58.7% of the respondents who were the majority stated that the new media as a communication tool fostered a competitive positioning for their Co-operative societies, 25.4% indicated not at all and lastly 15.9% indicated they were not sure.

4.7.3.4 New Media Communication Tools in Attracting Customers

Table 4. 29: New Media as a Communication Tool in Attracting New Customers

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Not Frequent	22	34.9	34.9	34.9
Frequent	40	63.5	63.5	98.4
None of the above	1	1.6	1.6	100.0
Total	63	100.0	100.0	

According to the study, 63.5% cited that their Co-operatives frequently used new media communication tools in attracting customers, 34.9% indicated not frequent and 1.6% stated none of the above.

4.6.2 Dedicated Fulltime Staff

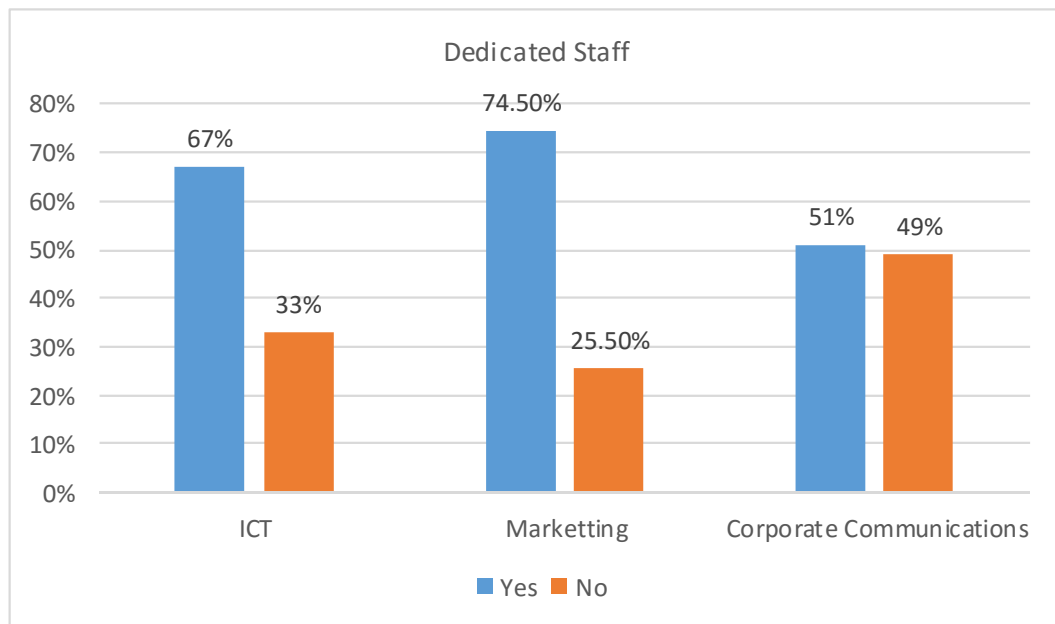


Figure 4. 23: Dedicated Fulltime Staff

According to the study on fulltime dedicated staff, 67% of the respondents stated their Co-operatives had ICT fulltime dedicated staff while 33% stated not at all, 74.50% agreed they had marketing fulltime dedicated staff while 25.50% stated not at all and lastly 51% indicated that they had corporate communications fulltime dedicated staff while 49% cited not at all.

Regression Analysis of the Findings

The researcher conducted a multiple linear regression analysis so as to investigate the utilization of social media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in

Meru, Kenya and the four independent factors namely: Communication Process (CP), Efficacy (EF), ICT Infrastructure (IF) and Human Resource Policies (HRP)

The regression equation was

Equation 1: The regression Equation

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Whereby Y = Co-operative information (CI)

X₁ = Communication Process (CP)

X₂ = Efficacy (EF)

X₃ = ICT Infrastructure (IF)

X₄ = Human Resource Policies (HRP)

Table 4. 30: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	0.843	0.742	0.724	0.4216	

a) Predictors: (Constant), Communication Process (CP), Efficacy (EF), ICT Infrastructure (IF) and Human Resource Policies (HRP)

b) Independent variable: Co-operative information

The study used the R square. The R Square is called the coefficient of determination and tells us how Co-operative information varied with Communication Process (CP), Efficacy (EF), ICT Infrastructure (IF) and Human Resource Policies (HRP). The four independent

variables that were studied explain 74.2% of the factors are affected by Co-operative information as represented by R Squared (Coefficient of determinant). This therefore means that other factors not studied in this research contribute 25.8% of the factors affected by Co-operative information among youths in Meru.

Table 4. 31: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.72	9	1.302	44.231	.000(a)
	Residual	3.432	52	0.066		
	Total	15.152	61			

a) Predictors: (Constant), Communication Process (CP), Efficacy (EF), ICT Infrastructure (IF) and Human Resource Policies (HRP)

a) Independent Variable: Co-operative information (CI)

The study used ANOVA to establish the significance of the regression model from which an f-significance value of p less than 0.05 was established. The model is statistically significant in predicting communication Process (CP), Efficacy (EF), ICT Infrastructure (IF) and Human Resource Policies (HRP) are affected by Co-operative information among youths in Meru. This shows that the regression model has a less than 0.05 likelihood (probability) of giving a wrong prediction. This therefore means that the regression model has a confidence level of above 95% hence high reliability of the results.

Table 4. 32: Coefficients Results

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.116	.186		0.623	.535
Communication Process	0.577	.068	.559	8.478	.000
Efficacy	0.157	.043	.257	3.676	.036
ICT Infrastructure	0.082	.042	.301	2.252	.020
Human Resource Policies	0.021	.002	.245	6.906	.001

b) Predictors: (Constant), Communication Process (CP), Efficacy (EF), ICT Infrastructure (IF) and Human Resource Policies (HRP)

c) Independent Variable: Co-operative information (CI)

The established regression equation was

$$Y = 0.116 + 0.577X_1 + 0.157X_2 + 0.082X_3 + 0.021X_4 + \varepsilon$$

The regression equation above has established that holding all factors (predicting communication Process (CP), Efficacy (EF), ICT Infrastructure (IF) and Human Resource Policies (HRP)) constant, factors influenced by Co-operative information and hence affects youths performance in Meru will be 0.116. The findings presented also shows that taking all other dependent variables at zero, a unit increase in Co-operative information will lead to a 0.577 increase in the scores of communication process. A unit increase in

Co-operative information will lead to a 0.157 increase in Efficacy. On the other hand, a unit increase in Co-operative Information will lead to a 0.082 increase in the scores of the ICT Infrastructure; and a unit increase in Co-operative Information will lead to a 0.021 increase in the scores of Human Resource Policies. This infers that Communication process is influenced by Co-operative information among youths in Meru most followed by Efficacy, ICT Infrastructure and then Human resource policies. The study also established a significant relationship between Co-operative information among youths in Meru and the dependent variables; Communication process ($p=0.00<0.05$), Efficacy ($p=0.036<0.05$), ICT Infrastructure ($p= 0.20<0.05$) and Human resource policies ($p=0.001<0.05$) as shown by the p values. The researcher dropped the regression model because $p>0.5$ and $t<1.96$. Therefore the restated model is as follows:

$$Y=0.577X_1+0.157X_2+0.082X_3+0.021X_4+ \varepsilon$$

Non-Parametric Correlation

A Spearman correlation is used when one or both of the variables are not assumed to be normally distributed. The values of the variables were converted in ranks and then correlated. The study correlated communication process, Efficacy, ICT Infrastructure and Human resource Policies under the assumption that both of these variables are normal and interval.

Table 4. 33: Correlations

			Communi cation Process	Efficacy	ICT Infrastruct ure	Human Resource Policies	
Spearman's rho	Communication Process	Correlation	1.0	.617	.547	.667	
		Coefficient	.00	.000	.000	.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.61	.61	.61	.61	
	N						
	Efficacy	Correlation	.617	1.000	.437	.235	
		Coefficient	.000	.61	.000	.001	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.61	.61	.61	.61	
	N						
	ICT Infrastructure	Correlation	.547	.437	1.0	.441	
		Coefficient	.000	.61	.00	.002	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.61	.61	.61	.61	
	N						
Human Resource Policies	Correlation	.667	.235	.441	1.000		
	Coefficient	.000	.61	.000	.61		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.61	.61	.61	.61		
N							

The results suggest that the relationship between Communication Process and Efficacy (rho = 0.617, p = 0.000) is statistically significant. Communication process and ICT Infrastructure had a rho of 0.547 and a p value of 0.000 therefore denoting statistical significance. Similarly, the Communication Process and Human Resource Policies posted a rho of 0.667 with a p value of 0.000 therefore providing a statistical significance.

Efficacy and ICT Infrastructure had a rho of 0.437, $p=0.000$ further pointing to a statistical significance. On the same note, Efficacy and Human Resource Policies correlated at rho=0.235 and $p=0.001$. This therefore is statistically significant. Finally, the ICT Infrastructure and Human Resource Policies stood at a correlation of rho=0.441 and $p=0.002$ revealing statistical significance.

4.9 Key Informant Interviews

4.9.1 Chairman Shirika Society Limited 27th March, 2019

One of the key informants for this research was the chairperson of Shirika SACCO. She is also the chairperson of the Research Committee of the International Co-Operative Alliance- Africa chapter. She widely published on matters co-operatives. The study sought to get her general views on the *utilization of social media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in Meru County, Kenya* in a face to face interview. The study chose to engage the key informant in this open discussion so as to address the main and broad objective of the research.

Form the discussions with the key informant; the study found out that majority of the co-operatives in Kenya have failed to harvest the demographic dividend of the youth in Kenya. It further emerged that most Social media messages posted by co-operatives in Kenya are just mere incidentals and not well thought out key messages meant to woe the youth into co-operatives. She argues that co-operatives have remained ignorant to the potential of the social media in recruitment drives. It further emerged that co-operative information circulated on social media sites sometimes mean nothing much in different environments and cultures and to different demographics. It further emerged that most of the co-operative leaders in Kenya are ignorant of embracing ICTs in their operations leave alone discussing the issues in their meetings. A case to point out that emerged in the

discussion was one direction international co-operative leaders at global level are moving towards; *platform Cooperativism*; this is a movement towards democratizing the internet.

The availability of social media coupled by fast growing technology also emerged as one of the key contributors that can spur the growth of co-operatives. The researchers found out that with the fast growing technology, co-operatives have a big opportunity to grow its membership base especially tapping into the big numbers of the youth. But the big challenge is its adoption and utilization by the co-operatives. The big challenge is, as the technology grows, some co-operatives continue to be vague or redundant in embracing new media opportunities. It further emerged that those with the mandate to new media is embraced by co-operatives do not have adequate technology to identify, filter or make informed decisions to the effect.

Utilizing social media adequately as a source of co-operative information, it emerged, is a challenge. Most of these intentional messages on social media to provide information seem to be ignorant of key messaging strengths.

Weak leadership in rural co-operatives coupled by poor infrastructure and low budgetary allocation as well as poor internet connectivity are a huge hindrance to utilization of social media by co-operatives in Meru County.

4.9.2 The County Chief Officer

The County chief officer in charge of trade, tourism and co-operatives was interviewed in January 2019 and was the 2nd key informant in this research. This was due to his position in the county where the study was being carried out. The study sought to find out what his general comments were on social media being utilized by co-operatives in Meru County as a source of co-operative information to the youth in Meru County.

The study found out that Meru county has an active co-operative sector but with an aging population in all aspects from membership to leadership. The informant hinted that the challenge towards utilization of social media as a source of co-operative information was in ICT infrastructure in co-operatives in the county. The informant argued that co-operatives, most of them, have low budgetary allocations towards ICT infrastructures leave alone low internet connected most of the time. He asserted that if one of the most vibrant co-operatives embraced social media as a source of co-operative information, perhaps it would double its memberships especially among the youth of the county.

It further emerged that co-operative societies have little or no professional staff handling communications; most of the co-operatives have strengthened marketing and abandoned the communication aspects.

The study further deduced that there is need to do capacity building for co-operative leaders and managers on the potential of social media in the new economic times; It emerged that co-operative need to rethink their communications functions and the role the social media space can play in information, communication and public education.

Meru County was the geographical area of study and the Chief Officer in charge of co-operatives provided clear insights on the status of co-operatives in the county. Further to the officer noted that the county government of Meru was keen on the growth of co-operatives in the region and cited the enactment of a bill, the Meru Count Co-operatives Act 2014, as a key instrument in strengthening co-operatives and ensuring good governance.

The officer however noted that the youth are inadequately involved in co-operative ventures. He cited lack of information to the youth, little or no income for the youth and poor image of co-operatives associated with mismanagement of funds, leadership wrangles among others either within the county.

While the county government remains keen on strengthening the function of co-operatives, accordingly, the co-operatives have a number of challenges in adopting new communication tools to enhance uptake of their services. The chief officer asserts that human resource is one of the key challenges hindering dissemination of co-operative information.

Major challenges facing the co-operatives in adoption of social media as communications tools however remain cross cutting. Inadvertently, the co-operatives who have adopted social media as communication tools do not have clear messages. Messages sent out are not clear, consistent and targeted.

The chief officer argues that the youth have been left out of co-operative ventures largely due to information gap; co-operatives being unique business models have not been well understood by majority of the people including those who are members. He noted that if education of members and non-members and especially the youth would get adequate information, they would be outright members of co-operatives.

4.9.3 Director Platform Coop Consortium

An interview was held with the director of platform Cooperativism consortium at The New School University in New York, in November 2019 as one of the key informants for this study. This was to give a general global perspective of co-operative communication and tools used thereof including social media. The informant noted that a bigger

challenge faces the African co-operative space in terms of adoption of new communication tools as opposed to the traditional way of doing things. The root cause of this, he attributes to 'conservative' nature of members and leadership of the sector to a large extent.

Members of majority of co-operatives across the continent have reluctantly failed to plan the future of co-operatives while some co-operatives have draconian by-laws that hinder new membership especially the youth of whom majority have little or no income to allow them mobilize their savings. He dares co-operatives to disrupt their thinking and buy in into new ideas while putting into consideration succession planning.

The informant asserts that the principles of co-operatives have not been well understood by co-operative members and also some of the leaders. This according to her has made some co-operatives unproductive and others at the verge of collapse.

On communication, co-operatives have not positioned themselves into understanding the context and role of communication in line with what the entity and its associated economies are; this has hindered most of the co-operatives from mapping out their communication needs and adopting appropriate communications tools.

According to this key informant, there is huge potential into adopting social media as a communication tool amongst co-operatives. He further noted that for a long time, co-operatives have been 'information prisons' and this is the high time the doors get opened widely as the world gets communication patterns changed by social media.

He argued that there is need for more research in this new area to get up-to-date data on the co-operatives that have adopted social media as a communication tool in their operations. However, he argues that inherent characteristics of inadequate adoption of

social media are evident enough to show there is low adoption of social media as a communication tool among co-operatives and youth involvement in the venture remains a key challenge.

4.9.4 Focus Group Discussions

4.9.4.1 Focus Group A – *Chipukizi* Group

This group consisted of 5 students who are part of a youth co-operative called '*Chipukizi co-operative society limited*' at The Co-operative University of Kenya. The members of the co-operative society have no meaningful income of their own but they perform music, drama and other folklore to audiences for a pay. They pay themselves and plow the rest back as savings to their SACCO.

From the discussions, the group members strongly feel there is a huge gap in information between them and co-operatives. This is because co-operatives have remained closed in terms of information sharing. To them, whereas co-operatives as autonomous associations of people pooling their economies of scale together, co-operatives are slowly becoming a rich man's club leaving out the unemployed and low income earners of whom majority are the youth.

The members feel there is a huge potential in co-operatives harnessing the digital space and sharing information targeting the youth. This will close the gap that exists and open up for learning and succession in terms of businesses.

To this group, the biggest challenges facing the co-operatives in adopting social media as a communication tool is change management and trust. The group asserts that, some co-operative leaders and members are so conservative and fearful of the digital world that this may open their co-operatives to big risks including financial losses.

4.9.4.2 Group B

This group consisted of 5 young people who belonged to different co-operatives; Shirika Co-operative Society Limited, Kenya Police SACCO, Afya SACCO, Solution SACCO And Arimi Co-operative Society Limited. All the SACCOs are in Meru but Shirika co-operative society is in Nairobi. The purpose for picking one urban SACCO is to provide comparison with the rural operations and communication.

The experiences on social media usage as a communication tool among the five members all point in similar direction with slight deviation on Shirika SACCO and Kenya police SACCO due to their locations and scope respectively. Shirika SACCO for instance was pointed out to be very active on social media in dissemination of targeted information to the members and with negligible following. To a large extent, they have adopted social media as a communication tool but the messaging needs refinement.

On the other hand, Kenya police SACCO is aggressive in social media communication bearing in mind their scope. It has membership of almost the entire police force and also open to other members; they were said to be quick in response to queries online and apt in information shared. The two SACCOs equally have quite interactive websites and web portals for their members.

The other three members who belonged to co-operatives in the rural set up assert their co-operatives have missed a huge opportunity in adopting social media as a communication tool. For instance Arimi SACCO has an inactive website which is on and off the web. It has no Facebook nor twitter account. On the case of a solution SACCO, they have a Facebook account which was lastly updated in 2017 as at the time of interview in 2019.

Collectively, the discussants expressed their concerns that co-operative have inherent challenges facing their communications especially in adopting social media as communication tools. They proposed stringent management of the communication functions to disseminate appropriate information to the youth who needed to be members of the societies.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This chapter presents the summary, key findings and recommendations. The broad objective of this study was to find out to what extent co-operatives in Meru County utilize social media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in the county. Other objectives of the study included:

- i. Assessing the extent to which Co-operatives in Meru County have adopted and utilized Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth
- ii. Exploring opportunities for utilization of Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in Meru County and assess how these opportunities can be accelerated to spread Co-operative information
- iii. Ascertaining barriers to usage and utilization of social media as a source of co-operative information

5.1.1 Communication Process

This study showed that majority of the respondents stated that the co-operatives' communication to the staff was very good. Majority also stated that the co-operatives communication to the heads of departments was good, the top management communication very good and board of management and director's communication was average. Majority of the respondents indicated that the shareholders communication and regulatory body's communication were very good. On the government communication

majority of the respondents indicated very good. Majority also stated that the potential shareholders' communication was good and lastly on the customer's communication, the majority cited that it was very good.

Further, the study revealed that on use of organization's website, majority of the respondents stated it was good that a small number rated their website as poor and below average. This percentage, bearing in mind the technologically constantly changing world should be taken as a matter of concern. However, the other majority that rated their websites as above average is a pointer towards improvement. Perhaps further studies need to be carried out in this respect to find out whatever gaps are in the area.

On social media sites, the majority of the respondents indicated it was very good. These findings, the majority, deduced that co-operatives in Meru County have adopted the use of social media sites as channels of communications both for internal and external publics. The majority stated that social media are a commonly used tool because of availability of gadgets and internet. In that most of the social media applications are easy to navigate, information is easy and simple to comprehend, anyone can air their opinions and also the tools for accessing the sites especially mobile telephone are , most of them internet enabled.

Respondents in the study stated that the direct telephone calls were very good. They stated that this is a rather traditional but effective method of communication. It has, however, grown and developed with time owing to accessibility and penetration of mobile telephone in rural areas. Majority of the respondents termed it as very good and excellent. This is perhaps because of the personal touch and immediacy in getting feedback. This

method is not limited to literacy levels of the users and seems to be the most effective according to the research findings.

Further, the study showed that majority of the respondents stated that the use of direct emails was good. On the use of bulk SMS services, majority of the respondents stated it was very good and on other communication channels they cited poor. The majority concluded that Social media communication channels are vibrant in most of the co-operative societies. This is used to communicate with internal and external clients of the co-operatives. Such sites can also be used to reach out to both members and non-members of the co-operative society.

From the study, the findings showed that, majority of the respondent stated that their co-operative society had customer complaints/compliments handling mechanisms. Proper handling and resolution of customer complaints is a communication function of getting feedback from the clients. From the study, majority stated that most of the co-operatives have put in place communication strategy to handle customer complaints. It cannot be authoritatively be concluded that they do not at all handle customer complaints; the gap is, they do not have mechanisms or a structured way of handling the complaints and having them concluded.

Based on this study, majority stated that co-operatives use various channels of communications. The most commonly used include dedicated telephone lines, social media and dedicated email. Some also have a complaints register and websites as a channel of communication. According to the study, communication channels used, majority of the respondents stated that their organizations used dedicated official emails, social media, websites, dedicated telephone line, complaints register and other forms of communication.

5.1.2: Efficacy

This study, showed that, on website aspects majority of the respondents stated that the general look of the website was very good. Majority of the respondents stated that there was regular website updating, factual website information, website being rich in information and content, interactivity on website, educative website and a website easy to navigate.

On the use of new media communication tools, the study showed that majority of the respondents cited the use of website was average. Majority also stated that use of official emails was good and the use of Facebook was average. Majority of the respondents also cited an average use of Twitter and a good use of Whatsapp.

5.1.3: ICT Infrastructure

The findings of the study show that majority of the respondents agreed that their Co-operatives used a computer based system. According to the study, respondents who were the majority stated that they possessed a desktop/laptop computer at work stations. This is used as a working tool for their daily routines. It concerns the researchers that 19% of the respondents interviewed do not have computers as a working tool. What operations they carry out that doesn't require computer points to a direction of future studies.

5.1.4: Human Resource and Policies

According to the study on the policies, majority of the respondents indicated their co-operatives had communication policies, they had ICT policies, they had membership policy and that they had marketing policies.

According to the study on fulltime dedicated staff, majority of the respondents stated their Co-operatives had ICT fulltime dedicated staff, they had marketing fulltime dedicated staff and they had corporate communications fulltime dedicated staff.

5.2 Conclusions

The following are the conclusions from the study;

5.2.1: Communication Process

It can be concluded that there was a good communication by co-operatives' to the staff. Also the co-operatives communication to the heads of department was good, the top management communication very good and board of management director's communication was average. The shareholders communication and regulatory body's communication were very good. The government communication to the co-operative was also very good. The potential shareholders communication was good and lastly there was a very good customer's communication. From the above findings, the researchers can deduce that co-operative societies are above average in communicating with their various key publics. It is prudent for researchers to conclude that co-operative society's internal communications are well managed. However, externally, there seems to be a challenge that perhaps calls for further studies in this area.

Study findings showed that on use of organization's website, it was found to be good that a small number rated their website as poor and below average. This percentage bearing in mind the technologically constantly changing world should be taken as a matter of concern. However websites were rated above average and from this it can be concluded that it was a pointer towards improvement. Perhaps further studies need to be carried out in this respect to find out whatever gaps are in the area.

The social media sites were very good. These findings, it can be concluded that co-operatives in Meru County have adopted the use of social media sites as channels of communications both for internal and external publics. Also it was found that the social media are a commonly used tool because of availability of gadgets and internet. In that most of the social media applications are easy to navigate, information is easy and simple to comprehend, anyone can air their opinions and also the tools for accessing the sites especially mobile telephone are , most of them internet enabled.

It was also found that the use of direct telephone calls was very good. According to the study it was found that this is a rather traditional but effective method of communication. It has however grown and developed with time owing to accessibility and penetration of mobile telephone in rural areas. This is perhaps of the personal touch and immediacy in getting feedback. This method is not limited to literacy levels of the users and seems to be the most effective according to the research findings.

Further, the study showed that majority of the respondent stated that their co-operative society had customer complaints/compliments handling mechanisms. Proper handling and resolution of customer complaints is a communication function of getting feedback from the clients. From the study, it can be concluded that most of the co-operatives have put in communication strategy to handle customer complaints. It cannot be authoritatively concluded that they do not at all handle customer complaints; the gap is they do not have mechanisms or a structured way of handling the complaints and having them concluded.

From this study, it was found that the co-operatives use various channels of communications. The most commonly used include dedicated telephone line, social media and dedicated email. Some also have a complaints register and websites as a channel of communication. According to the study it is concluded that the communication channels

used in organizations were dedicated official emails, social media, websites, dedicated telephone line, complaints register and other forms of communication.

From the study it was also found that some of the co-operatives had a website. It can be concluded that co-operatives may not be having websites because of the technical support and the IT infrastructure required to build a website and maintain it. Also the human resource required and skills may not be at the reach of the co-operatives and also the availability of the internet bandwidth. With a huge percentage of the co-operatives literally operating without a website, intervention measures perhaps need to be put into place by policy makers to address this gap.

From the study, it was also found that the co-operatives used social networking sites to enhance uptake of services. According to the study, Co-operatives used social media sites for various reasons. This question tested, specifically the use of social networking sites to enhance uptake of co-operative services. This means the social networking sites are populated with co-operative information that would enhance uptake of the services.

It was also found that the Co-operatives who used social networking sites enhanced increased uptake of co-operative services perhaps us social media for other information purposes. It can be authoritatively concluded that the co-operatives used Facebook as a networking site, twitter, Whatsapp, LinkedIn and Instagram. Also it was found that there was an average use of social networking sites to attract new clients especially in the youth as compared to the others in the same industry.

5.2.2: Efficacy

On the website aspects, it was found that the general look of the website was very good. It can be concluded that the organization had website and there was regular website updating, factual website information, website being rich in information and content, interactivity on website, educative website and a website easy to navigate.

It was also found that the Co-operatives used new media communication tools and their use of websites, Whatsapp and official emails was good but the use of Facebook and Twitter was average. On use of LinkedIn it was found to be below average, use of Instagram average, and use of the bulk SMS services good. On the use of YouTube it was average and use of other new networking below average. From this it can be concluded that there was efficacy in use of new media communication tools which was mainly the fastest and efficient to communicate to the members, stakeholders and customers

5.2.3: ICT Infrastructure

From the study, it can be deduced that Co-operatives used computer based system for its various activities to enhance efficiency in conducting the activities. It was found that employees possessed a desktop/laptop computer at work stations which enabled a well-structured computer based system for communication and many other activities within the organization. The ICT infrastructure was used as a working tool for their daily routines. Otherwise, it concerns the researchers that 19% of the respondents interviewed do not have computers as a working tool. What operations they carry out that doesn't require computers points to a direction of future studies.

From the study it can also be deduced that Co-operatives had access to reliable internet connections at work. It was found that the major challenge was that computers software

updating was rarely done. Another conclusion is that the Co-operative societies had specialized mobile applications to enhance uptake of the services and they also stated that their Co-operatives recruited youth which was to a moderate extent.

It was also found that the new media as a communication tool fostered a competitive positioning for their Co-operative societies. This drew a conclusion that the Co-operatives frequently used new media communication tools in attracting customers. From the study, it was found that the current use of new media as a communication tool by the organization on customer management was effective and the majority also stated that they were not aware of platform Cooperativism.

5.2.4: Human Resource and Policies

From the study on the policies, it was found that co-operatives had communication policies, they had ICT policies, they had membership policy and that they had marketing policies. It can be concluded that these policies were used to govern the activities of the co-operatives to run smoothly without as per the co-operatives act and management set rules in the organizations

According to the study on fulltime dedicated staff, it was concluded that Co-operatives had ICT fulltime dedicated staff, they had marketing fulltime dedicated staff and they had corporate communications fulltime dedicated staff.

The use of ICT innovations helped to increase customer growth especially the youth. According to the study on recent innovations, it was found that they used social media platforms like Whatsapp groups, Facebook groups, Mobile banking, bulk SMS and online loan application. This drew a conclusion that the new media communication tools played a vital role in the major activities in the organizations.

According to the study on internet series used in the Co-operatives, it was found that they used mobile subscriptions, they used fiber optic connections, they used broadband internet connections and lastly that they used other internet series. We can conclude that the use of internet made it effective for the human resource mobilization as per the policies of the organizations

5.3 Recommendations

The following are the recommendations from the study on the objectives;

5.3.1: Communication Process

On improving the communication process, the organization should ensure a computer based network system to improve the communication between the management, staff, stakeholders and the government. This could be faster and efficient.

According to the study on use of organization's website, majority of the respondents stated it was good but a small number rated their website as poor and below average. This percentage bearing in mind the technologically constantly changing world should be taken as a matter of concern. Perhaps further studies need to be carried out in this respect to find out whatever gaps are in the area.

On social media sites, the organization management should conduct a campaign aimed at training and enlightening the public on the importance of using new social media sites for communication purposes as they are efficient, faster and cheap as compared to traditional methods of communication.

The study showed that, majority of the respondents stated that the use of direct emails was good. On the use of bulk SMS services, majority of the respondents stated it was very

good and on other communication channels they cited poor. The majority concluded that Social media communication channels are vibrant in most of the co-operative societies. This is used to communicate with internal and external clients of the co-operatives. Such sites can also be used to reach out to both members and non-members of the co-operative society.

It was found out that, majority of the respondent stated that their co-operative society had customer complaints/compliments handling mechanisms. Proper handing and resolution of customer complaints should be enhanced to facilitate efficient communication function to getting feedback from the clients.

The organizations should ensure operational new communication tools which should be updated with all the necessary information to enhance uptake of co-operative services. The existing media communication tools should be improved. This means the social networking sites should be populated with co-operative information that would enhance uptake of the services.

5.3.2 Efficacy

According to the study on website some respondents stated their organization had no websites while others stated that their websites were not updated and this cannot be taken for granted. The management of various organizations should ensure a regular website updating, factual website information, and website being rich in information and content, interactivity on website, educative website and a website easy to navigate for efficient uptake of services.

The staff should be trained on usage of websites and other communication tools like LinkedIn, Whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter and they should know the importance of

embracing these tools which are efficient in communication and thus efficient uptake of services.

5.3.3: ICT Infrastructure

The management should put in place an operational computerized that is easy to operate and which should be updated regularly to enhance uptake of services. All major services should be computerized and used as a working tool for their daily routines. It concerns the researchers that 19% of the respondents interviewed do not have computers as a working tool. What operations they carry out that doesn't require computers points to a direction of future studies. The computers should also be connected to a reliable internet.

The study found out that, there was a percentage of respondents who stated that they didn't have specialized mobile applications to enhance uptake of the services. This leaves a research gap that should be carried out on importance of the specialized mobile applications on enhancing uptake of the services. Also some respondents were not aware of platform Cooperativism. This also leaves a research gap that for s study

5.4.4: Human Resource and Policies

There should be a review on the various policies affecting the organizations to access their applicability and impact on the growth of the organizations. A model on training and motivating staffs should also be put in place as some respondents stated that employees were not dedicated on their roles. The management should also invest on the most appropriate internet connections for ease of acquiring information and resources.

5.5 Conclusions and Recommendations on Specific Objectives

5.5.1 Objective One

The first objective of this study was to assess the extent to which Co-operatives in Meru County have adopted and utilized Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth. From the study, the researchers found out that 83% of the co-operatives studied have social networking sites for communications. Only 17% of the co-operatives do not use social media for communications. Further, co-operatives use various channels of communications. The most commonly used include dedicated telephone line, social media and dedicated email. Some also have a complaints register and websites as a channel of communication. According to the study, communication channels used, 79% of the respondents stated that their organizations used dedicated official email while 21% cited not at all, 83% indicated they used social media while 17% stated not at all, 48% stated they used websites while 52% indicated not at all, 89% stated they used dedicated telephone line while 11% cited not at all, 51% stated they used complaints register while 49% stated not at all and lastly 23% cited that they used other forms of communication while 77% indicated not at all.

Recommendations on Objective One: From the findings, the following can be recommended:

Co-operative societies need to come up with intervention measures to address their presence on social media sites. Such interventions may include having social media policies to the effect. The messages sent out to the social media need to be intensified in terms of frequency and response to queries need to have zero lifespan.

Further the researchers recommend recruitment of human resource persons with ability to handle the social media; these are staff who would be fully dedicated to handling and manning social round the clock.

We also recommend training for senior managers and communications teams on the roles and impacts of social media towards harnessing more youths and reaching out to them with co-operative information

5.5.2 Objective Two

The second objective of this study was to explore opportunities for utilization of Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in Meru County and assess how these opportunities can be accelerated to spread Co-operative information. There are various opportunities that accrue on the use of social media as a source of co-operative information:

Effective use of social media can bring great opportunities for co-operatives in Meru county but will require some thought and planning on their side. Moving with fast-paced developments in online technology can help to the co-operatives enhance their brand, boost their profile and perhaps even win new business. However co-operatives need a healthy perspective on what your businesses are able to put into social media, and what's realistic to expect in return.

Faster connections, new devices and new online applications have all helped to change the way people work, socialize and shop.

The researchers recommend that:

Co-operatives directly target customers with their marketing campaigns on social media; messages should be clearly and intelligently be created to answer key questions; inform, educate and call to action

Co-operatives personally interact with existing and potential customers through social media networks; this will reduce the time and provide further understanding of a brand and functions of a co-operative society

We further recommend that co-operatives measure referrals from your social media activity to sales; this will enable co-operatives to effectively communicate and disseminate co-operative information especially to the youth

We further recommend sharing of information and ideas of how to handle negative feedback about co-operatives on social media. Officers designated to handle social media need to ensure that what they post and how you interact with people presents a professional image to the world. Writing down a set of rules on how they will manage social media can help them to steer through the challenges.

5.5.3 Objective Three

The third objective of this study was to ascertain barriers to usage and utilization of social media as a source of co-operative information: According to the study, majority of the respondents agreed that their Co-operatives used a computer based system. According to the study, respondents who were the majority stated that they possessed a desktop/laptop computer at work stations. This is used as a working tool for their daily routines. It concerns the researchers that 19% of the respondents interviewed do not have computers as a working tool. What operations they carry out that doesn't require a computer points to a direction of future studies.

According to the study majority of the respondents agreed that they have access to reliable internet connections at work. Majority of the respondents also stated that their computers software updating was rarely done. According to the study, majority of the respondents agreed that their Co-operative societies had specialized mobile applications

to enhance uptake of the services and they also stated that their Co-operatives recruited youth to a moderate extent.

According to the study, the majority stated that the new media as a communication tool fostered a competitive positioning for their Co-operative societies. According to the study, majority of the respondents cited that their Co-operatives frequently used new media communication tools in attracting customers.

According to the study, majority of the respondents indicated that the current use of new media as a communication tool by the organization on customer management was effective and the majority also stated that they were not aware of platform Cooperativism.

The researchers recommend that:

Co-operatives invest in ICT infrastructure especially in provision of computers and other associated hardware. This will enable their staff to have their operations integrated and open opportunities for online information provision and communication especially on emails.

We further recommend that co-operatives invest in reliable internet connectivity at their work stations. This will enable seamless communication online amongst the staff and also their customers.

We further recommend that co-operatives provide staff dedicated to handling social media and further strengthen their corporate communications functions while making the marketing functions more effective.

Finally, the researchers recommend further studies on utilization of social media and key messaging aspects online for co-operatives.

5.6 Summary of the Study

Economies all across Africa are faced with low-paid, informal work, and youth unemployment. From this study, we deduce that if the co-operative model can be rebooted on the Internet especially using social media as a communication tool, it can help to address some of these issues especially among the youth.

To address this gap, social media as a communication tool offers one of the best solutions in line with the sector's principles. From the study, there is need to bring together co-operative representatives and members, policymakers and government officials, designers, IT professionals, media & communication scholars, non-governmental organizations, and unions. These experts should explore how digital platforms, rooted in the principles of broad-based ownership and democratic governance, could come to fruition across the African continent.

Focusing on the following questions would be fundamental:

Potential and Feasibility: What is the potential of social media as a communication tool for Cooperativism in Africa in addressing the sharing of co-operative information?

Global and local contexts: How can seeds of online platforms such as social media spread across Africa? What are the local needs when it comes to worker voice, democratic governance, and fair pay?

Case studies and Success stories: In Africa, how can social platforms succeed in sectors such as agriculture, health, transportation, banking and education to curb youth unemployment and sustainable succession planning in co-operatives?

Co-operatives: In Africa, how could co-operatives of various forms meaningfully join the digital economy and empower workers, women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and others?

Openness and Transparency: Why fighting for co-operative data ownership and a diversified digital economy is at the heart of this work?

Policy and Sustainability: How to improve the regulatory environment to secure the long-term success of co-operative business models of Africa?

The platform Cooperativism is about the convergence of the 21st century technologies and the rich, global heritage of Cooperativism. These are online mediums that support production and sociality, digital labor brokerages, web-based marketplaces that are collectively owned and democratically governed, and all those initiatives that directly support the co-operative economic model. It is further set to radically prepare the social organization of emerging technologies among co-operatives aiming to re-design with community wealth in mind.

This holistic model is set to deliver better outcomes than the corporate “sharing economy,” which is likely to fail the ecology, workers, and consumers over the long haul. If the Kenya’s co-operative movement is set to benefit from the platform Cooperativism, the emerging experiments in the co-operative platform economy ought to be taken seriously, nurtured, and grown by communities and policymakers alike especially Kenya being the hub of co-operative ventures in Africa.

This study strongly tasks Co-operative and communication scholars to link radical democracy and the internet as a tool for corporate extraction, and how to reverse the process while harnessing the dividends of social media as a communication tool among co-operatives. Greater emphasis in combining the rich heritage of co-operatives in Kenya

with the promise of 21st century technologies, the platform Cooperativism is a call for a new kind of online economy, one free from the economics of monopoly, exploitation, and surveillance.

With the technological sophistication necessary to build online enterprises, many co-operatives in Kenya may not manage to achieve 100% internet connectivity and usage in all their operations. With these unmet needs for internet usage, it is evidently becoming harder and harder, around the world, to secure a livelihood without taking part in the online economy. This has, forced the re-emergence, in the past few years, recognizable platform co-operatives by definition.

Kenya, doing poorly in having worker co-operatives, the embracing of platform co-operatives will usher in Worker co-operatives that will offer a viable solution to the long-term challenge of reducing the number of chronically unemployed and underemployed youths especially from Universities, middle level colleges and the number of workers trapped in low-paying jobs.

One of the missing links between the developed and developing world is access to communication technologies. ICT networks are a catalyst for the achievement of all three pillars of sustainability; social, economic and environmental and ICT infrastructure is taking on a utilitarian function on par with water, energy and transportation. 26% of all GDP growth in developing countries can be attributed to the internet. Mobile telephony is almost 100% so the divide now has shifted to access to the internet and access to mobile broadband because that's where the future is going to be.

Co-operatives in Kenya have big gaps in ICT uptake, yet technology helps in enhancing linkages, social capital and coordination of activities for common interests. But herein lies

a big opportunity to harness the benefits of ICTs. In Africa, there is little data available in relation to the number of co-operatives embracing ICTs, the inherent opportunities and the challenges that go with this. Many co-operatives have no websites or social media pages, and have poor management of data for networking, marketing and for record purposes.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

a. Chairperson, Shirika SACCO Society Limited and Chairperson Research

Committee, ICA-Africa

1. Generally how would you describe youth involvement in matters co-operatives across Africa, East Africa and Kenya?
2. What is the situation on adoption of ICTs among the co-operative societies across board?
3. What role has the social media platform played in dissemination of co-operative information?
4. Do we have any glaring challenges that require to be addressed?
5. How is the future of co-operatives in terms of leveraging on social media to exploit its potential?
6. Has the leadership of co-operatives failed to provide direction in terms of policies in addressing the ICT gaps?
7. Do we have any research done across the continent to ascertain existence of these gaps?

b. Chief Officer, Co-operatives- Meru County

1. Meru being the cradle of co-operatives, what communications tools do they use?
2. Is the county government addressing any serious issues leading to growth of co-operatives?
3. From your interactions with co-operatives, what are the inherent issues in terms of adoption ICTs?

4. Youth involvement in co-operatives remains a challenge across the country. Is this the case in Meru County?
5. How is the ICT challenge being addressed by the county government in terms of policy framework?

c. Director, Platform Cooperativism Consortium

1. What are the major challenges facing youth involvement in co-operative ventures?
2. Broadly, what is the general focus of co-operatives in terms of adoption of social media as a communication tool to disseminate co-operative information?
3. What would be the advantage of having youth involved in co-operative ventures
4. What areas can the youth explore to reap maximum benefits from co-operative ventures
5. Any comment on platform Cooperativism?

APPENDIX 2: PROTOCOLS FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. Are you comfortable by the extent to which co-operatives in Meru County have adopted and utilized Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth?
2. Are there any opportunities for utilization of Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in Meru County and assess how these opportunities can be accelerated to spread the co-operative movement's information
3. What challenges hinder usage and utilization of Social Media as a source of co-operative information among the youth in Meru County?

APPENDIX 3: CLEARANCE FROM THE UNIVERSITY



MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MMUST)

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P.O Box 190
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Kenya

Directorate of Postgraduate Studies

Ref: MMU/COR: 509099

Date: 23rd October, 2018

Mwongela Francis Mikwa
BJM/LH/01-56334/2016
P.O. Box 190-50100
KAKAMEGA

Dear Mr. Mikwa,

RE: APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL

I am pleased to inform you that the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies Board considered and approved your Ph.D. proposal entitled: *“Utilization of Social Media as a Source of Co-operative Information among the Youth in Meru, Kenya”* and appointed the following as supervisors:

1. Dr. Peres Wenje
2. Dr Lydia Anyonje

You are required to submit through your supervisor(s) progress reports every three months to the Director of Postgraduate Studies. Such reports should be copied to the following: Chairman, School of Arts and Social Sciences Graduate Studies Committee and Chairman, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication and Graduate Studies Committee. Kindly adhere to research ethics consideration in conducting research.

It is the policy and regulations of the University that you observe a deadline of three years from the date of registration to complete your Ph. D. thesis. Do not hesitate to consult this office in case of any problem encountered in the course of your work.

We wish you the best in your research and hope the study will make original contribution to knowledge.

Yours Sincerely,




Dr. Benedict Alala
FOR, DIRECTOR, POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

APPENDIX 5: SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

Mwongela Francis Mikwa is a student at Masinde Muliro University of Science & Technology (MMUST) and is carrying this study in fulfillment for the award of a Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Communication Studies in the School of Arts and Social Sciences. His study is entitled '*Utilization of Social Media as a Source of Co-operative Information among the youth in Meru County, Kenya*'. The data he is collecting shall be used for academic purposes only and it will be treated with the confidentiality it deserves. Your participation in facilitating this study will be highly appreciated.

Please provide the required information to enable the student meet his study objectives

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Organization's general information

Organization Name			
Date of Registration	Day:	Month:	Year:
No of Branches			
Addresses			

Office Teleph one		
Email		
Websit e		
Sub County:		Ward:

2. Details of the respondent

a) Name.....

.....(Optional)

b) Designation...

.....

c) Age

Below 25 years () 25-30 years () 31-35 years () 36-40 years ()

41-45 years () 46-50 years ()

Over 51 ()

d). Gender

Male () Female ()

e). Education level

High school () Diploma/ certificate () Undergraduate ()

Graduate () PhD and above ()

f). For how long has the Co-operative Society been in operation?

1 – 10 years

11 – 20 years

21 – 30 years

Above 30 years

g). Your Department

Marketing

Sales

Human Resource

Information Technology

Corporate Communications

Others Specify.....

h). Indicate the level of the Organization (Tick Appropriately)

S/NO	Type	Tick
1.	Primary	
2.	Secondary / Union	
3.	National	
4.	Apex	

i). Membership Details

S/NO	Category	No. of Members
1.	Men (above 35 years)	
2.	Women (above 35 years)	
3.	Youth (below 35 years)	

j). What services does your co-operative provide? (Tick Appropriately)

S/NO	Service	Tick
1.	Back office services	
2.	Deposit taking	
3.	Loans to members	
4.	General banking	
5.	Asset financing	
6.	Others	

SECTION B: COMMUNICATION PROCESS

4. (a). How would you rate your Co-operative's effectiveness in communication with the following publics using the scale of 1-6 (1= poor, 2 = below average 3= average 4=good, 5= very good, 6= excellent)?

S/NO	Public	1	2	3	4	5	6
Internal Publics							
I	All Staff						
ii	Heads of departments and sections						
iii	Top management						

	ent						
Iv	Board of managem ent / directors						
External Publics							
Iv	Shareholders						
V	Regulatory bodies						
Vi	The Government						
Vi i	Potential shareholders						
Vi ii	Customers						

(b). How would you rate your co-operative's use of the following communication channels/ tools to get new clients especially the youth? Using the scale of 1-6 (1= poor, 2 = below average 3= average 4 good, 5= very good 6= excellent)? Tick in the space provided

	Communication tool	1	2	3	5	6
	Organisation's Website					

	Social media sites						
	Direct telephone calls						
	Direct emails						
	Bulk SMS services						
	Others						

(c). Does your co-operative society have customer complaints/compliments handling mechanism?

Yes No I don't know

(d). If your answer to the above question is yes, what channel of communication is used?

S/NO	Channel	Tick where appropriate
1.	Dedicated Official Email	
2.	Social media	
3.	Website	
4.	Dedicated telephone line	
5.	Complaints register / suggestion box	

6.	Others	
----	--------	--

(e). Does your co-operative society have website?

Yes No I don't know

(f). Does your co-operative use Social Networking Sites to enhance uptake of its services?

Yes No I don't know

(g). If yes, which Social Networking Sites?

S/NO	SNS	TICK
1.	Facebook	
2.	Twitter	
3.	Whatsapp	
4.	LinkedIn	
5.	Instagram	
6.	Others	

(h). How would you rate your Co-operative's use of Social Networking sites to attract new clients especially the youth as compared to others in the county in the same industry?

Poor Good Average Good V. Good

Excellence

SECTION C: EFFICACY

5. (a). How would you rate your co-operative’s website in the following aspects? In the scale of 1-6 (1= poor, 2 = below average 3= average 4 good, 5= very good 6= excellent)? Tick in the space provided

s/no	Learning Aspect	1	2	3	4	5
I	General look of the website					
ii	Regularly updated					
iii	Factual information					
iv	Rich in information and content					
V	Interactivity					
vi	Educative					
vii	Easy to navigate					

6. Rate your co-operative’s use of the following New Media Communication Tools; in the scale of 1-6 (1= poor, 2 = below average 3= average 4 good, 5= very good 6= excellent)? Tick in the space provided

S/NO	SNS	Rate
i.	Website	
ii.	Official emails	
iii.	Facebook	

iv.	Twitter	
v.	Whatsapp	
vi.	LinkedIn	
vii.	Instagram	
viii.	Bulk SMS services	
ix.	YouTube	
x.	Others	

SECTION D: ICT INFRASTRUCTURE

7. (a) Does your co-operative society use a Computer-based operating system (software)?

Yes	
No	
If YES, Speci fy the type	

(b). Do you have a desktop or laptop computer at your work station?

Yes [] No []

(c). Do you have access to reliable internet connection at your work station?

Yes [] No []

(d). How often is your computer software updated?

Daily [] weekly [] monthly [] rarely []

(e). Does your co-operative society have a specialized mobile application to enhance uptake of its services?

Yes [] No [] I don't know []

(f). how best would you describe your co-operative society in recruiting youth to take its services?

High [] Moderate [] Low []

(g). If the answer above is high or moderate, do you think that using new media as a communication tool would foster a competitive positioning for your co-operative society?

Yes [] No [] Not sure []

(h) If your answer is yes, how often does your co-operative society use new media as a communication tool in attracting new customers? (Tick all the appropriately)

Frequent [] Not frequent [] None of the above []

(i) In your opinion, how can you describe the current use of new media as a communication tool by your organization on customer management?

Effective [] Not effective [] Exploitative [] None of the above []

(j) Are you aware of *platform Cooperativism*?

Yes [] No [] Not sure []

SECTION E: HUMAN RESOURCES AND POLICIES

8. (a). Does your co-operative society have the following policies? Tick appropriately

S/NO	Policy	Tick
1.	Communications policy	
2.	ICT Policy	
3.	Membership policy	
4.	Marketing policy	

(b). Does your co-operative society have fulltime staff dedicated to the following areas?

S/NO	Area of specialization	Yes/ No
1.	ICT	
2.	Marketing	
3.	Corporate communications	

(c). which other areas do you think your organization has an added advantage on use of technology?

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

(d). Does the use of ICT innovations help to increase your customer growth especially the youth?

Yes [] No [] I don't know []

(e) If Yes, Give the most recent innovation(s) adopted by your Co-operative society.

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

10. For the last 2 years, which internet series does your co-operative society use (✓) the Company you are working for in the space provided.

S/NO	Category/ year	Tick
	Mobile Subscriptions	
	Fibre optic Connections	
	Broadband internet subscriptions	
	Others	

THANK FOR YOUR COOPERATION