

**UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS'
ELECTIONS IN KENYA**

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements of the Award of
Degree of Master of Science in Communication of Masinde Muliro University of
Science and Technology**

November, 2020

DECLARATION

This study is my original work and has not been presented elsewhere for any other award. All sources herein quoted or cited have been acknowledged and indicated using complete references.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my study to my inspiring Father Henry Chamegere, loving Mother Grace Chamegere, encouraging daughter Laureen Kavetsa and brother Ben Kisia. Their support and prayers kept me going to achieve my goals. May God bless them.

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ABSTRACT

Several studies have been carried out on the role of social media in political democratization where most of them based on national elections in different countries. However, little attention has been given to university students who are increasingly utilizing social media as a way of engaging politically with aspirants, thereby influencing their voting patterns. Therefore, the focus of this study was to assess the utilization of social media in university students elections in Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to: determine the preferred social media tool by university students in Kenya; establish time spent by university students on social media during their communication and examine if social media influences political decisions made by university students during elections in Kenya. Literature review was done to identify the knowledge gaps and was supported by a conceptual framework based on the variables in the study. The study was underpinned by two theories, namely; Uses and Gratification Theory (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974) and Framing Theory (Goffman, 1974). The Uses and Gratification Theory postulates that the audience usually choose a medium that gratifies their needs while Framing Theory articulates that some aspects of reality are selected by the media and made salient to the public through the choice and design of content posted on social media. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design which involves gathering data that describes events then. Stratified sampling method was used from a population of 17,000 undergraduate students as it guarantees better coverage of the population. Simple random sampling was then used to pick respondents from each stratum. Data collection was carried out by use of the questionnaire from a sample of 378 students of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. Analysis was done using descriptive statistics that entailed organizing, tabulating, depicting, and describing the data collected by use of visual aids such as graphs, charts, frequencies and percentages. The findings revealed that social media is vastly used by university students in political communication and determines how the campaigns are carried out. The findings further showed that there is regular use of social media to express political preferences by political actors and this influences the political decisions made by university students. WhatsApp is the most preferred tool among university students as it allows for easy access, formation of political groupings and information circulation. The study indicates that most students spend time on social media thus the efficacy of its use determines the influence. However, verification of information sent on social media is a barrier in its use in the era of propaganda, disinformation and misinformation. It could be extrapolated that some students endanger their lives and studies by over use of social media, especially the female gender. The study recommends inclusion of social media in university learning system, ensuring university students are versed with the computer misuse and cybercrimes act, 2018, formulation of policies to govern social media use and comprehensive social media strategy in universities.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAK	Communication Authority of Kenya
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IEBC	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
KOT	Kenyans on Twitter
MMUST	Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology
SNS	Social Networking Site
SPSS	Statistical Packages for Social Scientists
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
BAKE	Bloggers Association of Kenya

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Internet –An electronic network of communication that connects computer networks and organizational computer facilities around the World. ambient media phenomena, one that has a family resemblance to earlier visions of ‘ubiquitous computing.

Internet service - A term that encompasses e-mail, WWW, Usenet, newsgroups, file transfer protocol (FTP), IM, internet relay chat and list servers, and mailing lists.

New Media- Refers to forms of communication that are native to computers, computational and relying on computers for distribution. New media is a term also used to refer to content made available using different forms of electronic communication made using computer technology

Platform- Means a basic technology or site linked to hardware and software of computers, determining their operation and shaping other softwares involved or are in use.

Communication-The act of conveying given information with intended meanings from one individual or group to another through the use of commonly understood signs and semiotic rules.

Social Media- The term refers to various types and tools of electronic communication in which users develop social groupings, online unified communities and classes to share information, pictures, thoughts, personal messages, memes and other information including videos and photos.

Facebook- The term has been in use and this study refers to a popular free and open social networking site that allows members registered to generate profile details, upload photos and video, exchange information and link with friends, family, schoolmates and colleagues.

Political Interest- A people’s willingness to participate and pay attention to political issues at the expense of other topics in the public. In this study, it refers to the attention

people pay to information or communication, news items touching on politics and people's expression of their level of political interest.

Social Networking – This involves online connection where new technologies of communication and sharing information between two or more individual on social media sites.

Social Networks- Link between two points or social structures made of individuals, organizations or institutions called “nodes” joined by different types of connections, relationships. In this study, it's the online connections between users of the different social media.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the study; the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, objectives of the study, the research questions, study assumptions, scope of the study, significance of the study, theories supporting the study and conceptual framework.

1.1 Background of the Study

The Kenyan media landscape is vibrant and widening. This is evident in the number of media houses emerging, from print, electronic and online media. The number of radio stations in operation stands at 173, 68 free to air television stations, four daily national newspapers in English and one in Kiswahili plus a number of regional and weekly publications (Communications Authority of Kenya, 2019). By the end of September 2018, the total number of active internet and data subscriptions stood at 42.2 million up from 41.1 million subscriptions reported end of June 2018 marking a growth of 2.7 percent (Communications Authority of Kenya, 2019). This is a clear indicator of growth in Kenyan media moreso, social media use, based on the internet subscriptions.

Radio stands out as the critical media and most accessible source of information, though at the decline rate, with others like television, the internet and social media rising rapidly, especially for those in the urban areas (EU report on Kenya 2018). Before the transformation to digital migration in 2015 by the Kenyan government, the highest proportion of audience has been radio, but lately it has fallen from 92% in 2017 to 66% in 2019, as per the media landscape report (2019). Radio still stands out as the most consumed media. The decline in radio listenership can be attributed to the increased

number of social media sites that incorporate media convergence. Social media has become the tool that people from diverse backgrounds converge online to interact with their friends and strangers alike in the virtual World (Dutta&Bhat, 2016). As the masses wait for the radio to “tell” the story, social media breaks the news.

Social media has broadened its scale to include different activities of life, including politics. It is on this basis that this study borrows the definition of social media as being websites which allow profile creation and visibility of relationships between users (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Social media is growing at a incredible pace. More people, especially the young generation, use social media platforms to express their thoughts on almost all aspects. Acceptance of social media has been increasing in the past years and the number of worldwide users is expected to reach 2.9 billion by 2020 (Statista, 2017). This has necessitated social media use in all fields.

Application of social media in political communication has been embraced and makes it easier and flexible for politicians. Politicians are using social media sites to connect with their followers and the public in order to propagate their views, share information and engage in political discussions, among other topics (Dutta & Bhat, 2016). Though social media is in use in universities, its utilization in political campaigns and measures of its success have not been intensively studied, leading to the current study. Social media use among university students is evident in the way they react to both local and national issues affecting them.

To gain ground and maintain their political power, those in the political space use the media to persuade their constituents to vote and support them during elections. Social media has presented a better channel for both politicians and their constituents. The same

can be said of university students who have found social media sites accessible, affordable and effective tool for political communication. The 44th President of United States, the Democratic candidate Barack Obama's journey to the White House was supported by Web 2.0 technologies, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as well as modern social networking systems which played a key role (Cogburn and Vasquez, 2011; Fraser and Dutta, 2009; Mbetera, 2017).

The use of social media in the American elections unwrapped the political abilities of social media Worldwide. In 2012, during his second bid for Presidency, Barack Obama effectively engaged Facebook sites and other social media tools to run a successful campaign targeting the young people. He had a total of 34.5 million followers and his photo on Facebook was the most liked (www.cnn.com).

Obama won the Presidential Elections with the use of social media sites in spreading his message among voters (Bimber, 2014). His success in the 2008 and 2012 presidential primaries and elections are attributed to his understanding and utilization of cyberspace (Pew Research, 2008 & 2012). In 2008, Obama had close to 1 million followers compared to his opponent Republican candidate McCain's 100,000 followers. Obama effectively used the internet through his www.mybarackobama.com website to mobilize funds for his campaigns from donors. Obama for America (OFA), effectively used Facebook and other community blogs to solicit for money, push voter turnout and sustain a grassroots level approach to election campaigns (Zhang et al., 2010).

Obama won the American presidency based on the massive social media campaigns and popularity. If social media was used effectively in American elections, can the same be applicable in Kenyan elections and based on youths? This study analyses the utilization of social media in university student's elections in Kenya and is to amplify the use of

social media during campaigns and if the decisions made are influenced by social media use.

The media is always used as a tool to drive and circulate different manifestos of various aspirants and parties to the public and make them subscribe to a given thought. "What does not exist in media does not exist in the public mind" (Manuel, 2009). This assumption has pushed most aspirants into massive media campaigns. In India, during the 2014 general elections, massive campaigns were carried out via social media, which was used to increase awareness and generate public views (Wolf, 2015). Most aspirants in Indian elections thronged social media in search for support and publication of their manifestos. Online interactive platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn have been used as campaign tools as they enable users to create profiles, develop content, share information and socialize. This is quite evident among university students who are ardent users of such online platforms.

Scholars such as (Knight and Cook, 2012; Mbetera, 2017) argue that social media has allowed people to access information, express their political views and discuss issues with other people in their network. The creation of a network makes social media a flexible tool of use by university students. Besides political arenas, other expanses too have turned to social media to improve their operations.

Corporate recruiters are now hiring their prospective employees by engaging and referring to their social media blogs and profiles, while at the same time, monitoring their digital track rather than their resume alone (Schawbel, 2012).

Tunisia, Egypt and Libya are countries in Africa that have had a history to remember with social media use. The 2011 Arab spring that hit these countries exhibited that social media was a tool for democracy as it gave voices to the public (Anderson, 2011).

Through the revolts, the then Tunisian President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali was ousted, Hosni Mubarak the longest serving President of Egypt became unpopular in early 2011 as a result of a number of factors, including the continuation of the state of emergency, extended police powers, suspension of some constitutional rights and the legalization of censorship.

Mubarak, who was 82 in 2011, planned to have his son Gamal succeed him as president and leader of the National Democratic Party but protests in the streets of Cairo, Alexandria, and other cities organized through social media forced him to announce that he would not seek re-election leading to his downfall. Libya's Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's term crumbled in 2011 (Castells, 2012). Gaddafi, who was famously labelled the "mad dog of the Middle East" by former US President Ronald Reagan, was the uncontested ruler of oil-rich Libya for a full 42 years. But his iron-clad grip on the country began loosening in February 2011, when a popular revolt gained control over most of the Eastern and Western parts of Libya. The revolts gained momentum by use of social media.

The civil disobedience and actions of protests have been experienced around the globe with Brazil and Turkey as examples (Konnektiv et al., 2014). The 2011 London demonstrations by youths due to high levels of unemployment and the 2014 Burkina Faso rebellion owing to the change of the constitution by President Blaise Compaore were actualized by the use of social media (Nolle, 2016). Social media has exhibited powers of a silent tool that magnifies information and youths are aware that its effectiveness can be consequential.

In Kenya, during 2013 general elections, a contest between Jubilee's Uhuru Kenyatta and Orange Democratic Movement's Raila Odinga among others, social media tools

were in use, and massive campaigns were staged on social media. Most presidential candidates and political parties had presence on social media, especially Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

Martha Karua the Presidential candidate of NARC-Kenya party set aside every Thursday of the week to engage with her followers on social media through what was popularly known as "AskMartha." She used the platform to solicit for votes and convince electorates into supporting her manifesto. With the enormous social media campaigns, constituents flocked social media to get information on campaign activities, know about vying candidates and political parties (Smith, 2011). This amplified the use of social media in Kenyan politics. Social media helps people to get political news in real-time as they happen and react to them. In the 2013 Kenyan general elections, Martha Karua and Peter Kenneth ranked highly on social media use mostly on Twitter and Facebook with the winner Uhuru Kenyatta running the most liked Facebook page, a sign that he massively invested on Facebook use and attracted traffic.

The 2019 Kenya media landscape report indicates that the active mobile subscriptions stood at 49.5 million with a penetration level of 106.2%. The higher than 100% level in mobile subscriptions were attributed to the number of SIM cards in use and increase in the number of youths who registered to acquire SIM cards. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) report 2018 indicates that 30% of Kenyans own more than one SIM card. This can be linked to the need and search for cheap available options by the users, the vigorous marketing campaigns by SIM card providers and the growing number of youths that are vibrant in communication and power of connection.

The Internet subscription in Kenya has also grown from 16.4% in 2014 to 45.7% in 2018 (Reelforge& TIFA, 2019). This indicates that growth in mobile telephony technology is

impacting internet subscriptions and thus, the growth of social media sites which can be accessed via mobile phones. Social media use in Kenyan politics is a result of its successful use in Europe and American elections and as the case of USA and Nigeria (Kalyango & Adu-Kumi, 2013), Most studies though have been based on one form of social media, mainly Facebook and Twitter. Uhuru Kenyatta, a presidential candidate in the 2013 elections, hired experts from UK public relations firms and a team of online experts to manage and control his social media sites an indicator of how influential social media was in the run up to the elections.

The use of social media to gauge the popularity of a given candidate in terms of surveys has its significance in politics. In the 2017 Kenyan elections, different parties hired media experts to their campaign teams and a team of bloggers to run their media teams as well as to manage their social media presence. This was to ensure that there was more traffic towards a given candidates site while others used the sites to discredit their opponents. Twitter in Kenya is particularly active and has been the basis of setting the agenda in any field, be it political, social or just criticism with the Hashtag Kenyans on Twitter (#KOT), being critical in bashing, banishing and raising controversies. With the growth of other social media tools, a platform such as Twitter can be used for the good of the society or conversely be used to cause differences. Different social media sites are shaping up and eclipsing twitter though it stands out as the place for public fury. Social media currently plays an increasing role in the dissemination of information and publicity.

The use of social media among university students appears to be on the rise and this is may n attributed to the availability of internet connections within higher learning

institutions. According to Miller and Melton (2015), university students use social networks, Facebook and Twitter more than once every day. Such pervasive use of social media has brought to attention the importance of the use of these networks in educational platforms. Social networks provide contributions to education in such away that it improves communication, providing an opportunity to meet such settings, and eliminating communication barriers related to the contributions of activities carried out on the social networking sites (Özmen and Atici, 2014).

In South Africa, political parties such as the leading African National Congress (ANC) and the opposition party Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) have faced accusations of working through student's protests with the intent of undermining national leaders. This is with regard to the nationwide "*#FeesMustFall*" student movement which emerged in 2015, to win access to limited resources within higher education and the broader society in South Africa. In Kenya, most famous political leaders have roots in university politics; this is the building block for them to advance to the next level, which is national politics (University World News August Issue, 2019).

With the rising popularity, activeness and commitment of most youths in the use of social media. University students have contributed to the growth of the Nation, both positively or negatively and their role in defining the countries steps cannot be discarded. Essoungou (2010) postulates that "the new communication technology is one of the few ways that young Africans can use to bypass the inefficiencies in the system that allows the status quo to hold on. It lowers the barriers of entry for everyone to get involved and be heard." Revolts, demonstrations and show of solidarity have changed from the physical planned to the social media. Youths understand that it's via social media tools

that their grievances can be magnified to break the ceiling limiting them. With most youths having gained the zeal to participate in elections, a study on its use among University students is of the essence. The study was motivated by the 2017 Kenyan Elections in which a record five million youths were able to participate in the general elections for the first time and showed the desire to participate in shaping the political future of the country (European Union Election Observation mission final report on Kenyan 2017 General Elections 2018).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Social media has emerged as a powerful medium of communication across the globe and its extensive use has changed the way people communicate and interact online. Social media channels which include the social networking sites, blogs, vlogs, instant messaging and virtual communities have brought in new avenues of achieving the democratization process that resonates with the current digital trends. Although social media is attractive to young people at the university, little research has been done to establish the extend of social media use by university students during elections.

In Kenyan universities, social media use is rampant and university students, most of who are in the age bracket of between 18 and 24 years use it to create, share and ingest information. It has helped university students and the public to converse, breaking down the physical barriers which restricted immediate communication thus permitting successful social media-facilitated collaboration. However, social media consumers are faced with challenges associated with the negative side of social media during its use. Some notable destructive use of social media are ethical and privacy violation issues, information misapplication and abuse, uncredible social media content, hate speech issues, misinformation and disinformation based on its fluid nature.

During university students elections cases of disfigured images of opponents, tribal alignments and association to university management to have political favours have been used to discredit opponents online. In the past, posters, banners, flyers and public rallies were the norm during campaigns but currently, the political war is fought online. Social media use in politics is evident. The 2017 Kenya National Elections as a case, voter turnout was enormous, comprising close to five million young people at the age of 18 years and above who were able to vote for the first time, this was seen as an indicator of participatory nature of youths in electioneering process and was associated with social media use. Despite the increase in popularity of social media, there is limited data and studies on consumption patterns of social media by different groups. In the absence of robust research on the use of social media in university students' elections, this study serves as the basis from which to analyze the utilization of social media in university students' elections in Kenya and if it's use has an impact on political decisions made.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to determine utilization of social media in university students' elections in Kenya.

It was backed up by specific objectives which were to:

- i. Determine the preferred social media tool by university students in Kenya.
- ii. Establish the time spent on social media by university students in Kenya.
- iii. Examine the extent to which social media influences political decisions made by university students during their elections in Kenya.

1.4 Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following questions:

- i. Which is the preferred social media tool for use in communication at the university?
- ii. What amount of time do you spent on social media sites in your communication at the university?
- iii. To what extent does information on social media sites influence your political decisions during elections in the university?

1.5 Justification of the Study

The study sought determine utilization of social media in university students' elections in Kenya. Several studies have been done on social media use and have yielded varied findings. Boateng and Amankwaa (2016) defined social media as the application that allows users to converse and interact with each other. This gives social media strength as an online space that is used by people to share, communicate, establish and maintain connection with others for various purposes. Among university students, social media has emerged as a key conduit in communication both positive and negative. Koross and Kosgei (2016) in their study titled: Role of Social Media on Student Unrest in Selected Kenyan Public Universities found out that social media is an inherently dialectical force that university students use to organize, mobilize, spread and plan unrests in Kenyan universities. This signifies the use of social media among university students.

The motivation behind this study was to provide insights on how journalists can cover political communication that makes use of social media. This will enable them have the knowledge on the preferred social media tools and their influence. Understanding the use of social media will aide them to be objective and accurate. This is significant because the Kenyan media is changing drastically with media convergence as the core trend in the current media setting. Social media is taking centre stage. Social media is viewed as a tool that fuels fierce discussions on issues that affect society mostly amongst youths,

politics included. Understanding its power is crucial. Such knowledge can then be used to inform media policies on the use of social media. It is hoped that the findings of the study will be relevant and useful to all those who would want to understand or formulate policies about the instruments of mass communication, especially social media tools.

Evidently, mass media instruments have not only made the world a global village but they are constantly changing how humans relate to each other. Social media which is a new entry has made communication to the masses easier. This is because it allows politicians to bypass the news media which has several gates and delivers campaign messages directly to the constituents. Since social media has diversified communication, the current study strives to give a different perspective of how its utilization among university students is impacting on their decisions during electioneering period. Moreover, social media as a contributor to the democratic process, aids in increase of understanding of how media acts in between sender and receiver and the reaction therein. This will contribute to the accumulation of knowledge and expanding know-how in general.

This study posits that how people, mostly university students, choose the tools for communication and the time they spent on the social media tools promotes relationships and the decisions they make. This is key in the social setup. Social media has become one of the prominent communication tools, particularly in universities. Talaue, Alsaad, AlRushaidan & AlHagail (2018) postulate that social media platforms help with access to information and educational-related materials. The content accessed via social media is either important or not based on the push of use. A number of intervening variables fall in between social media and university students elections. These variables contribute majorly to the utilization of the social media tools.

This study therefore demonstrates how university students utilize social media tools during elections. The findings of the study will thus contribute in development of social media use policies by the University. Other universities can borrow from the results of this study to formulate policies to improve University education performance via use of social media. The study forms an important milestone in research as the knowledge could be a necessary pillar in the use of social media for democracy. It is hoped that data from this study will inform policies on how to manage use of social media tools and hope that other researchers in the same area will find the results of this study useful.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study focused on utilization of social media in university students' elections in Kenya, a case of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology based on the premise that social media is used by university students but no concrete study has been done to determine its utilization in university students' elections and the influences therein.

The study was done at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, a public University in Kakamega county, Western part of Kenya. The University is within Kakamega town which is the headquarter of Kakamega County. The County is cosmopolitan with a population of more than 1,867,579 based on the Kenyan Census 2019 report (KNBS, 2019) and sits on an area of 3,033.8Km square. On the other hand, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology has a population of 17,000 students and offers courses from Doctorate degree level, Masters degree, Undergraduate degree, Diploma and Certificate. The choice of the university as a study area is due to proximity, being a public university, it also admits students from across the nation and based on the surrounding population. In the university, social media is emerging as a convenient tool for students in communication and as a journalistic tool.

1.7 Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

1.7.1 Assumptions of the Study

The following factors were assumed in the course of the research

- i. That there is high usage of social media tools by university students during electioneering period and respondents are aware of its use.
- ii. Respondents will be willing to reply to questions and the answers given will reflect the true picture.
- iii. That respondents will be aware of social media tools used by University students during electioneering period and if they influence the decisions made.

1.7.2 Limitations of the Study

Research is a vigorous activity with many formalities to be observed. With a set duration the research had to move from proposal writing, collection of data, and analysis of the data, writing the final report and submitting through the university supervisors. Time was a great limitation. To address this, the researcher dedicated more time and a team to assist in data collection.

The research went through several steps, typesetting, printing, photocopying, and associated travelling which required more financial commitment. Therefore, the researcher had insufficient funds. The study resolved the hindrance to the research by use of personal funds and savings to ensure the research sailed through comprehensively.

The study faced the challenge of having equal proportion between male and female respondents as the method used for sampling was random where all students had the equal chance of being selected. To solve this issue, a fixed proportion was taken from every group and class to ensure equal chances in relation to gender.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The study on utilization of social media in university students' elections in Kenya engaged two theories to define the use of social media. Ravitch and Carl (2016) state that theoretical framework assists researchers in situating and contextualizing formal theories into their studies as a guide in order to position the studies in a scholarly and academic fashion. Without theoretical or conceptual frameworks, studies will have no proper direction, "and this explains why in every research, one is expected to present one's 'theoretical' framework" (Bello and Ufua, 2018).

This study employed Uses and gratifications theory which in the study indicates that media customers or audience are active mediating factors in functional analysis of media effects and Framing theory which in the study defines the way media and media gatekeepers organize and present the events and issues they cover, and the way audiences interpret what they are provided with. Framing theory in the study simply stresses more on how messages are framed during communication, in this case among university students using social media. Uses and gratifications theory focuses on how university students actively take part in the communication procedure using social media tools. The use of the two theories together in this study is based on the way they complement each other.

1.8.1 Uses and Gratification Theory

Uses and gratification theory was coined by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch in 1974. The theory asserts that people use media to gratify specific wants and needs. Unlike many media theories that view media users as passive, Uses and Gratifications theory perceives users as active agents who have control over their media consumption. The theory was developed in response to the needs of explaining why people use certain media and the benefits they acquire from them and basically examines the benefits of the audience to a

given medium of choice. The theory stresses how and why the audience use media (Haridakis & Hanson,2009).

This theory assumes that media use is goal directed and receivers select the types of media and media content to fulfil their needs. In this way, the audience initiates the mass communication process and is able to ‘bend the media ‘to its needs more readily than the media can overpower.The audience is aware of its needs, can report them when asked and give reasons for using the media and that media is selected based on the expectation that it will satisfy specific needs and desires (Gallion, 2010; Asemah, 2011).

This brings out the notion that mass media in an era of rapid rate of media saturation, cannot afford to be the same in structure and quality of content of programmes. The audience are provided with an opportunity to make a wide range of media selections. Such choices could be between one social media tool to the other and among various types of content. This indicates that the content that media releases to their audiences are a reproduction of what kind of content that particular audience wants.

According to (Brown and McQuail, 1974; Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974; Ikachoi, 2017), the field of communication and research was on the verge of its death because researchers were focusing on what the media was doing for the people and did not gauge the importance of the audience to what the media provides as alluded to by Severin & Tankard (2001). McQuail (2010) adds to the body of knowledge by stating that the question asked is, “why do people use media and to what extend do they use them for?”

In understanding university students’ use of social media, the study seeks to elaborate why they use social media and if it has any influence on their political decisions. To further expound on what the uses and gratifications theory of the media entails; Folarin (2002) argues that, “the focus was shifted from media production and transmission

functions to the media consumption function. He argues that instead of asking; “what kinds of effects occur under what conditions?” The question changed to become; “who uses which media under which conditions and for what reasons?” This is the key purpose of uses and gratification theory.

McQuail (2010), further posits that other areas like functionalist sociology view media as serving the various needs of the people and the society for the sake of unity, cultural continuity, social control and a large circulation of public information of all kinds (Ikachoi, 2017). Critics have hit at the theory in the sense that it downplays the importance of media. Some say, it overlooks the way media influences people, especially instinctively. Others opine that while audiences may not always be passive, they may not always be active either, something the theory does not account for and leading to its criticisms.

Uses and gratification theory stands out on the notion that the audience have various desires that push them to follow a given media or content in the given media. The theory is based on research that places media users as active and aware of their choices and decisions. This makes uses and gratification theory relevant in understanding the use of social media among university students majorly when making political decisions. The theory tries to explain the purposes of media and satisfactions derived from them in terms of motives and personal needs of audience members (McQuail, 2000; Ikachoi, 2017). The focal point of the theory is that, there are discrete benefits the media message consumers envision to get from any medium they expose themselves to and that's the case of university students. They converge to a medium that benefits them and offers them gratifications desired.

Wimmer (2011), states that the theory can be applied to research areas where media audience are free to choose what attracts them based on what benefits them. The benefits and attractions are key to the exposure of the social media. This theory fits in this study based on university students freedom to choose the available social media tools for their communication. The freedom with which one can comment or react on an issue interests university students as they have the free hand to wander and choose what suits them. Students have specific satisfactions they get from social media that would not be found in main stream media.

The main stream media have gate keepers who sieve and regulate what can be publicized as opposed to social media sites. Social media plays a major role in civic and political life, political information dissemination, exchange of political ideas, raising of campaign funds, mobilizing protests and reacting on public issues that affect university students. The audiences (University students) actively participate in choosing the media content that fits them and this is made easy by social media technologies. Students are described and seen as the major users of social media. Uses and gratification theory fits to identify and analyse the reasons why university students use social media (Whiting and Williams, 2013). Furthermore, applying the uses and gratification theory in social media studies is of great importance in understanding the new aspects employed by social media tools.

There are certain gratifications that university students gain from social media without which their usage would not be beneficial. Formation of social classes via social media, power of networking and ability to create and disseminate content makes social media fun to use. University students can distort content, redirect and influence the meaning created via social media. The use of social media technologies among youths and mostly students has been applied for years which implies that they provide meaningful

gratifications to the users without which they would shift allegiance. This study therefore seeks to unearth the benefits or gratifications gained by university students in the use of social media during electioneering period and choice of their leaders when it comes to the democratic process of elections. How do university students' utilize social media? What is the preferred social media tool and does it impact on the decisions they finally make? The user harbours the weight on uses and gratifications theory and plays a great part in the choice of media and content they get from it. It is based on the benefits therein that leads to networking on the choosen social media tool.

Leung (2013) in a study on the application of uses and gratification theory in relation to social media argues that it emanates from creating social ties, entertainment, seeking new information and gaining a level of status among peers. Application of the theory in this study is built on the tenet that the audience choose a medium that gratifies their needs and satisfies them. The use of social media in political campaigns and the choice of social media tool by aspirants is based on how electorates select a medium that is interactive, fast and useful. Uses and gratification theory in relation to social media use presents varied views. It is used to predict users' specific behaviours concerning the sites and the attachment based on the time spent on the social media tool. The flexibility with which social media presents information to the audience and mostly social and interactive nature of the tools, allows for indepth analysis in terms of mobilization for political reasons and makes this theory relevant in the study. University students will throng a medium that suits them, which creates a situation that is attractive and leads to bandwagon effect. Based on the arguments raised and prove of relevance of the theory to this study, the researcher agrees that there are other sources of information relevant to different areas like friends, colleagues and relatives, the theory fills the gap for this research.

The theory will help in understanding reasons and gratifications about university students use of social media, the benefits therein and the reasons why they prefer some social networking sites over others available to them. The variety of social media sites presents a basis for one to choose which social media tool applies to them and based on the situation they seek gratifications. Relating this theory to the study, it shows that university students use social media like facebook, whatsapp, twitter and Instagram to satisfy their needs which may either be physical, social or psychological irrespective of its influence on their studies. Besides, it offers explanations to suggest that students use social media for varying reasons which include sports, spiritual and political communication. Uses and Gratification theory is used in this study to demonstrate two things; that the people are the critical factor in any communication set up and that the capacity for media to set given goals may be affected by other factors

1.8.2 Framing theory

The roots of framing theory are attributed to the Sociologist Erving Goffman (1974). Framing theory of mass communication, refers to how the media packages and presents information to the public. According to the theory, the media highlights certain events and then places them within a particular context to encourage or discourage certain interpretations. In this way, the media exercises a selective influence over how people view reality. Framing theory tenets are based on the the process in which some aspects of reality are selected and given greater emphasis or importance than others. The major premise of framing theory is that a matter can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and be interpreted as having inferences for multiple values or thoughts. The multiple angles presented then provide the audience with options on how best to interact with the notions created by the content source.

Framing theory is built on the meaning of a frame. In the English language, the word "frame" can be used both as a verb (to frame) or as a noun (a frame). As a noun, frame signifies the border within which the whole picture is displayed (similar to a frame placed around a picture or painting), and is used as a tool for interpreting and understanding the perceptions and underlying objectives of the various actors in the conflict.

As a verb, to frame refers to creation of frames, either from a simple reading of the situation or through a deliberative, critical, or strategic process. Framing thus refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue. It defines the issue, its causes are diagnosed, moral judgments are suggested and appropriate solutions and actions proposed.

In this study the researcher denotes framing as a quality of communication that leads others to accept one meaning over another. It is the process by which a communication source defines and constructs an issue or controversy. (Entman, 1993; Ardevol-Abreu, 2015) in the study on framing theory in communication research in Spain postulates that it is a process used in media and publications to have a message perceived in a certain way and as simply stated, placing a message within a certain meaning. The term frame has been represented differently. The term "frame" can be used in varied settings, in media and communication it refers to the words, images, phrases, and presentation styles that a given personality or media outlet use when relaying information about an issue or event to the audience (Chong & Druckman, 2016). Others allude to the notion that presentation of an idea via any media is through a frame created by the immediate media. This means the presenter can choose particular words or statements that change the entire aspect of the message, thereby framing it.

Frames are systems of pre-conceived ideas used to organize and interpret new information. Media is built on frames and frames draw attention to some aspects of reality at the expense of others. Any information carried in the media has a set of importance to the targeted audience and how to capture attention of the audience is based on the reality being advocated for by the media house. Media programming and presentation is based on which frame should be emphasized than the other. The angle given emphasis is the exact point intended. In this study framing theory is based on the tenet that the way content is framed by a particular medium affects the way it is consumed by the audience.

In political communication, the chosen frame reveals what the speaker sees as relevant to the topic and emphasizes it. American political scientist Robert M. Entman of Northwestern University defined framing when he stated, “to frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating a given text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, more evaluation and treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993). This is the basis for politicians use of media to spread their content.

Entman (1993) identified two classes of primary schema when dealing with framing; natural and social. Natural have to do with one’s physical and biological make up, social frames are complex and involve intelligence. In applying Framing Theory, both natural schema which presents one’s physical status and biological set up and social which employs the art of thought are applied. The media chooses and sets frames for reference based on the issue in the news and university students who campaign for positions have social media experts who choose what to stake for their masters and what taints their opponents. They work both to praise and banish. The bottom line in framing theory is when media chooses some factors about an issue or event to emphasize an issue at hand.

They even choose part of the entire subject that they magnify at the expense of other facts.

Entman discusses the use of salience which he defined as “making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences.” He adds that increase in salience enhances the probability that the audience or receivers will perceive information, determine meaning, process and store it. An idea that is emphasized in the news can easily be remembered by the audience and will be consumed based on the manner it is framed.

Framing Theory revolves around the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue. Media has been on the forefront in advocating for some issues and amplifying them. The question is, do they do them for a given or set reason? The answer is yes. Each medium has its set goals to achieve. Framing Theory suggests that how something is presented to the audience influences the choices people make on how to use that information.

Application of Framing Theory in this study brings out the objective of understanding if social media influences political decisions and if the issues raised on social media have influence on university students’ choice of student leaders.

University students have different ways they perceive information they obtain from social media. The message may require them to act immediately, internalize, interpret and act later or simply discourage them from acting in a given way. Frame in thought or an individual’s frame refers to a person’s cognitive understanding of a given situation (Chong & Druckman, 2016). Different personalities may understand a situation in varied ways. Some may feel connected to the message directly or indirectly. Framing works

alongside priming which basically is emphasizing some issues more than others, changing the weight with which audience develops an attitude and belief.

Framing majorly touches on news and news generators in media. News generators analyse an issue, put it in perspective and pass it to the audience as news. In this study framing theory is based on content formulation, the process and how it is received and interpreted. Media frames can be grouped into two different types, strong and weak frames. Both strong and weak frames have impact on the audience and how they perceive a given message. Ardevol-Abreu (2015) labels several frames used in scientific literature which include media and individual frames, strong and weak frames and specific and generic frames. Amongst university students there are both media and individual frames, strong and weak frames and specific and generic frames created by content generators. Content generators amongst university students are assigned a mandate to deliver. This are a group of social media experts. Social media experts are hired to develop content based on both strong and weak frames which are intentional to the audience.

In applying Entman's framing theory in this study, it is attached to the political analysis which is competitive, fought between a number of parties, ideological factions and issues. Competitive based on the number of aspirants with different philosophies and blocks and fought to achieve one's ideological beliefs. In political campaigns individuals receive multiple frames with varying frequencies from different sources and varied intentions. The impact of the developed frames in political campaigns via social media can be judged by looking at its influence and the alternative frames available.

How the audience perceive the frames created by the content generators and the point at which the impact is felt determines if it is a weak or strong frame in use. Motivation in the way frames are deduced is the key point. Personal motivation or competition mainly

promotes attention to the appropriateness of consideration and anything that increases motivation expands and spreads the motive behind the frame. Motivated individuals are further distinguished from those unmotivated by either dismissing it as either weak frame or strong (Chong & Druckman, 2016).

Hallahan (1999) deduces that there are different styles of framing that are used in information dissemination, which include, valence framing, putting information in either a positive or negative light, semantic framing, which simply means phrasing of terms and story framing which involves selecting key themes or ideas that are the focus of the message and incorporating story telling and narrative techniques that supports a given theme. Media have developed the idea of framing as stated by (Hallahan, 1999) and they use the styles of framing to structure and formulate political messages. University students also develop and structure political information on social media based on the styles.

The use of Framing theory in politics dates back to American consultant Frank Luntz (Scheufele,2004) who was the first to use framing theory to design strategies that enhanced persuasive power in political communication (Ardevol-Abreu, 2015). The frames are grounded on two types of audiences, active and inactive audiences. This affects the use of social media in political communication such as that of university students in which it is hard to define clearly who the active and inactive audiences are unless after feedback. Social media plays a vital role in framing of content by creating arguments. Political frames on social media which are developed from choice of social media tool, content development, choice of content either video, pictorial or memes and the message determine the impact to the audience and how they perceive the

information. Most politicians and their campaign teams have transferred the use of propaganda to social media to realize the goal of impacting on content consumption and distorting it for their benefits. It maybe pictorial, music, written or video and the manipulation may also be psychological aspects or argument.

Conserva (2003) has organized 89 propaganda techniques into seven different types, logical frames, diversion and evasion, appealing to emotions, using falsehoods and trickery, playing on human behavioral tendencies, speaking or writing styles and reason and common sense. Using the above, social media tools frame different issues into varied ways to achieve the set goals by the content developers. Combination of propaganda and social media makes it more interesting based on the interactive nature of social media. In university students' elections social media has been flooded by content that appeals to emotions, diverts attention and creates a different logic line to influence success or failure of an aspirant. This has been achieved using language and the accompanied pictorials.

Entman's Framing Theory in this study helps to analyze the frame setting of social media by university students during elections. Social media gives the audience more room and space to choose the message to consume based on the site, size, type and duration taken to consume the content and deduce meaning. If the frames are destructive, the consumers will tend to behave based on the frames. Most political players have hired social media managers and content developers who basically work on manipulation of the frames in social media sites and monitoring the content and reactions. Relating framing theory to this current study, utilization of social media in university students' elections shows that university students use social media like facebook, whatsapp,

twitter, Instagram and others in their daily operations and the content placed therein and how it is formulated determines how information placed is consumed based on photos, video, written, voice or combination of both. Users (students) select content that suits them to meet their goals and the promoters of social media amongst university students during elections understand how best to capture users' attention. Framing theory proves that there are equally legitimate abstractions in social media use and each provides in its own right a basis for various kinds of explanations and predictions.

In summary, the synthesis of uses and gratification theory analyzes the benefits of using a given media, which in this study is in social media. Further, framing theory examines the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue and fix their thinking on a given issue placed in the media. Uses and gratifications theory as well as framing theory will aid this study in achieving the set objective of understanding utilization of social media in university students' elections in Kenya.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework offers many benefits to a research study. It assists the researcher in finding and constructing his or her worldview on the phenomenon being investigated (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The conceptual framework is based on the objectives of the study and variables under study. Conceptual framework is intended to help the researcher develop awareness and understanding of the situation under scrutiny and communicate. In using conceptual framework the researcher may opine that his or her research problem cannot meaningfully be researched in reference to only one theory (Imenda, 2014). The researcher therefore synthesizes the existing views both theoretical and empirical findings.

The synthesis is a model or conceptual framework which is an intergrated way of looking at the problem under study (Liehr and Smith; 1999; Imenda, 2014). Both conceptual and theoretical frameworks refer to the epistemological paradigm that a researcher adopts in looking at a given research problem. Liehr and Smith; (1999); Imenda, (2014), each of them refers to a structure which guides the researcher. Imenda, (2014), alludes that a framework, in research is a structure that provides “guidance for the researcher as study questions are fine tuned, methods for measuring variables are selected and analyses planned”.

Social networking sites have created a platform for social discussion of political information. Reliance on these sites facilitates acquisition, discussion and sharing of political news, information and ideas thereby creating an online public domain. In this study social media is the independent variable measured based on the dependent variable us in students elections. It was gauged on the other intervening variables which include economical status, accessibility of the internet, frequence of use, social groupings, background and ethnic formations.

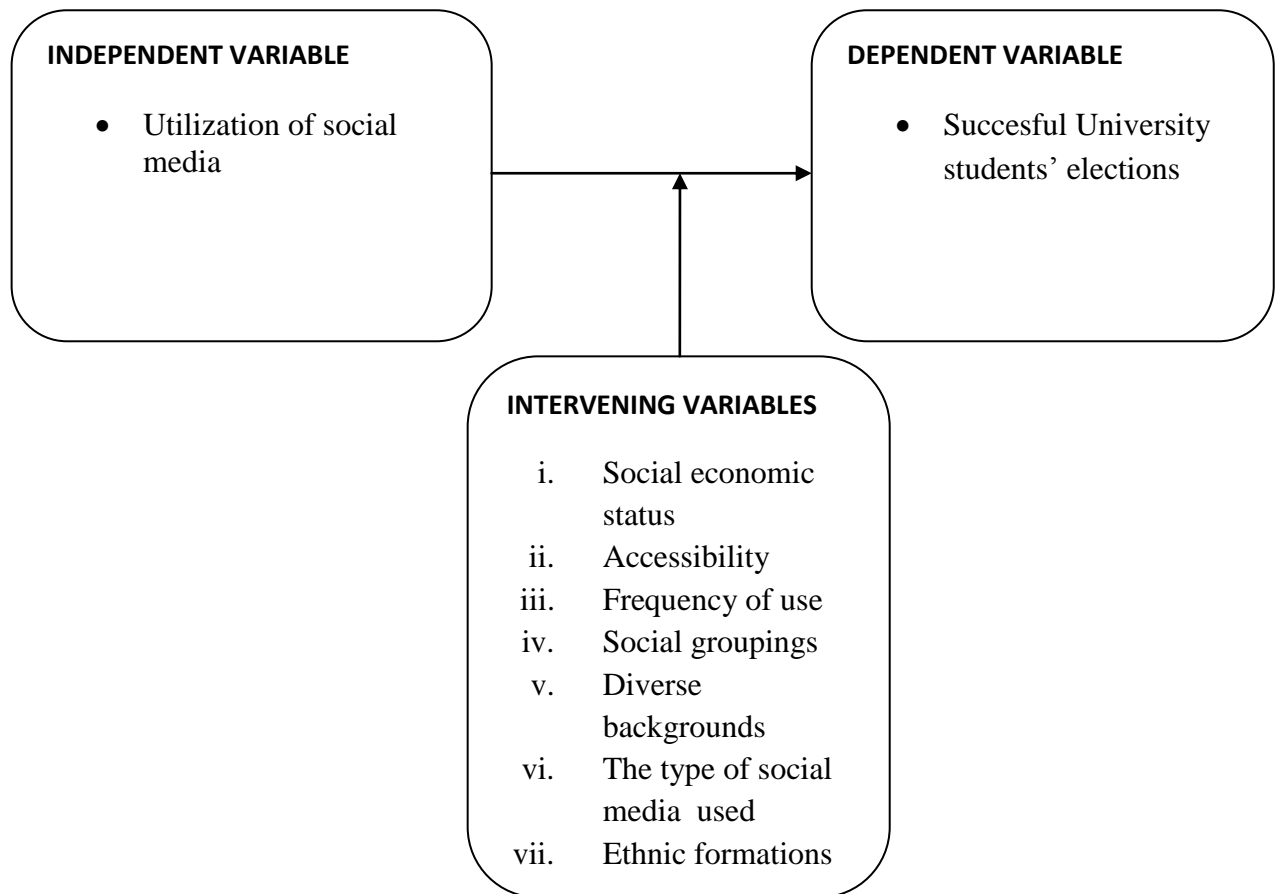


Figure 1. 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author 2020

The independent variable in the study is utilization of social media and the dependent variable is successful student elections. The use of social media in students' elections is determined by a number of intervening variables, namely, social economic status, accessibility, frequency of use, social groupings, backgrounds, type of social media and ethnic formations. In the use of social media, university students face challenges and factors that hinder its use. One has to have a gadget for accessing social media, this maybe a phone that can access the internet and have bundles, and is dependent also on Wifi connectivity within the surrounding area. The context is important as it leads to how the message will be contextualized and how the meaning and action will be determined.

The candidates who bear this in mind during students' elections will be more successful compared to those who do not.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the background of the study; the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, objectives of the study, the research questions, study assumptions, scope of the study, significance of the study, theories supporting the study and conceptual framework.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This Chapter explores social media use in relation to university students. This study therefore sought to determine utilization of social media in university students elections

in Kenya and was based on the study objectives. In understanding social media use, the time spent by university students in its use and if it affects decisions made by university students, literature reviewed analysed evolution of social media platforms in use, social media trends among university students, social media types and university students' choice, factors affecting social media use, social media and social change among university students, social media and group mobilization, social media trends and politics, social media tools and politics, social media students and politics, the internet and communication about politics, internet university students and political engagements and university students and social presence.

2.1 Evolution of Social Media Platforms In Use

Social media has been defined by different scholars based on their area of study and the way they analyse it. Social media is a set of information technologies which facilitate connections and networking (Kapoor et al., 2017; Oestreicher-Singer & Zalmanson, 2013). Social media is the term often used to refer to new forms of media that involve interactive involvement (Manning, 2014). The use of social media sites then incorporates all the new media sites in use and makes it an all inclusive term. "Social media" is coined by two separate words; social and media that have their meanings. Debates and discussions have arose on the specific definition of social media, it has become challenging due to it's transformational nature and emerging into development of new media. Another definition in use is, social media refers to "Internet-based applications built on Web 2.0". Web 2.0 refers to a concept as well as a platform for harnessing collective intelligence" (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013).

The common term "social media" owes its birth to the creation of Web 2.0 and the versions that followed. Social media can be described as a "group of applications which operates

on the internet Web 2.0 and allows for the exchange of information among the users” (Colomo-Palacios, Soto-Acosta, Ramayah & Russ, 2013). The term “Web 2.0” therefore, refers to the set of technologies and ideologies that enable and drive media rich content creation on the internet (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This incorporates social media as a tool for content circulation. Web 2.0 is an upgraded version of Web 1.0. Web 1.0, had limitations that hindered the creation of content useful for these sites. The emergence of Web 2.0 brought with it unbounded opportunities and room for the existing sites like facebook and twitter.

Social media can be summed up to be online interactive platforms like facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+, Wikipedia and Blogs that enable users to create profiles, content, share information and socialize (Flynn, 2012; Knight and Cook, 2013; Mbetera, 2017). In creating content and profiles, social media enables people to access information, express their political views and discuss issues with others in their network. Creation of a network makes social media vibrant in it’s use. Social media can be said to be activities, practices, issues and behaviours that occur through media in sharing information, knowledge and opinion (Safko and Brake, 2009; Yakin, 2013). This definition generalizes social media and their functions. It creates a platform where masses share knowledge, and views as they search for information.

Being internet based tools, social media builds on the interactive nature of the media. Social media is constructed in a way that it attracts immediate response from varied personalities. The definition thus breaks it to a simple understanding of social media as interactive media. It can then be indicated simply as websites and applications that are set to allow people share content in a quick way, efficiently and in real time. The issue of time then attracts university students whose concentration levels have gone down in terms of reading bulky content and

want first hand information in real time. The urgency with which social media circulates content makes it viable for use by university students in their communication which includes political communication.

Social media, which include facebook, twitter, WhatsApp, Youtube and LinkedIn among others, provide people with a universal network connectivity (Asur & Huberman, 2010). Web 2.0 is rooted in the open source ideology, whereby users cooperate freely using social media and sharing their work and material amongst themselves. University students use this technologies in their communication and interaction. Technological advances in Web 2.0 and open ideology has supported the emergence of User Generated Content (UGC). The User Generated Content opens up the ability to create and share content free of censorship and at a low cost which has contributed to the proliferation of social media (DesAutels, 2011). University students have built the use of social media on the basis of creating, sharing and manipulation of the content and is majorly on the aspect of interactivity.

Scholars (Ekeanyanwu and Kalyango, 2013; Akintola, Bello & Daramola, 2017) argue that social media is the ninth wonder of the world. Based on the features therein, social media tools are at the level of surprising many in the way they are used and accepted by the society. The wide spread use of social media and it's acceptability makes it inexorable. Osahenye (2012); Akintola, Bello and Daramola, (2017) summarized the qualities of social media as an unstoppable power which is contagious and has outreaching impact. This outlines why social media has been accepted and made easier for use by university students who see it as a great communication tool. The power to sway and influence fellow students into using social media among university students is swift.

Sisira (2011) alludes to the fact that website connectivity that allows its users to have the authority to share content, views, personal opinion and encourages interaction can be considered and classified as social media. In his understanding of social media it is a tool that commands authority and enables individuals have a say on issues. Social networking sites have capabilities of promoting public participation mostly among youths whose behavior is based on social media uptake and use. Social media facilitates access to a large number of contacts enabling organized social movements to reach the masses. The ability to martial groupings among students and push for their specific agenda makes social media a platform suitable for university students to engage and advocate for their rights. It also makes it easier to bring together university students during electioneering periods as social media sites are used as uniting tools.

Mayfield (2008) in his study of social media, describes social media as “online platforms that promote participation, openness, conversation and connectedness”. The connection that links people via social media and through online platforms brings out the importance for the public to get information in due time. The interpretation by Mayfield revolves around the participative and interactive nature of social media which interests university students in their daily operations. Social media tools like facebook, twitter, and whatsapp, play a fundamental role in knowledge and information circulation from both producers of content to the consumers (audience) based on their interactive nature and flexibility.

Veil, Buehner and Palenchar (2011) concur with (Mayfield, 2008) in postulating that social media is core in human communication, with characteristics of participation, openness, conversation and connectedness being given emphasis. It's on this basis that students in universities have employed use of social media in numerous roles in

their day to day social ways including studies. This is because it is a collective form of online channels for interaction, collaboration and content-sharing. The conversation on the emergence of social media tools and their use cannot be shaved off based on forums developed, social curation, networking and even microblogging.

The use of social media like facebook which is a popular free social networking site, WhatsApp, which ensures quick interaction for the active members, Instagram which its inclusion of photos and videos makes it more interactive and Linked-inn that has gone professional and active in job seeking is immense in the society today. Job seeking and marketing of curriculum vitae is massive via social media. Twitter which allows free microblogging for the registered members has taken the centre stage for articulating most issues that touch on individuals or governments and plays a major role in the fighting for rights through creation of hashtags# that trigger action. All definitions of social media agree that social media implies to the use of online or internet technologies that enhance interactivity which is the basis for the choice of social media by university students during elections.

2.2 Social Media Trends among University Students

The continued information search and use of social media among youths has led to various inventions and technological changes. The urge for adventure and the need to know more among youths has made them stream into inventive settings that mostly touch on their lifestyles. Technology is transforming daily bringing with it changes both social and economical. Social media's popularity and its use among youths is growing Worldwide. Availability of various social media tools presents a platform to the users of selecting the preferred tool for their use. Research by Pew Research Center (2012) in the US revealed that 65% of social media users were aged between 18-29 years and

engaged in political activities during the 2008 US elections. A clear indicator that youths take part in national politics using varied social media sites.

Facebook has been the leading site in use but emergence of other tools have presented a challenge. Waters and Lester (2010) argued that people use social media for a variety of reasons like messaging and communication, community and social group interactions and exchange of opinions and reviews. Youths embrace social media for connections and interactions and basically to entertain themselves which is the case with most university students. The choice of the most preferred social media tool is therefore based on a number of factors.

The transformation of social media and inclusion of instant messaging systems has made it appropriate for university students in their daily operations to formulate, access and share content. Social media tools that allow room to formulate and share content then gains popularity among university students. Access to information, manipulation and sharing is key in the use of social media among university students. Social media tools have continued to sprout and youths are the targets in their success or fail as they are the major users or proponents. Social networking sites are considered to play an active role in younger generation's daily lives (Lenhart, 2010), as most of the active users are students of higher learning levels and tertiary institutions.

Exposure to social media has been stated to have effect on the students and the effect is negative. Findings also show that facebook is the most used social media by undergraduate students of Kogi State University. In the study on the influence on social media on academic performance of Undergraduate students of Kogi State University in

Nigeria, the study found out that it has negative effect on their academic performance (Asemah and Edegoh, 2013).

Oblinger and Oblinger (2005) named university students ‘the most wired and connected generation in human history’, ‘Digital Natives’, and ‘the Net Generation’. Based on this argument, university students stand out as being active social media users and consumers. Against this backdrop, social networking sites have become brilliant tools for education and can be used socially and collaboratively between learners and teachers as well as students. They present a network that links both inclusively. Asabere (2012) notes that “current Information Communication Technology (ICT) trends are providing accessibility to online services such as social networking and connectivity which enable collaboration amongst students and contribute to social learning activities amongst students. University students in Kenya are active users of social media, most are present on facebook, twitter, whatsapp, Instagram and even youtube.

The rapid growth of this technology has improved and enabled collaborative operations and learning activities especially because of its high level of interactivity, accessibility, affordability and navigation. From facebook, twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and other social messaging apps, interaction has been made flexible among university students. They carry the choice of which social media tool suits them. Most university students interact via whatsapp and facebook. Discussions on their lifestyles, social and economical aspects can be trailed on social media. They prefer social media since it gives them free and affordable space to spar their grievances to the public. This study analyses the social media sites in use by university students to ascertain the most preferred sites.

2.2.1 Social Media Types and University Students' Choices

The use of the social media as channels of communication is a growing trend in Kenya and virtually all parts of the World. Most people including university students make use of social media in their operations. Baran (2010) argues that “technology can be used in ways beneficial or otherwise and contends that technology is a double-edged sword, maybe beneficial or not. This argument denotes that social media use may have benefits to the user or not. The power of social media resides in “us” meaning the users and this is simply alluding to the fact that people determine what they do with technology and the type of social media they choose to utilize. Choice of any tool is determined by the purpose which varies from sales, marketing, political communication and advertising or simply interaction. Several social media tools have emerged and the speedy growth of the internet and websites which have facilitated and developed communities and networks made them feasible.

In general terms collaboration, social interactions and participation generate many constructions on the internet and websites which built social media. The barriers in mainstream media have made social media to spiral and be perceived as trustworthy in content circulation. It allows private individuals to be involved in sourcing for information online “sharing” opinions, insights, experiences and other perspectives”(Marken, 2007). This has made social media an interactive tool amongst university students as they actively flock different sites for use. Asabere (2013) notes that “current ICT trends are providing accessibility to online services such as social networks and these enable collaboration amongst students and contribute a lot to social learning activities. Students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria are keying into the limitless opportunities”. These brings out the notion that improvements in the ICT have raised the stake for social media use among students.

Universities have available networking systems that promote student interaction, they therefore open the gates for mass use of social media tools. The rapid growth of technology which has spiraled social media has improved and enabled collaborative and learning activities especially because of its high level of interactivity, accessibility and affordability.

Kim, Sohn and Choi (2011) in their study found out that obtaining social support is a strong motivation for Korean students use of facebook. The study looked at facebook use among students and the findings indicated that it served as a motivation factor. Most social media tools are involved in a number of functions from mining of data, transformation, processing and monitoring and analyzing traffic. The choice of what suits a given group is therefore determined by purpose of the user. Use of social media amongst university students hence reinforces traffic of content on social media with most students using it as a source of information. Social media tools come in varied designs and their use is based on how they can be manipulated by the users. From facebook, twitter, whatsapp, Instagram and youtube, users and content generators have choices to make based on each tool's strength.

2.2.1.1 Facebook as a Tool for Communication

Facebook is a social media tool that enables users have the ability to create and join interest groups, 'like' pages, follow, import and search for contacts and upload photos and videos. The current updated version of facebook enables automatic upload of videos for video chats. Facebook which was launched in 2004 as a tool for social networking exclusively for Harvard students has enhanced its users ability to interact with "Facebook friends", by updating their "status", writing on other members "walls" or

transferring directly personal messages. According to digital information World, 2019, facebook dominates the industry at 85% rating on the internet users Worldwide excluding China (digitalinformationworld.com). This is an indicator of the rapid spread of facebook use. Great benefits of facebook are the abilities to interact and form groups that can be both closed or open to the public. The message posted is permanent unless deleted and can be reviewed or seen by others later.

Research has been done on facebook use and the findings indicate that close to 75% of facebook users are located outside the United States. The growth of mobile technology Worldwide has opened up facebook use and has increased accessibility of facebook with the numbers rising to a rate of more than 350 million facebook users worldwide who access their accounts via mobile phones. Madge et al. (2009) states that facebook is utilized informally by students for learning purposes such as connecting with their tutors and collaborating on group projects.

Student researchers from the Whitmore School of Economics and Business discovered that younger students frequently use facebook compared to the older students so as to maintain communication with friends who attended the same high school or from their hometown (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). This is the power of connectivity. Students also use Facebook to informally discuss their academic work and studies. Kert and Kert (2010) established that students have positive opinion about using Facebook as a learning tool.

Facebook is still the largest social media platform in the world and has 2.4 billion users who are mostly youths. It is based on the popularity of facebook and social media at large that most university students engage facebook as a tool for communication.

Mobile technology has widened social media sphere. University students own mobile phones which besides being used for basic communication like calls, texts and money transfer, they are a worthy tool for social communication and facebook advertising gaining ground. The ability to create different accounts on facebook makes it interesting to the young generation who have the tendency to hide their identity and explore. In this regard facebook is seen by the youths as being a tool to express their issues.

2.2.1.2 Twitter as a Tool for Communication

Twitter is a tool that enables sharing, liking and following of posts. Launched in 2006, twitter is a real time social media tool that allows followers to like, react or re-tweet and the more ‘followers’ one has, the better for their business, network and interaction. Twitter allows users to send short character messages and involves quick exchanges of posts. According to Next Scoop an internet marketing blog 2019, twitter use base was at 326 million each month and on daily basis over 500 million tweets are posted. Using twitter interaction, a short key word “hashtag”, is added to tweets to connect messages and develop a trail of reactions and re-tweets. It has been taken as the tool where users air their views and also “set agenda” for different issues at hand. In 2016, Twitter had 313 million active users (Statista, 2016), making it the most successful microblogging site and attracting anumber of participants. It has become particularly a significant tool used as a political tool with examples including its important role in the Arab Spring anti-government protests (Hermida et al 2014), as well as extensive use by American President Donald Trump during and following his presidential campaign (Ulanoff 2017). Most Kenyans engage leaders and the government on twitter, with the hashtag “Kenyans on twitter” #KOT being famous. #KOT has been applied when fighting for rights, bashing other nationalities, defending Kenyans abroad and even praising those who perform beyond the norm. Most university students use twitter to engage and follow

students operations while in campus. During students demonstrations, where security apparatus engage them, the diversionary nature has been to take the war on twitter where university students agitate for their grievances in a bid to have them addressed. Cases of university management being accused of high handedness have been exposed on twitter. Students believe that by depositing issues faced in public domain through social media majorly twitter, then solutions can be found. The outcome has been different and with varied repercussions in some universities the proprietors and perpetrators of social media wars among university students have been targeted for disciplinary actions.

2.2.1.3 WhatsApp as a Tool for Communication

WhatsApp, a messenger tool that enables exchange of messages, pictures, documents, videos and memes is a cross-platform instant messaging client for smart phones is speedily gaining fame. WhatsApp was founded in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum, and as of February 2016, it had a user base of up to one billion people worldwide, making it the most globally popular messaging application (WhatsApp inc., 2016). WhatsApp is an instant messaging platform which allows for interactivity and faster response which makes it appropriate for university students. It creates a sense of belonging (Doering, Lewis, Veletsianos, and Nichols-Besel, 2008; Sweeny, 2010), and it is said to eliminate social barriers (Doering, Lewis, Veletsianos, Nichols-Besel, 2008). It is a tool that is downloaded by the user and installed on the mobile phone before one can access it. WhatsApp requires the internet to send text messages, images, video, user location and audio media messages to other users using standard cellular mobile phones to those in contact.

In addition to basic messaging, WhatsApp provides group chat creation based on “classes” and location sharing. Group chats have made it easier for information sharing

and re-sharing which makes the information viral. WhatsApp is used for various functions among the youths and groups. Some take it as a tool for networking and others use it to secretly have conversations with friends in different parts of the World.

WhatsApp messages are sent either between user to user as opposed to user to group. It has necessitated the ability to forward messages or information which interests most users information can be shared easily. Most university students own mobile phones and the use of WhatsApp requires one to download the app, link up with friends in ones contact who are using it, form a group or be added to one by the administration and is able to interact. Students can easily interact with their colleagues who are in their contacts and are connected to WhatsApp and form a group or social class. Does the communication on WhatsApp affect their decisions? Networking is key in decision making and interactivity and content shared matters. Creation of social groupings that range from academic, political, sports, community and tribe has made WhatsApp a tool favourable to university students. WhatsApp is picking up as the major social media tool in use among university students with the included features of video and voice use making it more interactive.

2.2.1.4 LinkedIn as a Tool for Communication

LinkedIn is a social network that focuses on professional networking and career development. It is an American business and employment-oriented service that operates via websites and mobile apps. LinkedIn was founded in 2002 and launched in 2003 and has become one of the oldest social networking site in use (linkedin.com). It is ideal for building connections for freelance work, customer base, potential partners and maintaining job prospects. Surprisingly it is not common amongst the young generation. Its intended audience are experts that have an interest in interacting professionally. For one to enjoy LinkedIn, they need to create a profile that relates to their resume from which they link up with other professional users. The site has developed into a suitable

tool for job hunting and hiring of professionals as people have to create a professional account and most companies and organizations are advertising jobs on LinkedIn. University students engage on LinkedIn to create a profile that builds their presence for job search, communication and links with the job market. The use of LinkedIn creates a professional image in its use and therefore restricts its use in political communication.

2.2.1.5 Instagram as a Tool for Communication

Instagram is a free, online photo-sharing application and social network platform that was acquired by Facebook in 2012 (WhatIs.com). Instagram was started by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in San Francisco for photo sharing. It is an application that allows its users to edit and upload photos and short videos through a mobile app. Users can add caption to each of their posts and use hashtags and location based geotags to index this posts and make them searchable by other users within the app (WhatIs.com).

Instagram has been seen as a celebrity site with most of the users posting pictures that depict fame. The user creates an Instagram handle which is a username that is used to define their profile address. The notion has changed and it is used as an advertising and marketing tool. One has to follow an individual on Instagram to view the content posted. By April 2017, Instagram stories recorded 200 million active users and its transformation into a business app has increased the user base. Political communication via Instagram is by use of images that depict the position and manifestos. University students use Instagram in communication on both social and political issues. The use of posters on Instagram can be gauged by the number of followers, likes and dislikes.

2.2.1.6 YouTube as a Tool for Communication.

This is a free video sharing website that makes it easy to watch online videos. It is one of the most popular sites on the web. It was originally created in 2005 by three former Paypal employees; Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Jawed Karim and was later bought by Google in 2006 (Digitalunite.com). YouTube is a website platform where users are allowed to share videos online and can monitor people's views by the number of likes and comments that follow. When it was created, YouTube was intended for people to post and share original content but it has become both an archive to store video clips, songs and jokes. Millions of users around the world have created accounts on the site that allow them to upload videos that anyone can watch. Its ability to enable "viral video" sharing is gaining popularity with its ability to share links via email addresses (Digitalunite.com). For those who are unregistered, they can only watch but not upload and those who upload have the opportunity to know if their content is viewed or dormant. YouTube has emerged as appropriate too for marketing and advertising.

2.2.2 Importance of Social Media use

Social media is used in different dimensions to diversify conversations and cultivate different sectors from politics, business, marketing and advertising. It is different from other traditional media forms such as print, electronics and emailing that have gates used to limit and regulate content. With features that promote information provision, entertainment and learning options, social media has developed to a most important part of life that transforms university students' operations. Social media evolution has made it easier and possible to communicate and has reduced the distance between parties in information transfer. It has made it easier and quicker to exchange texts via the internet (Ikachoi, 2017). To enable easy collaboration and knowledge sharing among peers, social media plays a key role (Aghaee, 2010).

According to Ngai et al. (2015) "the advent of social media has substantially changed the manner in which many people, communities and/or organizations communicate and interact". This has created a scenario which has pushed many into accepting social media as part of life. Social media use, develops four factors which include, media utilities, immediacy of feedback, use of a number of verbal as well as non verbal ways, language and variety and the benefit of being able to personalize messages and circulate as stated by Massey & Montoya-Weis (2006). Feedback is important in communication as it satisfies the sender that the message wa delivered to the intended receiver. Social media has made feedback faster and easier. The use of both verbal and non verbal mode of communication via social media has fastened message delivery and meaning amplification. Personalized messages in social media makes it easier for the message to be owned and shared among peers which interests university students use of social media.

Interactive social media sites have made communication between friends, classmates and colleagues possible and easier. One needs a network of friends who are connected to start a conversation either between two people or a group. Social media allows creation of social classes which then aide in communication. It has made the World a village to live in as has simplified flow of information beyond borders.

Aghaee (2010), alludes to the fact that there are many advantages of social media use in collaborative learning, he adds, have helped brands to stand out and created people's opinion on issues that are essential to maintain online presence. Online presence is currently a basis for widening people's scope be it political, business, advertising and marketing. Other sectors too have gained ground through social media with farming and

agricultural sector going online. Social media creates room for communities to unite and discuss issues. It has led to the creation of “social groupings” “classes” and villages based on origin, interest, community, language among university students, courses, friendship and other interest areas. Social classes are beneficial during political discussions and most have been used to determine and set agenda on who vies and who wins during electioneering periods.

The emergence of propaganda, mis-information and disinformation as ways to propagate and change information has found basis via social media and this makes it even interesting to use it. Social media has broken geographical boundaries, increased sales, opened up the World for people to monitor current and global trends and changed the real definition of communication by making it a two way traffic. It has widened the scope of different sectors and university students employ social media in their operations due to its flexibility including political discussions. It makes it beneficial to use.

2.2.3 Factors affecting Social Media use

The use of social media sites has rapidly grown with the expansion of internet connectivity and use of mobile telephony technology spiraled by increase in number of gadgets that can be used to access the internet. Companies, institutions, public offices and some residential areas have internet connectivity and available Wi-Fi. The connection has made accessing social media easier and cheaper. With this growth comes factors that if not dealt with affect the use of social media. Kwon and Wen in their study have discussed how individual acts affect its use. They cited altruism and social identity as among social factors that encourage the use of social media sites.

The fact that social media users feel free to share content they have created or received is a great factor in the use of social media. They gain gratification in their use of social media sites. Lin, Li, Califf, and Featherman (2013) in their study on factors affecting users attraction to social networks found out that gratification was the influencing factor in people's use of social media sites with another concern being usefulness. Issues like efficiency, entertainment, community, privacy and its user friendliness and navigability also play a role (Ell & Bokhari, 2013). This interests youths and other social media players in the use of social media sites.

Sago (2013) studied factors influencing social media adoption and frequency of use and in his study he singled out user friendliness, enjoyment and usefulness of social media service and its frequency of use as the factors that affect social media use. This presents the notion that the use of social media site is based on how useful or beneficial the tool is to the user. Frequency of use is stated on how accessible the tool is. Presence of mobile phone technology presents a platform suitable for the users to access information. Other factors that affect social media use and mostly among university students vary from cultural, social, geographical, economical and to an extend spiritual and psychological.

Sawyer (2011) in his research looked at the impact of social media on cultural adaptation and postulates that social media has both social, physical and cultural influence. It has the power to affect both the cultural aspect, social being and also impact on the physical aspect. This is the case with university students use of social media which carries factors that hinder social media use. The sole purpose of university students is to gain knowledge which is achieved via academic process, inclusion of social media brings varied challenges and its use in political communication also faces major challenges too.

Based on university students, social media has factors that hinder its use that differ from availability of a mobile telephone or gadget, economic issues, internet availability, geographical setting and presence of groups that share similar characteristics.

2.2.4. Social Media and Social Change among University Students

Social change involves change agents, these agents are needed to “keep the hope alive” if a given effort is to succeed (Kloppers, 2013). The change can be positive or negative. The positive effects can be rated to gain ground covering the negative aspects. Social media plays a role in social change as an agent. Social change may come with the populace accepting the changes caused by something introduced to them and the effects that come with it. While social capital refers to all networks put together the urge that rises from these networks use to individuals push to do a number of things via these networks can either be taken positive or negatively based on the interests of the user. Social media has proved to not necessarily pull Kenyans from the offline world but complement their relations as it keeps people connected despite the distance apart (Putnam, 2000). Social media has changed the World from being far apart to a smaller village.

The use of social media in elections in the United States have indicated that social media has the power for mass mobilization and bringing together strangers for a common cause decreasing the cost of building large networks (Davis, 1999). The uniting power of social media makes it a tool for easier social transformation. Social media has transformed social movements and led to the growth of online political behavior and political changes with most countries affected and most countries have had political changes through social media movements. A study by Pew research centre

in the 2008 United States election found that social media use as a political campaign tool increased political participation among young people and this interests this study.

There is continued debate on whether social media use has transformed traditional ways of communication in which advocacy and activism are practiced. Given that they make many aspects of lobbying, campaigning and organizing more effective and efficient in communication, social media is seen as a tool that has changed traditional communication ways (Bennett, 2003). Social media use is gaining ground as a tool for social change and there is need for understanding if they are effective. Social adjustments play a pivotal role in persistence push for different issues and social media can positively enhance people mostly students transition by encouraging connection and interaction among them.

Gray, Vitak, Eason, and Ellison (2013) examined the role of facebook in students' social adjustments in first year of college education, their findings indicated that collaborative behaviors with classmates was present via social media with social support and social adjustments also witnessed. This indicates that social media plays a role in social change and university students can use social media to change the perception of their peers on varied issues. This then calls for the study of social media utilization in varied aspects including political decision making.

2.2.5 Social Media and Group Mobilization

Group is a number of people or things that are located, gathered or classed together. In a political setting, politicians use the power of mobilizing groups together to push for a political agenda that interests them. The ability to bring different parties together into agreeing on one political agenda involves a number of factors that range from

geographical setting, position, social and physical. To unite the multitudes into one reasoning factor and class, different ways are used to bring together masses based on the interests of the concerned which is majorly winning a political seat or position. Social media is a key component in the mobilization of groups towards a given goal and achievement of interests either for an individual or society. Mobilization can therefore be based on same concern areas or even varied grounds but with one target end.

Youths Worldwide have realized that the only way out to having their word is through ganging up with similar interest and having a tool that can easily unite them in varied physical positions. Social media plays that role effectively. In Africa, countries like Egypt, Nigeria and Tunisia are examples of states that have seen the upsurge of social media use in group mobilization (Nwoye and Okafor, 2014, Mbetera, 2017). Through Facebook and word of mouth, more than 20,000 people were mobilized in two days to demonstrate against Israel's bombing of Gaza in 2009 (Storsul, 2011, Mbetera, 2017). This was a clear indicator that facebook use as a tool for communication can penetrate where word of mouth can't and builds the wide spread use of social media mostly among university students.

The Kenyan setting has seen most youths engage their leaders on social forums. Social media discussions have had issues raised which sometimes reflect the position of the masses on an issue or may not be a true reflection of the picture of the entire country. This gives the political players a good chance and position of attack on the issues that they wish should be agitated for. Amongst university students, groups are formed based on areas of interests, social class, ethnic alignments and political interests which are part of the formations during electioneering periods. The groups end up formulating a

winning team that suits them. Social media and blogging have played major roles in university students elections with a clear case being the University of Nairobi students elections. Political aspirants at the University of Nairobi in the 2019 students elections had to go to a higher level of hiring influencers, spending lots of money to maintain their presence on social media, distorting information through propaganda spread among other ways during campaigns. Aspirants contracted bloggers who showered praises and derided opponents.

Bloggers were making over 5,000 shillings daily during the 2019 elections period in the University of Nairobi. In the article carried by Kenya's Daily Nation Newspaper on Friday April 5th 2019 titled "Features Candidates need to win UoN (University of Nairobi) students elections" the paper singles out aspirants spent over Sh4 million in campaigns with estimated 200,000 shillings being spent daily by both "camps" on the campaign teams. This is a reflection of how social media plays a key role in students elections. The story in daily brings the notion that students elections are won based on mobilization and money. The use of "wise men" who are described by the writer as a group of highly influential students who commandeer politics in Nairobi University cements the notion. The "wise men" are described as individuals who are moneyed and have a social media presence that influences thousands of student followers and thus command the masses and have influence on political decisions made by university students.

Social media use for group mobilization is gaining ground greatly. Most countries that have embraced democracy and freedom of expression and speech have allowed social media to gain ground but others have set limits in its use. Some countries have strict rules and regulations that limit their use.

Min (2011) found that in Korea, June, Hong and Sung social media users are more careful on how they express opinions and what they post in bid to avoid content that maybe misleading and be held accountable. This is not the case with most countries. Tunisia is one of the African countries that has faced revolutions to push for government change through social media and serves as an example of how social media leads to group mobilization.

Self-representation can also limit the impact social media platforms have on issues like politics, this argument as stated by Storsul (2011), is evident when it comes to political mobilization. Those without the power to marshal and place the masses in a given direction cannot use social media, this has necessitated the hiring of social media experts in championing issues and setting the agenda and discussions on social platforms. Social media experts are believed to command numbers on their personal social media handles like twitter and facebook besides holding power to unite masses on group sites like WhatsApp. Social mobilization has an influence on the masses and calls for the need to study if it influences the political decisions by university students in Kenya.

2.2.6 Social Media Trends and Politics

Social media has an impact on political directions and decisions. In Nigerian politics, social media presence and use was visible. Udejinta (2011), observed that “one remarkable thing about the 2011 general elections was the adoption of social media, especially Facebook by the politicians. The zeal employed on social media in the 2011 Nigerian general elections can be better stated and singled out by President Goodluck Jonathan, whose decision to declare his candidature for the highest political office in the country was by use of Facebook. Jonathan’s post on Facebook on Wednesday, September 15, 2010, led to Nigerians massively streaming to Facebook with a record of

4000 more fans and likes in 24 hours (OkoroNwofor (2013). This was an indicator that most Nigerians had presence on social media and knew of the decision by Goodluck Jonathan.

Asemah (2011) observes that in their media use, politicians are advised to consider a number of forms of interactive media ranging from internet use and mobile phone technology, as achievement in politics is dogged by the number of connections and votes one manages in an election.

Political figures communicate to electorates by posting their manifestos and being able to know citizens needs. This can be achieved by interactive media that allows the user and electorates get feedback. This is achieved by interactive social media. Developments in ICT have also ignited the use of social media via affordable mobile phones. The use of mobile phones is a growing technology that has increased citizens' connectivity, both social and political. The public has become closer to politicians with the aid of social media sites. It has enhanced the two way communication that allows politicians and citizens to communicate. In Kenya, NARC-Kenya's party leader and presidential candidate Martha Karua set a date with electorates on twitter "AskMartha" during the 2013 campaigns. She was able to interact with most electorates via social media from varied parts of the country. The trend is visible among university students who set up discussions on social media on different issues that affect them.

In Kenya growth in social media use is vibrant through mobile phone technology. First quarter's financial year 2017/18 report by Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK) indicated that the number of mobile phone subscriptions was 41.0 million up from 40.2 million registered in the earlier quarter, making 1.9 percent growth over that period of 2017/2018 (BAKE, 2017). This showed higher numbers in terms mobile phone users.

The statistics report indicated that the most downloaded applications in the country were Uber app for taxi business, Instagram, Facebook, Branch money transaction app, facebook messenger, True caller for monitoring contacts, Tala a loaning app, Facebook Lite, WhatsApp and the general app Opera Mini. Based on the report titled "State of the Internet in Kenya, the report showed growth in the number of people joining social media sites and using mobile phone Apps as stated by Bloggers Association of Kenya, (BAKE, 2017).

Media landscape report 2019, indicated that Google.com tops the list of the most visited site followed by YouTube.com. Local news sites in Kenya also top lists of sites visited with Standard Media, Nation media and Tuko news sites among the leading. According to the report, 20 most visited sites were the betting sites of Sportpesa, Betin and 1xbet and social media sites visited mostly being Facebook, YouTube and Twitter (Reelforge & TIFA, 2019). Most of these sites can be accessed via mobile phones.

Based on the media landscape report, the internet craze can be sensed in the country and increase in social media use portrayed its viral spread. The power to communicate effectively carries a great impact in any institution, organization or group's success. Social media use has brought with it an easy effective communication channel. Proper communication cements teamwork and cooperation which is the basis for social media use among university students.

The use of Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Flickr and many others have become an integral part of our lives. Accessing news through social media platforms by using mobile devices is gaining popularity (Italie, 2015). The growing popularity making many people to flock online in use of social media. This is mostly among the younger, active generation who are eager to experiment in usage. The Kenyan

perspective in the use of social media can be viewed differently, Ndlela (2016) elicited the fact that many Kenyans monitored the Kenyan 2013 general elections on social media platforms and moving the political conversations from the main stream media that has barriers to a more flexible channel, social media.

Scholars, Kuss& Griffiths (2011) argued that youth, mainly in universities, are highly engaged in the use of social media, which they consider as their personal space and largely dictate the way they communicate. It is through social media tools that it has reduced their relational and problem solving skills in real-life situations and could resort to violence as a way of resolving conflicts in their day to day operations. Based on the background, social media has played a vital role in modern political participation Worldwide. The increased number of young people who participated in 2017 Kenyan general elections and the inclusion of vibrant social media tools an indicator that social media plays a vital role. This study sought to ascertaining the level of use of social media in university students' elections and its influence on political decision making in terms of electing the preferred leaders. The findings are an eye-opener for the government, Ministry of Information Communication and Technology and university management on the need to formulate policies that will govern the use of social media and developing social media strategies.

2.2.7 Social Media Tools and Politics

Social media tools are online interactive platforms like facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+, Wikipedia, and blogs that enable users to create profiles, content, share information, and socialize (Flynn, 2012; Knight and Cook, 2013; Mbetera, 2017). Other scholars say that social media is a vehicle that develops communicative communities in virtual public sphere as it enables people to get together (Gronlund,

Strandberg and Himmelross, 2009; Segard,2015). With widespread Internet accessibility and hunger for information majorly in political communication, social media has come in handy in the development of content, analysis of the information and sharing of the information.

Social media sites, in particular, have given politicians the opportunity to construct and disseminate their desired narrative about their political positions and construct political reality (Kreiss, 2016) A political candidate's social media message will typically contain only small tidbits that mention a larger political narrative being pushed by the candidate in a single social media post. This has been supported by the various news media barriers within the mainstream media. The many barriers in mainstream media and the undetermined changes in traditional media when it comes to political communication have made social media a better option.

The expenses that come with the use of mainstream media in political communication have challenged its use and made social media tools fill the gap for political communication and opened up a new chance for jobs and political machinations. Scholars have tried to analyze the impact of social media sites in relation to different political settings and as new findings emerge, several others change. This calls for moere studies in the use of social media in political communication. There is need to keep on gathering, monitor, analyze, summarize and visualize political relevant information from social media with the goal to improve communication with citizens and voters. Identification of political leaders and opinions, influential users and following discussions being taken by peers during electioneering periods is important. In the US and World around social media such as SNS, weblogs, wikis and microblogging sites

have played key roles in political communication.

For example, politicians have been on the forefront in the use of social media with Barack Obama being able to successfully use social media in his campaigns (Wittal et al., 2010).

Political participation and discussions have been high on social media sites during election periods with twitter, facebook among others being ideal platforms for users to spread information and political opinions.

Politics and political interests enhance participation as they determine an individual's state either politically active or passive, one is determined a serious contender based on the rates of their campaigns (Kruikemeier et al., 2013). Interest in politics also determines the level an individual can go and provides motivation to devote time and energy (O'Neil, 2006). Social media and politics intertwine, the use of new media technologies in politics has been a practice that was applied in the 2013 Kenyan general elections and the American politics during the Obama era. Political communication via social media in the US, Nigeria and Kenya as case studies indicate the role of social media especially among young people in campaigns and spread of manifestos.

Golbeck et al (2010) focused on the US Congress and analyzed the contents of more than 6000 tweets from Congress members, Ammann (2010) focused on the use of Twitter US Senate and the contents of their tweets during the 2010 midterm election season and the results indicated that they used twitter for their political campaigns. A 2018 Pew Research Center survey carried out in the US found out that the white race social media users were less likely than nonwhite users to say social media was

personally important for their own political engagement but the study across every major demographic group indicated that there was more exhaustion than excitement over seeing political content on social media.

Political communication has been looked at based on a given tool, examining two years of facebook posts on walls of three major contenders of the 2008 US presidency, Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and John McCain among the others, Robertson et al. (2010) detailed the patterns in terms of usage, breadth of frequency and interpreted them. The findings were that based on the public sphere, social media plays a key socio-technical environments that most closely enable public sphere discussion.

Kenya has been on the receiving end in the social media use with the darkest moment being the 2007/2008 post-election violence that is said to have been propagated through use of social media sites. As (Koross & Kosgei, 2016) postulated, it seemed to be a reflection of the trend in other places and the viral effect was through the impact of social media use. Kenyans engage mainly on social media and several issues and scandals have been publicized by the use of social media sites with discussions ending up based on tribe, gender, race or geographical setting and worse of political affiliations and as hatred. With all the blame placed on social media, it plays an increasingly critical role in the spread and dissemination of information deemed relevant to the masses like passing on knowledge and skill to other members and the public at large. Social media sites are more popular in checking on friends, searching for content and sharing as is on Facebook and other platforms with sharing pictures and videos with diverse angles of interaction and the capacity to transform the world over (Koross & Kosgei, 2016).

2.2.8 Social Media, Students and Politics

Education Worldwide is transforming and new ideas and developments included in the system to suit the required set targets. Students are admitted to different institutions to acquire knowledge in specific areas that is beneficial to them and the society. Most countries have transformed into being techno-savvy and higher learning institutions are on the pace to change the space. Technological developments have majorly influenced University students all over the World. Most are using the gained information to be invetive and widen technological knowledge. Internet connectivity, availability of computers with reliable hard ware and software features have made it faster to connect with other parties and convenient in communication via social media (Sawyer, 2011).

University students use social media networks as instruments majorly to disseminate information, communicate and create social groupings and classes. It is a tool that allows for socialization. Academic research also tends to focus on the executional factors in the content of digital engagement (Ashley and Tuten 2015) They apply social media in their academics and research works and also leisure engagement. Today's student communicates via several channels and technology cannot be ruled out easily and they can't do without facebooking or texting.

It has opened up new ways for collaboration and discussion in the sense that it offers a great deal of content posting, coping, searching and sharing content anytime and anywhere there is internet connection to meet their needs. Hill and Lashar (2013) postulate that some characteristics of social media are participation, openness, Conversation and community participation, this assertion is key in political communication and participatory.

Political participation as stated by (Verba & Nie. 1972) are activities that private citizens more or less engage in with the aim of influencing the selection of government personnel and their actions. Students too engage in politics both at the institutional and national level, the formal levels of participation is where they elect their representatives and take a lead role on political parties. Several issues have influenced University students politics from national politics perspective where camps are formed based on political temperatures in the country and even choice of pictures and colours. In political campaigns, money is spent to “oil” the campaigns where millions are dished out, ethnicity and tribalism where tribal organizations form their camps, violence, platforms used as political ambitions, social media and connections. All this show the level of seriousness that social media tools come with.

Studies in the US have shown that most undergraduates have embarked on social media for gaining social identity and a major means for social interaction (Junco et al., 2012). A case of University of Nairobi elections 2019, the article in the Daily Nation 5th April 2019 titled, “Money, social media influencers drive UoN (University of Nairobi) leadership campaign”, several features emerge key among them being security, blogging, protector and funds. Aspirants spent millions in search of the office most being spent on “wise men” who according to the article are current and former influential students who have high social media presence. The “wise men” are said to most feared hooligans whose mandate is to create tension, havoc, and fear during students’ campaigns. According to the article, a typical “wise man”, is a moneyed person with a social media presence that influences thousands of student followers. One aspirant is quoted saying, “You have to be as slay as a fox, brave and of fetching intellect so as to be a wise man.

Your past heroics in organizing successful student protests and standing to the arm-twisting tactics of the administration should also precede you”.

Social media and blogging plays a key role that aspirants at the University of Nairobi other than hiring influencers, spent lots of money to maintain their presence in social media through propaganda spread by contracted bloggers who shower praises and deride opponents. Bloggers were making over 5,000 shillings daily. The article singles out that that aspirants spent over Sh4 million in campaigns with estimated Sh 200,000 being spent daily.

2.3 Social Networks and Online Connections

Social networking which involves use of Internet-based networks or sites to stay online with friends, family, colleagues, customers, or clients are the new ways of communication majorly among the youths. The advent methods of communication which were majorly verbal and non-verbal have been overpowered by Worldwide web and online communication channels that present interesting options. Scholars have tried to explain the meaning of online communication with the easiest communication being how people as well as computers communicate with each other via a network and the Internet. The internet use was a thing for pride and set out only for the few.

Currently, use of internet and online communication has killed off the use of paper work and increased communication among people on the same network. The sharing and creation and maintainance of relationships and the innermost being can be expressed via different ways (Hu, Wood, Smith, & Westbrook, 2004). The notion by the scholars depicts the social aspect of social media use. It has enhanced communication and made

it easier for creation of online family. Online connections come with emails, sms,chats, forums, whiteboards and other connections that are easy and provide options of using either video or picture to pass a message. They are interactive platforms that include facebook, Twitter, Instagram WhatsApp among others that spearhead communication online by either use of computers or mobile technology.

The spread of mobile technology with the ability to use online and internet has spiraled the use of online communication in various sectors. Marketers use social networks just like advertisers, content managers and political content managers. They provide robust marketing opportunities for companies, increase brand recognition and encourage brand loyalty. The network effect has led to the growth of social media and use of tweets, likes on facebook, views on YouTube and Instagram have encouraged online trooping. Following the Internet design, societies, organizations and movements have evolved from centralized to decentralized and distributed networks. It is easier for offices far off to ccommunicate to a client and solve an issue. This decentralization and democratization of decision making has impacted businesses, governments and society at large (Malone, 2004; Koross & Kosgey, 2016).

As the network society diffuses, and new communications technologies expand the internet has brought connectors and links that bring the inner being through interaction. Underwood & Findlay (2004) studied the effect of internet connection on relationships and in their study and self-disclosure and intimacy were measured in terms of shared secrets in discussion of personal problems. The findings depicted society that has found closure in online communication and sharing of secrets unknown to many including closest friends. This indicates the impact of online communication in terms of social life.

2.4 The Internet and Communication about Politics

There has been raging debate about the true value of the internet in the political campaigning process and how different parties in politics use the internet. Communication has both the sender and the receiver of the intended information. In ensuring that the message reaches the audience, the medium used is key. Politics thrives when the message or signal sent by the politician is received by the intended constituents and there is feedback. Feedback notifies the aspirant of the feelings of the audience. The internet has opened up channels that have enhanced political communication to a higher level. Most politicians have presence on social media that enables them to interact freely with the audience on varied issues. The debate on the internet use in political communication seems set to continue and raise critical questions than answers since there has been contrasting empirical evidence on the same.

What is true and evident however is that the internet has revolutionized the way institutions, organizations, individuals and government agents communicate and talk about politics.

Internet services in Kenya were introduced in the mid to late 1990s and expanded rapidly over the next two decades (Mureithi, 2017). The growth of internet services have widened to other spheres. In the 1990s the internet services were limited, expensive, and hindered because of poor technological infrastructure, it was followed by substantial and sustained expansion in connectivity in the 2000s, much of which can be associated with introduction of mobile devices that have made internet connection easier (Communication Commission of Kenya, 2007; Kaigwa, 2017; Stork, Calandro, & Gillwald, 2013; Wyche & Olson, 2018).

The Internet has revitalized social media use Worldwide. Latin America as a case study is the region known for the fastest growth in internet users, and it has dominated many of the top global rankings of online engagement (Zain,2013; Radwanick, 2011; Gainous, Wagner & Gray ,2016). With the availability of the internet, social media tools can easily be applied to enhance communication and the trend is fastly being spread to other continents and countries. Even though restrictions and policies have been developed to hinder wide spread of social media in some countries in Africa, easy manipulation and navigation is surpassing the laws.

Latinobarómetro's report (2015) found that Facebook use in Latin America was more than doubled from 19% in 2010 to 42% in 2015. In this case, Latin America was ranked as one with the highest levels of internet penetration and its rates of usage had increased. This offered an early snapshot of how internet diffusion could affect attitudes in the developing world. The growth in internet usage in Latin America raises important political implications, this was the argument by (Gainous, Wagner & Gray 2016). The notions raised can be equated to the increased internet use in political communication. While the internet is important in established democracies, changes in political campaigns and institutions are often gradual, or even limited. In these states, political players are in the battle to engage social media tools in their political fields. Scholars, voters and political players have recognized the value, convenience and the potential of the internet in the political process.

The expected growth and increasing popularity of the internet therefore means that as it continues to develop and mature, it will continue to take and occupy central stage in communication about politics and the political process itself. This makes the World revolve around the internet. Universities are key players in the internet use both by

students, employees and management. They have built a strong pillar and force around the internet and new media technologies in communication and learning. Most universities have even moved some of the courses to being taught online with Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology being one of them. The common courses that cut across several departments and schools are offered online. This builds the importance of the Internet to higher learning institutions.

Wimmer and Dominick (2006) identified new areas of focus in research on political communication focusing on the internet in their study which included; the internet and public access, creation of an online public sphere, credibility of online political information, online campaigning and activism and online media ownership. Their study was inclusive of all the aspects that involve social media use in relation to internet. The fact that internet widens public access and sphere, encourages activism and ownership overshadows the main stream media in political communication and fight for democracy. Tedesco (2004) alludes that the internet's level is a vehicle for transforming democracy and increasing political levels of participation has been met with both expectation and explicit doubt. Scholars have been polarized into two camps of the optimists and skeptics. The optimists are of the idea that the internet will arouse and increase political participation while the skeptics believe that the internet will only serve to strengthen the well-known political communication patterns. In other words, the traditional offline communication habits will be transferred to the online platform thereby adding nothing new to the whole process.

In the last two decades, the internet has managed to penetrate society at an exciting pace. It is sweeping both the rich and poor at equal levels. As new aspects of the internet continue to emerge, the internet has evolved and continued to mature in form and content which means this debate cannot be fully resolved at this point (Tedesco, 2004).

The optimists focus on the potential of the internet to evade the grip of long-established mainstream media on the flow, tone and content of political communication.

The internet is expected to provide a new horizontal flow of information thereby enabling the voters and political actors to directly engage with each other, these contrasts with the vertical, hierarchical nature of traditional media establishments. This debate and research is taking place in the midst an acknowledgement among scholars of the declining involvement in civic affairs and the rising public distrust (Capella & Jamieson 1997).

2.4.1 Internet, University Students and Political Engagement

It has been a concern among many scholars who have observed declining passion and increasing indifference mostly among the youth when it comes to political participation. Politics was seen as a platform for the old and retired in public service to rule in the sense of self actualization. Bennet (1997) has noted the high levels of cynicism among the youth in regard to political involvement. Most youths feared engaging in politics as it was dubbed a “dirty” game and which had detrimental effects on the players both winners and losers. The youth level of participation was declining and it did not interest them. Political campaigns have now moved from the crowd marshalling state to the internet. At the same time, it’s the young people who report spending numerous hours on the internet, they have indicated asense that they were likely to use the internet more than newspapers in seeking political information and as avenues for involvement.

Carpini (2000) compared young adults with the older generation and observed that the youth are significantly; (1) Less trusting of their fellow citizens, (2) less interested in

politics or public affairs (3) less likely to feel a sense of identity, pride or obligation associated with citizenship (4) less knowledgeable about the substance or processes of politics (5) less likely to read a newspaper or watch the news (6) less likely to register to vote (7) less likely to participate in politics beyond voting (8) less likely to participate in community organizations designed to address public problems through collective action (9) less likely to connect individual efforts to help solve problems with more traditional, collective forms of civic engagement.

These disturbing observations demonstrate both the challenge facing the youth involvement in politics, but also highlight the opportunity and potential of the internet poses for youth engagement.

According to Carpini (2000), what is most fundamentally troublesome about these findings is that they point to a decline in our “civic infrastructure” during formative years of political socialization when these young people are developing “civic habits”. Generally, the media habits of the youth are also different than those of older citizens. They are much less likely than their older counterparts to read a daily newspaper, tune in to traditional evening television news broadcasts, or listen to news on the radio. Tedesco (2004) concludes by asserting that “what is not clear are ways to use the internet to interest, engage and activate the young voter”.

2.5 Social Networking Sites (SNS) Interaction Impacts

Impact is a marked effect or influence of one thing over the other and can also be taken as having a strong effect on someone or something. This revolves around interaction which is reciprocal action or influence. Interaction and impact are processes and representations that involve an activity. Social networks have had impacts and influences on individuals and mostly users. Online Social Networks like Facebook, Twitter,

WhatsApp, YouTube and MySpace have been receiving a lot of attention from the public, governments in place and even mainstream media on how they impact on masses. Inevitably, this new concept of Social Networking Sites (SNS) has now generated a lot of interest among many scholars on how they operate and as argued by (Wills & Reeves, 2009), social networks have lots of influence. SNSs seem to have been adopted by a broad range of society in many countries particularly teenagers (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Lenhart et al. 2007).

The youths have found social networks as avenues for communication and an easy process of interaction. The impact of social networks on youths is massive from both social, psychological and even physical changes. They change their thoughts and ideas on varied issues and also push them into action on a number of issues.

In a joint study by TNS and the Kenya ICT Board, in Kenya facebook was ranked higher in terms of use and further research revealed that top among social media uses was joining groups (56%), contributing to a discussion (56%), meeting friends (48%) and checking adverts (40%) (TNS & Kenya ICT Board, 2009).

Based on the findings interaction plays a bigger role in young people joining social networks with the main reasons being joining groups and going into discussions. The youths searching for jobs have to rummage around social networks for adverts on jobs and means of making money. Steinfield and Lampe (2009) accurately describe the nature and purpose of social networking sites as interaction.

Social networking sites allow people to present themselves well, expose their social connections, establish ways and sustain connections with others. It is through

connections that the power of social media use is achieved. It makes the World a village. The connections are important in the the democratic process and motivate people into engaging. Majority of scholars have tended to focus on the user characteristics and motivations while very few have focused on their role in engaging people in the democratic process as argued by (Zhang et al., 2010). Scholars argue that democracy grows in societies where political discussion is frequent and social sites are able to facilitate this. The proliferation of new media including the internet and social media have multiplied information and discussion and therefore provide potential for a more informed citizenry and more democratic participation, however, challenges like disinformation and misinformation that pervade the internet also undermines democratic information and discussions. The study will add to the body of knowledge in understand the use of social media among University students in relation to their use during elections based on the most preferred social media, the time spent on social media and if it influences the political decisions made by University students.

2.6 University Students and Social Presence

Social presence is a key part of social media (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Social presence is the sense of “warmth” and sociability within a website (Gefen & Straub, 2003).The notion by the above scholars is fit for University students use of social media and the gains therein. Social presence is defined as “the extent to which a medium allows users to experience others as psychologically present” (Hassanein & Head, 2005).It is the psychological presence that builds trust and enhances communication between parties involved.

Presence is the “illusion of being there or an experience of being in an environment while physically situated in another location” (Li, Daugherty, & Biocca, 2002). It is basically positioning yourself, ideas and thoughts at a far end but physically separated.

Social media has made it possible to achieve the scenario of “theWorld being smaller”, and closer. Among university students, social media links regions, areas and social groupings to segmented achievable positions and groups politically and socially.

A research study conducted across 15 countries identified students in higher education as being responsible for increasing the use of mobile computing devices, such as tablets and smartphones, with 67% attributing the technologies as being a factor in their academic success (Dahlstrom, Walker & Dziuban, 2013). Facebook is the social media platform most commonly used by university students. A study of 3000 university students found that 90% used Facebook (Dahlstrom, Grunwald, de Boor, & Vockley, 2011). Short et al (1976) suggest that intimacy and immediacy enhance the warmth of the media and presence is higher for interpersonal and synchronous communications than mediated and asynchronous (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This is the position of social media to university students.

The urge and psyche created in the use of social media unites and creates a warm environment besides the setbacks. A media is perceived as warm if it enables human interactions, sociability, and sensitivity (Hassanein & Head, 2005). Information seeking increases the perception of social presence (Hajli, Sims, Zadeh, & Richard, 2017) and Cheung, Chiu, and Lee (2011) find that social presence enhances users’ continued use of social media. Social media has made it easier to enhance participation which is as a result of continued information seeking and interpretation. The gates created in traditional media have been opened by social media.

Several sites have emerged online with links sent to social media. The developed sites act as sources of news and are faster and immediate in breaking news stories. Social

presence is therefore a determining factor in the choice of social media tool and its continuous use. Continuous use, impacts and creates influence to the user.

2.7 Benefits of Social Media for University Students

Social media refers to all applications and websites or blogs that enable people around the globe to interconnect via the internet, chat, share content, video call among other functionalities. Most university students find social media use effective and easy as most sites call for having the app, signing up and ready to use. It has been made easier by mobile phones that already have the apps and only require the user to sign in the app. Social media is increasing the participation of university students in activities both in and outside classroom. Most university students use social media for social connection and psychological development.

Psychological development has had its fair share of issues as social media is seen as a source of boredom leading to isolation. By having a connected environment, university students can easily juggle between education and social life. In terms of learning skills, social media is creating new and advanced learning methods. The move by most universities to include some of the common courses in their online study systems is expanding the sphere of social media use among university students. University students require mobile phones to access most university systems and be on the know of the operations. There are several communication channels that universities employ on regular basis which include brochures, letters, email messages, telephone conversations, newspapers, websites, internet and intranet but social media is taking over based on its flexibility and killing the paperwork.

Nayara and Kumar (2018) have argued that Information and Communication

Technology (ICT) removes the big constraints of time and space in higher education and enables access on anytime and anywhere basis. This has been brought by intergration of social media in higher learning institutions. This will have the effect of complimenting the normal traditional classroom setup and eventually enhance the learning process as a whole.

This has already been seen in most universities with online courses on the increase and students having the comfort of working from their tables. It is quite surprising that most universities in Kenya, despite having working elearning platforms that allows access to education materials do not take advantage of the neat features that social media has to offer. If social media were to be implemented in the e-learning programmes, they would have the effect of extending the traditional formal classroom set ups to a virtual system that promotes discussions freely. This would lead to better understanding of the material being studied (Notely, 2009).

Farzana, Mushahid & Mahe (2010) found out that most university students view social media as a hub for making new friends as opposed to expanding their academic interest through research. As social media creates this space for making friends, it has broken the physical connections and led most university students to live in isolation. The current crop of university students are facing depression issues as they lack people they can openly share with their frustrations mostly caused by social media. The power of connection within social media has been used to lure most university students into traps that leave them with scars. Online dating is a hinderance for both male and female students. Though it is a social purpose it is detrimental. Oluwatoyin (2011) hypothesizes that poor performance of university students is based on constant social media interactions during periods that ought to have been dedicated to studies.

Research done by Kirschner and Karpinski (2010), found a significant negative

relationship between facebook use and academic performance a perception that builds the negative image of social media. The findings by most researchers, though comprehensive and accurate in the context of their study, ignored to analyse whether the features in social media can be useful in learning. Social media can be used to connect sections of higher learning institutions and allow students to share information and work in unison. This therefore drives to show that proper use of social media creates room that can compliment learning.

Social media targets a wide audience making it ideal for content sharing among huge audiences. It raises possibilities of misuse which can hinder positive contributions and therefore calls for proper policies in place to ensure full utilization of social media without which may generate more disadvantages than advantages. Most university students have issues when it comes to balancing internet usage, their social life, extracurricular activities, and part time jobs online. The need to make more money and be engaged leads to excessive use of social media differently.

Social media is perceived by university students as a platform where they can do away with pressure arising from studies in classes and interact to their social benefits.

2.8 Research Gaps

Beyond the boundaries of personal communication, social media is redefining the way in which organizations are reaching their audiences and communicating with the individuals. Several studies have been done on use of social media among university students Worldwide Kenya included. Studies reviewed show that the use of social media tools can improve the day to day operations of the students as it provides information in varied fields of interest. Social media tools are also tools for group settings based on year of study, class, subject combination among others. Varied social

media tools are in use including Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Snap chat, Youtube among others. The studies further reveal social media is a tool for social change.

However, little information is provided on the utilization of social media in university students elections in Kenya. It is against this background that the study seeks to analyze the utilization of social media in University students elections. This is because, despite the students being knowledgeable enough to understand more on social media use, cases of misuse of social media are rampant among university students. Besides the change of students elections laws amongst universities, there are cases of political clashes and tribal realignments. These divide students within the universities leading to cases of misinformation and disinformation. This study thus demonstrates how university students utilize social media tools so that they can be a success in university elections and help in the developing of policies to manage social media use, enlighten university students on subsequent acts of the constitution and help other researchers in media and journalism in the area of social media study as reference material.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed literature review informed by the objectives of the study. Specifically, it has covered evolution of social media platforms in use, social media trends among university students, social media types and university students' choice, factors affecting social media use, social media and social change among university students, social media and group mobilization, social media trends and politics, social media tools and politics, social media students and politics, the internet and communication about politics, internet university students and political engagements and university students and social presence.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter delves into the steps the study used to realize its objectives; research design, population of the study, sampling procedure, sample size, instrumentation, data collection tools, data analysis and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

Research design is a conceptual structure in which research is conducted, it can also be regarded as an arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance with the purpose of the research. Other scholars in their studies allude to the fact that it constitutes the blueprint for the data collection, measurement and analysis (Kothari, 2013).

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. It was designed in a way to explore the relationship between social media use in university students' elections. This was intended to gather data that informed the findings and recommendations of the study. Under descriptive survey method, information is collected by interviewing respondents or by administering questionnaires to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2003). Descriptive survey is not only restricted to fact findings, it can also result in formulation of important principles of knowledge and solutions to given problems which is the basis of this study.

3.2 Study Area

The study was carried out at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST). MMUST was purposively selected due to its accessibility, the target group and the fact that it serves students from all over the country. MMUST is situated along

Kisumu Webuye road in the western part of Kenya, Kakamega County. Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology is one of the public universities in Kenya within Kakamega County with a population of 1,867,579 as per the Kenya Population and Housing Census (KPHC) Report 2019. It is the fourth populous County after Nairobi, Kiambu and Nakuru Counties.

With a total of 17,000 students according to Kenya Bureau of Statistics 2017 report and students 2017 data base, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology has students who enroll for different courses both in the main campus and its subsequent campuses for courses ranging from Certificate to Doctorate levels.

There have been vigorous students' campaigns previously but since the elections have been narrowed to schools and faculties, campaigns have been transformed such that they make intensive use of technology. In this regard, social media plays a role in the campaigns during students' elections. For instance, university students hold yearly elections in which they elect a students' governing body that is led by a students' President. Before the current electoral college system was adopted in late 2016 by local universities, the entire population in Universities had the right to directly elect their leaders. It called for massive campaigns to convince the electorates to support a given candidate.

According to the new system adopted by universities, the students' association constitutes itself into electoral colleges based on their academic departments, schools or faculties. Students from each of these faculties or schools referred to as electoral colleges elect representatives who then elect the students governing council that observes the two-third gender rule. "The representatives of each electoral college shall elect the

members of the student council within thirty days of the election under this subsection,” reads section 41(1)(e) of the Universities Act.

3.3 Study Population

Population refers to class subjects, variables, concepts, or phenomena (Wimmer, 2006). The study population comprised of students in the university pursuing undergraduate courses. Study population excluded the postgraduate students at the university since they do not participate in the elections. Okoro (2006) postulates that “population in research stands for elements of concern in a given study.” The subjects of the study were drawn from students at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. Based on the data of students admitted at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology for different courses and the University’s official website, there are 17,000 students in Kakamega main campus.

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Technique

Chandran (2004), and Baraza (2016) in their studies define the process as that of selecting a number of individuals in a manner that the chosen individuals represent a larger group from the sample that has been selected. The study employed probability sampling followed by stratified sampling. The sampling technique was used to group respondents into year of study after which simple random sampling was then used to pick respondents from the stratum. The sample was stratified to reflect the distribution of students at MMUST by the year of study. The students listed were placed in various categories which formed a sampling frame from each category, that is 1st years, 2nd years, 3rd years, 4th years and 5th year who formed a stratum. Simple random sampling was then used to select those from each category to participate in the study. This technique allowed for selection of sample without bias. According to Oso et al, (2005),

simple random sampling ensures that each member in the population has an equal and independent chance for inclusion in the sample.

The study used proportionate stratified sampling, under this method the different strata do not have the same sampling fractions. This gave equal chances to students in different years of study within Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology main campus. The questionnaires were distributed amongst the selected students as per the years of study and courses based on the total sample size of 378 questionnaires. It was easy to have limited chances of biasness on the case study and give equal chances to all cases of study in selected population and estimate the sampling.

3.4.1 Sample Size

A sample provides estimates of the true occurrence of the behavior under study (Kabir, 2016). It is determined by the type and purpose of the study being carried out (Oso & Onen, 2011). A sample is a selected part of a population observed for the purpose of making a scientific statement about a population. It is usually chosen when the population of the study area is too big. To get required information of students who use social media within Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, the researcher used The Research advisors sample size table (2006). The study was based on a confidence level of =95% and margin of error =5% on a population size of 17,000 students at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, the study used a sample of 378.

Using stratified sampling, the researcher divided the population into separate groups called strata. The population was divided into groups that were used to obtain a sample size of (378) students from different years of study namely, 1st years, 2nd years, 3rd years

and 4th years. The sample size 378 was arrived at using the Research Advisors table (2006) indicated below

Figure 3. 1: Sampling Table

Required Sample Size [†]								
Population Size	Confidence = 95%				Confidence = 99%			
	Margin of Error				Margin of Error			
	5.0%	3.5%	2.5%	1.0%	5.0%	3.5%	2.5%	1.0%
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
20	19	20	20	20	19	20	20	20
30	28	29	29	30	29	29	30	30
50	44	47	48	50	47	48	49	50
75	63	69	72	74	67	71	73	75
100	80	89	94	99	87	93	96	99
150	108	126	137	148	122	135	142	149
200	132	160	177	196	154	174	186	198
250	152	190	215	244	182	211	229	246
300	169	217	251	291	207	246	270	295
400	196	265	318	384	250	309	348	391
500	217	306	377	475	285	365	421	485
600	234	340	432	565	315	416	490	579
700	248	370	481	653	341	462	554	672
800	260	396	526	739	363	503	615	763
1,000	278	440	606	906	399	575	727	943
1,200	291	474	674	1067	427	636	827	1119
1,500	306	515	759	1297	460	712	959	1376
2,000	322	563	869	1655	498	808	1141	1785
2,500	333	597	952	1984	524	879	1288	2173
3,500	346	641	1068	2565	558	977	1510	2890
5,000	357	678	1176	3288	586	1066	1734	3842
7,500	365	710	1275	4211	610	1147	1960	5165
10,000	370	727	1332	4899	622	1193	2098	6239
25,000	378	760	1448	6939	646	1285	2399	9972
50,000	381	772	1491	8056	655	1318	2520	12455
75,000	382	776	1506	8514	658	1330	2563	13583
100,000	383	778	1513	8762	659	1336	2585	14227
250,000	384	782	1527	9248	662	1347	2626	15555
500,000	384	783	1532	9423	663	1350	2640	16055
1,000,000	384	783	1534	9512	663	1352	2647	16317
2,500,000	384	784	1536	9567	663	1353	2651	16478
10,000,000	384	784	1536	9594	663	1354	2653	16560
100,000,000	384	784	1537	9603	663	1354	2654	16584
300,000,000	384	784	1537	9603	663	1354	2654	16586

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3.5 Data Collection Tools

Data collection refers to the process of gathering information to serve or prove facts (Kombo & Tromp, 2014). Data is the information to be collected by the researcher to complete the study, these data includes facts and figures relating to a particular issue under study, data is collected both secondary and primary..

3.5.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used to get views from students in the use of social media, time spent and if it influences their political decisions. It was divided into two sections namely; A and B. Section A, sought information on respondent's demographic data. Section B was used to find out general information of the respondents engagement with social media and their reaction towards its use in elections among university students. The questionnaire had both structured and semi-structured questions with respondents given an opportunity to express their views in regard to social media use. The questionnaires were distributed to three hundred and seventy eight (378) respondents.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it purports to measure (Kombo, 2006). Reliability on the other hand is the measure or the degree to which the research instruments yield results that are consisted after repeat trials (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). To estimate the reliability of the instrument, a pilot survey involving the research instrument (questionnaire) was done using a small and representative sample of thirty eight (38) respondents which is a 10% representation of the sample size of 378 sampled in Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology at the School of Business and Economics (SOBE). According to Bonta (2008), piloting is important because it helps to identify ambiguities of the instruments and vague questions so that they can be improved.

The researcher determined the content validity of the questionnaires as a way of ensuring that the data collected using the instrument represent adequately the domain of the variables measured. Thus assistance was sought from the researcher's supervisors and other research experts from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology to assess the relevance of the content in the research tool against the objectives of the study. Their suggestion were then used to improve the clarity of the questionnaires used in the study. With 100% response in the pilot study, the findings indicated use of social media among university students and influenced their decision making during electioneering period. The collected data in pre-test was not used in the final study.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher before embarking on data collection, trained the research assistants drawn from the population under study. The researcher and the four assistants assisted in the guidance and distribution of the research tool. The researcher and the assistants embarked on data collection using the questionnaires as per the sample size and by use of both snowball and stratified sampling techniques. Primary data is best collected from interaction with the respondents through the aid of questionnaires (Mugenda & Mugenda 1999). The study employed primary data collection that was done by use of questionnaires. The questionnaires included both structured and semi structured questions.

3.8 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data is raw information and information collected from the respondents (Kombo & Tromp, 2014) Data analysis is basically about the organization, interpretation and presentation of data (Oso & Onen, 2011). Data analysis is the whole process which starts immediately after data has been collected and completed. The process ends at the point of interpretation and processing of results (Kothari, 2008; Baraza, 2016). Data analysis is

about the organization, interpretation and presentation of data (Oso & Onen, 2011). Quantitative study involves turning raw numbers into meaningful data through the application of rational and critical thinking. This was done by carefully and keenly scrutinizing the questionnaires to detect any errors and omissions. Necessary corrections were made where errors and any omissions were detected. This was to ensure the collected data was accurate and consistent. The data was then assigned codes and arranged in groups based on common characteristics and then summarized in the manner that they provided answers to the questions the researcher had asked when formulating the research problem (Vyhmeister, 2001).

To summarize the observations and findings made from the study, inferential and descriptive statistics were used to analyze collected data which made use of percentages and frequencies. Specific primary data collected was critically analyzed and objectively interpreted through comparing it to other findings with the study framework. Data was analyzed by SPSS 25 version and presented in form of pie charts, bar charts and tables.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The issue of ethics is important in conducting research. Adherence to ethical values is a key requirement in research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The major ethical issues of concern in research include knowledgeable approval, privacy and confidentiality and the issue anonymity of the respondents (Oso & Onen, 2011). First and foremost, the researcher sought informed consent from the respondents who participated in the study. The researcher involved the principle of voluntary participation which requires that respondents should not be coerced into participating in the research. A research permit was sought from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), which was presented to the County Education Office for the official letter

from the County of Kakamega and Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology management through the Dean of Student's office.

The researcher took reasonable measures to protect subjects physically and psychologically after receiving informed consent from the subjects. Respondents were assured that the research would be used solely for academic purposes. Finally the researcher maintained responsibility for the work and for the subject's contribution to the study.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the steps the study used to realize its objectives; research design, population of the study, sampling procedure, sample size, instrumentation, data collection tools, data analysis and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.0 Overview

This chapter discussed findings, data presentation, interpretation and analysis. The findings were organized around the study objectives. The main objective of the study was to determine utilization of social media in university students elections in Kenya, a case of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology.

4.1 Questionnaire Return Rate

The study used a sample size of 378 respondents from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. The sample size was a representation of the entire population of the University. From the target of 378 questionnaires disbursed, 370 questionnaires were fully filled representing 97.9% return rate as shown in the table 4.2 below. The response was good and confirmed to by Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) which stipulates that a response rate of 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting; 60% rate is good response and 70% and over is excellent. As per the response the respondents were willing to participate in the study representing an excellent response.

Table 4. 1: Questionnaire Return Rate

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Responded	370	97.9%
No Response	8	2.1%
Total	378	100%

Source: Author 2018

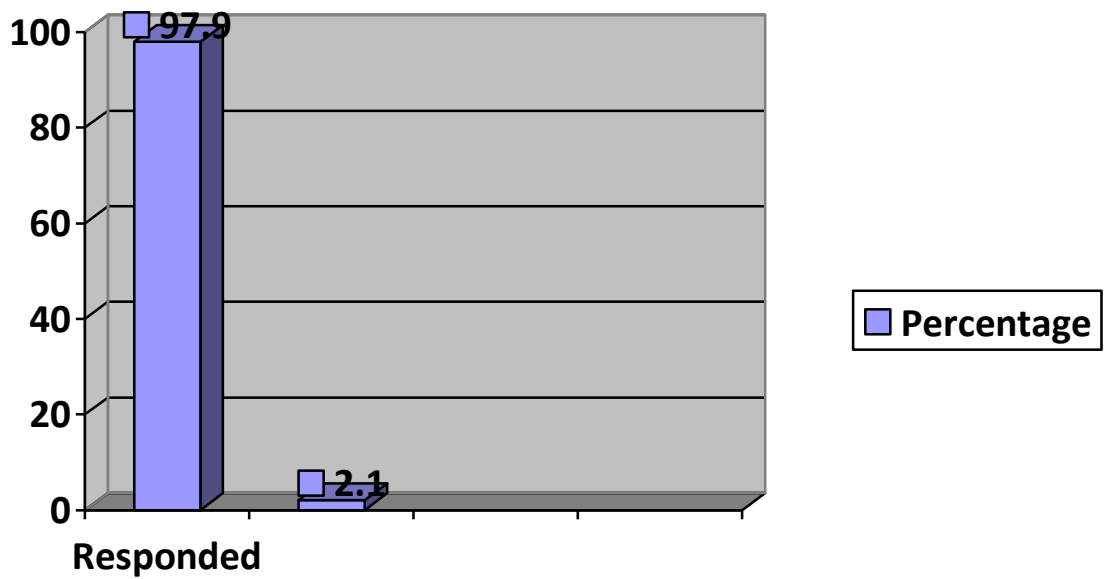


Figure 4. 1: Response Rate

4.2 Demographic Information

The demographic information analysed included gender and year of study of the respondents of the study within the university.

4.3 Distribution of Respondents by Gender

The sample size of 378 and return rate of 97.9% the respondents were sampled in terms of the gender of the students. Out of the 370 returned questionnaires, male students who responded were 219 at the rate of 59.2% with female students response at 151 representing 40.8%. As shown in Table 4.3, more male students were willing to respond to the questionnaires than female.

Table 4. 2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Respondents	Percentage
Male	219	59.2%
Female	151	40.8%
Total	370	100%

Source: Author 2018

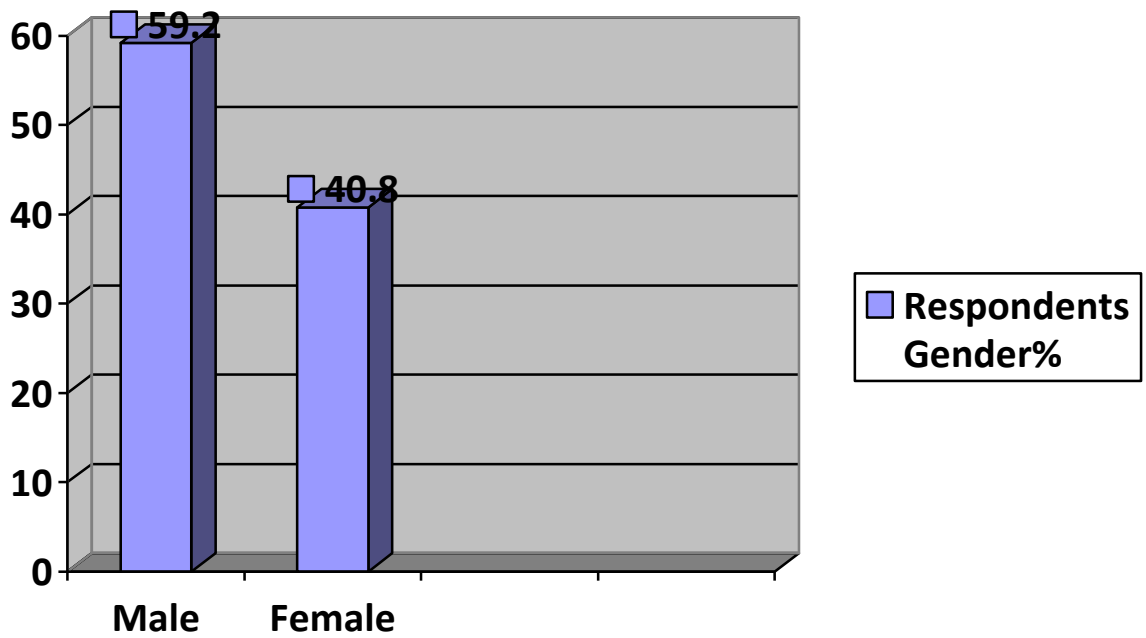


Figure 4.2: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

The findings on the gender of the respondents was based on the stratified sampling method which uses simple random sampling and gives an equal chance to the respondents in circulation of the research tool. The response on gender is an indicator of the willingness of the respondents as most were seen as being busy in their studies and the willingness to respond by the male students on the issue of politics and social media use as compared to female students.

4.4 Distribution of Respondents by Year of study

The findings on the year of study of the respondents was based on the stratified sampling method and distribution of the sample in status. The response on the year of study indicates the distribution of the population, the willingness of the respondents to comment on the issue under study and the availability of the respondents as most were seen as being busy in their studies.

Table 4. 3: Distribution of Respondents by Year of study

Year of Study	Respondents	Percentage
First years	98	26%
Second years	116	31%
Third Years	102	28%
Fourth Years	54	15%
Total	370	100%

Source: Author 2018

As per the findings in table 4.4 , a high percentage of the second year students participated in this research accounting for 116 representing 31% followed by third year students who accounted for 102 respondents a total of 28%, 26% of the respondents

which represents 98 of the total sampled were first years while 15% which represents 54 respondents were fourth years. More second years were interested on the topic of political communication as compared to the fourth years. This is indicated in the interests to participate in the decisions made within the University.

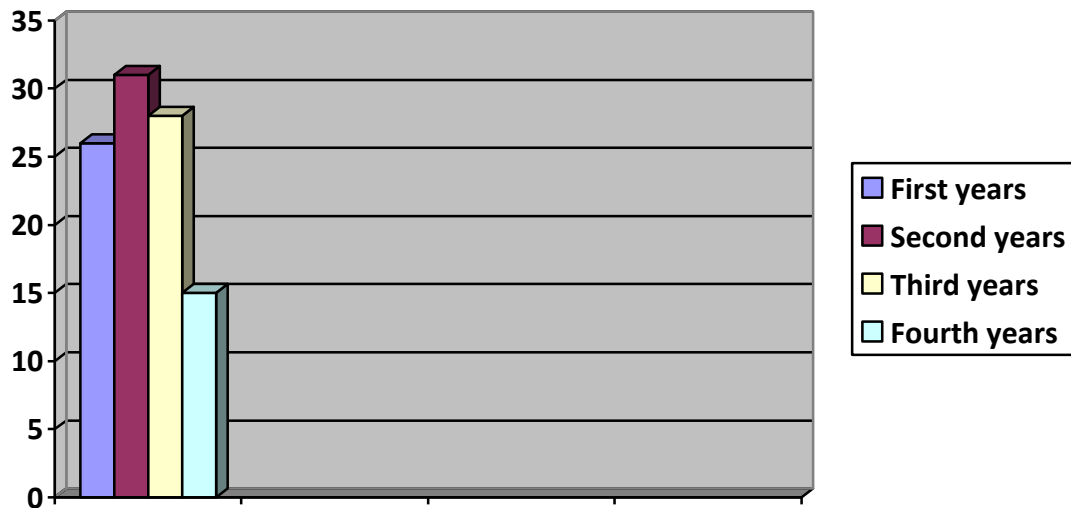


Figure 4.3: Year of study respondents percentage

4.5 Source of Information for University Students

In understanding the operations of respondents the researcher wanted to comprehend the source of information of the respondents. As per the tool of data collection, questionnaire, 370 representing (100%) respondents responded to the question of the source of information for university students. As per the findings, 178 (48%) respondents were of the view that the main source of information is social media sites, broadcast media; radio and Television had 137(37%) respondents while print media had 40 (11%) respondents while others including face to face had 15 (4%) respondents.

Table 4.4: Source of Information

Source of Information	Respondents number	Respondents %
Social media	178	48%
Broadcast media	137	37%
Print Media	40	11%
Others	15	4%
Total	370	100%

Source: Author 2018

As per the findings in Table 4.5, most university students find information via social media sites with broadcast media coming in closer.

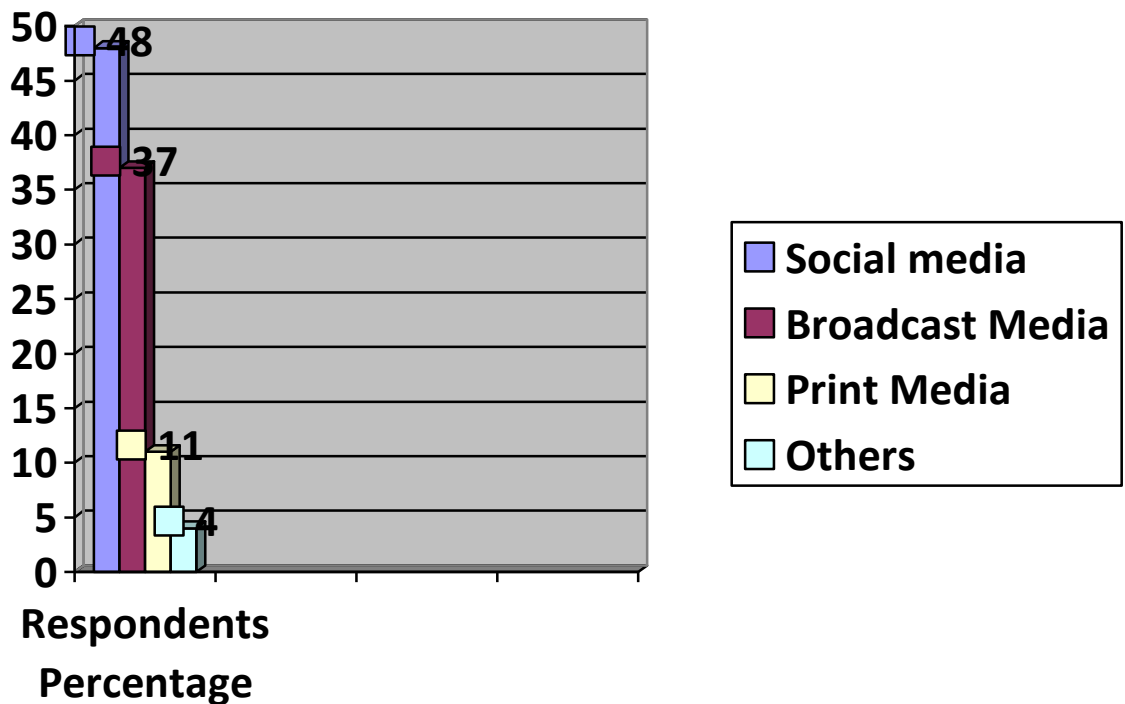


Figure 4.4: Source of Information

Table 4.5 and figure 4.5.0 indicate the table and graph on the source of information from the respondents with 48% responding that social media is their main source of information, 37% broadcast media, 11% print media and other sources at 4%.

The findings in this study on the source of information by university students' corroborates with Keren Jepngetich's study on influence of social media on face to face communication among college students in Eldoret (Jepngetich, 2016). The study showed that 63.4% of respondents use social media while 36.6% prefer face to face communication as trusted source of communication. Based on the findings, most students prefer the use of social media and is an indicator of the reflections in the studies which indicate the growing use of social media.

4.5.1 Preferred Source of Information

To understand better the source of information choice the respondents were asked on the reasons why they prefer the source of information based on the frequency of responds, most of the respondents based on easy accessibility, cheap as the two main options for their choice.

Table 4. 5: Preferred Source of Information

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Easily accessible	234	28.7%
Offers the best options	120	14.7%
Reduces boredom	105	12.9%
Cheap	178	21.9%

Has impact on way of life	95	11.7%
Others use it	82	10.1%
Total	814	100%

In understanding the source of information for the university students, the respondents as per the frequency of choice, the response in Table 4.5.1 indicate easily accessible at 234 (28.7%) as the most frequent response for the reason of the choice.

Cheap at 178 (21.9%), offers best options at 120 (14.7%), has impact on the way of life at 95 (11.7%) others use it at 82 (10.1%) and reduces boredom at 105 (12.9%). The findings indicate an interactive form of communication based on the respondents and validates the choice of social media as their source of communication. The findings corroborates with Mbetera, (2017) study on universities within Nairobi that found out entertainment, chatting and information seeking as key elements in the use of social media by respondents. Mugeru (2015) study indicates that most of the respondents cited knowledge sharing, collaboration, social interaction and immediate feedback as the proven benefits of social media in public Universities. The findings corroborates with the findings by Sharma & Shukla (2016) who found out among Indian college students that social media was used as a cheaper online medium for chatting with friends, keeping in touch with family and for sharing pictures, documents and videos. The ease of access can be associated to the intervening variables of accessibility to the internet and the availability of internet points in most learning institutions it is easy to access the internet while in universities. Devolution in Kenya too has brought fourth the availability of the internet in towns and some residential homes provide internet services free to their

residents as a way of enticing them. Availability of the internet makes it easy to access most sites.

4.6 Objective One: Preferred Social Media Tool

The first objective was to determine the preferred social media tool by university students

Table 4. 6: Preferred Social Media Tool

Social media tool	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Facebook	140	38%
WhatsApp	167	45%
Twitter	48	13%
Others	15	4%
Total	370	100%

Source: (Author, 2018)

In finding response to the first objective of this study the research wanted to determine the preferred social media tool by University students at Masinde Muliro University.

The respondents are tabled in Table 4.6 There are several social media tools in use for various purposes. In this study, the respondents were asked the preferred social media tool as shown in Table 4.5 The study found out that WhatsApp and Facebook are the most preferred due to easy exchange and sharing of content. According to respondents 167 (45%) prefer WhatsApp as the tool for communication, 140 (38%) of respondents agreed that Facebook was their choice, Twitter stands at 48 (13%) while other networks stand at 15 (4%), the other tools mentioned were Instagram, facebook lite and youtube. Most female respondents who chose other tools mentioned Instagram and snapchat than the males. Based on the respondents, most University students belong to whatsApp groups based on the year of study, regions they come from, courses they partake, areas of residence, “communities” and political groupings. WhatsApp is the most preferred social media site among University students for political communication with the arguments being the site is easily accessible for those with smart phones and can access

internet connectivity and download the app, the formation of “classes’ among students on WhatsApp makes it more interactive and enables students to share content. The inclusion of video and voice calls and ability to sent video and audio clips instantly makes WhatsApp appropriate for communication among peers on social, educational, spiritual and psychological issues. It is followed by Facebook as indicated by pie chart below

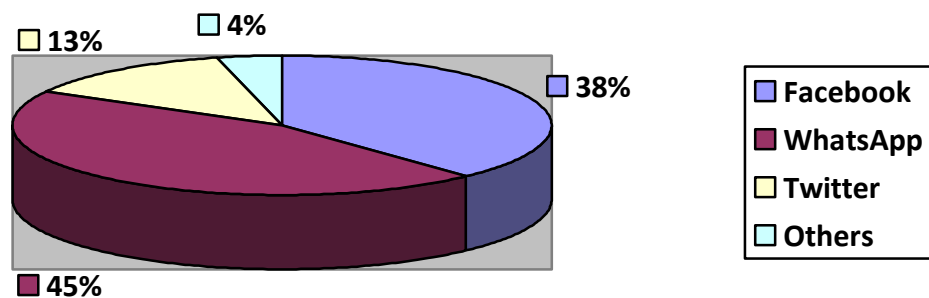


Figure 4. 5: Preferred Social Media Network

The findings in Table 4.5 compute with the findings by Nendo (2017) research and the media landscape in Kenya report, (2019) which captured 2018 & 2019, with the media landscape report indicating WhatsApp at 73% in 2018 and 82% in 2019 and Facebook at 70% in 2018 and 80% in 2019 and the Nendo, (2017) findings which found out that most Kenyans are on social media sites with WhatsApp with 12 million Kenyans and facebook with 7.1 million Kenyans as indicated in Table 4.6.1.

Table 4. 7: Active users’ Platforms as of September 2017

Platform	Monthly Users
WhatsApp	12 million
Facebook	7.1 million
YouTube	8 million
Instagram	4 million
LinkedIn	1 million
Twitter	1 million
Snapchat	0.25 million

Source: (Nendo, 2017)

Based on Table 4.6.1 WhatsApp is rated the highly used monthly platform as per the report of 2017. Its flexibility and easy to use features and availability of the internet penetration on mobile subscriptions have contributed to the growth of locally generated content and sharing though contradicts its use in organizations social media usage with the Marketing society of Kenya, end year survey, 2018, indicating that there is 88% usage of social media platforms with facebook at 71% being the most common used for reaching their audience and the least being podcast, WhatsApp and Email at 2%, 2%, and 1% respectively (Media landscape report 2019).

The findings tally with Yakin (2013), study on utilization of social media tools for informal learning activities which found out that Facebook usage for learning from experts or advisors among students iwas 39.5%, and the rate of Youtube in the same group was 34.5%. The rates were 21.3% for Google Groups and 19.65% for Wikipedia. Twitter with the rate of 13.4% and Skype with the rate of 11.5% used to communicate with experts or advisors.

A study by Ndunge (2017) indicated that WhatsApp had the most population carrying 36% of users sampled, followed by Twitter with 23%, Instagram 18%, Facebook with 16% and YouTube was accessed by 10 percent of the total population sampled. The findings indicate that the transformational nature of social media makes it easier and flexible to use amongst youths and WhatsApp is taking the centre stage among university students in their communication.

4.6.2 Reasons for the Preferred Social Media site.

In understanding better the preferred social media site, the study sought to understand the reasons behind the social media site of choice. Based on the response in 4.6, WhatsApp was the most preferred social media site and the respondents were of the idea that it is convenient, safe and easy to use as shown in Table 4.6.2

Table 4. 8: Reasons for the Preferred Social Media site

Reasons for the preferred social media tool	Number of respondents	Percentage
Convenient	130	35%
Easy to use	63	17%
Safe	74	20%
Cheap	96	26%
Others use it	7	2%
Total	370	100%

Source: Author 2018

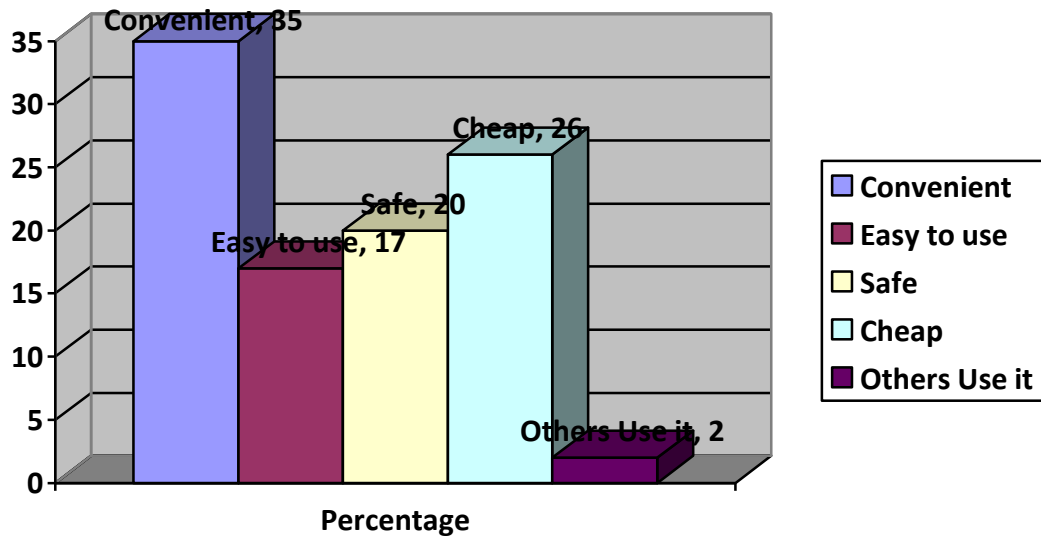
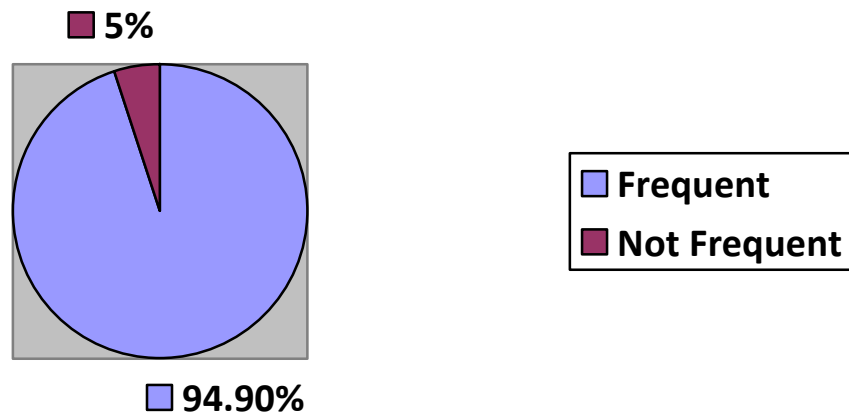


Figure 4. 6: Reasons for the Social Media choice

4.6.3 How Frequent Respondents use Social Media

Respondents were asked how frequent they used social media, the researcher wanted to understand how the choice of the preferred social media was in use. The choice was made simple for the respondents to choose if it was frequent or not. As indicated in the pie chart below, 351 (94.9%) of the users respondent that they used social media frequently and 19 (5.05%) do not use it frequently. The results indicate massive use of social media among youths.

Figure 4. 7: How Frequent Respondents use Social Media



4.6.4 Do the views on the Preferred Social Media Tool have Impact on your life

To better understand social media use, the preferred tool and how it is used the research sought to know if the social media tool selected had impact on the users. As indicated in the Pie Chart 4.6.4 below most respondents opined that it impacted their lifestyles at 226 (61%) against 144(39%) the number of those who were of the opinion that it didn't impact their ways.

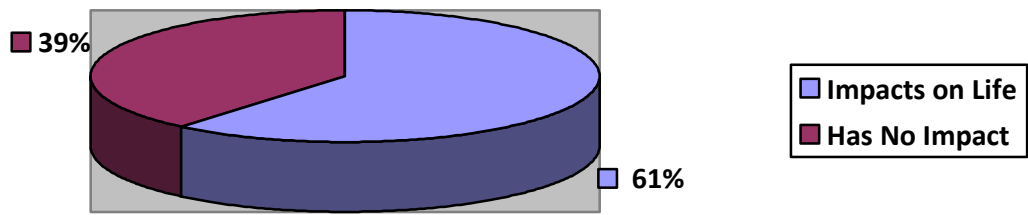


Figure 4. 8: Pie chart on if Social Media Tool has Impact on Students life

Based on the findings as indicated in the pie chart above most respondents alluded to the notion that social media use impacts on their lifestyle. It is the nature of the impact that varies from social, psychological, physical and even spiritually. Upon being asked how it impacts them, the respondents were of the idea that, communication and sharing of information was key in way of life with most respondents stating that information sharing led to their understanding of their environment and how to adopt, others said understanding new trends via social media made them advance in their lifestyle while others said the decisions they made in their daily lives was as a result of what was happening to others.

Changes in trends, political information, and psychological issues as per the respondents were issues that impacted the respondents. As per the respondents gender, most males were impacted with issues that touched on political information, sports and gambling an indicator of interest in politics, sports and gambling with most females being impacted on trends based on dressing, expenditure, and relationships. The social aspect carries more weight as per the study with most respondents being impacted socially in their

life. For those who felt it was not touching on their lives, most respondents stated that information in social media could not be trusted based on the fake news fact and fake lifestyles that would not be trusted.

The findings corroborates with information gathered by Ethel Lee, (2013) on the impacts of social media on consumer behavior that indicated social media provided more powerful platforms where new products, services, or even new brands could be noticed in the market place. Though the findings as stated by Ethel Lee, (2013) did not imply that social media could influence consumers to actually try these products and services. Data gathered by Lee, reflected that individuals (64 %) are indeed influenced to try new products, services, or brands because of the user-generated contents (blogposts, Facebook status, user reviews, and so on) available on the social media. It tallies with this study that stands at 61%. The respondents call for more research in the area based on specific impact of a social media tool.

4.7 Frequency of Accessing the Internet in a week

Based on the second objective of understanding time spent on social media, the study asked respondents on the number of times they visited the internet in a week. To access social media sites, one major factor is availability of the internet. One has to access the internet to be able to join a social media site. The researcher wanted to know the frequency at which most university students visit the internet.

Table 4. 9: Frequency of Accessing the Internet in a week

Frequency of Visiting the Internet	Number of respondents	Percentage%
Daily	140	38%
Once a week	28	7.5%
Several times a day	202	54.5%
Total	370	100%

Source: (Author, 2018)

When asked how often they visit the internet, most respondents confirmed that they visit it several times a day at 202 (54.5%) followed by those who visit it daily at 140 (38%) and 28 (7.5%) for those who access the internet once a week respectively. The main reason for the study question and objective was to examine whether the time of exposure to information via social media platforms led to flocking social media sites.

The reflection of this findings is that the internet is becoming a way of life for most people mostly youths who cannot operate without the internet. The findings indicate that respondents visit social media sites on daily basis and it is spread all over the day. Tallying with the research question by Ethel Lee, (2013) on the time spend on social media in his study impact of social media on consumer behavior, respondents were asked how much time they spend on social media platforms and mass media channels per week and the study found out that an individual spends an average of 6.2 hours on social media sites per week Ethel Lee, (2013).

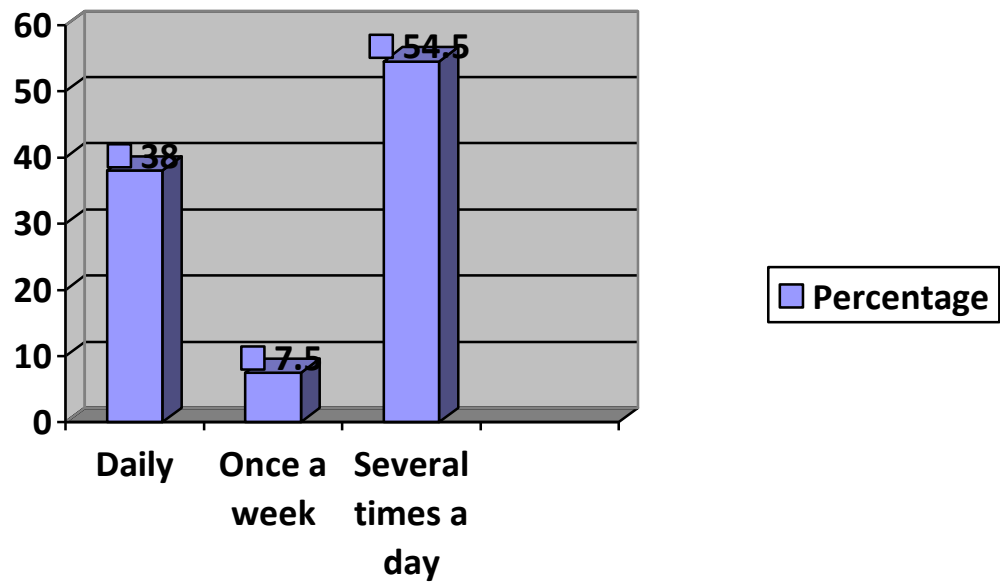


Figure 4.9: Frequency of accessing the Internet in a week

4.8 Objective Two: Average Time Spent on Social Media

The study was to establish the time spent on social media by university students at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. To get response on this objective, the researcher designed the study tool to get response in terms of minutes and hours respondents spent on social media sites. The response was as tabled in Table 4.8

Table 4. 10: Time Spent on Social Media per Day

Time spent on social media	No. of respondents	Percentage%
Less than 30minutes	70	19%
30min-1hour	137	37%
1hr -2hrs	104	28%
2hrs-5hrs	33	9%
More than 5hrs	26	7%
Total	370	100%

Source: (Author, 2018)

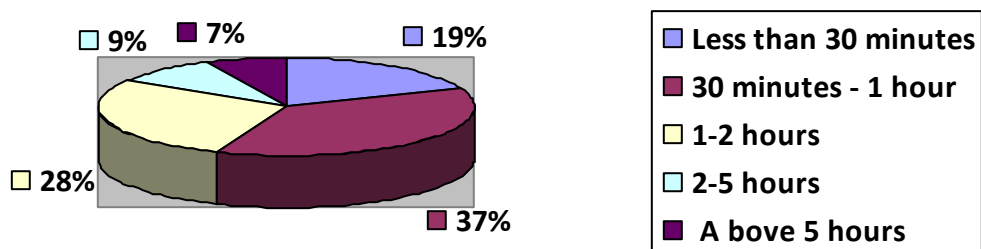


Figure 4.10: Average Time Spent on Social Media

The question of time spent by university students on social media sites was answered by 370 respondents out of which 137 (37%) of the respondents said they spent 30 minutes to 1 hour on a social media site. 104 (28%) spend 1 to 2 hours hour on social media sites,

less than 30 minutes 70(19%), those who spend 2-5hours 33 (9%) while above 5 hours 26 respondents (7%).

According to the findings, most university students spent time on social media sites and it is part of their lifestyle. The findings correlate with the findings by Karen Jepngetich (2016) a study on the influence of social media on face to face communication among college students, a study done on selected colleges in Eldoret in which the findings indicated that 59.6% spent 2-5 hours on social media 21.6% spent 5-10 hours and 16.4% spend 1 hour while 1.4% spend 10 hours.

According to O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson (2011), The American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP) classify time spent on social networking sites (SNS) into three categories as high use (more than 2 hours), average use (30 minutes to 2 hours) and low use (less than 30 minutes). The findings though do not specify the age brackets of the respondents, a study done in European countries as indicated by digitalinformationworld.com, indicated that Netherlands has the highest number of hours spent on social media at 6:03hours per day, Portugal at 5:67 hours in a day and Sweden at 5:52 hours per day in 2016. A study by Ndunge (2017) discovered that most students spend between one and three hours on social media sites, while extreme users spend more than twelve hours. Interestingly, 4.5 % of the sample she studied spend less than an hour online in a day. Recent studies have unearthed that the quantity of time people are spending on the internet especially the social media is on the rise (Tang & Cheah, 2017).

The average time on social media by teenagers daily is 5hours and 30% of that time is for purposes of interacting and communicating with others and most of that time is through mobile phones. The study which analyzed people from the age of 16 years to 64 years indicated that the age bracket of 16-24 years spent 3:01 hours on social media per

day, 25-34 years used 2:37 hours, 35-44 years used 2:04 hours, 45-54 years spent 1:39 hours per day and 55-64 years spent 1:13 hours per day on social media. The study looked at the average time as compared to this study that looked at the time one can spent on social media at one time.

4.8.1 Spending more Time on Social Media

Time is of essence and it is important to understand where university students spend their time to make it easier to access them. The study sought to know if, university students would be willing to spent more time on social media tools and the reasons behind it. Based on the respondents 288 (77.8%) respondents were of the idea that they would increase time spent on social media to even entire day based on availability of the internet, gadgets and presence of others on social media sites. This proves the sense of interactivity of social media tools. Most respondents would increase to 6 hours a day. Those who would not increase time spent on social media, 82 (22.2%) termed it as a waste of time which would be spent in class and the trend was seen based on age bracket of the respondents. Those in the younger bracket agreed to increasing time spent on social media tools as indicated in the table and chart below.

Table 4. 11: Spending more Time on Social Media

Increase of time spent on social media	Respondents	Percentage
Agreed Yes	288	77.8%
Disagreed No	82	22.2%
Total	370	100%

Source: Author, 2018

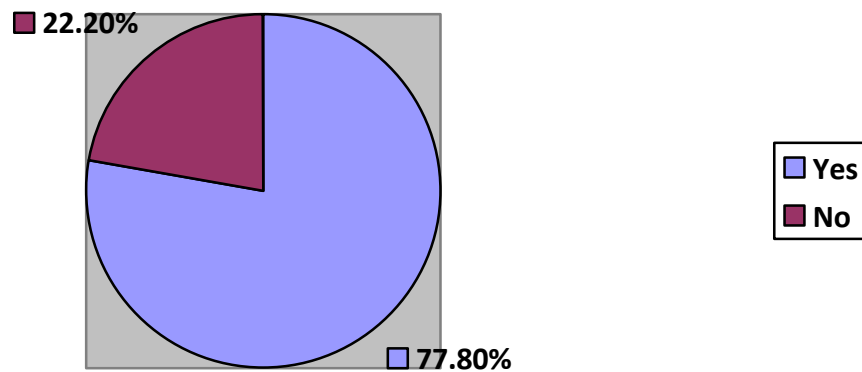


Figure 4.11: Respondents on spending more time on social media

Respondents on the question of more time can be spent on social media, 77.8% alluded to the fact that they would spend more time on social media. Social media has become a basic need in communication be it traveling, in a barbershop, in class, in hospital or just during leisure time. One would not stop to check on what is trending on Facebook, Twitter or WhatsApp. In the digital World most people are becoming social media addicts. Spent more time browsing different mediums throughout the day. The findings corroborate with the survey by digitalinformationworld.com which indicate internet users are spending an average of 2 hours and 22 minutes per day on social networking and

messaging platforms. The study on the time spent on social media found out that most university students spent 30 minutes to one hour at 37% glued on social media followed closely with those who spent one hour to two hours at 28%. The study indicates increase in the number of social media users and the time they spent on social media. In the Philippines, an average user spends 11 minutes more per day than they did in 2017. This indicates that time spent on social media changes daily. More studies on the different social media tools and time spent on them may bring out the major reason of choosing one tool towards the other.

4.9 Why Respondents use Social Media

Table 4. 12: Why Respondents use Social Media.

Use of social media	Respondents	Percentage
Networking/ Socializing	122	33%
Seek/ acquire and share information	133	36%
Entertainment	67	18%
Class work	48	13%
Total	370	100%

Source: Author 2018

The respondents were asked the reasons for using social media sites. According to Table 4.8 most respondents 133(36%) cited information acquiring, seeking and sharing as the major reason for using social media, this strengthens the information in Table 4.4 which indicates WhatsApp as the most preferred social media site as it is easy and simple tool for acquiring, seeking and sharing information. 122 (33%) of the respondents cited Networking and socializing, Entertainment 67 (18%) with class work has 48 (13%). The results signify the major importance of social media sites and also elaborate why youths prefer social media sites.

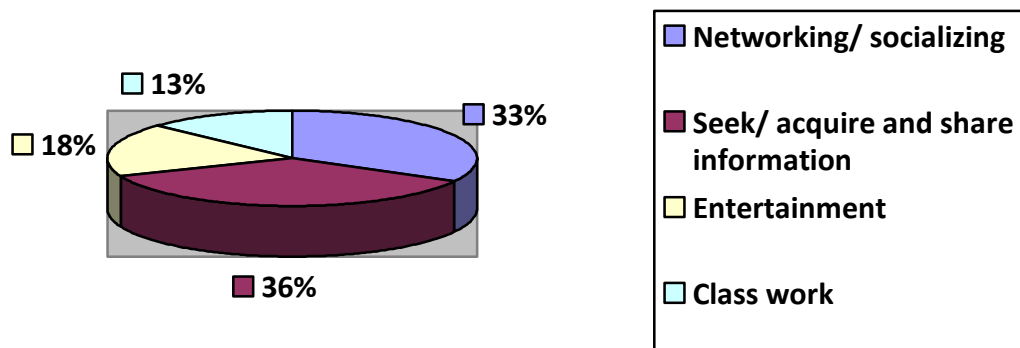


Figure 4. 12: Why respondents use social media

4.9.1 Usefulness and effectiveness of social media use by university students

Table 4. 13: Usefulness and Effectiveness of social media use by university students

Effectiveness	Respondents	Percentage %
Very effective	266	72%
Somehow effective	93	25%
Not Effective	11	3%
Total	370	100%

Source: Author, 2018

4.9.1 Usefulness and Effectiveness of Social Media use by University Students

The study asked respondents to indicate their perception of social media and political decisions within the university. Their general feelings would be a pointer to the factors that affect decisions made based on social media information. The responses were rated on a five point Likert scale where: 1- Strongly disagree 2- Disagree 3- Neutral 4-Agree and 5-Strongly agree

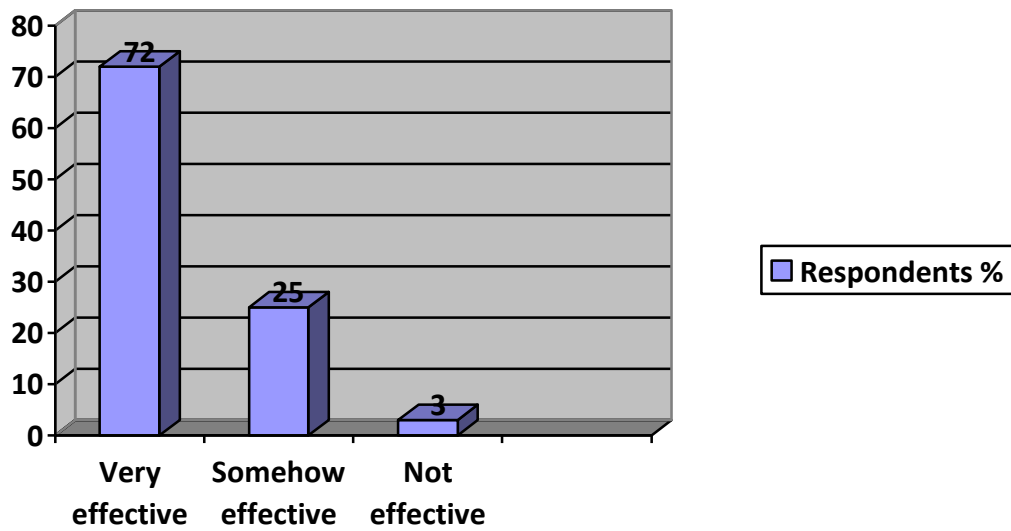


Figure 4. 13: Usefulness and effectiveness of social media use by university students

4.9.2 University students Involvement in any Political Discussion

During electioneering periods several people are pushed into political discussions. To understand the position of University students in political discussions, the study sought to understand their involvement in any political discussions. The response rate indicates that 329 (88.9%) of the university students have been involved in a political discussion with 41 (11.1%) indicating that they have not been involved in any political discussion.

Table 4. 14: University students Involvement in Political Discussion

Involvement in political participation	Respondents	Percentage
Those involved	329	88.9%
Those not involved	41	11.1%
Total	370	100%

Source: Author 2018

The findings in the study found out that most youths and university students engage in political discussions and upon being asked how, most cited social media sites of Facebook, WhatsApp and twitter as forefront for political discussions and also attending political rallies, and camapigns. They stated that involvement in political discussions was more interesting. This is an indicator of the involvement nature of social media in terms of sharing information and accessing of information from social media tools. The findings corroborates with the findings by other scholars Effing, Hillegersberg and Huibers, (2011), Kwak et al. (2010) and Mbetera, (2017). The scholars found out the involvement of social media in political discussions.

The findings also correlated with the findings in the study by Okoro & Nwafor (2013) in Nigeria, on social media and political participation in 2011 General Elections. The findings indicated that an average of 76% of respondents recorded as having used social media for political participation and used it during the 2011 Nigerian general elections and also relates to the findings in the Nairobi university election campaigns for student leaders held on Saturday 6th April 2019, the story in the Daily Nation Kenyan newspaper headlined “Money, social media influencers drive UoN leadership campaign,” the writer singles out “wise man” who is a moneyed individual with social media presence that influences thousands of student followers. Based on the uses and gratification theory

applied in this study, there is more gratification from the youths in the use of social media for political discussions.

4.9.3 Source of Political Information within the University by Students

Information is key and communication makes it relevant. Those that can communicate clearly are in position to achieve their goals. University students have varied sources of information for their daily activities, the study on investigating the utilization of social media tools by university students asked respondents on their sources of political information. Most respondents indicated social media 211 (57%), fliers 78 (21.2%), others at 59 (16.1%), Billboards 7 (2%), with radio at 15 (3.7%) an indicator that learning radio stations play a role in political communication among university students and television having no influence as it rated at the least recording 0 (0%). In the response to this question besides social media, other sources of news like word of mouth, individuals and friends were rated as sources of information too.

The findings depict a trend in University students where most information is through interactive nature of social media and word of mouth. It indicates that interactivity plays a key role in political communication among university students with social media, fliers and others ranking highly. The use of fliers is an interpersonal communication and the personal or door to door or class campaigns follow up on social media as communication tools among university students as indicated in the Table 4.9.3. The study elicits the need for research on the impact of interpersonal communication and its influence on decision making among universities.

Table 4. 15: Source of political information among university students

Source of political information	Respondents	Percentage
Social media	211	57%
Radio	15	3.7%
Television	0	0%
Fliers	78	21.2%
Bill boards	7	2%
Others	59	16.1%
Total	370	100%

Source: Author 2018

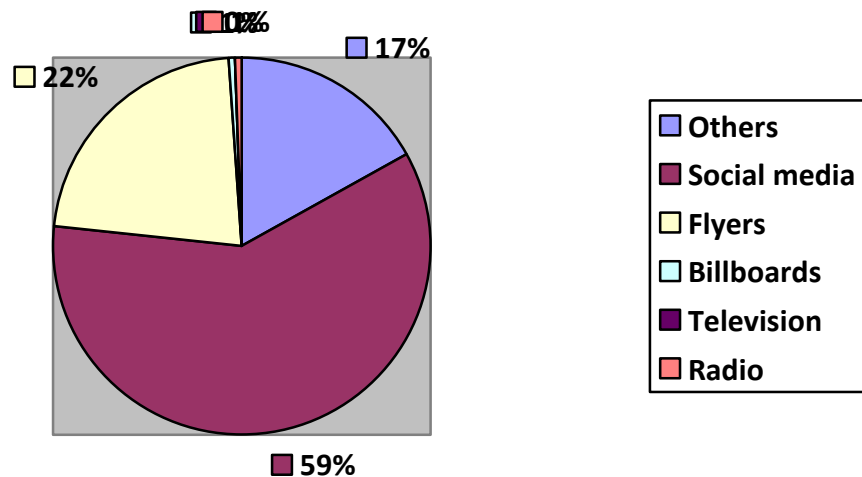


Figure 4. 14: Chart on source of information among university students

As per the Pie chart 4.9.3 above, there is change in campaign strategy among university students and calls for more studies on why radio and television rank very low besides being the major sources of information among publics at the national level. Based on respondents most male respondents indicated social media against the females as a

source of information with most females indicating others as the source. This shows gaps in the interests among varied genders on the information and calls for more studies on why the males are interested in political information against the females. Studies done have indicated that citizens who are interested in politics increase their news consumption, while those who prefer entertainment become less likely to learn about politics. It brings out the argument that those who choose radio and television do so to get political news. However, it is still unclear whether this argument applies to social media platforms, where opportunities for chance encounters with political content increase (Fletcher & Nielsen 2017). It also generates more arguments based on the theories employed in this study. Uses and gratification theory and framing theory. In this response uses and gratification theory is applicable.

4.9.4 Are Students Elections Discussed Based on Issues on Social Media

The study sought to understand if students elections are discussed on social media based on issues. The response as per respondents stood at 226 (61%) who believe that they are issue based and 144 (39%) of the respondents who believe that they are not. The response indicates that political communication on social media among university students and policies set for their discussion are interlinked. With the current social media tools in use, youths response shows that they commented on issues that touched on their lifestyles and developed by those who vied for different positions. Those who responded against being issue based argued that it was based on tribe, class groupings, course groupings and affiliation to certain religions, affiliation to certain national political leaders and parties and regionalism. The findings on being issue based tally with the findings by scholars, (Hong and Sung- Min, 2011; Vincente and Novo, 2014; Mbetera, 2017). As indicated in Table 4.9.4 media framing amongst social media users affects audience assumptions of it being true and factual.

Table 4. 16: University students elections based on issues

Are political discussions issue based	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	226	61%
No	144	39%
Total	370	100%

Source: Author 2018

Based on the findings, most respondents agreed that most issues discussed are on opinions raised by others and mostly social media managers hired by aspirants to steer their campaigns online. As Entman points out in framing theory, the set frames determine the perception to be conceptualized.

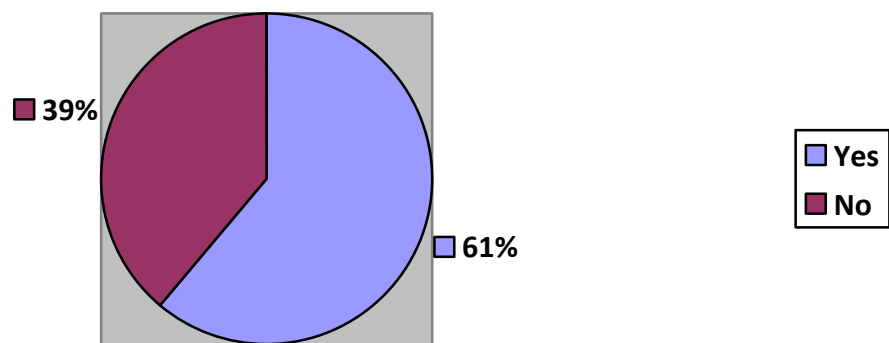


Figure 4. 15: Indicator of Opinion Based Discussions on Social Media

4.10 What Influences Political Debates among University Students on Social Media

Political discussions and debates are key in campaigns since youths also engage in politics. The research in understanding utilization of social media tools, also sought to

know what stirs political debates on social media by university students. Trending issues, political groupings, and political figures are stated as the key triggers of social media debates but the response indicated that they were closer to other issues like policies. Trending issues on social media at 111 (30%) was the highest indicator. Political groupings at 96 (26%), political figures at 74 (20%), policies at 67 (18%), and tribe at 22 (6%). The application of social media, as a tool in social media is key in spreading information on trending issues as shown in Table 4.9.

Table 4. 17: What influences political debates

What influences political debates	Respondents	Percentage
Trending issues	111	30%
Political groupings	96	26%
Political figures	74	20%
Policies	67	18%
Tribe	22	6%
Total	370	100%

Source: Author 2018

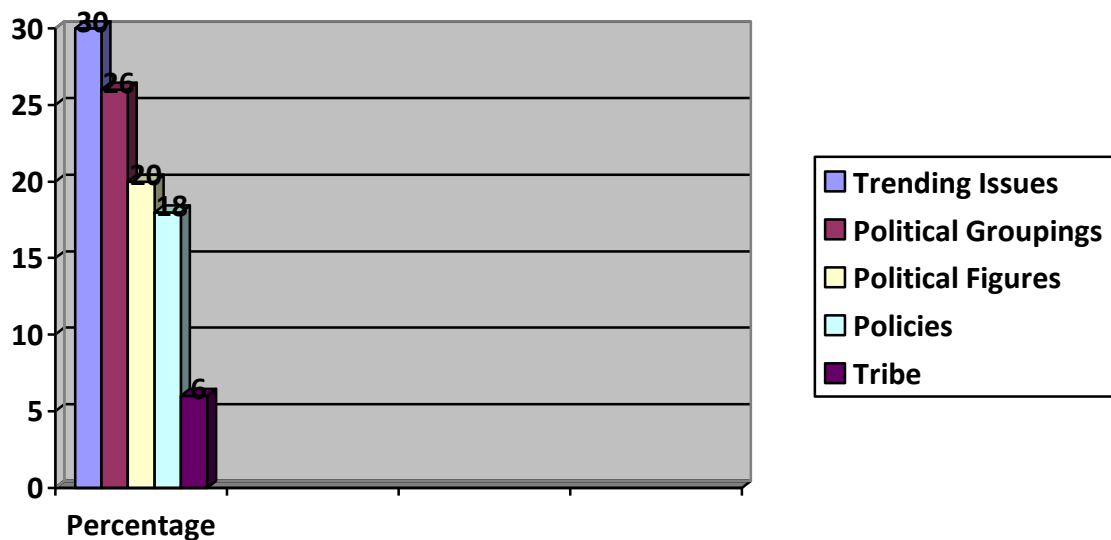


Figure 4. 16: What Influences Political Debates

The findings in Table 4.10 corroborates with the findings in Table 4.5 which tally with the findings by Nendo (2017) research and the media landscape in Kenya report, (2019) which captured both 2018 & 2019. The media landscape report indicated WhatsApp use was at 73% in 2018 and 82% in 2019 and Facebook at 70% in 2018 and 80% in 2019.

The Nendo, (2017) findings which found out that most Kenyans are on social media sites showed WhatsApp with 12 million monthly users in Kenya and Facebook with 7.1 million monthly users. The two tools WhatsApp and facebook are commonly used for sharing content and searching for information leading to the encouragement of trending issues.

4.10.1 Opinion on Social Media and Political Decisions

In assessing if social media influences political decisions made by university students at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, the study sought to analyze statements on the influence of social media sites. The study found out that social media sites affect decisions made on political aspirant which in turn affects the choice of the political leaders as indicated in Table 4.10.1

Table 4. 18: Opinion on social media and political decisions

Statements	Mean	Standard deviation
Social media tools affects decisions made on political aspirants	3.9	0.176
It is a trusted source for political information	2.29	0.173
An aspirant who is not on social media cannot win a political position	3.29	0.374
Social media use on political issues is cheap	3.53	0.566
Social media sites are full of political propaganda	3.32	0.853
Massive social media campaign helps one win elections	3.56	0.154
Composite mean and standard deviation	3.36	0.256

Source: Author 2018

From the findings, most of the respondents agree with the statement that social media sites affect decisions made on political aspirants at 3.9, it is a trusted source of political information at 2.29, an aspirant who is not on social media cannot win a political

position at 3.29, Social media use on political issues is cheap at 3.53. They agreed that social media sites are full of political propaganda at 3.32 though also agree that massive social media campaign helps one win elections. The findings can be correlated with the findings in the study by Okoro & Nwafor (2013) in Nigeria, on Social media and political participation in 2011 General Elections.

The findings indicated that an average of 76% of respondents recorded as used social media for political participation and used it during the 2011 general elections. The findings also correlated with the findings in the University of Nairobi student election campaigns for student leaders held on Saturday 6th April 2019, the story in the Daily Nation Kenyan newspaper headlined “Money, social media influencers drive UoN leadership campaign,” the writer singles out “wise man” who is a moneyed individual with social media presence that influences thousands of student followers.

4.10.2 Benefits of Using Social Media among University Students

Table 4. 19: Benefits of social media among university students

Social media benefits	Respondents	Percentage %
Immediate feedback	115	31%
Knowledge sharing	85	23%
Collaboration	63	17%
Easy convergence	48	13%
Social interaction	59	16%
Total	370	100%

Source: Author 2018

The findings on the benefits of using social media by University students, most respondents cited immediate feedback, knowledge sharing, collaboration, easy convergence and social interaction as the most benefits of using social media. The results indicate proven benefits of using social media in this study. Findings in this study marry with the findings by Aghaee (2010) who alludes that there are a number of advantages of social media use in collaborative learning environment, helping each other when needed and sharing of resources and documents.

Based on the findings in this study, students need social media for exchanging resources and documents, sharing existing knowledge with others and feedback and it cements the choice of WhatsApp as the preferred social media site by the respondents.

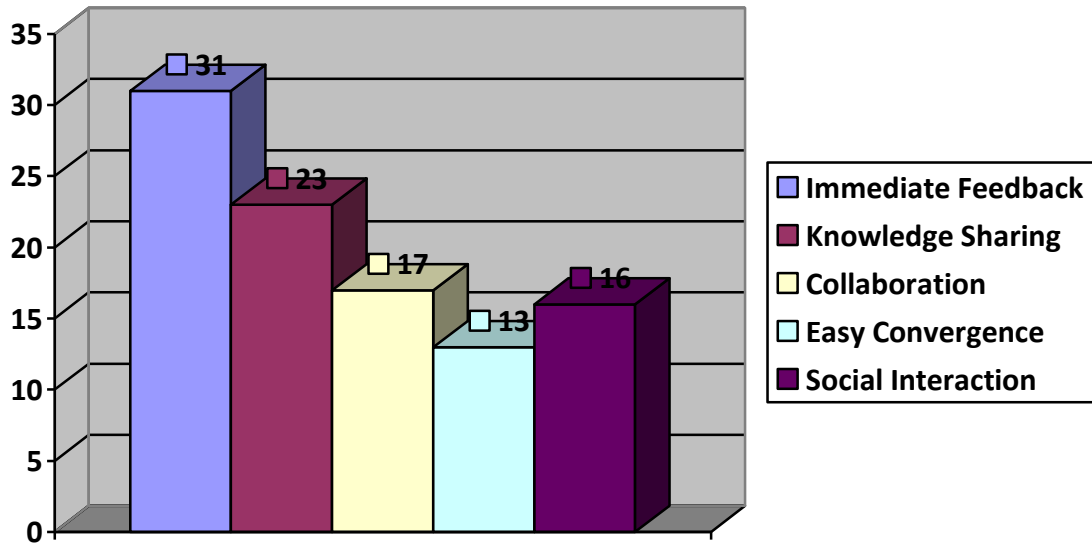


Figure 4. 17: Benefits of using social media among University students

4.10.3 Objective Three: Were the Elections Won Based on Social Media Presence

The study sought to understand if social media use influences political decisions by university students elections. Based on the objective of examining if social media influences political decisions made, response on if the last elections were won based on social media presence presented varied responses, 215(58%) respondent yes to the social media presence with 155 (42%) being of the idea that it was not won based on social media tool preferred. Table 4.10.2 indicates

Table 4. 20: Were the elections won based on social media presence

Elections won on social media presence	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	215	58%
No	155	42%
Total	370	100%

Source: Author 2018

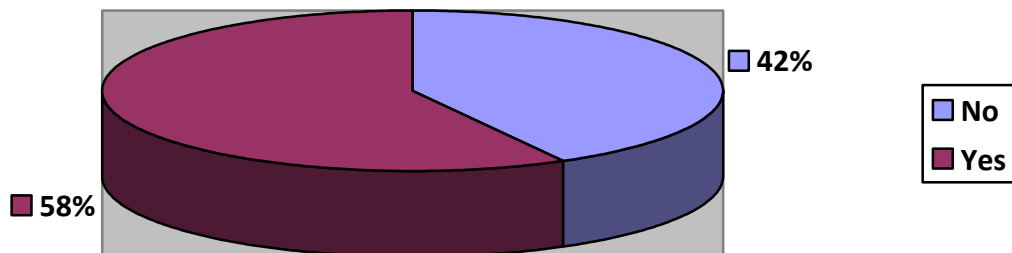


Figure 4. 18: Were Elections Won based on social media presence

The respondents in Table 4.10.2 indicates the use of social media in politics. The respondents gender also played out with more male respondents alluding to the fact that it was more based on social media presence while the female respondents indicating no impact. On the most visible social media tool, WhatsApp was highly rated at 233 (63%) and facebook 126 (34%) and other sites at 11 (3%). Based on the respondents, the findings correlate with other studies, the study by Okoro & Nwafor (2013) in Nigeria, on Social media and political participation in 2011 General Elections which indicated that social media presence impacted on elections. The findings indicated that an average of

76% of respondents recorded as used social media for political participation and used it during the 2011 general elections.

The outcomes also correlated with the findings in the Nairobi university students elections campaigns for student leaders held on Saturday 6th April 2019, the story in the Daily Nation Kenyan newspaper headlined. The article singles out that that aspirants spent over Sh4 million in campaigns with estimated Sh 200,000 being spent daily, the story in Kenya’s Daily Nation Newspaper by Nyambega Gisesa on Friday April 5th 2019 titled “Features Candidates need to win UoN (University of Nairobi) students elections” brings the notion that students elections are won based on mobilization, and the use of “wise men” a group of highly influential students who commandeer politics in the University. The “wise men are individuals who are moneyed and have a social media presence that influences thousands of student followers.

The report on Nairobi University students elections prove the use of social media tools in students elections as financial muscles on social media prove who wins the elections. It reveals that social media plays a major role in influencing decisions made politically by University students.

4.10.4 Challenges of social media use among University students

The study sought views on challenges faced by university students in using social media. Respondents who are University students at Masinde Muliro University responded as shown in Table 4.10.4

Table 4. 21: Challenges of Social Media use among University Students

Challenges	No. of Respondents	Percentage %
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Lack of accountability	133	36%
Lack of policies	67	18%
Lack of Internet connectivity	89	24%
Lack of Privacy	44	12%
Expensive	11	3%
Lack of gadgets	26	7%
Total	370	100%

Source: Author 2018

As per the findings, majority of the respondents cited lack of accountability, lack of internet connectivity, lack of policies, lack of privacy, lack of gadgets and being expensive as the issues that face social media use by university students. Social media revolves around accountability and truth. The major hinderance in it's use has been the infiltration by fake news and propaganda. Lack of privacy is as a result of social media being prone to abuse. Internet hacking and impersonation are rampant, we have had scenarios where facebook and twitter accounts of senior politicians have been hacked and messages sent that are provocative. Though lack of internet is an issue, availability of Wi-Fi connectivity in many social places has tried to solve the challenge. As (Bughin et al., 2008; Mugeru, 2016) allude, most organizations face challenges with embracing social media and use of new information systems in their operations and thus social media is no exception.

Regardless of the possibilities that social media offers for organizations, many institutions and companies also associate challenges and problems with its adoption and

use to failure to implement social media use. One of the factors that affect full implementation is lack of social media communication policy in organizations. Policies enable organizations to easily and effectively implement it's use. The study also found out as stated in table 4.9 lack of accountability and lack of policies as key challenges faced in the full implementation and use of social media in organizations and companies including universities.

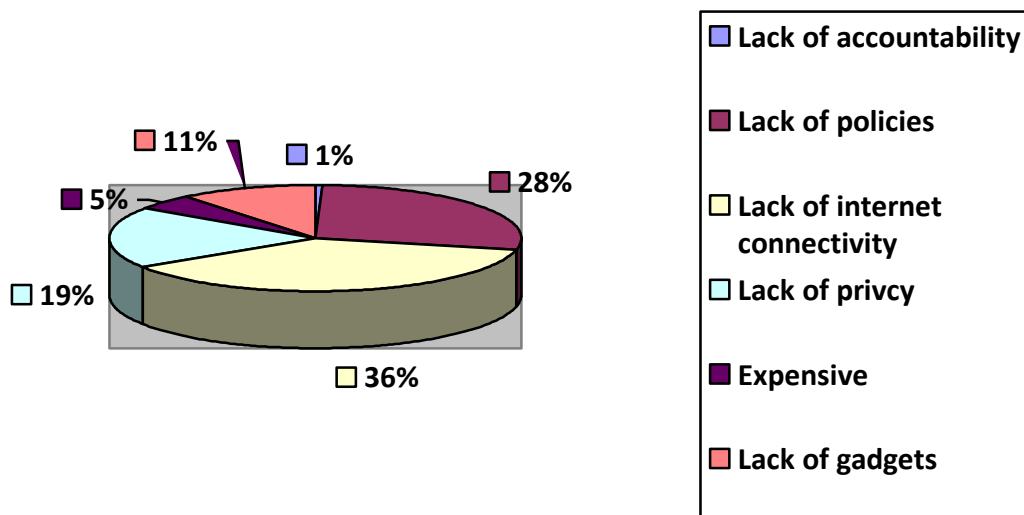


Figure 4. 19: Challenges of using social media sites

4.11. Conclusion of the Research Objectives

The study was based on three objectives; determine the preferred social media site by university students in Kenya, establish the time spent on social media by university students in Kenya and assess if social media influences political decisions made by university students during their elections in Kenya.

The first objective was to determine the preferred social media tool by university students in Kenya. The sampled students at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology indicated 45% of the respondents who totaled 167 out of the 370 preferred WhatsApp as a tool of choice. WhatsApp as a tool has been in use since it's launch in

2009 and is quickly becoming the World's most popular text and messaging application. It has enhanced privacy features like end-to-end encryption, it is free and enables web-based international calling. The ability to ensure encryption which is the process of converting information or data into a code, especially to prevent unauthorized access ensures that content is secured and this interests university students. Facebook came in closely with 38% an indication that though it has been in use for sometime, it is being eclipsed by WhatsApp.

The response indicates the transformation nature of social media and the changes that come in with new applications. Respondents were of the idea that it is convenient, cheap and safe to use whatsapp. In relation to its benefits, respondents alluded that it has immediate feedback due to formulation of "social classes" that act as vehicles for socialization. Preference of WhatsApp correlates with the response to the benefits of using social media by university students with 31%, 115 respondents out of the 370 agreeing that it has immediate feedback alluding to WhatsApp use. It is also backed up by the response on why respondents use social media, the respondents were of the idea that it is used to seek, acquire and share information at 133 respondents out of the 370 sampled at 36% with networking and socializing at 33% backed by 122 respondents. The easier social media site to use in seeking, acquiring and sharing information is rated as whatsapp. Ahad & Lim (2014) are among scholars who provide the reasons why students use whatsapp. They postulate that it is built as an alternative to short messaging service (SMS), Whatsapp offers real-time texting or communication, has necessitated the ease of sharing information (e.g. contact list) or media content (e.g. audio, video files, images, location data). This makes it convenient for university students.

The findings on the most preferred social media tool stated as WhatsApp, is an indicator of the mobile phone penetration and use. The Nendo (2017) findings indicated

WhatsApp had a monthly user level of 12 million and it's easy to use features and availability of internet and internet enabled gadgets spiraled its use. The Nendo findings placed Facebook at a 7.1 million users per month with others like Youtube and Instagram coming closer. With the reponse on the source of information signifying social media use at 48%, it is evident that social media has impact in communication and the tool that offers easier accessible and flexible features is preferred by most university students.

The second objective was to establish the time spent on social media by university students in Kenya. Social media is important as it allows one to reach people locally, regionally, nationally and even internationally. Based on the characteristics of the target audience, messages can be personalized to resonate with the audience more appropriately. Time is of essence in social media use. Communicators know the role of time as it affects the the receptive behaviour of the audience. The amount of time spent on a given social media tool signifies its importance. The sampled students at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology registered different views in relation to the time spent on social media. Most respondents on the time spent indicated that they spent an average of 30 minutes to 1 hour on social media at 37% which was a representation of 137 respondents out of the total 370 sampled. Those who spent one hour to 2 hours on social media ratings stood at 28%, 104 respondents.

The findings indicate use of social media by university students. The amount of time people engaging in social media and the number of people using social media shows steady growth. In 2012 people used to spent 90 minutes per day, and by 2018 it rose to 144 minutes and in 2019 the trend shows 153 minutes per day. Based on the findings, the duration requires an interactive social media site thus proving the findings in the first

objective of the preferred social media tool amongst university students, WhatsApp as the most preferred social media site is more interactive. Most people are spending time on social media and the trend seems not to change. Yearly there are more people on social media.

In 2017, research indicated that people spent 135 minutes per day or nearly two and half hours on social media. That's up from 2016 when people averaged 126 minutes per day on social media. The amount of time people spent on social media has been increasing yearly for the last five years (Statista.com). It is an indication that students spent time on social media sites. It is believed that people spent 1/7 of their being a wake lives on social media. People now spend 40 minutes and 40 percent longer each day on social compared to the same time in 2014 (globalwebindex.com). The findings correlate with the response on frequency of accessing social media sites and out of the 370 returned questionnaires 202 respondents that stood at 54.5% of the total, agreed to using social media sites several times a day.

This is an indicator that the internet is becoming a way and part of life and social media is ruling it. Time spent on social media matters because more time in the app means people probably see more advertisements, can watch more videos, memes and opportunities which is how all these apps make money. The big war on mobile phone devices in relation to internet and social media use is for user attention. These apps, plus more traditional media companies are all looking to capture attention in an increasingly competitive landscape and social media is the player. Most companies rate their competitive nature in terms of the numbers and viewers.

The third objective was to examine if social media influences political decisions made by university students in Kenya. Social media in politics is the use of online social media

platforms in political processes and activities. Political processes and activities include all activities that pertain to the governance of a country or unit. It includes political organization, global politics, political corruption, political parties and political values. Social media use in political organization can be traced from the city streets demonstrations in the Philippines in 2001, Barrack Obama election as President of the United States in 2008, revocation of the fraudulent elections in Moldavia in 2009, Spain demonstrations in 2011 and the “Occupy Wall Street” in New York in 2011.

The study sought to understand if social media influences political decisions among university students. The findings from the respondents signify an influence with a mean of 3.9 alluding to the notion that social media sites affect decisions on political aspirants and 3.56 mean of the idea that massive social media campaign helps one win elections. The notion that massive social media use helps one win elections alludes to the findings in the second objective of the time spent on social media and capitalizing on the duration spent on social media sites. Therefore, social media sites can be of use in political decisions.

Social media’s development into an important tool of influencing society is part of the advancement of information and communication technologies. The political scene has been transformed over the recent few decades with the inclusion of web technologies. Social media is a genuine factor in political crusades and the manner in which individuals consider issues. Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram and Google have been used by leaders and constituents in conversations that develop into political agendas.

Political campaigns are essential places for battles and they regularly puzzle. Social media has been used in the creation of numerous polls with opposing outcomes posted

on social media sites that influence the political decisions made by the electorates. University students engage social media in political discourse as it opens the door for interaction. In the past they needed to meet the aspirants by either going for a political event or “Kamukunji” which not all students could attend and most of them turned rowdy. Present day innovation via social media one can go to virtual systems and interact with other members including leaders.

Political decisions are impacted by each story regardless of being genuine or fake. The level of streaming of images, connections, gossips, truths and half truths. Both politicians and there agents master in selling different unverified news. The damage caused by the content posted makes it hard to be neutralized during electioneering periods and affects the choice and outcomes. Most respondents were of the idea that social media pushes them into making decisions that they later realize to be untrue. This cements the impact of social media on political decisions by university students.

4.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on data presentation, interpretation and analysis based on the study objectives. The results were compared with findings from other researchers in the same area.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This section presents the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study based on the study objectives. Conclusions and recommendations were drawn from the study findings to address the objectives advanced in the study. The main objective of the study was to determine utilization of social media in university students elections in Kenya, a case of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology. Specific objectives were; to determine the preferred social media site by university students, establish the time spent on social media by university students and examine if social media influences political decisions made by university students. The study engaged Uses and gratifications as well as Framing theories.

5.1 Summary of the Findings

The findings of this study were derived from the data collected and as per the response in the questionnaires. The study firstly established that social media tools are used by university students during their elections, campaigns and students' political decisions are influenced by information on social media sites. The emergence of smartphones and social media sites have transformed many students way of life. Social media is used to share ideas, organize and participate in political opinions among university students. Rapid social media use is reshaping political engagements among youths. The political debate has moved from Kamukunji's to online debates. Most respondents agreed to the fact that one needs a strong social media presence to be able to make it politically in any position aspired for.

The study also established that there are several social media tools in use by university students and besides political reasons, social media play other chores like knowledge sharing, source of individual pleasure and entertainment. Social life is also impacted by social media use in terms of decision making, the changes in most university students social life can be traced to the use of social media sites. As a marketing too, social media is essential for university students in the decision making process that impacts buying process and price comparison.

Universities represent social class. The wider social class within the university is broken down into smaller social groupings that university students identify with. Social classes simply known as “groups”, are generated via social media. The group brings together members with similar interests in something deemed relevant to them. They are then clogged together via communication channels that unite them. Social media plays the role of a uniting factor. The social groupings among university students are based on the course of study, year of study, tribe, region, interests, social amenities and interests. Social media influences decisions made by the users.

The research identified gaps in the use of social media by university students based on gender as more females are interested in social media sites that are social and those that are inclusive of use of photos, videos, snaps and sharing. Instagram, WhatsApp and facebook stand out for the females.

5.2 Preferred Social Media Sites by University Students: Objective One.

The study found out that WhatsApp is the most preferred social media tool amongst university students. WhatsApp is a messenger freeware, cross-platform messaging and Voice over IP service owned by Facebook. It is an application that runs on mobile devices but also accessible on desktops as long as user’s mobile device remains connected to the internet. WhatsApp allows users to send text messages, make voice and

video calls, share images, documents, user locations, and other media. The choice of WhatsApp as the preferred social media tool is based on the notion that it is convenient, simple and easier to use. Convenience is the state of being able to proceed with something without difficulty and the anatomy of WhatsApp as a tool provides for that.

Simplicity in terms of the user is based on the notion that once one has the App in the mobile phone, their contact recorded, it only requires internet connectivity to start a conversation with friends or contacts online. WhatsApp was found to help university students connect to the society and the whole World, simplifying the distance. It is an effective medium for the flow of ideas and information. Due to its flexibility and ability to form “social” groupings that are “tribal groupings” it stands out as being a convenient means of communication. WhatsApp was rated high by university students based on the fact that it is convenient and cheap and on the ability of users to form groups that can be accessed by members only.

WhatsApp makes communication easier and faster and its ability to send more texts makes it convenient in its use by allowing the forwarding of information. It has immediate feedback due to the formation of favorable groupings. Its accessibility in terms of downloading the app and its use, makes it easier to use and options like video call and audio recording have also transformed it. The choice of WhatsApp is associated with how the frames are created in communication giving it suitability. Uses and gratifications theory and Framing theory are applicable in the findings. Framing theory suggests that how something is presented to the audience influences the choices they make on how to process information. Choices involve choosing the rightful communication channels that present the desired attributes. University students choice of WhatsApp is based on the presented features. The push by university students to a more

favourable social media tool magnifies the sense pushed by framing theory of drawing attention to certain attributes of the available objects.

The push to satisfy their needs of communication thus strengthens the applicable tenets of Uses and gratifications theory which states that the audience are active and motivated in selecting the media they consume and they are aware of their reasons for selecting different media options.

5.3 Time Spent on Social Media Site by University Students: Objective Two.

Social media is one of the best ways for people to connect with one another. Social media impact is determined by the attention set to the tool. Attention is measured based on the time one spends on the social media tool and its impact. The number of people visiting or using a given social media tool determines its impact and the amount of time people spend on social media each day is growing. Most students spend time on social media sites with most respondents agreeing to the fact that they spend 30 minutes to one hour on social media sites per day. Students who represent a good number of youths use social media to acquire information, be it in line with trending stories, seek information, share, react and magnify the rate impact of information collected by sharing.

Uses and gratifications theory is applicable in the findings; social media has opened up new avenues of the theory as it has led to discovery of new gratifications. This has led to university students spending more time on social media to gratify discovery needs. The needs are achieved through socializing, entertainment, information seeking among others and media channels achieve the goal of being overly in use by the competition for audience's attention. Due to the amount of time spend on social media, it is important to ensure youths are engaged well via social media to ensure they can maximize their use. This can be achieved by having online courses or in cooperating social media tools in the studies. Understanding the time spent by students on social media was beneficial in

streamlining learning modes to make it flexible and able to be aligned to learning modes. It is based on what is offered by the social media sites that pulls the audience towards them.

**5.4 Social Media Influence on Political Decisions by University Students:
Objective Three.**

Political decisions by university students are largely affected by social media sites and the posts. As per the respondents, social media influences the political decisions made based on the way it is designed for its operations. The frames placed therein have the ability to access and share content among friends and core. Its influence was built on the premise that once information is rolled out to one individual, it is shared among groups and the perception created among the masses affects the choice. According to Baumgartner & Morris (2009), “young adults who may not be interested in politics can get political information through their online network of friends and acquaintances, and this may generate greater political interest. “ They also argue that the sense of ‘virtual community’ can generate a greater interest around a political idea or leader, which is the case among university students who make selections of their leaders based on the judgment by others.

University students involvement in politics is based on the participatory nature of their peers. Social media influences decisions based on the information available on social networks. In the study by an overwhelming 91% indicated that they had come across information of political nature like campaign updates, photos, videos and links to political websites among others on Facebook. The findings also agree with the study by Baum (2003) which stated that social networks contributed to democratic discourse by providing current information and news on politics to the disengaged groups.

The findings strengthen the use of Uses and gratifications theory and framing theory in the study. Uses and gratifications theory asserts that people use media to gratify specific wants and needs and media technologies like social media are in use to motivate the audience into specific gratifications. University students are influenced by social media based on expectations. The way political information is framed in social media pushes the audience in this case university students into organizing and building up a political narrative that influences choices made. The political frames created by via social media have great influence on the outcomes.

The findings points out that social media is an important platform for exposure to information on politics and aspirants and their managers actively ensure that information regarding them is posted on social media.

5.5 Conclusions

The field of communication has undergone substantial transformation for years. The upsurge of social media is changing the dynamics. Social media offers a big opportunity to universities in terms of student engagement and development in a very constructive way. Researchers all over the World are constantly trying to find out roles played by social media in our communication systems today. Effective communication has a great impact on an individual or organizations day to day operations. As we advance in our way of life, the urge to incorporate social media sites in our operations rises. Most people are experimenting with different forms of social media and it is becoming a reality that most people can't run away from.

Universities play a big role and are key not only in impacting knowledge to students but also in implementing new ideas. The findings indicate use of social media among university students and most choose the best tools that offer networking, sharing of content and linkages. University students also spent time on social media and it

influences their decisions. Formulation of policies that govern its use are important to ensure reduced emergence of conflicts. Lack of this policies have led to misuse of social media tools, as students and staff are likely to use social media against the set out parameters.

5.6 Recommendations Based on Objectives

The main reason behind any research is to try and fill an existing knowledge gap. The utilization of social media in university students elections.

5.6.1 Preferred Social Media

The study recommends that higher learning institutions should continually embrace social media to remain competitive with technological changes. The study has shown that social media is effective in political decision making among youths in universities. With the increasing number of internet users and low internet cost, availability of Wi-Fi connectivity, there is needed to formulate a strategy for adoption of social media tools.

The preferred social media site which is WhatsApp carries advantages that interest the youths, understanding how it works is important in ensuring its proper use. The transformation of social media and development of Apps continually calls for technological studies among universities and encouraged use.

To achieve proper use of social media sites, it is recommended that institutional heads understand how varied social media sites work and their preference in relation to certain groups and also which site is favorable for students and how best it can be used and regulated.

5.6.2 Time Spent on Social Media

Social media can have damaging effects if mishandled. Time is of essence in day to day operations and therefore it calls to understanding the period one spends on social media.

University students spend more time on social media as it is the major source of information and the easier form of interaction. To ensure efficient flow of information and its consumption, social media sites preferred by students can be utilized in conveying important information that touches on students by organizations. This study recommends the engagement of university students in governing social media sites owned by universities and their use. Students can be encouraged to use social media more by making it educative and in finding solutions to issues that affect them like stress management, depression and social issues through continuous interaction.

5.6.3 Social Media and Influence on Politics

The study recommends that institutions should embrace use of social media by formulating policies on how to use during electioneering periods and ensuring upto date interactions. This will ensure regulation and verification of information posted in the social media platforms hence making the information credible. Social media sites are key in political communication but they can be used to spread propaganda, mis-information, dis- information about political opponents and create conflicts. There is need to create policies and laws that will govern players on social media use in relation to political campaigns. This can limit physical interactions that mostly turn violent.

5.6.4 Conclusions

There is massive innovation as regards to communication with the advent and usage of social media taking the centre stage. This study sought to analyze the utilization of social media in university student elections in Kenya, a case of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, discoveries demonstrate that most university students use social media and have access to different interpersonal interaction settings with its use. It is the perspective of this study that university students invest more energy and resources

in social media utilization as signified in the findings on the preferred social media tool, the time spend on social media and its political influence during elections.

Many people are using social media in different beneficial ways from advertising and marketing, analyzing consumer behaviour in introducing goods and services to social, physical and psychological benefits and university students have employed the same. It's evident from the study that social media is a useful servant to university students. They use it in sharing information, building relationships, networking, group involvements and the study concludes that it influences political decisions made in the choice of university student leaders. University students spend more time on social media and are in love with social media tools that are cheap, easily accessible, promote networking and which enable easy sharing of content. This corroborates with Asabere (2012) who notes that technology has improved and enabled collaborative and learning activities especially because of its high level of interactivity, accessibility and affordability.

There is need to encourage university students to venture more in productive use of social media with clear set policies. Vincente and Novo, (2014), who argue that in Spain, political participation and youth's policy satisfaction are interlinked. The link should be enhanced in developing policies by the government. Despite the government's efforts to formulate policies to govern the use of social media in Kenya, the policies have been used to block its use in totality and contravening other constitutional articles like freedom of expression and access to information in benefit of those who feel aggrieved in the content posted on social media.

5.6.5 New Knowledge

The research on utilization of social media in university students' elections was an eye opener to more knowledge on university students way of life, in relation to social ,

economical and psychological. Social media tools are more applicable by university students in articulating personal issues and as a way of stress management mostly among the female respondents. The research identified gaps in the use of social media by university students based on gender as more females are interested in social media sites that are social, interactive, “closer” and those that are inclusive in terms of use of photos, videos, snaps and enable sharing. Instagram, WhatsApp and facebook stand out for the females.

Instagram attracts most female actors and participants followed by WhatsApp, with facebook also in use, the findings also indicate that facebook cannot be trusted as it has many impersonators and fake account managers with untrusted sources. The study found out that content harvesting was high on facebook and Instagram.

Increase in micro-loaning institutions and apps available online with presence on social media is an area of concern among university students. It is through social media that the loans are marketed and students tempted into acquiring them and later becoming victims. Impersonification is rampant in most youths and mostly university students, groups of techno savvy students are using social media to fake issues as a way of soliciting for funds from comrades and most have been conned by those claiming to sell cheap bundles from leading sim companies and “sure” bets from gambling companies in the name of encouraging students to gamble and win more money. This was more among male respondents. The extend is rampant to the level of formulation and registration of fake paybill numbers to convince university students into action. The incorporation of social media and its link to gambling mostly among youths is rampant.

5.6.6 Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

- i. University students be motivated to invent in social media technologies. The government through the Ministry of Information Communication and Technology to take lead in initiating and coordinating all policies and programs towards the use and development of social media tools.
- ii. There is need to create online and offline digital safety campaigns that will be automatically incorporated on any political message send via social media and links to other sites that promote sanity in use of social media tools.
- iii. University students should be informed and enlightened of the Kenya's computer misuse and cybercrimes act, 2018 and the subsequent sections.
- iv. Universities should adopt choice of specific channels that can lead to a focused attention based on a specific tool for a particular purpose and avoid the unnecessary costs and exertions.
- v. Stakeholders in collaboration with Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK) and network providers' need to develop means of filtering information that is consumed by youths and other people through social media. This will minimize unwarranted, tainting and unconfirmed information from being shared through social media.
- vi. Universities should integrate various processes within the institutions with specific social media tools. Integration of the precise social media tools throughout the education journey of students can make their experience more engaging and of interest leading to the success of operations. Accomplishment with digital settings at the university students can connect and network which is beneficial as it creates chances for employability.

5.6.7 Further Studies

Further studies would concretise the understanding of social media use in different spheres:

- i. Explore the impact of social media on students' adjustment to university life both in terms of their social, spiritual and psychological growth and include both students and staff.
- ii. The study focused on Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, based in rural Western Kenya, similar studies can be done on comparison analysis with other urban Universities in Kenya.
- iii. The impact of social media on university students involvement in gambling which is rampant among youths and mostly university students, assessing its impact in relation to social media will provide more insight and knowledge that will aid in more literature.
- iv. A larger study involving analysis of differences in social media use among genders would reflect more on what kindles social media use.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: QUESTIONNAIRE

paper code

**MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION**

Dear Respondent,

My name is **Chamegere M. N. Elvis**, a Masters student (Masters of Science in Communication) at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST). I am carrying out research on *Utilization of Social media in University students' elections in Kenya, a case of Masinde Muliro University*.

This information is strictly for academic purposes and will be treated with full confidentiality so feel free to answer the questions.

Thank you for your co-operation.

(Tick the appropriate box where necessary)

SECTION A. DEMOGRAPHIC

1. Age (Years) 15-18 19-25 25-30 Above 30

2. Male Female

3. Nationality, Kenyan Others (Specify).....

4. Student Course, Undergraduate Diploma Certificate Others (specify)

5. Year Of Study, First Year Second Year Third Year Fourth Year

Others (Specify).....

SECTION B. PREFERRED MEDIUM FOR COMMUNICATION

6. Which medium of communication do you prefer to use?

TV Radio Newspaper Social media

Others (specify).....

Why do you prefer the medium selected above?

Easily accessible

Offers the best options

Reduces boredom

Cheap to access

Has impact on your way of life

Used by others

7 a) What is your preferred social media tool?

Facebook WhatsApp Instagram twitter

YouTube Others (Specify).....

b) Why do you prefer the above social media?

.....
.....
.....
.....

c) How frequent do you use social media?

Frequently

Not frequently

d) What language is used on the above social media?

English Kiswahili Both Kiswahili & English

Others (Specify).....

e) Why do you use the selected social media tool?

Networking /socializing

Seek/ acquire and share information

Entertainment

Class work

Others
(Specify).....
.....

.....
.....

f) Do the views in your preferred social media have impact on your lifestyle?

Yes No

If Yes how?

.....
.....
.....

If No why

.....
.....
.....

SECTION C. TIME SPENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

8. a) How frequent do you access the internet in a week?

Daily
Once a week
Several times a day

b) What is the average time spent on social media tools?

Less than 30min 30min- 1hour 1hour- 2 hours 2hours- 5 hour
more than 5 hours

c) Would you prefer spending more time on social media tools?

Yes No

If Yes how long?

.....
.....
.....
.....

d) What are the benefits of using social media among students?

Immediate feedback
Knowledge sharing

- Collaboration
- Easy convergence
- Social interaction

SECTION D INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

9) a) Is social media use among University students useful and effective?

- Very effective
- Somehow effective
- Not effective

b) Have you been involved in any political discussion?

Yes No

How ?

.....

c) What was your source of political information within the University during university students elections?

- Radio
- Television
- Social media
- Bill boards
- Posters
- Fliers

Others

(Specify).....

10) Are the discussions on politics in University during elections issue based?

Yes No

11) What influences political debates among university students during electioneering period on social media?

- Trending issues
- Political figures
- Policies

Tribe
Political groupings

12) Do you support the notion that social media is used to enhance political communication among university students during elections?

Yes No

If, Yes

how.....
.....
.....

If NO, why.....
.....
.....

13) a) What is your opinion on social media tools and political decisions?

- Social media tools affect decisions made on political aspirants
- Social media is a trusted source of political information
- An aspirant who is not on social media cannot win political position
- Social media use on political issue is cheap
- Social media tools are full of political propaganda
- Massive social media campaigns helps one win elections

b) Were the last students elections in the university won based on social media presence?

Yes No

If Yes, which social media tool was most visible?.....

If No, how were they won?

.....
.....
.....

14) What are the challenges of using social media tools by university students in Kenya?

- Lack of accountability
- Lack of policies
- Lack of internet connectivity
- Lack of privacy

It is expensive
Lack of gadgets

15) Any other comment on social media and its use?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Thanks

APPENDIX TWO: RESEARCH CLEARANCE PERMIT

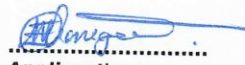
**THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MR. ELVIS NASHON MUDOGO
CHAMEGERE
of MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, 190-50100
Kakamega, has been permitted to
conduct research in Kakamega County**

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/17/63137/20493
Date Of Issue : 8th December, 2017
Fee Received : Ksh 1000



**on the topic: MEDIA AND POLITICS IN
KENYA: UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA
IN STUDENTS ELECTIONS AT MASINDE
MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY, KENYA**

**for the period ending:
7th December, 2018**


.....
**Applicant's
Signature**


.....
**Director General
National Commission for Science,
Technology & Innovation**

CONDITIONS

1. The License is valid for the proposed research, research site specified period.
2. Both the Licence and any rights thereunder are non-transferable.
3. Upon request of the Commission, the Licensee shall submit a progress report.
4. The Licensee shall report to the County Director of Education and County Governor in the area of research before commencement of the research.
5. Excavation, filming and collection of specimens are subject to further permissions from relevant Government agencies.
6. This Licence does not give authority to transfer research materials.
7. The Licensee shall submit two (2) hard copies and upload a soft copy of their final report.
8. The Commission reserves the right to modify the conditions of this Licence including its cancellation without prior notice.



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



National Commission for Science,
Technology and Innovation

**RESEARCH CLEARANCE
PERMIT**

Serial No.A **16898**

CONDITIONS: see back page

APPENDIX THREE: COUNTY RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



**THE PRESIDENCY
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR & CO-ORDINATION OF
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT**

Office Mobile No: 0707 085260
Email-cckakamega12@yahoo.com

When replying please quote

Ref No: **ED/12/1/VOL.III/114**

**COUNTY COMMISSIONER
KAKAMEGA COUNTY
P O BOX 43-50100
KAKAMEGA.**

Date: 19th Jan, 2018

Elvis Nashon Mudogo Chamegere,
Masinde Muliro University of
Science and Technology,
P O BOX 190-50100,

Kakamega.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your authorization vide letter Ref: NACOSTI/P/17/63137/20493 dated 8th December, 2017 by NACOSTI to undertake research on *"Media and politics in Kenya: Utilization of social media in students' elections at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya"*.

I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to carry out the research on the same.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'D. K. Boen', written over a horizontal line.

**D. K. BOEN,
FOR: COUNTY COMMISSIONER,
KAKAMEGA COUNTY.**