

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON INFORMATION
CREDIBILITY ON TOP-DOWN COMMUNICATION.**

(A CASE STUDY OF MAASAI MARA UNIVERSITY)

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**A RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
FILM, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FINAL YEAR RESEARCH
PROJECT OF THE BACHELOR OF ARTS COMMUNICATION AND
PUBLIC RELATIONS DEGREE AT MAASAI MARA UNIVERSITY**

DECLARATION

Declaration by the student

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree or any other award in any other University.

Name.....

Signature.....

Date.....

Declaration by the Lecturer

This /thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University Supervisor

Signature..... Date.....

Name: Mrs Elizabeth Oluoch

Department: Film,Media and Communication

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this report to the Almighty God for giving me the strength and good health to effectively do this research. For my mother for assisting me financially to conduct this research. Joycelyn Wambui for assisting me in doing statistical inference and all the respondents that were very cooperative in the research process.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank my supervisor Mrs Elizabeth Oluoch for her guidance and counsel on how to make my research manageable and beneficial for the university and Maasai Mara Community at large. My special gratitude for third and fourth year communication students for allowing me to use them as respondents in my research.

ABSTRACT

Communication is the engine that drives all the social systems we know of. Without proper communication, systems may crumble. The study focuses on how credibility of information can be affected by use of social media. The type of communication in our study is top-down communication. Social media is a new phenomenon in the country and there has not been effective training of how to handle it as a tool. In organizations, improper use of social media will cause an effect to credibility on the information. We used source and medium credibility theories to investigate the effect of social media on information credibility. Our study was based in Maasai Mara University with a population of 150 where a sample of 50 students were chosen to represent the population. Results were tabulated and presented in tables and histograms. It was found out that there is a relation between social media use and information credibility. Use of social media reduces credibility. Recommendations were given by the researcher that the university should put checks and balances on social media use would increase credibility of social media as a tool. A call for further study was given on the issue of social media and information credibility

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1.1 SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a new platform especially in Kenya .It can be defined as a group of internet based operations which allow creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan&Haenlein 2010, p 2).Other social scientists including Metzger and Flanigan (2009) identify social media as a system in which individuals engage wide-scale communication, collective resource building and collaboration online (p 415).

From these definitions, it is clear that in social media ,there is no clear form of communication management and any person who has access to the social media platform has the ability to post information while possibly maintaining anonymity. The nature of social media brings about credibility issues especially in top-down communication in the case of universities. In the Kenyan context, the emergence of hackers has made it harder to know which information should be trusted and which should be treated with skepticism.

From early theorists like Hovland and Weiss ,there has been a clear link between the source/medium and perceived credibility .With the advent of social media ,where everyone is a source of information ,it has become harder to gauge perceived credibility .Here are some examples of how social media has been misused and caused misinformation:

Given the rapid and uncontrollable spread of information on Twitter or Facebook, an authoritative and credible information source in this environment is particularly important. Hoaxes on Twitter can have severe consequences. For example, a Twitter hoax in April, 2013 claimed that President Obama was injured in an explosion at the White House, which resulted in a 150 points Dow Jones Industrial Average fall, evaporating a \$136 billion market value in minutes (Chozick & Perlroth, 2013). Even though people soon learned that the fake tweet was posted by hackers through the Associated Press (AP) account and the domestic market rebounded, it caused panic in the global markets and some investors lost money. Another hoax news was put up in May, 2013. Five-time NBA champ, Kobe Bryant, was said to retire in the fake news posted by a hoax Twitter account pretending to be Yahoo's well-known sports writer Adrian Wojnarowski. No market plunge occurred this time. But people did believe that Bryant was going to end his career after 17 seasons.

The rumor ended only with Bryant's rebuttal tweet, "Really?? Me. Retire?? Soon, but not yet! Vino still has work to do." Fake news on Twitter exerts great influence on us whether we are aware of it or not. In effect, it is the sources that play a vital role in the process of information dissemination because only when people believe the sources will they accept and spread the information provided by such sources. Then again, why people believe these social media sources to be credible and spread these rumors like they are real news? Now, what if a real sports writer, or AP or ESPN reporter publicized Bryant's retirement instead of, say, a makeup artist or a mechanical engineering scientist? Whose words sound more credible? Again, if we are talking about makeup and beauty, does a post by a makeup artist make it more authoritative and credible to you? The platform provided by interactive technology does accelerate information diffusion and then increase communication effect, but most of the time, communication effect on social media is more hinged on "hubs"—individuals more connected and visible in the networks (Barabási, 2002).

These are just few example of how social media information can spread like wildfire. What led to the revolution in North Africa was caused by social media. In the early 2000s, several Egyptian bloggers became prominent for tackling thorny issues. The initial blogs were only published in English, but the development of Arabic software encouraged the creation of more blogs in Arabic, thus attracting a wider domestic audience (Hamdy, 2009). As the Egyptian blogosphere grew, activists began utilizing other communication technologies, including social media like Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, and cellular phones (ibid.). April 2008 marked the first Egyptian instigated cyber activism attempt, in which activists created a Facebook page to join textile workers in Mahalla on a general strike. Although the Facebook page attracted 70,000 supporters, the strike was harshly defeated by state security forces (ibid.). The experience and knowledge gained in these early social media trials, however, proved useful in the 2011 protests and subsequent revolution.

What is perhaps most significant about the use of social media in the Egyptian revolution is how It changed the dynamics of social mobilization. Social media introduced speed and interactivity that were lacking in the traditional mobilization techniques, which generally include the use of leaflets, posters, and faxes. For instance, social media enabled domestic and international Egyptian activists to follow events in Egypt, join social-networking groups, and engage in discussions.

There were a number of individual activists with sufficient knowledge of social media resources

Who helped bring the revolution to life? These activists created Facebook groups, personal blogs, and Twitter accounts to engage supporters and followers in discussions on current conditions in Egypt. In the summer of 2010, the Facebook group “We are all Khalid Said” was created following the young man’s death. Although the group initially was used to disseminate information about Said’s death, it gradually expanded to include political discussions and began attracting more young political activists. Members of the group used this cyberspace to disseminate information on the latest misdeeds of the Mubarak regime, a discussion that appears to have reverberated among frustrated Egyptians and others, as indicated by the site’s popularity.

(International Journal of Communication 5 (2011) Social Media in the Egyptian Revolution 1213)

Social media is doubtlessly a powerful tool to cause mass activism and change. Organizations must then be very careful to be vigilant to curb the negative influences on the use of social media and deal with the anonymity effect of social media.

Our context is within an organization .In Kenya, social media is a new phenomenon and now organizations have begun creating Facebook pages and twitter accounts and because of advertising and publicity, it is open to the public .There I a high probability to spread incorrect information and reduce credibility of the medium and eventually the source.

1.1.2 ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

The aim of this study is to find out to which extent social media use affects information credibility and how university administration can effectively use social media for effective communication. This research will add to the body of knowledge of new media research and be used as an authoritative source in organizational communication.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Credibility of both source and medium is important because it greatly affects the believability of communication(Hovland & Weiss 1951,Kiousis 2001).Social media as a source pauses many

questions on how reliable it is as both a source and a medium for communication .In the Kenyan context, according to the Kenya Cyber Security Report of 2015,the third most important cyber security issue is insider threats(p 12).The research indicated that over 80% of system-generated fraud is perpetrated by the employees. The study comes at an opportune time in Maasai Mara University when fake accounts in the name of the university and fraudulent information are so prevalent and there is a need to evaluate the sources.

In that report, page 15 states that recent crimes against social media included the following:

December 2014

- Phishing attack on over 5000 Facebook accounts.
- Teenager hacks Deputy President's Hon William Ruto's twitter account and the twitter accounts of the Defense Forces.

It is hence clear the nature of social media and how easily hoaxes can be propagated as truth while no proof is attached to the information .Because of this, universities have to be careful to know the effect of social media on information given to the students in order to avoid the complexities contradictory information.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the study is to find out how social media use affects information credibility in the stance of top-down communication.

The specific objectives are as follows:

- To find out the dominant social media outlet in use in the university to relay information from the administration to the students.
- To find out the perceived credibility of this social media outlet among the students.
- To find out the relevance of information relayed in this social media outlet among students.
- To find out which characteristics of social media make it credible
- To find out which social media outlet is most effective to relay official information.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Which social media does the administration use most often and why?

- What are the credibility levels of this social media above among students?
- Do students perceive the information relayed in the social media outlet above as important?
- What are the characteristics of the preferred social media outlet, among the students, to relay official information?
- Which is the most effective social media outlet then to relay information among students?

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was done in Maasai Mara University as a case to represent all other universities. The study focused on the students who were in session, particularly from January to May 2016. They were taken as our population and sample were taken from each year of the groups in session.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study will add to the body of knowledge pertaining new media research. The findings of this study will play an advisory role to the administration of the university and assist it in the implementation of more effective and efficient new media communication practices. The findings of this study will also assist the administration in putting up monitoring measures to curb cybercrimes and place a name to every source of information that purports to be Maasai Mara University administration.

1.7 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This study will be of great importance to our university because it comes at a time where rumors and propaganda are so rampant in the university and there is need for a clear delineation between what is true and what is fake. Everyone can speak on behalf of the university in social media. This poses a great concern on the credibility of social media information. The study will assist the administration to reconstruct their social media communications strategy so as to avoid misinformation and ultimately uproars and demonstrations.

Students also need to know the measures of credibility so as to know which information is true and which hype. The credibility scales in this study will reduce the confusion and increase the efficiency of social media communication...

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The correspondents of this research were limited to only the students in session during the January to May 2016 period. In taking samples of incorrect or misleading information, we studied information relayed from September 2015 to April 2016. Time could not allow us to do an extensive study on social media credibility. Resources also limited us to Maasai Mara University. In as much as we had limitations, the study succinctly covers the issue of credibility and gives us the way forward.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at already documented literature on credibility as a whole and specifically credibility in social media. The chapter will give a detailed account of what other scholars have researched and will help us identify gaps so that we can base our studies on filling the knowledge gaps that may appear.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study will revolve around one major theory, that is the source credibility theory proposed by Hovland and Weiss (1976). Though this theory mainly deals with traditional media or word of mouth, we will incorporate new concepts of credibility in social media or what is termed as electronic word of mouth (e-WOM).

According to Hennig-Tharau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler (2004), electronic word of mouth is any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet.

In this regard, we look at the source credibility theory and how it applies to top-down communication.

2.2.1 SOURCE CREDIBILITY THEORY

This communication theory is under the umbrella of persuasive communication theories. It was propounded and advanced by a number of scholars including Berlo, Lemert, Mertz in 1969 who proposed that people's acceptance of information and ideas was partly dependent on the message source. Berlo et al 1969 said that people were more likely to accept the transmitted information from a source with more perceived credibility.

From the start, there is a correlation between credibility and the source and medium of information. Source credibility is used interchangeably with media credibility. Hence it is defined as “perceptions of a news channel’s believability as distinct from individual sources, media organization or as the content of the news itself.”(Bucy 2003)

Which media outlet or source is used has an effect on the perceived credibility. Perceived credibility is hence the perception of the source or medium based on particular measures. Cunningham & Bright (2012) and Ohanian (1990) suggest that factors like liking, attractiveness and expertise are conceptual dimensions of source credibility other than independent source factors. This means that a source that is perceived to be attractive and likeable could be determined as credible, though it might not.

With the advent of social media, there is a need to merge source and media because everyone in the social media is both a source and a purveyor of content, or a producer and consumer too. A good example is not from new media but from traditional media i.e. newspapers. The newspaper can either reflect the organization (source) or can be a representative of print media (channel). Hence source credibility on social media is not only determined by the characteristics of the exact person behind the Twitter or Facebook account but also the attributes of the social media platform.

Hovland, Janis and Kelly (1953) point out that the source/media initiating the communication and the cues as to the trustworthiness, intentions and affiliations of the source in the process of communication have an important impact on the effectiveness of communication.

McCroskey & Teven 1999; O’Keefe (2002) continue to show what causes perceived source/media credibility among consumers of news content:

Expertise: This is one dimension of source credibility also called “competence” or “expertise” and aims to measure if the sources have the capability to know the truth. In our context, if the purveyor of social media messages about an organization has the capability to know the truth about the organization. Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953) define expertise as the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions. The proposed measures were: experienced/inexperienced, informed/uninformed, trained/untrained, qualified/unqualified, skilled/unskilled, intelligent/unintelligent and expert/not expert.

Trustworthiness: This dimension measures to what extent a source is inclined to tell the truth if he/she knows it. Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953) defined trustworthiness as the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid. The scales of this dimension are: honest/dishonest, trustworthy/untrustworthy, open-minded/closed-minded, just/unjust, fair/unfair and selfish/unselfish.

The students as the receivers in this case perceive the information relayed by the administration as credible based on how trustworthy it is and how expert or authoritative the producer is. Because of the nature of social media, trustworthiness or perceived goodwill of the source is affected. The medium is the message, according to Marshall McLuhan so social media use affects the perceived credibility of official information.

Now that the foundation for credibility has been laid, we will look at the recent research on e-WOM. There has been scanty research on social media because of the issues of scalability and scope of social media. It is very wide. The traditional scales of measuring credibility cannot be used. People cannot really draw measures like trustworthiness based on one tweet or a status update in Facebook. Rather how they speak, the behavior styles and the number of followers that the source has. A whole new way of measuring source credibility in the new media is being constructed, based on the rudimentary research of traditional media credibility theorists

2.2.2 NETWORK ANALYSIS

To understand in context the concept of credibility in e-WOM, we must review what is called network analysis. It was first proposed by Granovetter in 1973 who assumed that society was structured into two: high connected structures, which were made up of strong social ties like family and close friends and the other group was weak links such as acquaintances and that they were weak ties that connected these clusters together, keeping them from being isolated from the rest of the world.

Barabasi (2002) proposes that at most times weak ties play an important role in people's social activities by spreading words or getting information from the outside world, though strong ties were more influential to people than weak ties. It provides a promising explanation of credibility in social media. In Facebook or twitter, people are connected with numerous people and more ordinary people connected with a few friends. The relevance of a source or an account on social media to people determine the social tie or strength. This social strength influences people's

perceived source credibility of the source or account. In our context, the university students are connected to the administration by weak ties, because the relevance of the source is little, hence if the weak ties exist, then the perceived credibility of the administration's Facebook or twitter account will be little. If within the students, there are a few students who have strong ties with the sources of information in the university's accounts, then the information relayed through these sources will be perceived as credible. What the administration ought to do, hence, is to ensure that these ties increase to increase perceived credibility among the students.

2.2.3 TECHNOLOGY AFFORDANCE

More research on social media found out that system generated cues i.e. Facebook comments and followers on twitter affected source credibility.(Westerman,Spence Van Der Heide 2012). Too few or too many followers, according to Westerman's et al 2012 research, resulted in less credibility in the competence and trustworthiness of twitter page owners. Conceptualizing this effect, Tseng and Fogg (1999) proposed for types of credibility, two of which were referred as superficial aspects of the site. They include:

- Reputed credibility
- Surface credibility

Reputed credibility referred to the labels and markers on the site of the source's expertise and reputation. An example of Facebook and Twitter. Verified accounts indicated account identity.

Surface credibility is more abstract, which describes how much a perceiver believes a source based on the inspection of the site and profile. The basic idea is that people make their credibility judgments with the help of the number of followers, how the profile looks among others.

Wathen and Burkell (2002) operationalized this concept. They pointed out that surface characteristics to create perceived surface credibility, involved appearance/presentation and information organization, interface design elements of the social media outlet i.e. interactivity and navigability.

Sundar (2008) crystallized the concept of technological affordance on information credibility as he studied how technological affordance effected the judgment of credibility. These technological affordances or surface features triggered cognitive heuristics to affect people's assessment of

credibility. For example, the number of followers on Twitter or say friends on Facebook, whether source/account was popular or not, affected people's impression.

He continued to argue that because of excessive online information, today's youth are more and more dependent on cues/markers transmitted by technological features to make snap decisions about the credibility and quality of information they consumed.

Sundar et al (2015) assumed that technology affordances or surface features triggered heuristics in two ways:

The presence of surface features on the social media interface can transmit cues, both about the interface functionality and the designer's intent.

By adaptively gathering information for the user in the form of metrics that affect its operations.

In our context, how the social media looks, its interface has an effect on the perceived medium credibility. Twitter in comparison to Facebook has more positive heuristics. Hence as the university's administration chooses the appropriate media, the one with most credible surface features should be chosen.

In the organizational context there are a few thoughts shared by a few scholars. Though credibility in social media has been researched, there is no clear research that questions the role of social media in organizational communication. This research aims at doing that. How does use of social media affect the credibility of information in the organizational context?

In an organization, communication affects all aspects of the organization. Communication connects each individual part of the system so that it can function as a whole. It is also the means by which an organization is created and sustained (Santra & Grinn 2009).

Modaf et al (2007) defines organizational communication as the process of creating, exchanging, interpreting (correctly or incorrectly) and storing messages within a system of human interrelationships"

Communication in the organization is hence crucial because it enhances organizational effectiveness. Every organization works as a summation/collection of parts. Through communication in an organization, the systems theory is fulfilled. What if, because of the heuristics

of social media, a part of the system does not work as it should? The system will break down leading to what is commonly referred to as a crisis

2.2.4 SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE WORKPLACE

Though social media has revolutionized communication in the workplace, it has certain implications. Di Staso,McKorindale and Wright(2011) interviewed Public Relations executives to determine the impact of social media in their organization .One participant stated that the greatest risk for an organization is to ignore social media and allow conversations to happen without awareness or participation.(p 235)

Walter and Williams (2011) continue to state that the lack of control and one way interactions can make an organization to be susceptible to sometimes misguided actions of some social media users. He continues to say that it is difficult for the organization to accept the lack of control associated with social media and not knowing what people might say or do.

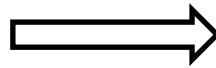
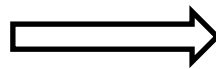
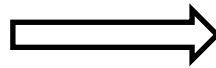
2.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

SOCIAL MEDIA USE

PERCIEVED SOURCE
CREDIBILITY

INFORMATION CONTROL ON
SOCIAL MEDIA



DEPENDENT VARIABLES

INFORMATION CREDIBILITY

INFORMATION BELIEVABILITY

ORGANIZATION'S PERCIEVED
EXPERTISE AND GOODWILL

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter prescribes the research methodology that was employed in the study. It comprises of research design, target population, data collection techniques, sources of data and data analysis. This section aims at establishing the process and means at which the data will be collected and presented.

3.2 STUDY AREA

The research was conducted in the immediate environment of the researcher, that is, Maasai Mara university main campus.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study mainly employed explanatory research design. To explain social media affected information credibility and why, we used the case study of Maasai Mara University. This approach collected data without manipulating the variables or compromising the veracity of research findings in the attempt to prove whether social media use by the university management affected the credibility of information relayed. The inferences about the relationship between the stated variables were made without interfering with the concomitant variation of dependent and independent variables.

3.4 TARGET POPULATION

The study targeted students in session from January to April 2016, that is, third years and fourth years who are in the School of Arts and Social Sciences, give vital information.

3.5 SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLE PROCEDURE

A sample size is a small part of the population to be studied. The observation of a sample size is intended to yield knowledge about the population of concern and help in statistical inference.

Sampling procedure is the process by which samples are selected in a study(Kothari 2007).Sampling can be defined as selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population

to be representative of that population .Any statement made about the sample should be true also of the population (Orodho 2010)

The study employed purposive sampling to choose third years and fourth years from the Department of Film Media and communication. The sample had the best qualities to be a representative of the population based on the researcher’s judgments.

To choose sample size of the administration population, the researcher again employed purposive sampling. Because of time and financial constraints, we had to again stratify the sample so that the sample size can be manageable.Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) says that the sample size should be at least 30% of the population size, or group required to represent the population.

3.6 SAMPLING FRAME

Category of respondents	Population N	Percentage %	Sample (n)	Sampling technique
students	150	30	50	Simple random sampling

3.7 INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION

The study used both primary and secondary data sources. Hence, the following instruments were used: Questionnaires and interview schedules. According to Kothari (2004) the questionnaire is an ideal instrument to gather descriptive information from a large sample in a fairly short time. It can also be answered at the convenience of the respondent and picked at a later date. The self-designed questionnaires were both structured and unstructured. The study also employed a five-point Lickert Scale which allowed respondents to rate their perception of credibility levels of information about the university, posted in social media.

3.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Kothari (2010) says that these are tests used to evaluate the effectiveness of a measurement instrument.Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) refer to validity as the extent to which the instrument

measures what is supposed to measure or designed to measure. In our study, the questionnaire and interview schedule were validated using content validity determined by expert judgment of the researcher. The researcher also consulted his peers together with the supervisor from the department of Film Media and Communication, Maasai Mara University.

The instruments were validated using pre-testing and responses from respondents were used to improve the technique.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Data was analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The data was organized into various tables including frequency tables and mean percentages. Chi square test was used to analyze data and show if there is a significant perceived relationship between social media use and message credibility

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

I am Edward Kinuthia, a student of Maasai Mara University pursuing a bachelor's degree in Communication and Public Relations. I am a fourth year student and have been tasked with collecting data for my undergraduate thesis: **The Effect of Social Media use on top-down Information Credibility**. Your response is crucial because it will strengthen the authoritativeness and veracity of the research findings. The responses will be treated with anonymity and discretion.

Carefully read the instructions provided before answering any question.

PART ONE: DEMOGRAPHICS

AGE:.....

GENDER:.....

YEAR OF STUDY:.....

MODE OF STUDY:.....

PART TWO: SOCIAL MEDIA USE

I use social media to get official information about student affairs

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I consider social media as an official source of information

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Social media is better than going to the notice board and reading notices

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I am active in the university's Facebook page

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Social media outlets like Facebook are a good information source for students.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I use social media to post what I feel is incorrect about my university.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I am satisfied with the way the university's administration uses social media.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

PART THREE: INFORMATION CREDIBILITY

I consider official information, about the university, posted on social media as accurate

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Every time I follow after information posted on social media, I make correct decisions

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

My actions as a student are guided mostly by what is posted on social media about the university

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

There is a capability that information posted on social media about the university might be wrong.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

The university has managed information flow about it on Facebook and other social media platforms.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Information about the university posted on social media has made me improve my perception about the administration.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I do not believe anything at all that is posted by the administration in social media

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

I prefer the old channels of information as compared to these new online platforms

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

The university administration has done an excellent job in controlling information that is purveyed through social media about itself

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither agree or disagree Agree Strongly Agree

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The methodology described in the previous chapter provided the baseline for data- gathering. In this chapter, the presentation of data is systematically linked to the format of the self-developed questionnaire attached in the appendix. The following will be used to analyze data: description of the sample, main results, discussion, presentation and interpretations of the results.

This chapter will focus on the analysis and interpretation of data that was collected for this study. According to De Vos (1998:203), data analysis entails that the analyst break down data into constituent parts to obtain answers to research questions and to test hypotheses. The analysis of research data does not in its own provide the answers to research questions. The purpose of interpreting the data is to reduce it to an intelligible and interpretable form so that the relations of research problems can be studied and tested, and conclusions drawn. On the other hand, when the researcher interprets the research results, he/she studies them for their meaning and implications (De Vos, 1998:203).

The next section will discuss the characteristics of the sample in order for the findings to be clearly understood.

4.2 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

As stated earlier, the goal of the study is to find out whether social media use affects information credibility, in this whether top-down communication credibility is affected by social media use. Data was collected using questionnaires. The population was third and fourth year students of Maasai Mara university. The sample was taken randomly from among the population. The sample size was 50.25 questionnaires were given to third years while the rest were given to fourth years. Because of the nature of the sample, all questionnaires were returned and none was spoilt. The gender was generally male and female. The next section consists of main results which would be represented in form of frequencies, cross-tabulations and T-tests

4.3 MAIN RESULTS

This section will draw on the description of the dependent and independent variables of the study. Since the sample size was less than 100 respondents, researcher will mainly use raw frequencies to describe the biographic section of the sample. The N-value cannot exceed the total number of respondents. Frequency distribution tables help the researcher to be able to see the spread of the sample or to describe the sample. In other words, the researcher becomes familiar with the demographic variables through the use of frequency distribution tables.

The SPSS Version 11.0 was used by the researcher to analyze the data. Univariate analysis was used in the description of the sample in terms of demographic characteristics as well as instrument scores. Since one of the objectives of this research is to provide a profile or description of the sample in terms of various variables, this analysis is sufficient.

4.3.2 SECTION A

4.3.2.1 DEMOGRAPHIC STATISTICS

4.3.2.1.1 QUESTION ONE: GENDER

TABLE 4.1

GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE

GENDER

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	25	50.0	50.0	50.0
Valid female	25	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

The table above shows the balance between male and female respondents. The balance will however not affect the results of the data

4.3.2.1.2 QUESTION TWO: AGE

Table 4.2 Different ages

AGE				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 21	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
22	20	40.0	40.0	46.0
23	15	30.0	30.0	76.0
24	6	12.0	12.0	88.0
25	6	12.0	12.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

4.3.3 SECTION B

In this section, relevant data about the response frequencies of the students that were in our research are reported. A self-designed questionnaire was used to explore the various issues surrounding social media and information credibility. The questionnaire has the following items.

TABLE 4.3

Descriptive statistics on the different questions regarding social media use and information credibility

I use social media to get official information about the university				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
Disagree	14	28.0	28.0	34.0
neither agree or disagree	11	22.0	22.0	56.0
Agree	19	38.0	38.0	94.0
strongly agree	3	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Here 38% of the respondents agreed to the fact that they get official information about the university in social media. This means that most people have good faith in the social media platforms

social media is better than going to the notice board and reading notices

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	13	26.0	26.0	26.0
Valid Agree	10	20.0	20.0	46.0
Valid strongly agree	27	54.0	54.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Again here 54% of the respondents admitted that they prefer social media because it is efficient as compared to the traditional means of purveying information.

I am active in the university's Facebook page

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	4	8.0	8.0	8.0
Valid Disagree	9	18.0	18.0	26.0
Valid neither agree or disagree	3	6.0	6.0	32.0
Valid Agree	21	42.0	42.0	74.0
Valid strongly agree	13	26.0	26.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

42% again admitted to the fact that they are in the university's Facebook page. So these respondents closely follow what is posted on that page

social media outlets like Facebook are a reliable information source about the university for students

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	19	38.0	38.0	38.0
neither agree or disagree	9	18.0	18.0	56.0
Valid Agree	11	22.0	22.0	78.0
strongly agree	11	22.0	22.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

38% of the respondents did not believe that Facebook is a reliable source of information, though they get information from the site. This may be so because of how the students and administration uses social media

I use social media to post what I feel is incorrect about my university

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
neither agree or disagree	20	40.0	40.0	46.0
Valid Agree	7	14.0	14.0	60.0
strongly agree	20	40.0	40.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

40% of the respondents posted what they felt is incorrect concerning our university on social media. These include criticism and rumors. That could be the reason why the Facebook page is not a very reliable source

I am satisfied with the way the university's administration uses social media

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	7	14.0	14.0	14.0
Disagree	20	40.0	40.0	54.0
Valid neither agree or disagree	16	32.0	32.0	86.0
Agree	7	14.0	14.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

40% of the respondents were not satisfied with the way the university uses social media. The administration is not perturbed by the kind of self-image portrayed on social media.

I consider official information posted about the university on social media as accurate

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	23	46.0	46.0	46.0
neither agree or disagree	16	32.0	32.0	78.0
Valid Agree	7	14.0	14.0	92.0
strongly agree	4	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

46% of the respondents did not consider the information posted on social media about the university as accurate. Though mostly the students are the source of this information, it is not considered accurate at all.

Every time I follow information posted on social media, I make correct decisions

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	15	30.0	30.0	30.0
neither agree or disagree	24	48.0	48.0	78.0
Valid Agree	7	14.0	14.0	92.0
strongly agree	4	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

48% were not sure whether they make correct decisions. This could be because students do not depend on social media alone as a source of information. Word of mouth is very common.

my actions as a student are guided mostly by what is posted on social media

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	22	44.0	44.0	44.0
Disagree	6	12.0	12.0	56.0
neither agree or disagree	4	8.0	8.0	64.0
Agree	13	26.0	26.0	90.0
strongly agree	5	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Most student did not attest to the fact that their actions are guided by social media mainly because they have a perception about social media that is wrong. They believe social media is a platform for innuendo and lies. Though they are active, they are skeptical about information regarding their affairs.

Information about the university posted on social media has made me improve my perception about the administration

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	3	6.0	6.0	6.0
Disagree	19	38.0	38.0	44.0
neither agree or disagree	17	34.0	34.0	78.0
Agree	11	22.0	22.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

38% of the respondents did not believe that social media has improved their perception about the university. On the contrary they believed that social media has done more to destroy the image of the university than to mend it.

I do not believe anything at all that is posted by the administration in social media

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	12	24.0	24.0	24.0
Disagree	23	46.0	46.0	70.0
neither agree or disagree	3	6.0	6.0	76.0
Agree	5	10.0	10.0	86.0
strongly agree	7	14.0	14.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

46% of the respondents, though they are skeptical about social media, still believe that there is some element of good in social media. Though it has been misused, the respondents believe, with proper control, clarification and censorship, social media is a reliable platform

I prefer the old channels of information like notices and memos as compared to these new online platforms

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid strongly disagree	11	22.0	22.0	22.0
Disagree	20	40.0	40.0	62.0
neither agree or disagree	7	14.0	14.0	76.0
Agree	9	18.0	18.0	94.0
strongly agree	3	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

This question gave the researcher clarity as to how the respondents view online platforms. Though social media may not have source credibility, they prefer online platforms as compared to these traditional forms. This means that if social media has perceived credibility, students can use it well as a tool for communication

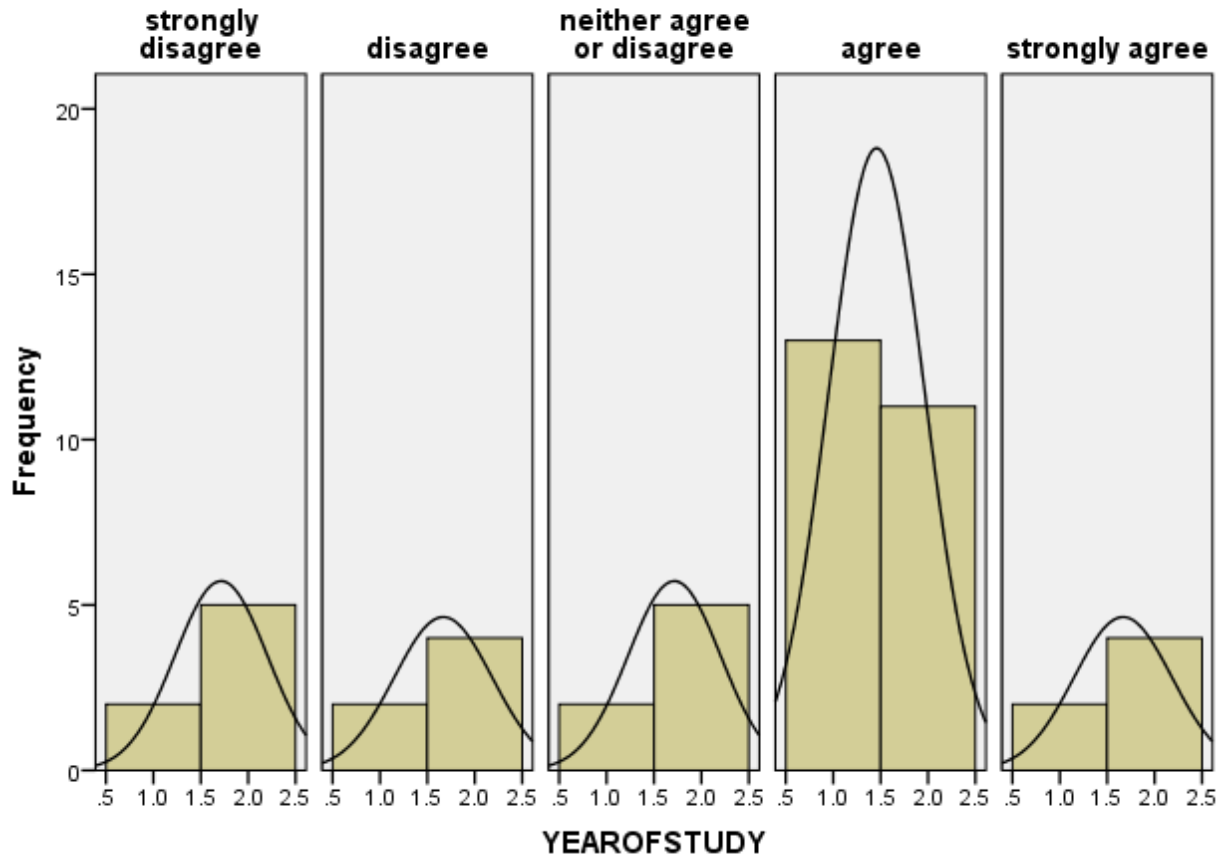
The university has done an excellent job in controlling information that is purveyed through social media about itself

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Disagree	22	44.0	44.0	44.0
neither agree or disagree	16	32.0	32.0	76.0
Agree	12	24.0	24.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

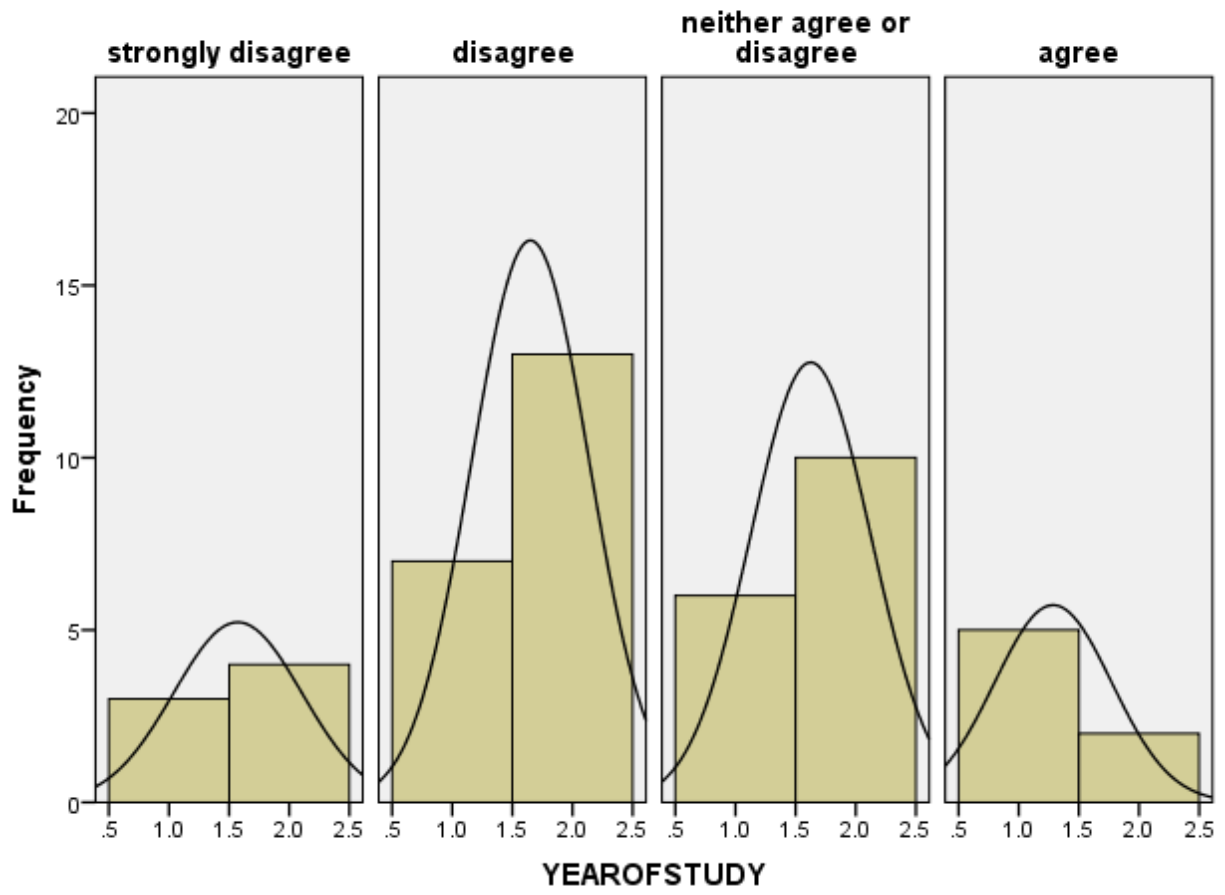
44% of the respondents disagree to the fact that the administration has done an excellent job in controlling information flow on social media. It is hence a call to the parties involved to rectify information flow before online tools become a source of crises for the university.

HISTOGRAMS FOR A NUMBER OF REPSONSES OF CRITICAL IMPORTANCE TO OUR STUDY

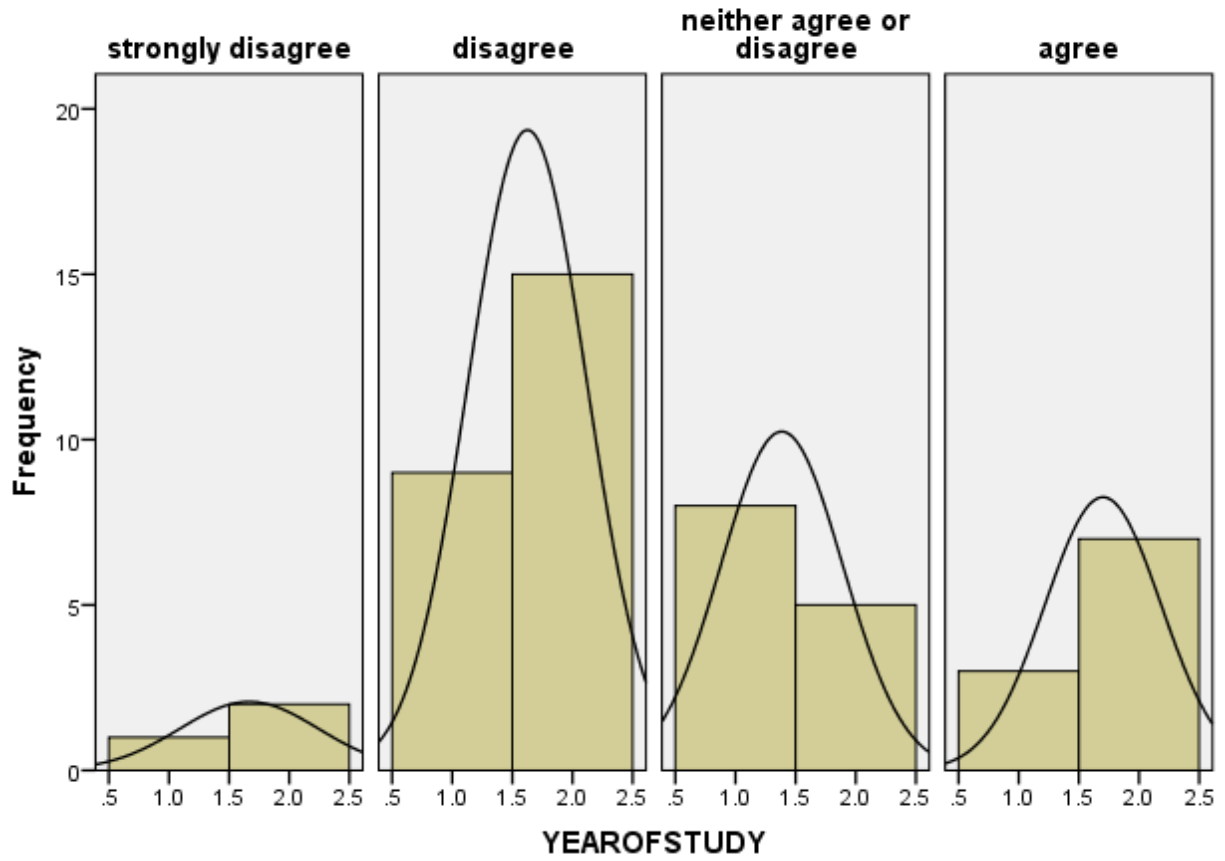
there is a capability that information posted on social media might be inaccurate



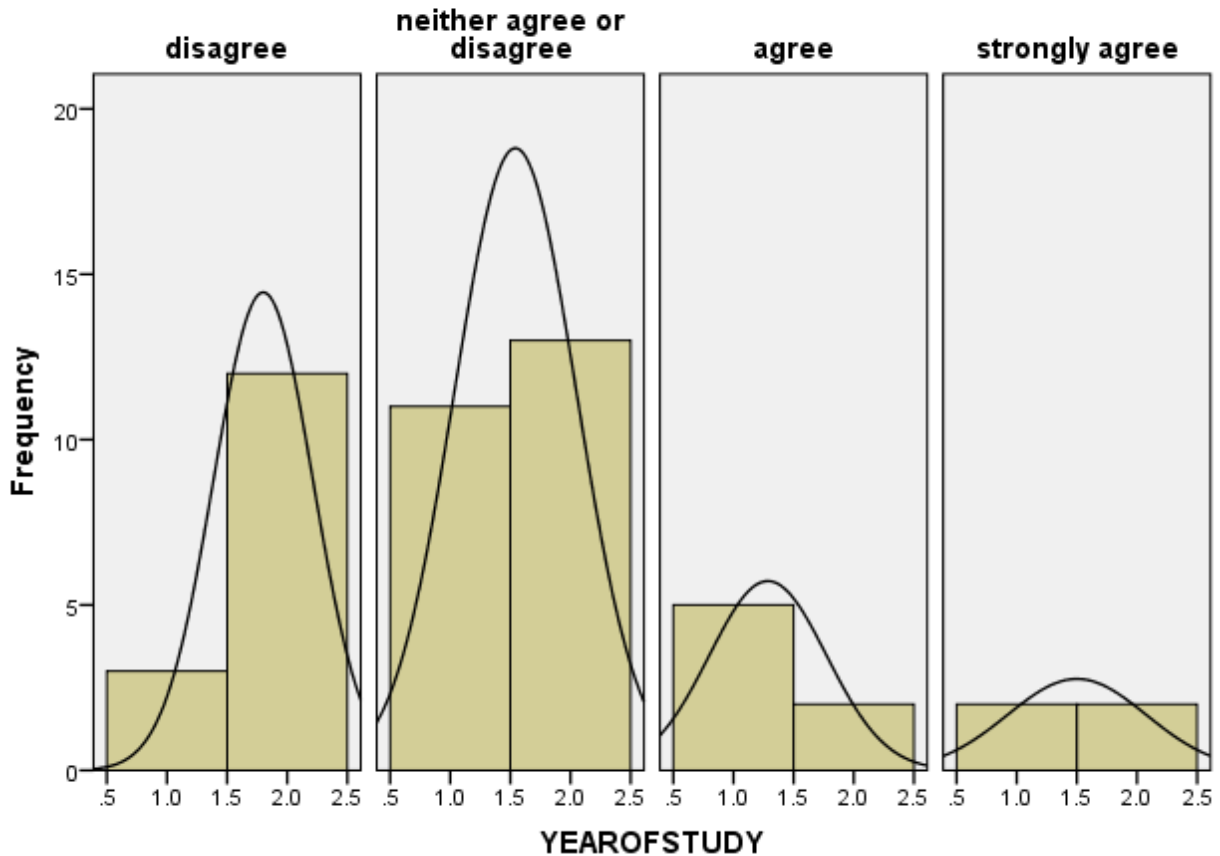
i am satisfied with the way the university's administration uses social media



i consider official information posted about the university on socail media as accurate



everytime i follow information posted on social media,i make correct decisions



From the responses above we can see that most respondents do not consider what is posted on social media as accurate and most of them do not rely on social media only to make the correct decisions.

4.4 CONCLUSION

From the statistics presented above, we can conclude that social media use has an effect on information credibility. Most respondents were of the opinion that because information was in social media, it has an impact on how reliable it is. That is the reason why, though many respondents are active in social media, they are there for gossip and grapevine but are careful. Once a medium has lost its perceived credibility, then even if official information is purveyed therein, there is trust that has been lost between the source of information and the recipient.

We can see that perceived source/message credibility has an effect on organizational image. When asked whether information on social media has an effect on how the organization is viewed, most respondents said that social media use did not improve their perception of the university. This was mainly because to an extent the university has failed to manage information flow. Essentially, in the online platforms, everyone is a source and recipient of information. Tracking, censorship and clarification is hence important to avoid wrong information or miscommunication. If these systems are not in place, the online platforms under the name: Maasai Mara University will work to destroy its corporate image, as is the case for these respondents. From the data given, the myth that in social media anything goes is proven. In the case of Daystar University, there was no clear information and multiple sources gave conflicting information. The image of the university got spoilt and the university had to make up for the misinformation. Issues in social media spiral to crises within no time. Here the administration must avert that so that the image may be protected.

Based on the findings of the research, we can rightly conclude that social media has an effect on the believability of the information relayed.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with analysis and interpretation of data obtained by way of questionnaires. In this chapter, a brief summary on the research project will be presented. The findings from both the literature review and the empirical investigation of social media use and information credibility will be presented. The recommendations that will serve as guidelines to assist both the administration and the students will be made.

5.2 SUMMARY

The purpose of this research project was to find out whether social media use has a bearing in any way of information credibility. This study was probed by a trend identified by the researcher. Social media is not as old in Kenya and many organizations have not really paid attention to social media and have not seen its potential as a communication tool. This ignorance has led to misuse of social media and to an extent the reduction of source credibility on the part of the organization.

The empirical research was limited to Maasai Mara University. To collect quantitative data, questionnaires were given to 50 respondents, half of which were third years and half were fourth years.

Chapter one was mainly concerned with the purpose of the research study, introducing the proposed study by stating and describing the problem of investigation and clarifying the concepts as applicable in the study. The design and methods were explained.

Chapter two focused on literature review on social media use and information credibility. In this chapter it was discovered that the qualities of the source or medium can have an effect on the believability of information purveyed. We saw that trustworthiness and expertise affect how credible or not the source or message will be.

Chapter three described the methodology and design of the research project. It further described the population and sample that were employed to collect the empirical data. Questionnaires were used to collect data. The mode of selecting the sample was purposive. We used explanatory research design.

Chapter four was dedicated to the data analysis using statistical inference software's like SPSS, presented in frequency tables and histograms and the results subsequently led to the findings and recommendations. Having discussed the foregoing, the next section will focus on the important findings from the research study.

5.3 FINDINGS

In light of the literature review and responses from the questionnaires, findings will be presented into two categories namely, findings from the literature review and those from the focus groups.

5.3.1 FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEW

It was found that information credibility was affected by the following factors.

- Trustworthiness of the source
- Expertise of the source
- The heuristics of the source
- Technological affordance i.e. surface features like the number of followers, interactivity and interfaces of social media.

5.3.1.1 Social media use in organizations

It was found out that social media use is embraced in organizations but because of its nature it's quite difficult to control, censor the information purveyed therein. The much that the organizations can do is to clarify information. Most managers admitted that social media has positive impacts like increasing sales, improving advertising and customer relations.

5.3.2 FINDINGS FROM THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

5.3.2.1 Social media use among students

Most students use and prefer social media for information as compared to traditional media. Students would rather go online than read the notice board. Most students also are active in the University's Facebook page. The findings indicated that most students used referrals to give information to their friends. If its wrong information, it is spread even to those who are not in social media anyway.

5.3.2.2 Perceived credibility among students

Most students did not believe that information in social media was credible, though they were active in social media, they did not immediately agree to everything in the domains. A huge

percentage expressed their fears in following after the media information 100%.The researcher concluded that because of previous experience with information on social media, the students lost perceived source credibility i.e. in the case of the administration which is the source and the medium credibility i.e. the social media outlet.Becuase there has been so much contradictory n=information in social media, the students do not really know what to believe.

5.3.2.3 Information control and organizational believability

There is no control or clarification whatsoever when it comes to social media information flow. The administration has not paid keen attention on what information is posted on social media, and when the administration posts, there is little follow up done. This means that the story may be sinned until it loses its original credibility. The students believe that if more is done by the administration to censor and clarify information about itself on social media, they could tap on the capabilities of social media in a positive way.

5.3.2.4 Organization's corporate image

Much damage has been done by social media to destroy its corporate image. The findings indicate that students have not improved their perception of the university based on information in social media, on the contrary, the information has reduced organizational credibility and has led to an overall deterioration of the corporate image. Because of lack of control and censorship, sensitive information which may be untrue. Scandals of corruption cause massive destruction to the organizational image.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made to assist the university handle information credibility issues in social media

Recommendation one

The university should come up with a social media management team that is constantly online to monitor information flow, giving clarifications where necessary, censoring information and even taking legal action. Once the team has been set in place, the social media networks which have the name Maasai Mara University will be purged of all spin and will be respected as official tools of communication.

Recommendation two

The university should also maintain consistency of information in social media. This can only be done if there is only one source of information in social media. Currently the many sources of information make it hard for the students to find out what is true and what is not. One of the reasons why social media affects information believability is the multiplicity of information sources. If the administration should maintain consistency by entrusting only one person with the duty of social media, then the information will be more believable.

Recommendation 3

The administration should also train its staff on proper social media behavior. Some of the official information communicated is leaked from discussions of staff members. If the staff is sensitized on privacy and confidentiality of official information in social media, then leaks in information will not cause uncertainties or assumptions. In the past, posts have been posted of a senior official in the University saying or doing uncomely things or chatting with another concerning the fate of students. These conversations should be kept in private to as to maintain the perceived goodwill of the source in social media.

Recommendation 4

The administration must come up with measures to gauge how credible information purveyed on social media will be as compared to traditional forms. Depending on the agreed upon scales, the administration must know which information is best communicated through social media and which is best using memos or notices. By so doing, the information that matches the credibility index will be purveyed and this will definitely increase the credibility of both the message and the source.

5.5 FURTHER RESEARCH

It is recommended further research be undertaken about credibility in these new forms of communication. Since most studies have been devoted to credibility in mass traditional mass media forms, efforts should also be dedicated to new media for more effective communication

Further research should also be devoted to social media use in organizational communication to see how social media affects the believability of an official message. Comparisons should be made between these old channels and new channels and a balance stricken to know what to use during which period.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The objectives of this research have been met as they have been outlined. The aim of this research have been identified and related to the use of social media and its effects on information credibility in Maasai Mara University.

In this chapter, the summary of this research project have been given. The findings and also the recommendations for social media use and information credibility were presented. Hence it is crucial for the university administration to understand the importance of source/message credibility to the receivers of the information to maintain their faith on the information portrayed by the university.

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