

**THE IMPACT OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA AS A NEWS REPORTING
PLATFORM AMONG JOURNALISM STUDENTS AT MAASAI MARA
UNIVERSITY**

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ABSTRACT

The growth of the Internet has changed the way newsrooms across the world operate. At the heart of the new developments is the growing presence of traditional media of newspaper, magazines, radio and television online. Media houses have formed digital divisions solely tasked with operating their websites and social media handles. This study sought to find out how this changing technology is changing how young adults access news and information. This study picked the journalism students at Maasai Mara university since they are the most likely batch to find out what is going on in the country and also the readily available population. Respondents from the University were selected from the department of media, film and communication cutting across all years of study. This study sought to answer the following questions: How have social media changed operations in Kenyan newsrooms? What are the effects of social media use on traditional journalism pillars of objectivity, accuracy and verification? The study found that journalists have embraced the use of social media in the news gathering and dissemination process. This is, however, tempered by a cautious approach to the use of social media in news gathering and uncertainty over the effectiveness of gate keeping checks in place to ensure that social media use in the newsroom remains true to key journalistic tenets of fairness, objectivity and accuracy.

DECLARATION

DECLARATION BY THE STUDENT

I hereby declare that this project is a work of my own research and has not been submitted in any other university to gain credit

Kirambia Maurine Muthoni

ADM NO: AB13/SR/MN/0890/2016

Sign:.....

Date:.....

DECLARATION BY THE SUPERVISOR

This research project has been submitted for examination with our approval as the university supervisors.

Signature:

Date:

Mr. Felix Sialo

Department Of Media, Film And Communication

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research project to my loving and caring father for his unwavering support both financially and emotionally through my education journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge my project supervisor Mr. Felix Sialo for his support during the research process of this project and his willingness to push me to do better and be better.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The advent of the internet in the 1990s led to major developments in the world of communication hence the introduction of social networking sites (SNSs). The coming into being of these sites revolutionized the world of communication and today we celebrate its improvement from education to entertainment to news dissemination even. The evolution of the internet has led to its usage as the best medium of communication where two thirds of the internet world's population visits social-networking sites thus serving as communication and connection tool. These networking sites are called social media (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Social media exploded as a category of online discourse which enables people to create contents, share them, bookmark them and network at a prodigious rate (Jha and Bhardwaj, 2012). This has breached the gap that was there in communication where people had to rely solely on traditional methods to pass information. Social media is fast changing the public discourse in the society and is setting trends and agenda in topics that ranges from environment to technology and the entertainment industry (Asur and Huberman, 2010)

The driving factors for adoption of social media are the progressively ubiquitous access, convenience, functionality and flexibility of social technologies (Brown, 2010; Schroeder, Minocha and Schneider, 2010). These factors have made the adoption of social media very easy and have tremendously improved mankind's life by exposing him to different ways of creating and sharing information. An additional benefit to the social technologies provided on the internet is that they are frequently free or require marginal investment, thereby eliminating a potential barrier to adoption (Brown, 2010).

As we know, there is nothing ever completely one-sided and so is social media as it comes with both positive and negative effects. Today there is a major connection between social media and news reporting. The major advantages of using social media for reporting are; journalists can have real conversations with their audiences. Social media sites such as twitter and Facebook provide platform where audiences can reply to news. That is why most of media houses in Kenya including, Nation Media Group, Standard Group and Royal Media Services have Facebook,

twitter and other sites pages. It helps in conducting online debates amongst the citizens. All this inevitably promotes likability from the audience and thus increasing their viewership and readership. Journalists also get to know their readers more and what they like and therefore delivering the news effectively.

Negative effects that come as a result of using social as a news dissemination tool include; having too much news. The growth of social media has led to traditional media slowly include internet in its news dissemination by introduction of platforms like Standard Digital Edition, Nation.co.ke, Citizen.co.ke among others. However, there are other platforms such as Facebook, twitter, Buzzfeed and Tuko news where anyone can post anything anytime they want to. This leads to a bulk in news whereby the credibility of some of them is questionable. Another negative is that is that due to lack of editing when it comes to most social media information, sometimes the information published may be traumatizing to some audiences. Social media has also led to a lost control over distribution where everyone is a journalist and therefore a rise in the publication of false news. This shows the extent at which social media has affected news reporting both positively and negatively.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Journalism as a career path is a profession that is devoted to solely informing, education and entertaining the masses. In order to achieve these objective however, journalists and other media practitioners require a medium for dissemination. For decades and decades the traditional media has been the main media used. That is the press and broadcasting through radio and television. However, the growth of social media has affected this trend tremendously. News stations today not only have social media sites but also sometimes rely on information from social media to report exclusively. Almost everyone in this generation of the millenials owns at least a smart phone, a laptop or any other device that can be used to access the internet. Due to this fact, social media is where most of these people access news from. This research however seeks to determine the impact of social media to news reporting today: A case study of the undergraduate students at Maasai Mara University.

1.3 STUDY OBJECTIVES I used

General objective

To find out the impact of social media on news reporting among undergraduate students of Maasai Mara University.

Specific objectives

- To find out the social media sites used by the students.
- To identify the frequency of social media use among the students.
- To determine which media platform is widely used for dissemination.

1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The generation of today's youth is that of millennials. They have earned the title because of the frequency of use of social media. Every youth today owns a gadget that fits on the palm of their hands. This is a big difference from the past where people owned landlines and used payphones for communication purposes. The millennials have embraced this rapid change of tact and for that reason they have become a source of interest for researchers. As a result, Geopoll decided to make a survey on African millennials and the results were not surprising at all.

The study that was done to study how millennials consume media, their usage habits and how they use mobile apps was conducted on February, 2018 among 2861 respondents aged 18 to 34 years in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana and Nigeria. They used the Geopoll app to conduct the research. According to the research, in Kenya 60% of the millennials rely on social, slightly under 30% on TV and the rest get their information primarily from newspapers and radio. There is also the trend of using the phone as a second screen when watching while 35% said they were always on their phones.

This excessive use of phones for social media purposes is not just for news only. The millennials use social media for entertainment purposes too. As opposed to the traditional watching programs for entertainment, today youth get entertainment from subscriptions to online channels such as Netflix and showmax to stream movies or Spotify and Boomplay for music. They also

use social media as the main mode of communication thanks to messaging apps like Whatsapp and Facebook messenger. Gaming nowadays is done online too and in a nutshell, everything a millennial needs now fits in their gadget.

This is also a trend in Maasai Mara University where almost every student with a smartphone admitted to belonging to at least three Whatsapp groups and accessing internet at least five days a week. Most of them had justifiable reasons including the fact that there is free Wi-Fi in the school so internet is not expensive. They also said that most of the groups they are in are mandatory ones because they are either a classmates group where the class representative communicates all the information from the lecturer or a group study group where they make meetings easy to plan at everyone's convenience. This is therefore a need to carry out a research on how social media has impacted news dissemination among the students since most of these students don't own a television set. On the other hand, their phones are always on their hands and this makes it easier to access information from there.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study aim was to identify the impact of social media on news reporting among the youth. However, for the purpose of availability, the study was compressed to only cater for students of the Maasai Mara University. The undergraduate students studying journalism were the most involved in the study as they are the journalists of tomorrow and they however understand the issue of impact of social media on news reporting more deeply.

1.6 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The challenges faced during the research were quite few and easy to resolve. They included situations where the schools were closed due to covid-19 and so one to one interviews were not carried out as earlier planned. This issue was resolved by conducting interviews via phone calls and text messages to classmates and friends. Questionnaires were also administered via whatsapp and other messaging apps due to the same reason. In conclusion, most of this study was conducted online so not a lot of correspondents were interviewed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter is all about all the related works done before by other researchers. It seeks to support the relevance of the study. Besides other literature, the chapter will also cover the theories that relate with the study.

2.2 THEORITICAL REVIEW

2.2.1 USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY

Uses and gratifications theory (UGT) is an approach to understanding why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. It is an audience-centered approach to understanding mass communication. Instead of asking what media does to people it seeks out what people do with media. It suggests that media is a highly available product and the audiences are the consumers of the same product. The theory has the following assumptions;

1. The audience is active and media use is goal oriented.
2. The initiative in linking need gratification to a specific medium choice rests with the audience member.
3. The media compete with other resources for need of satisfaction.
4. People have enough self-awareness of their media use, interests and motives to be able to provide researchers with an accurate picture of that use.
5. Value judgements of media content can only be accessed by the audience.

According to this research, millenials use their phones for everything including internet services. In the internet they can access anything that they want including entertainment and acquiring news. Therefore, it is safe to say that the internet satisfies the needs of the students and that is why they keep using social media a way of acquiring news.

2.2.2 AGENDA SETTING THEORY.

Agenda setting theory describes the ability of the news media to influence the importance placed on the topics of the public agenda. It is a social science theory that attempts to make predictions; that is, if a news item is covered frequently and prominently, the audience will regard the issue as more important. Two basic assumptions surround the theory;

1. The press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape.
2. Media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues.

In this research, this theory applies more than any other one. When a news organization keeps running the same story all the time or gives it more prominence whether using traditional media or online media, the public will inevitably see it as more important than any other story therefore giving rise to public debate. Social media platforms such as twitter offer a very reliable platform for the same using hashtags and by the end of the day the online community ends up giving more prominence to a certain issue and not another.

Agenda setting occurs through cognitive process known as accessibility. Accessibility implies that the more frequently and prominently the news cover an issue, the more the instances of that issue become accessible to audience's memories.

2.3 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.3.1 NEWS SHARING IN SOCIAL MEDIA: THE EFFECT OF GRATIFICATIONS AND PRIOR EXPERIENCE

Recent events indicate that sharing news in social media has become a phenomenon of increasing social, economic and political importance because individuals can now participate in news production and diffusion in large global virtual communities. Yet, knowledge about factors influencing news sharing in social media remains limited. Drawing from the uses and gratifications and social cognitive theories, the study explores the influences of information seeking, socializing, entertainment, status seeking and prior social media sharing experience on news sharing intention. A survey was designed and administered to 203 students in a large local

university. Results from structural equation modeling analysis revealed that respondents who were driven by gratifications of information seeking, socializing and status seeking were more likely to share news in social media platforms. Prior experience with social media was also significant determinant of news sharing intention. Implications and directions for future works are discussed.

2.3.2 ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ONLINE TRAVEL INFORMATION SEARCH

Social media are playing an increasingly important role as information sources for travellers. The goal of this study is to investigate the extent to which social media appear in a search engine research in the context of travel related searches. The research employed research design that simulates traveler's use of the search engine for travel planning by using a set of pre-defined keywords in combination with nine US tourist destination names. The analysis of the search reports showed that social media constitute a substantial part of the search results, indicating that search engines likely direct travelers to social media sites. This study confirms the growing importance of social media in the online tourism domain. It also provides evidence for challenges faced by traditional providers of travel related information. Implications for tourism marketers in terms of online marketing strategies are discussed.

2.4 SUMMARY

The rise of social media over the years has certainly led to enthusiast researchers to conduct studies on it from different perspectives. Theories that were still existing way before social media can now relate to it in all ways imaginable. All of that is just a justification that this research is important. Everyone uses social media nowadays in one way or another. Conducting this research will answer very many question; the most important of them being to determine the impact of social media on news reporting.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is all about all the parts of the research process and how they all acted together to bring out a conclusive research. The research designs used and sampling techniques are some of the topics that will be covered.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The type of research design used was the case study. Journalism students at Maasai Mara University were the main focus of this study and the research aimed at describing the students in a detailed context and organizing them in such a way that they were studied as a single unit. Most of the behavioral techniques were similar and the research turned out conclusive. To some extent, descriptive design was used where questionnaires were offered to the respondents and analysed to collect information on attitudes and students' opinions on the use of social media as a news source.

All this was done online however due to the covid-19 pandemic causing closure of schools and minimizing of social interaction.

3.3 POPULATION

The target population for this study was the students at Maasai Mara University. This is because most of the people obtaining news from the internet are the youth in the society today and the youths at the convenience of the research were the students at the institution.

3.4 SAMPLING AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

3.4.1 SAMPLE SIZE

Due to the large population of students at Maasai Mara University that is well over eight thousand, the research circle was compressed such that only a sufficient number of those would be used as correspondents. Undergraduate students studying journalism at the institution were therefore selected by the researcher to be providers of information. 212 students were available for the study.

3.4.2 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

In order to come up with a reasonable number of respondents, the researcher followed the following techniques;

1. The convenience of the researcher- The research area was near the institution of Maasai Mara University so it was easier to engage the students studying there.
2. Knowledge of the research- Journalism students are the journalists of tomorrow so they have in-depth knowledge on the topic and that's why they were chosen.
3. The cost- It was cheap to conduct the research at the university since no travelling or other costs would be needed.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

3.5.1 QUESTIONNAIRES

Students that were not comfortable to answer the interviews were granted questionnaires to fill so that they would give their answers confidentially or rather anonymously. About a hundred questionnaires were conducted online due to covid-19 though. Only seventy six were conclusive.

3.5.2 INTERVIEWS

Students were also different questions through interviews both structured and unstructured. These interviews were mainly done through phone calls and text message due to covid-19 pandemic. Most students were willing to talk about their fascination with social media and it was not surprising that most of them agreed that they got most of their news online as did all the other information they needed including academic one.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

Interviews that were conducted, whether written down or sound recorded were analysed to determine the most generous ones and compare the most recurrent answers so that to draw a conclusive answer from the various questions asked. The questionnaires were also analysed to find out if they had consistent answers or if the answers didn't add with the previous ones. By so doing, conclusions were able to be done inevitably leading to a well-researched study.

3.7 CONCLUSION

As the years go by so does the growth of technology increases. With technological development comes new features in the internet every day. Everyone in this age whether a millennial or not can access internet easily and cheaply now that there is Wi-Fi. Phones have evolved from being a mere communication tool to a device that we can simply not live without. Entertainment, whether movies, music or games, can now be streamed through the internet from the comfort of our phones. Due to this trend, it has become quite obvious that almost everyone accesses their information from the internet mostly social media. News platforms such as Tuko news and BuzzFeed feed users with news ranging from sleazy celebrity gossip to political issues and that is how they draw in their users. The main question however remains, what are the impacts of social media to news reporting today? For sure there are both positive and negative ones but this is a milestone and no wonder traditional media is moving into the internet as well.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This is a chapter dedicated to data presentation, interpretation and analysis of the study findings. With so many social media platforms available in Kenya today, it is safe to assume that every Kenyan youth or millennial has a favourite social media platform. As it has already been discovered from previous chapters, the regular Kenyan university student relies on social media for not just news but also entertainment and other valuable education information. In this chapter, we are going to feature on the findings from the topic including the frequency of use of social media among millennials, the social media sites mostly used by millenials and ultimately determine the most frequently used social media site for news and information.

4.2 THE SOCIAL MEDIA SITES MOSTLY USED

4.2.1 TWITTER

Twitter is a very popular social media network among the students of Maasai Mara University. Among the roughly a hundred students interviewed on the topic, more that 75% admitted that they get most of their news on twitter before it is even aired on TV or radio or published on a newspaper. This makes twitter among the top most platform used by the students to get information.

The popularity of twitter is hailed at the way it makes it easier for the most important news to be accessed faster in the app. This is achieved by using hashtags whereby people use a particular hashtag to make a story popular making it the top trending story of the day and you do not have to such for most popular story once you open the app. Also, stories can be easily accessed by how many times a post has been retweeted or liked. The more the likes and retweets the easier it is to follow the story.

There are also media houses and other news disseminating agencies that have twitter pages where they post news updates as they happen making it easier for most students who don't own

TVs or cannot afford to buy a newspapers. The students also claimed that they could get news before it was even news by following news makers including celebrities and politicians on twitter who mostly tweet about their daily escapades.

One reason Twitter shows up as a source where news consumption is growing is that it has recently changed the way content appears to make news stories more visible. In early 2018, according to Forbes, “Twitter began putting breaking news tweets at the top of user timelines in a bid to increase engagement...” Also, users have been seeing “more news links in general.”

In addition, Twitter displays live news broadcasts next to the timeline. The Trends feature also includes current news stories. The Moments feature curates tweets from news outlets and those from individuals around a specific news event, and users can tweet about their experiences related to political, human interest, and weather-related events, and more.

There are several ways to follow news on Twitter:

Scroll through your timeline, watching for news stories. From there, you can click through to read a story in full. You can participate in spreading a news story by retweeting it for your followers to see or tweeting a response.

You can be more proactive in finding news by searching for a hashtag or by following an account that’s tweeting regularly about a particular story.

You can also find or search for trends, which are tailored to your location, interests, and who you follow. Trends are listed along with your timeline on the site or in the trends section of the Explore tab on the mobile app.

4.2.2 YOUTUBE

YouTube is a social media platform that has garnered popularity among students of Maasai Mara where they can consume any kind of video content from music, comedy, education to news. Most of the students admitted that it was even ‘addictive’ and that they were on YouTube for at least two hours a day. They also admitted that most of the time when they are using the school Wi-Fi they are always on YouTube.

The popularity of YouTube as a news tool is mostly because most media stations stream their broadcasts on YouTube as they happen and therefore all YouTube subscribers can watch them as they happen. YouTube also offers a platform where the audience can interact with the broadcaster and recommend opinions making it easier for the media houses to deliver effectively.

YouTube announced steps it's taking to better position itself as a top destination for online news videos. The company will invest \$25 million towards helping news publishers grow their video operations, and will also create a group of publishers to work on improving the news experience on YouTube.

Separately, the company plans to better contextualize videos through previews of news articles in certain searches for breaking news videos and by adding third-party information to videos of well-documented historical topics. YouTube also plans to more prominently feature local news. The moves could help YouTube improve the news experience it provides to users.

Linking to third-party sites could help users distinguish fact from fiction on certain videos. For example, a user watching a conspiratorial video on the moon landing would have access to third-party information that might help them realize the theories in the video they're watching have been debunked. YouTube has struggled with promoting conspiratorial content in the past, and combating the spread of sensationalized videos might make users believe YouTube is less likely to show them deceptive content.

More local news could appeal to consumers that see national news outlets as less trustworthy. Forty-one percent of registered voters think local news outlets are more trustworthy than national news outlets, per a 2017 poll by Morning Consult and Politico. By better catering to these users' tastes, YouTube could encourage consumers to more regularly seek out local news on its platform when they can't access it on linear TV, in turn growing engagement with the platform.

And as YouTube grows its news viewership, it could stand a better chance at luring ad spend away from linear TV and traditional news networks. As some brands look to reallocate their ad dollars away from traditional TV and towards digital, pivoting its news approach could help

YouTube grab a bigger portion of dollars that might be leaving traditional news networks, especially as the company reaches young viewers that legacy heavyweights aren't: YouTube reaches more 18-34-year-olds on mobile alone than any TV network.

4.2.3 FACEBOOK

Facebook is probably the only social media site where even the middle aged folks are active in. This is because of the fact that it is older than some of the other sites. Among the younger generation however, Facebook has grown to be 'boring' over the years. Most of the students said that they do not fully use Facebook to socialize anymore since they are afraid that their parents are on there too and they may pick up on their plans jinxing them.

However, when asked about using Facebook as a news source, a number of them admitted that they find Facebook to be a reliable since media houses now have Facebook pages where they post the news of the day and therefore keeping them on the know. News houses also stream their news live on Facebook live sometimes therefore reducing the need for TV to get news. They also said that on Facebook comment section they can be able to interact with the media house and pitch in on discussion topics.

There is also a personalized feature on Facebook that is called 'Newsfeed' which is customized to show news that are most relevant to the owner of the Facebook account. This is how it works;

1. It evaluates the stories that are most relevant to yours.

It looks at three main signals to estimate how relevant they think a post will be to you:

Who posted it: The friends, family, news sources, businesses, and public figures you interact with most are prioritized in your News Feed

Type of content: They prioritize the type of content you interact with most frequently, whether it's photos, videos, or links you favor.

Interactions with the post: Posts that have a lot of likes, reactions, comments, and shares (especially from people you interact with most)

Posts are ordered to show you top stories first.

Based on these signals, each post is assigned a ranking to determine where it appears in your News Feed and which stories appear first.

2. People can shape their News Feed

Facebook doesn't always get it right and ultimately you are the only one who knows what's most meaningful to you, so they give you specific controls to customize your experience.

News Feed Preferences: tap any of the News Feed Preferences to see how they work.

Customize right from your News Feed: Additionally, with a single tap, you can improve your News Feed directly from any post. The drop-down menu gives you customization options such as Hide or Unfollow.

3. How Facebook evaluate how they're doing

Through their Feed quality program, they make it a priority to reach out to people like you to learn and incorporate feedback so we can continue to improve your News Feed experience. Three examples of ways we're talking to people on an ongoing basis:

One on one interviews with a wide set of people across the globe.

Feed quality panel is a diverse group of people who continually review and provide feedback on their News Feeds.

Global surveys of 10s of thousands of people everyday.

4.2.4 INSTAGRAM

Instagram is another social media platform that the students admit to be obsessed with. This is because instagram is mostly popular with celebrities which makes it a digging zone for tabloids and online bloggers for salacious gossip and scandalous sagas on celebrities.

For the common student however, Instagram is where they get all the 'tea' about their favourite celebrities from. They use it to follow their daily lives and idolize them. Instagram is also popular with fashion vloggers and models so it also involves new from the beauty industries and the entertainment industry including the music and also the movie scene.

The 2020 Reuters Institute Digital News report found the use of Instagram for news had doubled since 2018.

The trend is strongest among young people. It said nearly a quarter of UK 18-24-year-olds used Instagram as a source of news about coronavirus. But social media platforms were also among the least-trusted sources.

Just 26% of people said they trusted social media as a source of information about the virus. A similar percentage said they trusted news that had been shared via chat apps such as Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp.

National governments and news organisations, by contrast, were both trusted by about 59% of respondents. Instagram is now used by more than a third of all people who answered the survey, and two-thirds of under-25s. And 11% use it for news, putting it just one point behind Twitter.

"Instagram's become very popular with younger people", said Nic Newman, lead author of the report. "They really respond well to stories that are told simply and well with visual images".

Stand-out visual stories in recent months have helped - climate change, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the coronavirus have all seen massive engagement on the platform.

4.2.5 WHATSAPP

Whatsapp is an application that almost everyone with a smartphone has. That said, everyone interviewed for this report said that they have a whatsapp account which they mostly use for messaging their friends.

However, most of them also said that sometimes they get to learn some news from whatsapp. This happens when links to stories are shared in whatsapp groups they are members in or short videos are shared. Talking of whatsapp groups, some of the students admitted to being members

in over ten groups and others as low as five groups. People can also get news from their friends' statuses.

WhatsApp is the most used messaging app for news, and numbers are already higher than for other social networks such as Instagram and Twitter (Newman et al. 2018, 52). While there is a decline in Facebook use for news and a stagnation in general Facebook use, WhatsApp use increases for both categories. WhatsApp use for news has almost tripled since 2014 and has overtaken Twitter's importance in many countries.

WhatsApp is a smartphone application that is originally intended only for interpersonal communication. It has a browser version for desktop computers but it was designed for use on mobile devices and is most frequently used on smartphones making it an inherently mobile communication tool. Because smartphones are ubiquitous and WhatsApp is a widely used application WhatsApp has become a relevant channel for digital journalism. To date, research has yet to define the exact characteristics of mobile devices for digital journalism production and consumption (Westlund and Quinn 2018) but the analysis of "locative media" is important, for example, the question whether "journalistic content is created uniquely by and for mobile devices" (Erdal et al. 2019). WhatsApp can be a tool for production and consumption of news: For journalists, WhatsApp is not only an application to reach sources but also to reach their audiences.

4.3 FREQUENCY OF USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The students of Maasai Mara University obviously had a lot to say about social media and how much they love it. Most of them when asked what social media platform they used most of the time, they admitted that it was hard to decide since all of them served different purposes in their lives.

For instance, most of them said that they preferred Instagram when it came to exploring what their favourite celebrities were up to and their long lost friends since this is a platform where most people post about their day to day escapades, their vacations, their love lives and everything depending on how much privacy they want to maintain.

YouTube on the other side was mostly used to quench the thirst for entertainment. YouTube provides all kinds of entertainment from comedy, to music, to movies and web series. It also provides some people with a channel to share their lifestyle with their fans. A few admitted to having their own YouTube channels where they share content like the art of makeup, recipes and music.

Whatsapp is mostly used to keep in touch with close friends and family by interacting in groups or individually. It is the one app that the students admitted they couldn't live without and they would go online at every half an hour to check their friends' statuses.

About Facebook however, they admitted that they go there to browse for news and other serious important information while also updating their account and posting a picture to get comments and update their account.

When asked about twitter, they all admitted that twitter is where they went on twitter when they go when they want to know what is going on in the country both politically, economically and socially. It is however safe to say that twitter is the most used app when it comes to discovering important affairs and therefore also a major source of news among students of Maasai Mara University.

4.4 MOST FREQUENTLY USED SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM FOR NEWS CONSUMPTION

After going through all the answers submitted by the interviewees, twitter turned out to be the most used app as a news source by the students of Maasai Mara University. This was because most of the news on twitter is mostly legit as opposed to other platforms where it is mostly hearsay and scandalous celebrity gossip.

YouTube came second in the list of the legitimacy of news offered due to its streaming services and availability of channels belonging to major news houses in the platform.

Facebook came third as a news disseminating platform also because of its streaming service of Facebook live and the availability of pages belonging to legit media houses such as the Standard Digital.

4.5 CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, it is safe to say that after this topic, it has been revealed that twitter takes home the cake for the most used platform for news consumption among the university students of Maasai Mara University. This is due to easy availability of news and also breaking news before they are aired saving time for the students who often have too much work to do instead of chasing news while most of them do not even own a TV set.

However, there are a few limitations to this form of news consumption including that most of the students end up not reading the entire article and therefore not getting the intended information and therefore spreading false information. There is also a trend called 'clickbait' whereby bloggers write flashy, often false, headlines to get the attention of the reader and get them to click on the link when the story is not the same as the headline. There is also the obsession with posting scandalous sagas involving celebrities which mostly is hearsay and therefore questioning the integrity of online news.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This is a chapter that is going to discuss the summary of the study, give some recommendations and conclude the findings of this study to make it easier and understandable.

5.2 SUMMARY

According to this report, 50% of the youths interviewed said that they hear about the latest news via social media before ever hearing about it on a news station. Many of them will see the breaking news on their newsfeed and go to the news sites to learn more. The report also found 57% percent increase in traffic to news sites referred from social media.

However there has been a decrease in how much of a news article people read. Most people will just scroll through their newsfeed and stumble upon relevant news content but just read headlines or a short video clip of the piece. Also, social platforms have a control what we see. Our social media friends have become the ‘managing editors’ deciding what we see. The more time an article has been liked and shared then the more likely it is to appear in your newsfeed.

There are also so many ‘fake news’ websites that compete for attention with sensational headlines and ridiculous storylines that tend to get shared more often due to the lack of readers fact checking or reading more than the headline. That means that authentic content is hard to come by now. In fact, fake news is actually more likely to spread than the truth.

News happens fast now. Today’s story will be tomorrow’s forgotten story. It is easy to miss things now because of how quick stories can get turned around and shared. While having so much information at our fingertips is great, it is worth always checking sources and not taking headlines as truth. With social media as our new news managers, it is up to us to be the new fact checkers for media.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

By this point of the report, we have already come to a conclusion that social media plays a pivotal role in news reporting among the students at Maasai Mara university because it is readily available and very cheap as compared to other media as all one needs is a smartphone that can access the internet. However, the good come with the bad and so does social media news.

That is why we came up with the following recommendations while consuming internet news so as to avoid spreading fake news;

1. Identify Your Biases

Few people are able to maintain a truly impartial view of current issues. We all have personal prejudices based on our culture, environment, and experiences. Knowing your self-interests and how they affect your judgment is key to evaluating information and making rational decisions.

2. Check the Source(s) of the Information

Are these sources legitimate? Have they proved reliable in the past? Do they have a discernible bias? Information reported in the The Nation Media Group or The Standard Group is likely to be more reliable than that in a little-known conspiracy website. Try to discern the motive of the source publishing the information.

3. Confirm That the Information Is Reported by Multiple Sources

Shocking, controversial, or surprising events are always reported by multiple sources across different forms of media. Be suspicious of significant “news” that’s limited to a single newspaper, TV network, or website. Check the details of the story on several sources, especially those from contrasting political stances, to differentiate between fact and opinion.

4. Read Past the Headline

Media companies depend on readership for revenue, whether through ad sales or subscriptions. Editors know that dramatic, exaggerated headlines attract readers even when the content is pedestrian and non-controversial, so don’t rely on a headline to give you the full story.

5. Check the Authors & Their Credentials

Established networks and periodicals rely on identified reporters and legitimate experts whose education and experience can be verified. Fake news often lacks an author or source.

6. Distinguish Between News & Opinion

Most reliable print sources clearly delineate between actual news reporting and editorial opinion. News stories on TV and radio talk shows are harder to categorize since the hosts can opine about current news from a particular political perspective. Free speech protects even outrageous, exaggerated, and false information under most circumstances, so be prepared to fact-check any information you hear on these broadcasts.

7. Watch Out for Older Information

Old news stories, especially audio and video sound bites, frequently reappear long past their original publication date. While their information may have been accurate once, it's easy to take it out of context, dramatically changing its meaning. Views, opinions, and circumstances can change over time, so make sure you understand the information in its original context.

8. Use Fact-Checkers to Validate Content

While many social media sites are initiating new security measures to identify and remove fake news, their efforts are likely to be less than 100% successful. The following fact-checking sites can help you spot fake news:

- [FactCheck](#)
- [Snopes](#)
- [PolitiFact](#)

5.4 CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it was clear that journalists have embraced the use of social media in news gathering and dissemination with 90 per cent having used social media to get in touch with news sources at one time or other. It is also significant that even the few who

responded that they had not used social media to reach out or get information from news sources operate social media accounts, with most of the respondents posting news stories to social media platforms. Social media plays a complementary role to other media platforms, in the case of The Standard Group and the Nation Media Group these platforms are TV, newspapers and radio. This complementary role happens with social media helping drive traffic to these other platforms and generate debate around topical issues with the audience and traditional news sources. The study also found out that social media has increased the pool of news sources with people who would otherwise not feature as traditional newsmakers riving debate of topical issues.

Another element that comes across is the ease of audience feedback coupled with what could be looked at as enhancing the news gathering and dissemination cycle. Those who could be considered as only the audience in tradition platforms like newspapers are today serving the role of news sources and opinion leaders by reacting to news stories on social media.

What comes out, however, is that despite the adoption of social media by journalists in the course of their daily work, there are still misgivings about the reliability of information gleaned from such media. Others expressed reservations that even when it comes to official social media handle belonging to the media companies, the level of checks and balances in place are inadequate or not well executed. The take home when you look at the bigger picture is that social media is not a passing phase with both Standard Group and the Nation Media Group putting substantial investments to stay abreast with new media developments. These approaches range from investment in human resources to spending finances making the newsrooms social media friendly by investing in up to date technology and gadgets. It is also clear from the findings that journalists think the only approach for media firms to adapt with the time and will have to involve figuring out a way of harnessing the financial aspect of social media and make money out of the same to contribute to the bottom line of the business.

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