

CHALLENGES FACING SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN CONFLICT PREVENTION IN KENYA SINCE 2007: A CASE OF USHAHIDI PLATFORM

Njeru Abraham Kirea

Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Studies, School of Information Sciences,
Moi University, Kenya

Dr. Bernard Malakwen

Senior Lecturer, Department of Communication Studies, Moi University, Kenya

Dr. Masibo Lumala

Senior Lecturer, Department of Communication Studies, Moi University, Kenya

©2018

**International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education (IAJSSE) | ISSN
2518-2412**

Received: 10th October 2018

Accepted: 16th October 2018

Full Length Research

Available Online at: http://www.iajournals.org/articles/iajsse_v2_i1_88_101.pdf

Citation: Njeru, A. K., Malakwen, B. & Lumala, M. (2018). Challenges facing social media platforms in conflict prevention in Kenya since 2007: A case of Ushahidi platform. *International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education*, 2(1), 88-101

ABSTRACT

Throughout history information is a key factor in conflict management around the world. The media can play its important role of being the society's watch dog of the society, by exposing to the masses what is essential but hidden, however the same media may also be used to mobilize masses to violence. Social media can therefore act as a tool for widening the democratic space, but can also lead to destabilization of peace. The aim of the study was to establish the challenges facing social media platforms in conflict prevention in Kenya since 2007: a case of Ushahidi platform in Kenya. The paradigm that was found suitable for this study is Pragmatism. The study used a mixed approach. In this study, interviews, focus group discussions and content analysis of the Ushahidi platform were chosen as the tools of data collection. In order to bring order, structure and interpretation to the collected data, the researcher systematically organized the data by coding it into categories and constructing matrixes. After classifying the data, the researcher compared and contrasted it to the information retrieved from the literature review. The study found that One major weak point social media as a tool for conflict prevention is the lack of ethical standards and professionalism for the users. It is too liberal and thus can be used to spread unverified information and distorted facts that might be detrimental to peace building and conflict prevention. This has led to some of the users already questioning

the credibility of the information that is circulated through social media. The other weak point about social media as tool for peace building is that it is dependent to a major extent on the access to internet. The availability of internet in low units doesn't necessarily mean cheap access. So over time the high cost of internet might affect the efficiency of the social media as a tool. The study concluded that information credibility is essential if social media as a tool is to be effective in conflict prevention and peace building. The nature of social media which allows for anonymity of identity gives room for unverified information to be floated around the social media networks; this can be detrimental to the conflict prevention and peace building initiatives. There is therefore need for information verification and authentication by a trusted agent, to offer information appertaining to violence, conflict prevention and peace building on the social media platforms. The study recommends that Ushahidi platform should be seen as an agent of social change and should discuss the social mobilization which may be able to bring about. The study further suggest that if we can look at Ushahidi platform as a development agent, can we then take this a step further and ask, or try to find, a methodology that looks at the Ushahidi platform as peacemaking agent, or to assist in the maintenance of peace in a post-conflict thereby tapping into Ushahidi platform's full potential.

Key Words: *social media platforms, conflict prevention, Kenya, Ushahidi platform*

INTRODUCTION

Technology has advanced considerably over the past few years and it has enabled us to change how we perceive the world's means of communications, and even expression. Through this, new media has emerged. This advancement has given birth and rise to an internet phenomenon known as social media, which comprises of everything that has to do with the internet. Social media has increasingly become the go-to medium for not only information, but a wide variety of communication and relation among people. It differs from conventional media in various ways such as in reach and usability; quality and permanence; and mostly, immediacy and permanence. Traditional media, in contrast, operates under a one-way communication model - from one informer to numerous recipients (Haythornthwaite, 2005). In the early 2000s, as the broadband internet expanded, websites that allowed users to create and upload content began to emerge. By the end of that millennium, social networking sites (SNS) were more accepted, with services acquiring a big number of users (Broders, 2009). Various dynamics have furthered the increase of social media involvement: most are based in addition to an increase of broadband access, the development of powerful computers and mobile devices and enhancement of software means. On a social note, younger age groups have also gained the ability to rapidly absorb social media and comparably, economic factors such as the cumulative affordability of computer hardware and software, and growing commercial interest in social media sites (Publications du gouvernement du Canada," 2013).

The U-Shahid (shahid means "witness" in Arabic) project in Egypt which is run by the Development and Institutionalization Support Center (DISC), an Egyptian organization based in Cairo. This organization first used Ushahidi during parliamentary elections in November and December 2010. Just days after Internet access was restored during the civil-resistance movement in early 2011, DISC used the platform again to map the protests against the Mubarak regime and its human-rights abuses. The Egyptian group has since launched Ushahidi platform to map feedback on constitutional amendments, and it plans to use Ushahidi to map corruption as well. A separate Cairo-based group also began using the Ushahidi platform in 2010 for a project called Harassmap, which enables Egyptian women to report cases of harassment and increase the visibility of this chronic problem.

The emergence of social media or new media as it is sometimes referred to, has dared to defragment communication. This has occurred through the involvement of the audience in the creation and dissemination of information. This has thus altered existing structures and created a room to what is referred to as citizen journalism (Wambiya, 2013). Social media has provided a means of constant and immediate communication, which link globally and locally. It has caused a shift in the communication environment which was previously dominated by the traditional mass media such as radio, television and newspapers. Social media has implications for power relations (ITU, 2010). The prime example is how social media is diluting the mainstream

media's monopoly of information. It is therefore becoming progressively more difficult for those in power to bury or manipulate information.

On January 1, 2008, as word spread throughout Kenya that incumbent presidential candidate Mwai Kibaki had rigged the then presidential election, text messages urging violence spread across the country and tribal and politically motivated attacks were perpetrated throughout Kenya. By January 9, as the violence escalated out of control in the Kibera slums in Nairobi and other towns such as Kisumu, Kakamega, Eldoret, and Naivasha in the Rift Valley, a group of Kenyans in Nairobi and the Diaspora launched Ushahidi, an online campaign platform to draw local and global attention to the violence taking place in their country. Within weeks they had documented in detail hundreds of incidents of violence that would have otherwise gone unreported, and received hundreds of thousands of site visits from around the world, sparking increased global media attention. Both of these anecdotes illustrate what Yochai Benkler calls the 'networked public sphere,' the notion that our information environment is characterized by both the potential for many-to-many communications (instead of just one-to-one or one-to-many), and the near elimination of the cost of communication (Goldstein and Rotich, 2008).

In Kenya just prior to the 2013 March 4th general elections the social media was polarized with propaganda, hate speech, statements of negative ethnicity and incitement. These were emanating majorly from the supporters of the two major antagonizing political blocks. Social media was home for verbal conflict that never resulted into physical violence, during the whole electioneering period, the time awaiting the ruling of the Supreme Court on the petition challenging the outcome of the presidential election results, up until the swearing in of the new president. There are still groups in the social media that give constant updates with doses of speculative information that might amount to incitement and hate speech. Throughout history information is a key factor in beginning conflicts around the world. The media can play an important role of a watch dog of the society, by exposing to the masses what is essential but hidden, however it can also be used to mobilize for violence. Social media can therefore act as a tool for widening the democratic space, but can also lead to destabilization of peace.

While there is no consensus on the sole role of the social media played in the Arab uprising, there is considerable debate of what credit properly goes to the social media compared to other factors in precipitating this wave of political unrest. Despite the lively debate, there is little systematic research on this area. The few resources are specific to conflict environment and how social media was used for coordination during the violence. There is inadequate material on the use and role of social media for conflict prevention and peace building. This could be partly explained by the lack of control over the research environments, rapid shifts of public attention, difficulties in measuring the casual impact of media intervention, and the heterogeneity of conflict environments and changing objectives in the conflict torn countries. This study therefore will bridge the gaps between sociology and communication sciences by analyzing the ways in which social media can contribute to peace building and conflict prevention in Kenya

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The agenda setting theory associated with Shaw and McCombs (1972) explains the strong media effects, closely linked to the ability of the media to reproduce social and cultural aspects of society, through the publication of information. The agenda in this context refers to the salience or importance of issues and not a pre-determined goal of the media to influence audiences. The model suggests that the media affects the scope of the public thinking. If applied to the post election crisis, we find that through daily reporting over time, issues (agenda) covered in the media were transformed to public agendas.

By generating discussions on peace-building, journalists and policy makers can collectively shape the public agenda to more constructive dialogues. Contrary, to a general assumption that the media has power to directly inject behaviors and attitudes in the minds of people, the model suggests that the media affects the scope of their thinking. This argument is also reflected in Bernard Cohen's 1963 statement that "the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling readers what to think about" (Cohen 1963 cited from Rogers & Dearing, 2001).

In essence, through daily reporting over time, the media agenda becomes the public agenda. The theory tends to imply that in an environment of conflict, the media mirrors the disorder in society and does not necessarily brew conflicts. This assumption then challenges the idea otherwise that the media can directly foment conflicts, but provides a good scope in the analysis of inherent socio-economic and political set up of the media in Kenya. Agenda setting operates under two assumptions. Firstly, the media does not reflect reality they filter and shape it. Secondly, the media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues (McQuail & Windhal, 1993).

The agenda setting theory has been challenged for portraying the public as a passive receiver (Hall, 1998 cited from Street, 2001:243). In view of this, I argue that the media does not passively relay information from sources; they select or reject it according to the reality of the day, or the particular slant of the media house. In the absence of effective guidelines on conflict sensitive journalism, practitioners are likely to infuse their own biases in news commentaries.

This theory explains the strength and the ability of the media to replicate social and cultural aspects of society through the provision of information. The agenda in this context refers to the dominant issue, which is not a pre-determined goal of the media to influence audiences. This theory suggests that media has the power to affect people's thinking. When this theory is applied to the post-election crisis, through daily reporting of the elections agenda tends to transform to public agenda (Shaw, 2003). Therefore if the agenda being set by the media is on peace-building, then the stakeholders are able to collectively shape the public agenda to foster constructive dialogues.

The perception that the media has power to directly change behaviors and attitudes in the minds of people, this theory merely suggests that all the media does is to affect the scope of their thinking. This argument is furthered by Bernard Cohen (1963) in a statement that “the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling readers what to think about.” his means that through the daily reporting, over time, the media agenda will eventually become the people’s agenda. This theory operates under two assumptions. Firstly, the media does not reflect reality they filter and shape it. Secondly, the media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues. This results to the media portraying the public as a passive receiver.

The agenda-setting effects of the news media on people's attention to, comprehension of, and opinions about topics in the news have been widely studied in political communication settings as well as in business communication. According to Ghorparde as quoted in Nayyar (2007), “agenda-setting is a relational concept that specifies a transfer of salience from agenda primers (media) to agenda adopters (consumers)”. The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about. The world will look different to different people depending on the map that is drawn for them by writers, editors, and publishers of the paper they read Cohen, (1963).

Agenda-setting research has shown that there is a correlation between what the media deems important and salience in the public mind. In simpler terms, agenda-setting claims that what the media finds important will eventually be mirrored in what people think are important. It is important to note that the notion of agenda-setting is positive association between the media and the audience. From agenda-setting stems the formation of public opinions and the distribution of pros and cons of particular issues. Agenda-setting shifts the focus of attention away from immediate effects on attitudes and opinions to longer term effects on cognitions Nayyar, (2007). The agenda setting function of the media, therefore, refers to the media’s capability, through repeated news coverage, of raising the importance of an issue in the public’s mind Tankard, (2001). It is a process in which the media selects news, issues and events and gives them prominence to the exclusion of the others. This means that a media house may wish to come up with an issue and give it a lot of attention such that all other stories get very minimal coverage.

A characteristic of agenda setting is that the media determines issues that are regarded as important by the masses or audience and the agenda set through the media tends to be believed. The agenda-setting theory says that because of newspapers, television, and other news media, people are aware or not aware, pay attention to or neglect, pay up or downgrade specific features of the public scene. People tend to include or exclude from their cognitions what the media include or exclude from their content. People also tend to assign an importance to what they include that closely resembles the emphasis given to events, issues and persons by the mass media Shaw, (1979).

The agenda setting theory says that the media (mainly the news media) aren't always successful at telling us what to think, but they are quite successful at telling us what to think about. This is also applicable to the new media (social media) which is the foundation of this research. This theory is good at explaining why people with similar media exposure place importance on the same issues. For instance Facebook users or users of WhatsApp share same ideas. Although different people may feel differently about the issue at hand, most people feel the same issues are important. The theory decisively moved away from the magic bullet theory which did not address the question of interpretation, unlike the agenda-setting theory.

Agenda-setting is not the goal of news media but it is "the inadvertent by-product of news coverage. News media should become the forerunners of the issues that are important to the public. News media must take a more active role in planning the overall community agenda through what is called public journalism. Littlejohn (1983) summarizes this well - the prevailing opinion now among media researchers seems to be that the media can have a powerful effect on the public agenda but not always. The power of media depends on such factors as media credibility on particular issues at particular times, the extent of conflicting evidence as perceived by individual members of the public, the extent to which individuals share media values at particular times and the public's need for guidance. When media credibility is high and factors such as the extent of conflicting evidence are reasonably low, then the media are probably powerful in establishing the public agenda.

The agenda-setting role of the news media is not limited to focusing public attention on a particular set of issues, but also influences our understanding and perspective on the topics in the news. This becomes clear when we think about the concept of an agenda in abstract terms. Theoretically, the items that define an agenda are "objects." In most agenda-setting research, these objects are public issues, but they also could be public figures, organizations, countries or anything else that is the focus of attention. In turn, each of these objects has numerous "attributes," those characteristics and traits that describe and define the object. While some attributes are emphasized, others receive less attention, and many receive no attention at all. Just as objects vary in salience, so do the attributes of each object. Thus, for each object there also is an agenda of attributes, which constitutes an important part of what journalists and, subsequently, members of the public have in mind when they think and talk about news objects. The influence of the news agenda of attributes on the public is the second level of agenda setting. The first level, of course, is the transmission of object salience. The second level is the transmission of attribute salience.

During an election, campaign managers seek to build the salience, the prominence, of their candidates among voters (first-level agenda-setting). They also strive to build an image of their candidates in which specific attributes become particularly salient (second-level agenda-setting). For example, during the 1996 general election in Spain, McCombs and his colleagues (McCombs, López-Escobar & Llamas, 2000) compared the descriptions by voters in Pamplona of

the three major party leaders after the elections with the presentation of these men before the election in seven major news sources, including local newspapers, national dailies, national television networks and televised political advertising. This comparison of the public agenda with the media agenda of attributes revealed a strong second level agenda setting influence. Second-level effects also exist for public issues, the traditional domain of agenda-setting research. Which aspects of an issue are covered in the news, and the relative emphasis on these various aspects of an issue, makes a considerable difference in how people view that issue. Evidence of attribute agenda-setting was found by Sebastián Valenzuela and Teresa Correa (2006) in the last presidential election in Chile. Voters' descriptions of Michelle Bachelet, Sebastián Piñera and Joaquín Lavín corresponded very closely to the previous pattern of descriptions for these three candidates in the main metropolitan newspapers. Among the attributes that were similar on the media and public agendas were leaders-hip, charisma, compassion, competency and honesty

The agenda-setting role of the mass media converges with many other paradigms in the communication field, including framing, priming, gatekeeping, cultivation and the spiral of silence. The similarities and differences between agenda setting and framing are currently one of the most discussed of these theoretical connections. However, the existence of multiple definitions of framing and the lack of consensus among scholars of what aspects of perceived reality are properly designated as frames makes any comparison between agenda setting and framing a rather difficult task. Moreover, theoretical efforts to demarcate the boundary between agenda-setting and framing (Price & Tewksbury, 1997) on the basis of the two aspects of knowledge activation (Higgins, 1996) accessibility (linked to agenda setting) and applicability (linked to framing) have found limited success

In conclusion therefore, media does not passively relay information from sources; they select or reject it according to the reality of the day and its credibility. All the content relied to the public passes through quality check point as per the media houses guidelines. In the absence of effective guidelines on conflict sensitive journalism, practitioners are likely to infuse their own biases in news commentaries.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used mixed methods. The choice of these methods is influenced by the perceived varying degrees of opinions, views and perception of divergent respondents sampled. Mixed methods is defined as research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of study (Creswell, 2003).

Three ways are apparent in the mixed methods literature for mixing the quantitative and qualitative data;

1. By combining or integrating them
2. By connecting them from the data analysis step of the first source of data to the data collection step of the second source of data so that one source builds on the other or helps to explain the other
3. By embedding one secondary or supporting source of data into a larger source of data to provide additional information in a study.

In the process of research, these three forms of mixing-merging, connecting or embedding will occur during various stages of the research such as during data collection, data analysis or interpretation (Creswell, 2003). Creswell (2009) argues that qualitative research design is suitable in natural settings. Since the study mostly focuses on respondents' perceptions of media and conflict management issues, qualitative approach gives more room for interpretation and understanding. Strauss & Corbin (1999) have further shown that those who use qualitative research obtain satisfactory results and appropriate answers to the central research questions being investigated. This design has been chosen because of its usefulness in obtaining an overall picture of the study. In addition, quantitative research consists of those studies in which the data concerned can be analyzed in terms of numbers. Quantitative research is based more directly on its original plans and its results are more readily analyzed and interpreted (Best and Khan, 2009). Qualitative research is more open and responsive to its subject. In this study the researcher collected both qualitative and quantitative data concurrently or at the same time and merged the data to form one interpretation of the data. This interpretation would provide both qualitative and quantitative information about magnitude and frequency as well as qualitative information from individual perspectives from participants and the context in which they were commenting on the research problem. This design is called the triangulation or concurrent mixed methods design. This means that the quantitative data and the qualitative data are merged by the researcher in the analysis.

Population

Population can be defined as all the members of a real or hypothetical set of people, event or objects to which a researcher wishes to generalize the results of the study. In total 333 respondents, team was targeted. The study population included students from the universities within Nairobi County who use Kenya's Ushahidi Platform in Kenya, Sole proprietor, Technical advisor, Lead developer, Team leader, corporate account manager, Project manager and Technologist as indicated in table 1.

Table 1: Study Population

	Population size
Student	63
Sole proprietor	10
Technical advisor	27
Lead developer	47
Team leader	33
Corporate account manager	13
Project manager	53
Technologist	87
Total	333

Sample and Sampling Technique

Sampling is the process of selecting the people who participated in a study. This process should be representative of the whole population. Sampling is hence the procedure, process or technique of choosing a sub-group from a population to participate in the study, (Ogula, 2005). A sample is a smaller group or sub-group obtained from the accessible population (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). This study adopted the stratified sampling technique. From the possible 200 target population, stratified random sampling was employed to select a total of 60 sample population. This is 30% of the total population. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) states that in stratified sampling where population within each strata is known, a sample of 10-30% is adequate representation for data collection.

Data Collection Tools and Procedures

Triangulation is used in social sciences for supporting the validity of results by adopting different methods of researching an issue or a research question. In this paper, interviews, focus group discussions and content analysis of the Ushahidi platform are chosen as the tools of data collection.

Use of questionnaires: Given the sample of respondents participating in this research, using questionnaires as instruments of data collection will be ideal. The researcher considers this instrument since it ensures that confidentiality will be upheld and it saves time. The questionnaires mostly consist of structured questions and fewer open ended questions. Structured questions compel the responds to provide specific answers, while the few open ended questions allowed for diverse responses, both approaches are essential for variety and getting the respondent's perception of the phenomena being investigated. Administering questionnaires will generally allow for information to be collected from a large sample and in diverse locations.

Key informant interview: This is a conversational practice where knowledge is produced through interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee or a group of interviewees. Unlike everyday conversations, the research interview is most often carried out to serve the researcher ends, which are external to the conversation itself (Creswell, 2003). Most qualitative research interviews are semi-structured as a consequence of the agenda being set by the researcher's interests yet with room for respondents. The researcher will use face to face interview methods to collect a wide range of information on the role of social media as a proactive tool for conflict prevention. The Key informants will be drawn from the field of peace studies and conflict prevention, as well as in the field of social media. A social media expert will be equally interviewed; this expert has also taken part in the development and operationalization of the Ushahidi Crisis Mapping and Reporting platform. Marshall and Rossman (1999) state that qualitative data is often dependent on key informant interview, interviews allows the researcher to understand the statistical data collected from quantitative research by explaining the figures and giving further information beyond the figures. Key people at ushahidi were interviewed. These are five senior employees in the platform. In addition youths who use ushahidi platform were also interviewed, particularly varsity students and Kibera youth leaders.

Focus Group Discussions: The researcher held focus groups discussion in each of the four locations. Each focus group will constitute of 5 to 7 youths. Focus groups allow the researcher to get the participants perspective, attitudes, experiences and reactions on the phenomena of interest by way of interaction and discussion with the participants. Focus groups have a high apparent validity since the idea is easy to understand, the result are believable are low cost and helps in getting quick results.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). In order to bring order, structure and interpretation to the collected data, the researcher will systematically organize the data by coding it into categories and constructing matrixes. After classifying the data, the researcher compared and contrasted it to the information retrieved from the literature review. After administering the questionnaires, the researcher used codes and had data converted into numerical codes for statistical analysis. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were computed for all the variables to ensure quality of data. The results from the sample was then generalized to the study population. The researcher then organized the results around the objectives of the study. The researcher used descriptive statistics to show distribution, relationships between variables under study, proportions in terms of texts, percentages, charts and tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of the study sought to find out challenges facing Ushahidi platform as a proactive actor in conflict prevention in Kenya since 2007. Respondents were kindly requested to indicate what they consider to be weaknesses of social media with interest to peace building and conflict prevention. The peace building expert explained: “In order for one to report violence, they need to be assured of their security and they must also trust that action will be taken once they file report on violence. What this means, is that citizens will be both the generators and the consumers of the information on violence if they use social media”. Conflict information management ethics is thus a key competence, since information needs to be verified and authenticated before it can be released to the masses. At present very few people trust that action can be taken if they reported violence through social media. For social media to be effective for early warning there has to be an assurance of accessing accurate information so that they could take precaution. The social media platforms must be seen to be giving accurate information about violence for users to trust it. He concludes that platforms must also have user friendly interfaces and easy to remember procedure.

One major weak point social media as a tool for conflict prevention is the lack of ethical standards and professionalism for the users. It is too liberal and thus can be used to spread unverified information and distorted facts that might be detrimental to peace building and conflict prevention. This has led to some of the users already questioning the credibility of the information that is circulated through social media. The other weak point about social media as tool for peace building is that it is dependent to a major extent on the access to internet. The availability of internet in low units doesn't necessarily mean cheap access. So over time the high cost of internet might affect the efficiency of the social media as a tool.

In tandem with the study findings, Miall, (2014) observed that Conflict prevention and peace building practitioners can best utilize the media if they are clear about their goal (their product) and also know who, specifically, they want to communicate to through the media. Social marketing is never aimed at the ‘general public.’ A sophisticated and strategic use of the media is more focused on particular target and segment audiences. For example, if the goal of a social marketing campaign is to stop littering, first research needs to be done to determine who is littering the most. In many cultures, young men are the chief culprits. In this case, young men are the ‘target audience.’ Successful media campaigns aimed at stopping littering use specific messages like ‘littering isn't cool’ and target magazines, radio programs and billboards seen by young men.

Additionally, Ramsbotham, Miall, & Woodhouse, (2011) opined that if a peacebuilding organization wants to promote cross-cultural dialogue between ethnic groups, they should think about who, in particular, they would like to join the dialogue. The media can be used successfully only when peacebuilding organizations have done the hard work to narrow down

their goals and target audiences. Knowing the specific goals and the audiences required to meet their goal enables peacebuilding professionals to be more sophisticated in their choice of when and where to use the media. The media can help achieve goals in conflict prevention and peacebuilding when paired with approaches or strategies. The media is not appropriate for all peacebuilding efforts however. Highly-sensitive negotiations, for example, are often best kept quiet without the pressure brought by media seeking to highlight areas of conflict (which helps them sell their media products) rather than serve to foster a focus on common ground, a problem-solving orientation, and hopefulness required for diplomacy.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that information credibility is essential if social media as a tool is to be effective in conflict prevention and peace building. The nature of social media which allows for anonymity of identity gives room for unverified information to be floated around the social media networks; this can be detrimental to the conflict prevention and peace building initiatives. There is therefore need for information verification and authentication by a trusted agent, to offer information appertaining to violence, conflict prevention and peace building on the social media platforms

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that Ushahidi platform should be seen as an agent of social change and should discuss the social mobilization which may be able to bring about. The study further suggest that if we can look at Ushahidi platform as a development agent, can we then take this a step further and ask, or try to find, a methodology that looks at the Ushahidi platform as peacemaking agent, or to assist in the maintenance of peace in a post-conflict thereby tapping into Ushahidi platform's full potential.

The study further recommends that when peace agreements are reached, efforts to sustain peacebuilding and enhance reconciliation and reconstruction are crucial. Ushahidi platform interventions can take the form of Ushahidi platform training, especially in the fields of impartial or inter-ethnic news reporting. This is news reporting that adequately reflects the ethnic make-up of a country and the true diversity of opinions. Programming aimed at sustaining peace through building support for peace agreements and focusing on reconciliation and supporting development of free media through policy and legislative reform and other measures

REFERENCES

ITU (International Telecommunication Union) (2010) ICT Statistics Newslog - National survey shows Kenyan Internet market heading towards "critical mass" viewed 3.4
[http://www.itu.int/ITUD/ict/newslog/National+Survey+Shows+Kenyan+Internet+Market+Heading+Towards+Critical+ Mass.aspx](http://www.itu.int/ITUD/ict/newslog/National+Survey+Shows+Kenyan+Internet+Market+Heading+Towards+Critical+Mass.aspx)

- Goldstein, J. and Rotich, J. (2008). Digitally Networked Technology in Kenya's 2007–2008 Post-Election Crisis; Internet & Democracy Case Study Series. Berkman Center Research Publication No. 2008-09.
- Price, M., & Thomson, S. (2002). *An Operational Framework for Media and Peacebuilding*. Retrieved March 12, 2013, from IMPACS: www.impacs.org
- Creswell J.W (2003). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods*
- Ramsbotham, O., Miall, H., & Woodhouse, T. (2011). *Contemporary conflict resolution*. Polity
- Miall, H., Ramsbotham, O., & Woodhouse, T. (1999). *Contemporary conflict resolution: the prevention, management and transformation of deadly conflicts*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1999). *Basics of qualitative research: methods and techniques of grounded theory*. Helping Hands Association.
- Struges, D. (2007). Third-Party Techniques for Preventing Conflict Escalation and Promoting Peaceful Settlement. *International Organization* , No. 4: , 653-681.
- Taylor, P. M. (1997). *Global Communications, International Affairs and the Media since 1945* (1st ed.). (N. I. Series., Ed.) London: Routledge.
- Terzis, G., & Melone, S. (2002). *Using the Media for Conflict Transformation*, . London: Pluto Press