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## Influence of New Media in the Political Sphere of Kenya

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### Introduction

The upsurge of the multiparty political system in developing countries marked with the commencement of difficult journey. In the process of transition from single party to multiparty political system, the contribution of media has always been remained crucial. The change political scenario could not get so much for the people of Kenya, it was still not accessible for the people to raise their voice direct to government and talk about their rights. In the midst of difficult democratic system, the New Media showed at least the rays of hope to the people of Kenya so that they could put their points on social media sites and openly express their views. In the last few years, it has been noticed in all over the world as well as Kenya also that new media has transformed democracy into digital democracy. All the structural changes that are taking place in political system under the arena of new media are very fast and rapid. New media is an example of expansion of technological proliferation and changes that has profoundly influencing the way of people behavior through the occurred changes in their perceiving of views and ideas. The power of digital democracy can be well understood through the visibility of all the government head on twitter as well as on different of social media sites.

The digitalization of media has brought the formational change in the democratic system of government. The caliber of digital media is vital which is shown through the power of twitter handler where they usually directly confront government with their judicious questions and quarry in real time. At the time of catastrophic moment of Westgate terrorist attack the majority of Kenyan they used Twitter coordinated with emergency service in 2013. We have witnessing with the upsurge of internet proliferation in Africa the new media is rapidly establishing its significant political influences in the entire continent. Kenyan has been witnessing from the last few contested elections poll that the role of new media has been very crucial from the context of formatting political consent among the citizen of country. Nigeria president **Goodluck Jonathan** when seven years ago surprisingly announced his presidential candidate on Facebook it was an uncommon political incident for the people of continent, this incident was unprecedented and started the new junction for the shift of political tradition. Kenya has its own substantial position when it comes to analyses the aid of new media in the sphere of transforming political scenario.

The conventional form of media has its own barricade where it cannot address all the core issue on the basis of truthfulness due to the reliability on provided advertising from government and there is also the threat of state coercion and up to some extent the conjugal alienation of journalists with loyalty of their own ethnic community. The conventional form of media is losing its clutch as the pre-eminent agenda setter in the country and the power of shaping political ideas is being gradually being taken over by various platforms of new media. It is a well-known fact that in across of world including the continent of Africa that the media has always traditionally played supreme position as the custodian and originators of the public agenda. The conventional form of media has long history of providing parameters of discussion and act as a catalyst of their own political biased ideologue among of common people. The domination of conventional media in the formation of ideas among has always been problematic for the people. The dominant tendency of conventional media has always found to homogenize the horizon of ideas and issues for the conversation and intently excluded many of crucial matters. The shattered disappointment and dissatisfaction among the people of country provided the vital opportunity for intensive proliferation of social media under the banner of innovative technologies provided by new media.

The dominative control of conventional media in Kenya has been covered under the malign notion of political and profitable context of reality through the pertaining of dissemination of biased ideas. The issues of political discourse was prime product of manufacturing views and never been allowed to be among of public as in their organic form. These inappropriate attitude of media was internally integrated with the association of country's media sector via the dominated by two media organizations, the Nation Media Group and Standard Group, since the country got independence. But from last few years with the upsurge of technical proliferation through the expansion of new media has violently disrupted the command of these powerful media houses. The presence of social media erupted as the new regime of information dissemination platform and started to operate the functioning of political ideas from the views of majority of Kenya and they have their presence on social media

sites these changes on the social political sphere of country has also created a wall of restraint for the dominance to conventional media houses.

### **Expansion of Digitalization in Kenya**

Initially in Kenya Computer and internet introduced by foreign aid organization because of the requirement of communicates from their home countries. As the passing of time computer and internet has gradually become the part Kenyan society. With commencement of globalization the process of international integration through virtual means of communication has played the vital role in the spread of information and communication technology in Kenya. Due to the opening of global market and interdependency among all over the world causes the need of strong structural establishment of information and communication technology and it became the pivotal requirement for the people of Kenya. The growing presence of private sectors had also specified the intensive use of information and communication technology for the purpose of rapid popularization of business and market.

The increase of market interest endorsed the opening of several of computer training centers, and cyber cafes which enforced the revolutionary technical development. With passing of time use of computer and technology become the essential requirement of social and political uses. But as long as the genuine interest for the development of country through the advancement of information and communication technology sector remained quite slow in Kenya and it was not in the list of prior task for the government. The spread of the process of digitalization of society remained stagnant until the government did not take the responsibility of digitalization. The discourse integrated with the concept of being digitalized was also partially influenced by western discourse but the contribution of computer expertise of Kenya and the community of Kenyan Indian also played a significant part in the spread of computer and internet technology. In the present time with the rapid upsurge of information and communication technology in all over the world and heavy dependency of people on the means of virtual technological method the future path of Kenya is also highly influenced by the idea of being digitalized and thus the proceedings of information and communication technology would be substantial for the people of all over of world including the entire continent of Africa.

The utopian concept of the process of digitalization and use of new media is strongly integrated with the thinking of people that the intensification of the process of the spread of information and communication technology would be marked with the betterment and improvement of quality of life of the citizen of Kenya which is related to the improvement in the political and economic empowerment and growth of the people. Accessibility of knowledge and information is the foundation of the development of any society in this context the role of new media is utmost significant for the people of all the third world countries where people can hardly afford quality level of education. So the proceeding of investment in the sector of information and

communication technology could bring appropriation in the sphere of acquiring of skills and critical approach among the citizen of Kenyan and ahead on the path of digital society. The expansion of information and communication technology has been associated with the prime intention of achieving economic development.

ICT has been playing a very significant act in for the knowledge based advancement of Kenyan future generation. Once former government of Kenya Mr, Mwai Kibaki stated that the ICT has the caliber to extend the reach of country up to becoming a middle-income country. In the year of 2006 on 31<sup>st</sup> October , the digital dream Vision 2030, a 25 years plan launched by the former president of kenya Mr. Mwai Kibaki for aheading Kenya on the way of prosperity and for the formation of certain specific strategically structural expansion with the aim of transforming country into a middle-income country. The exploitation of technology has become the requirement for the innovation of key element of strategy for the growth of any country on intra-level development of on the level of global sphere to deal with the issue of development enhancement. Dr. Bitange Ndeme, permanent secretary of information and communication and a former lecturer at the University of Nairobi who joined the civil services during the tenure of Kibaki in 2005, intensified the dream of digitalization through more effective way among the people of country. Ndeme used to state about himself and about his political way of intention that “I solely determined to ahead our country into digital age”, (Omondi, 2006). The mounted efforts of Ndeme were very strong with keeping faith in the potential to transform country into an ICT hub, especially for the capital Nairobi to be as center of ICT. Through the following of appropriate direction of plan it would be possible to achieve an alternative socio-economic development path headed with the implementation of various meanss related to the expansion of ICTs within different sectors for the prosperity of economy, without succumbed through the tedious and difficult industrialization process.

The mindset of the people of Kenyan has been prepared gradually for the adaptability of innovation expansion of ICTs sectors and made them believe that the process of digitalization is directly related to the sincere future of the people and it would be marked with the new formation of society. The assumption was based on the concept of that the growth of profit through the advancement of technical service sectors and expansion of market to secure the economic future of upcoming generation. From the starting of globalization era I became general conception among the most of the third world countries that the development of society could be absolutely based on the advancement of ICTs sectors and stop relying on industrialization process and transformation was integrated with the idea of digitalization of society. The idea of transformation of society from the dependency on industrialization to alternative way of development through digitalization is based on the new future model of society based on knowledge and information.

The future goal of the country trough proceeding with the expansion of digitalization process was not influenced by the idea of heading on the path of western development model but rather bent on taking the model of India, Manutius and Costa Rica as alternative model of example. But under the authoritarian nature of democratic society of Kenyan government system controlled execution of the expansion of ICTs and its

outcome for the people of Kenya has been integrated with the several issues of unanticipated types of risk factors and related future side effects. This unwanted obstacle in way of the expansion of modern technological path of Kenya bounded with several of dilemma where the execution of ICT and its amalgamation for creating change in future economic and socio-political goal has no guaranteed with positive outcome. The foundation of expansion of digitalization was not based on the appropriate assumption and related outcome through realistic expectation except of unrealistic hopes and dream based vision. In Kenya the cornerstone of the proceeding of digitalized society has been not founded on the ground of ideal model integrated with the social realities. Due the extensive expansion of new media participation of common audience got increased in the form of citizen journalism. The term citizen journalism started to use in Kenya since the amid of 2000s. The concept and understanding of the world citizen journalism and its criteria of boundaries not yet clearly defined but the use of this term is common among the people of Kenya. Availability of internet through many types of affordable technical devices and mushrooming of cyber cages with diffusion of several of social media sites has incited the enlargement of horizontal network of interactive communication scenario in Kenya.

The increase of new media got adapted by Kenyan smoothly due to one fundamental reason of the lower cost of accessibility of social media for the dissemination of information and messages among mass population which could be easily exploited for the mobilization and participation of mass population regarding on certain political, economic and social issues. The online participations of people on common goal and agenda related to national and local issues has become an essential way of life for the socially and politically active people of country due to the availability of reasonable smart phones in Kenyan market which extended the consumption of internet for the accessibility of several of social media sites. Being user short mobile phone from the very first time in political and social history Kenyan offered with an strong opportunity through permitting to questions directly candidate, this could be claimed in the world of information and technology which leveraged to the individual to raise their voice and be participative in the democratic process of country via freedom of expression. At present time the core connectivity of communication and dissemination of information between political affairs and the common people of country is the use of new media and in this way the process of politics in Kenya is mostly based on media politics.

The functioning of political system in all over the world and undoubtedly in Kenya could not be imagined without of obtaining support from media when citizen of country as through the powerful manipulative and lucrative market techniques the common people of country have been converted from citizen to consumer of political market. The virtual connecting power of network society is centered in the hands of lesser number of conglomerates via intertwined financial investors. The political communication through political media expanded the new forms of communication for facilitating the production and diffusion and interchange of political content vial several means of social media platform. The change political scenario through the emergence of new media accommodated interaction within the sphere of the political relationship of between of individual and political entity of the country. The change social scenario with the rapid use of social media has



been continuously through unanticipated ways. New media have been diffusing the new essence of democratic fragrance among the people of country. The direct confrontation between

### **New Media and Political Engagement in Kenya**

The role of media is extremely significant in shaping of political ideas and in the process of influencing attention of individuals. Political engagement with use of media can be referred in the form of cognitive and behavioral transformation in the political events and activities. Consumption of news and formation of views and opinion can also be considered in the form of political engagement through the accessibility of media. The expansion of internet took place in Kenya in the mid of 1990s and expanded very fast during the two decade. Earlier the accessibility of internet was very expensive and limited. Media contextually use to disseminate facts and opinion for formatting the political perspective of individual on certain issue. The dominating presence of social media continues to be substantial in the process of mobilizing and drawing attention of people.

The enormous flourishing of digital media platform is not only confronting to conventional form of media but also being assimilated as a crucial part of established media houses. To be on the platform of social media for any conventional media has become necessary at present time. Diffusion of new media has been promoting a horizontal sphere of interactive communication. New media have provided an opportunity for the people they are associated from the political sphere that they can directly connect to the large number of people through social media. The use of social media in the sphere of political arena has given a way to the political candidates to be interactively engaged with voters in comparison of conventional form of association through campaign and rallies. Social media has been proving to itself in providing fast flowing information among the large section of population with the provision of feedback which was constrained earlier during the solely use of conventional form of media.

The uses of conventional media is expensive than easy accessibility of new media. Social media has become the integral aspect of political discourse and discussion through the amalgamation of different social media sites. Social media has become the central part of Kenyan political procedures through its ability to equalized discourse by providing chance to everyone get noticed. The accessibility of high level of information among common people of country has become the cause of challenge for political leaders as the platform of social media can decline of upsurge their political position. From the last few years Africa has been witnessing the highest internet penetration growth rate. Interdependent association of social media and conventional media houses is still oblivious powerful ways. The majority of population they have been engrossed with the use of internet are overwhelmingly urban people, they are educated and affluent. The reach of social media is highest among the youth of the country as they are extensively integrated to online platform for their personal use and requirements.

Digital association through virtual interactive connectivity has been enhancing the political concerns of people. Social media has given an opportunity for political candidates and common people to be connected and raise their concerns for the development of country. Communication is the key of development and the use of social media platform to raise the issues of public concerns has been opening the window of hope for the people of Kenya. Political players of Kenya have been exhausting social media sites intensively for their political and other purposes. Media has always been provided a structured framework within which the idea of political concerns are discussed and framed among the people of country. The expansion and accessibility of interactive means of communication platform have provided an opportunity to be connected with politics to the common people of the country.

The enlargement of new media has started to eliminate the absolute control of conventional media by permitting common people to be connected with political affairs through various forms of interactive means of communication. This connectivity of common people with interactive means of communication has provided them a chance of raising their political concerns easily through social media sites. In Kenya the presence of new media have the potential of mobilizing and directing political activity through its strong virtual association with the common people of the country. The significance of social networking sites as be assured their presence on these sites cannot be undermined by the political candidates of Kenya because of the accessibility of these sites by the large number of Kenyan. The penetration of internet has expanded to itself among of majority of Kenyan. So it has become the integral part of the life of Kenyan. The manufacturing of political ideas is mostly dependent on the views which flow on the sites of social networking sites. These virtual means of communication platform has changed the association of media and political beings from very formal to informal and individualist involvement in the sphere of political and personal life of people in the era of the expansion of new media.

### **Intensive use of Social Media during Elections**

Kenya can be considered as a significant example in regards of the use of social media in politics. The mainstream media houses of Kenya are in the orbit of number of hindrance and obligation as per their commitment with certain political ideas for their commercial benefits, so for them be fair in the flow of information without curtailing of actual context is not possible. One of the major interdependence of mainstream media and government is the requirement of advertisement for media houses which curtailed their moral in the process of disseminating of contextually correct information among the people of country. The use of media in any society is highly concerned with the formation of political ideas and provider of views for choosing of appropriate candidate in democratic system of government. But in the recent election of 2017 in Kenya has shown the different mode of manufacturing ideas with shifting of people perceiving of views from mainstream media to social media platform.

The formation of political views has been gradually started to being taken over by social media sites where majority are indulged in political discourse and discussion. During the time of election, the role of Kenyan media is not limited of covering campaign of election and dissemination of information but on the ground of reality certain group of media people uses to start to take the side of particular candidate on basis of their similar race. This biased approach of journalism has also been shifted from conventional media to the platform of social media with existing prejudices of race. For government it's not possible to curtail the freedom of individual in regards of expressing their views on the platform of social media. So these platforms have become the hub of individual journalism. Despite government of Kenya has tried to curtailed the free flow information on social media sites but it was not possible of tracking internet all the time. Providing enough technical equipment for controlling flow of information and internet data is not possible for the government. From the duration of decade the upsurge of social media has emerged as chief dominating factor in the political sphere of the entire continent. Kenya has itself witnessing the penetration of internet and high use of social media in the political arena of country.

The serious issue in the contention of election including the matters of irregularities and use of malpractices has also been started to debate on the platform of Facebook and Twitter. The extensive use of social media has changed the conventional format political system in Kenya. From the time of 2007 elections, the use of new media has been pushing its presence extensively. Around of 80% political candidate had made their presence online during the campaign of election where the highly digitally present Jubilee won the election. It has become politically mandatory for the political parties of the country to assured the presence of their political candidate online as the large number of Kenyan are on social media.

### Conclusion


New media has provided a possibility for common people to raise their voice with the tiny device to the people sitting at the top. The reach of social media is high among the youth of the country. They are highly indulged in the virtual sphere of online world. The extensive upsurge of new media has provided the different means of interactive communicative platform with catching ideas. Social media has provided a chance of being politically empower for the kind of interested candidate they are constrained with limited resource, they have been availing social media for their political purpose. Several of mobilizing campaign is taking place through the use of Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp.

The expansion of new media and its contribution is mixed with the various aspects of success and weaknesses about of the upsurge of mass movements and protest. In contemporary scenario the integration of social media through the assimilation of its several of techniques based platform has become the essential elements of any of mass movements but with the significant contribution of new media the future and consolidated outcome of these movements based on the means of virtual coordination has not been seen concrete in long term. Movement which start through the excessive use of new media use to have strong intensity but it usually does



not be able to consistent for long time with remained of its excitement and intensive approach of transformation. Apart from all this unconventional form of media platforms has given a chance to the common people of country to be participative with the ongoing political affairs through their raise on voice and accommodated movement without of any high cost of and association of high-tech contact from political lineage. The broader sphere of new media has its inclined form of communication technologies which provide a new system of decentralized, non-hierarchical and effective technological platform for the dissemination of political and social ideas among of mass people.

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