

The Role of Social Media as a Collective Intelligence Platform in Project Implementation: Case in Kenya's Vision 2030 Flagship Projects

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DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v3-i8/160>

Published Date: 20 August 2013

Abstract

Social media is the online tools that people use to share content, profiles, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives and media itself, thus facilitating conversations and interaction online between groups of people. The role of Social media in the present times is an interesting and captivating to contemplate given the manner in which it has changed the way we live, interact but most importantly influenced organizational culture. Project management has not been left behind, being a relatively new area of research albeit growing immensely. The Kenya's vision 2030 will be achieved through successful implementation of projects. And this success will depend on how well these projects will be implemented to enhance success rate. The general objective was to establish how social media could be utilized to facilitate project implementation. Specifically, it assessed the role of social media as a platform for collaborative intelligence and gave recommendations on incorporating social media in the implementation of all projects under vision 2030.

The target population were project managers and team leaders involved in implementation of projects earmarked under vision 2030.

A descriptive study design was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20 and Ms 2007 excel.

This study revealed that the vision 2030 project official are embracing social media for work related purposes. Organizations running projects can use the power of social media to foster the culture of learning from each other. If project officials provide a platform and a framework around social computing tools for their people to meaningfully interact and collectively learn, this will become an extremely useful exercise for stakeholders and will contribute immensely to successful project implementation.

Key words:

Collective intelligence, Social media, Vision 2030 and Participatory Project Management

INTRODUCTION

The Kenya Vision 2030 is the national long-term development blue-print that aims to transform Kenya into a newly industrializing, middle-income country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens by 2030 in a clean and secure environment. It was launched on 10 June 2008 by the President of the Republic of Kenya, Mwai Kibaki. The Vision is based on three “pillars”: the economic, the social and the political. The economic pillar aims to improve the prosperity of all Kenyans through an economic development programme, covering all the regions of Kenya, and aiming to achieve an average GDP growth rate of 10% per annum beginning in 2012. The second pillar seeks to build a just and cohesive society with social equity in a clean and secure environment. The political pillar aims to realize a democratic system founded on issue-based politics that respects the rule of law, and protects the rights and freedoms of every individual in the Kenyan Society.

A SAGA with the requisite capacity has been established to oversee the implementation of all the Vision 2030 projects. The agency works closely in collaboration with government ministries and departments as well as the private sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholder groups. It is to be implemented in successive five year MTP, through flagship projects. The projects are original large-scale initiatives that look beyond their immediate locality and are capable of having an impact on the entire nation. Flagship projects form part of the national development with complementary projects being undertaken in line with the Medium-Term Plans, the Budget Outlook Paper, and the Medium- Term Expenditure Framework.

The Kenyan Government has created aVDS which provides strategic leadership and direction in the realization of the Vision 2030 goals to ensure the timely implementation of the flagship projects. The Secretariat is managed by the Director-General leading a team of four Directors and Secretariat members, under the overall guidance of the Vision 2030 Delivery Board that plays a policy-making and advisory role.

Notably, the implementation of the vision encompasses projects which automatically call for project management skills. Project implementation is the core business of project management.

The success of the vision is tagged on successful implementation of the projects which cut across the pillars mentioned above.

PMBok defines Project management as the application of knowledge, skills and techniques to execute projects effectively and efficiently. A platform to get these knowledge, skills and techniques together is critical in enhancing success rate of projects.

Presently, social media has emerged as a powerful tool in getting people together. It has attracted substantial interest by all groups of the societies such as, small and large businesses, clubs, education, non-profit, religion, and all sections of the government. Seemingly, everybody is experimenting with some form of social media either by using twitter or uploading photos and videos using MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, or by participating in online blogs, or contributing knowledge through Wikipedia. It is a reality of the 21st Century that no one can wish away. What started as platform for interactions and for friends to stay connected is now being used by organizations as a competitive .

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The country has witnessed failure of projects due to absence of a platform to engage stakeholders. An example is Lake Turkana fish processing plant project. This project was designed in 1971 to provide jobs to the Turkana people through fishing and fish processing for export. However, the Turkana are nomads with no history of fishing or eating fish. The

plant was completed and operated for a few days, but was quickly shut down. The cost to operate the freezers and the demand for clean water in the desert were too high. It remains a "white elephant" in Kenya's arid northwest. In the wake of Vision 2030, Kenya's economic blueprint, it would be paramount to ask the following : Where people involved in the conceptualization of the project? Was the project subjected to public (experts) scrutiny? Did project officials then have a forum to deliberate carefully on the problem? How many, therefore of such projects never see the light of the day thanks to low level involvement? Are there platforms in place where professionals can exchange views and get to a consensus on best practices before and during project implementation?

To safeguard the country from going a similar path, there is therefore need to have a platform where project officials can coordinate, share ideas, and exercise open dialogue. Such a platform is so timely at such a time when the country is working towards Vision 2030. The achievement of the goals of this document will be determined by how well projects earmarked under it shall be implemented. The environment around which Vision 2030 shall be achieved is one which is safe, secure and free, where project teams charged with driving the vision forward provide and receive critical feedback on projects and their bottlenecks and accomplishments and have a platform to do so. This study sought to investigate the role of social media as platform for facilitating collective intelligence in project implementation of kenya's vision 2030 projects.

Objectives

The general objective of the study was to establish the role of social media as a platform for collaborative intelligence in the implementation of Vision 2030. The recommendations would help the stakeholders in the implementation of the key projects earmarked as flagship projects tap into the potential of social media in running these projects.

Literature Review

This chapter contains literature materials from a number of educational researchers social media and its capacity to bring teams together. It also has a review of some challenges faced in the implementation of Vision 2030 projects from the second APR. The literature provided background information necessary for this article.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

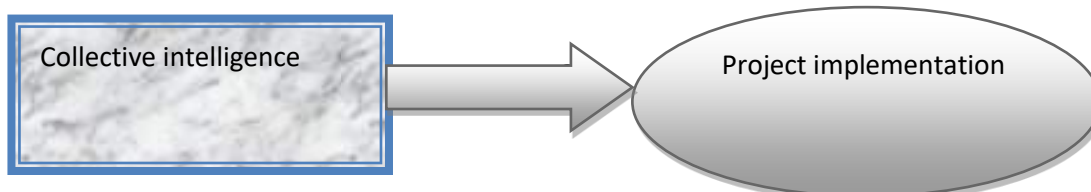
Literature search did not reveal a theoretical framework that directly merges social media to project management. The closest that social media came was in the involvement of stakeholders in project implementation, sentiments advanced by participatory project management theory. The involvement of the people entails allowing them to discover the possibilities of exercising choice and thereby becoming capable of managing their own development. Consequently, participatory development embodies a "process of enlarging peoples' choices" (Martinussen 1997:38). According to (Korf, 2003) Participatory project management aims at promoting local development projects, address real needs with the support of local partners.

Further, Harrison and Denn (2004) adds that Project performance depends on cooperation and teamwork which involves the following: Mutual support, Open communication, trust and respect

Participatory project management shall be the basis of this literature review.

Independent Variable

Dependent Variable



Collective intelligence

The collective intelligence is the united capacity of a group of persons, united in a team by a common goal that sets and accomplishes objectives.

Channeling the variety of connections among the members of a team toward a common entity is a strong point for the organization, leading to the development of collective intelligence. The manager of an intelligent organization must know to valorize the collective competence and he should turn into a leader which co-ordinates the activity and solves the conflicts among groups. Each person poses a series of competences. Putting these individuals in a team presupposes the reunification of personal competence and obtaining a set of competences – a collective competence that is superior to the individual one.

Web 2.0 as tool for collective intelligence

Web 2.0 is a concept that takes the network as a platform for information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design, and collaboration on the Internet or World Wide Web. Tim O'Reilly, who coined the phrase 'Web 2.0' in 2004, has described it as 'harnessing collective intelligence' Web 2.0 is about users and content, instead of just surfing on the Internet. It's about what the Internet can do for an active collaborator, rather than a passive viewer. Web 2.0 Technologies

Web 2.0 technologies are changing the way messages spread across the Web. A number of online tools and platforms are now defining how people share their perspectives, opinions, thoughts and experiences. Web 2.0 tools such as weblogs, RSS, video casting, social bookmarking, social networking, podcasts and picture sharing sites are becoming more and more popular. One major advantage of Web 2.0 tools is that the majority of them are free.

The Web 2.0 philosophy emphasizes the importance of people's interactions with the Internet. Everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the Web. And, by paying attention to what users are looking for and doing online, a company can provide better service and build customer loyalty. Some Web pages absolutely depend upon user contributions -- without them, there'd be no Web site. Wikis are a good example of this. Users can enter information, modify existing data or even delete entire sections in wikis. Ultimately, the people who visit the Web site determine what it contains and how it looks.

Tim O'Reilly wrote about the importance of harnessing collective intelligence. He stated that the Web sites that are shaped by user contributions will evolve into more superior destinations than other sites. He cited Wikipedia as the perfect example. O'Reilly felt that the community of informed users could monitor and maintain the site. However, since anyone can contribute information to Wikipedia, a person could submit incorrect information either by accident or on purpose. There's no way to guarantee the accuracy of the information, and you can't hold anyone responsible for submitting incorrect information.

Critique of the Existing Literature Relevant to the Study

(Lovink, 2012) argues that there is no need to store the constant flow as users are less and less interested in saving and storing their information offline; instead, they keep on moving and syncing everything, desperately trying to manage their identity in this real-time flow. Lovink detects the nature of Google not as a universal tool for knowledge acquisition, but as

a profit driven corporation that sees its scanned books not as a poetic resource, but as an opportunity to market Android reading software. He addresses the crisis of the multiple self as aroused by contemporary social media, with special emphasis on Facebook and its software settings designed to encourage conformity and a huge self-branding routine. He further points out that social media have to draw the line between entertainment and productivity among its users.

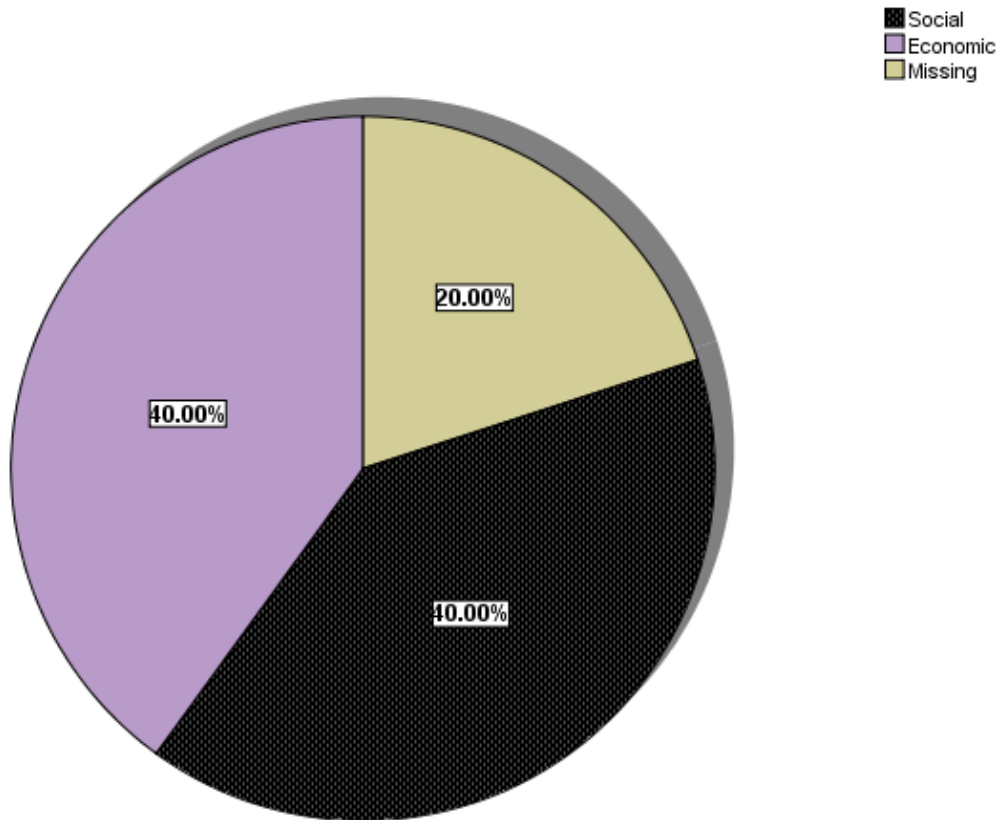
Research Methodology

A descriptive study design was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The major purpose of descriptive research is description of the situation as it exists at present (Kothari, 2008). This study obtained numeric as well as non numeric data. A case study research approach was used. According to Klotz, (1997) case studies have been used since they increase the understanding of how management control is used in practice as well as how the environment and other surrounding factors affect the control system. This research targeted all project managers and team leaders involved in implementation of projects earmarked under vision 2030. Questionnaires were distributed among all the three pillars of Vision 2030 so that there was even distribution. Under the economic pillar for instance, we had the tourism sector, agricultural sectors, manufacturing sector the BPO sector. Social sector had Education and Training sector, Health sector, Environment and Natural Resources Sector, Gender Vulnerable Groups and youth sector, population, urbanization and housing. Political pillar had Truth, justice and reconciliation commission. Data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20 and Ms 2007 excel.

Findings and Discussions

Basic parameter information

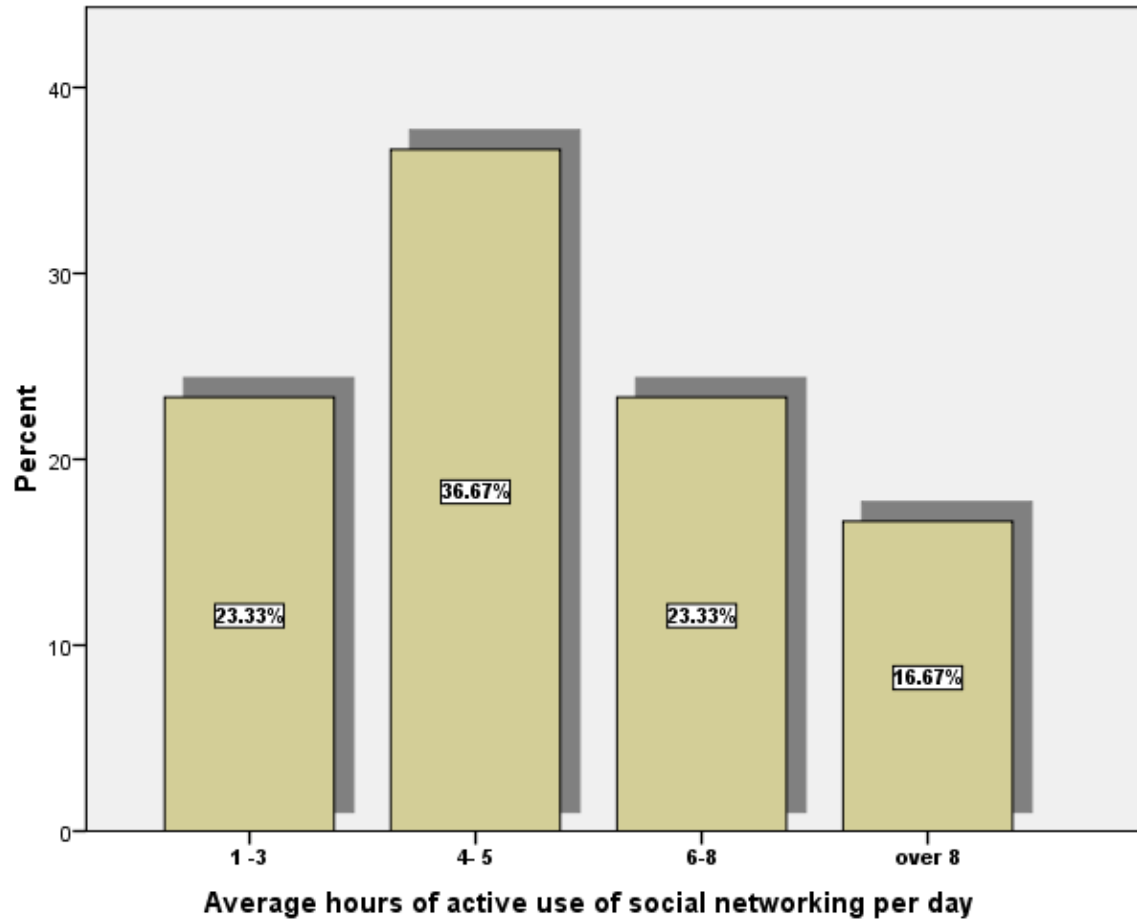
The Vision 2030 is anchored on three pillars: economic, social and political. This study incorporated all the three, however there was no response from the ministry involved in the implementation of the political pillar projects, Truth, justice and reconciliation commission. This findings are thus restricted on the other two. Below is a graph showing this distribution.



As shown, there was an equal distribution of responses for both social and economical pillar at 40% each. The missing values were 20% as shown. The missing values couldn't be assumed to be political pillar directly, it could be respondents who were not sure.

Average time spent on social media

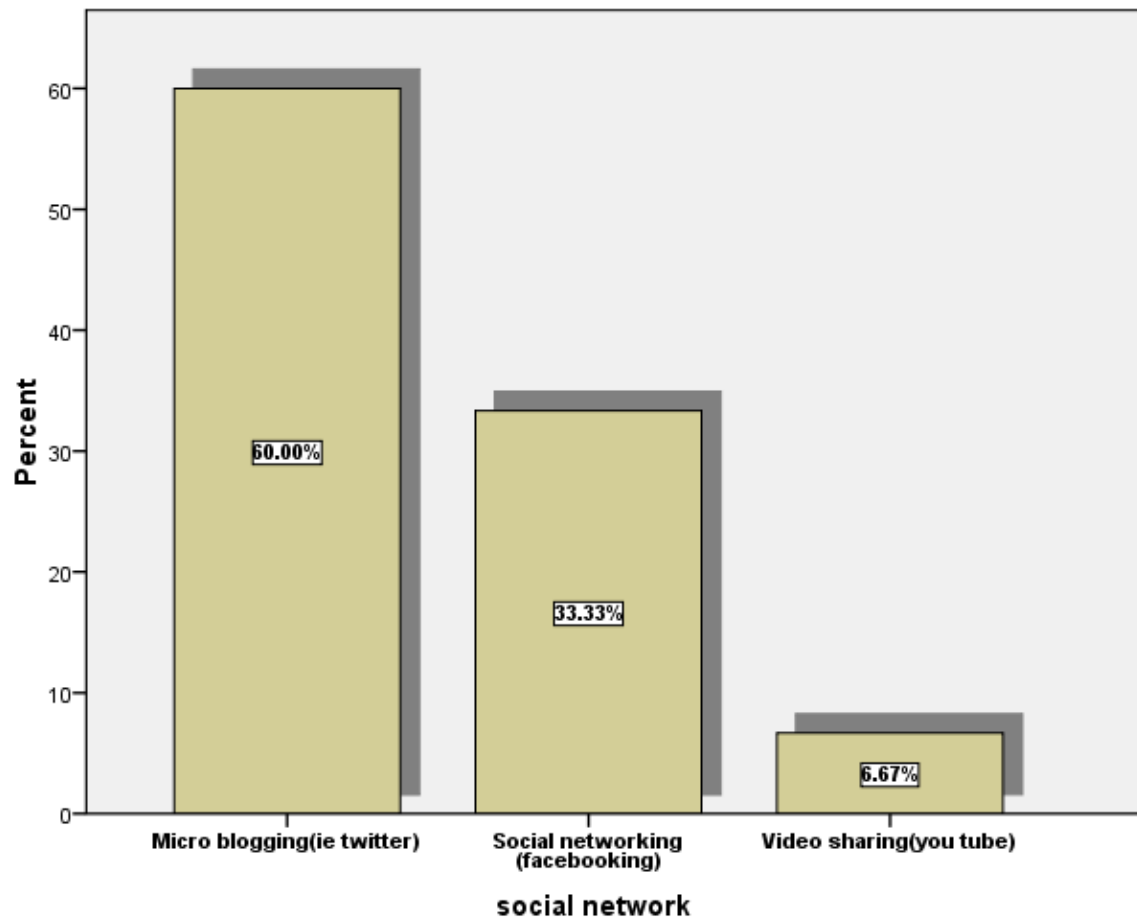
It was important to establish how much time on average per day, was spent on social networks. This would perhaps gauge how big the impact of tapping into the potential of the same and what importance project officials attach to social media in whatever business they do with it. Below is the graph:



Majority of respondents spend between 4 and 5 hours in a day on social sites recording 36.67% of response. This translates into at least 50% of the working hours in day is spend, in parallel with other activities, on social sites.

Social networking services

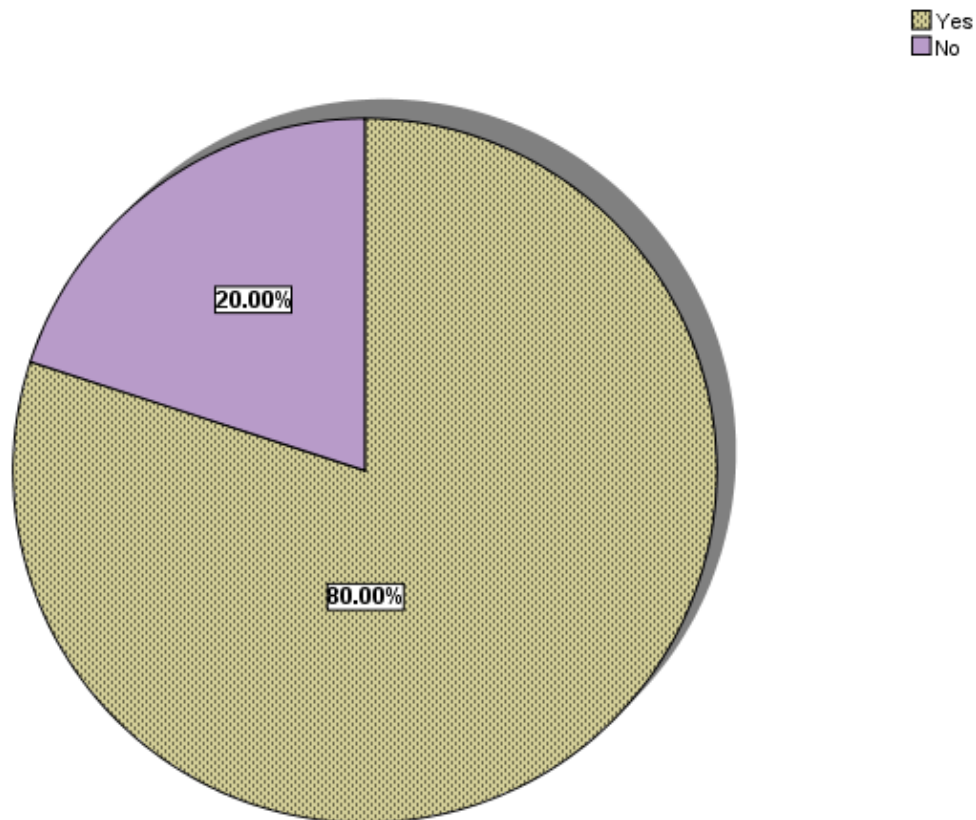
Out of social networking services identified in this study was rated among respondents as follows regarding frequency of access:



Microblogging is the practice of posting small pieces of digital content like text, pictures, links, short videos, or other media on the Internet. It recorded 60% of the response. Video sharing scored 6.67%. According to a report by Chadwick, Martin & Bailey, 67 per cent of social media users are more likely to buy a brand they follow on Twitter, while 79 per cent are more likely to recommend a brand they follow on Twitter. This study confirms that work by the duo was indeed true on preference of Twitter by social media users.

Exploiting intellectual assets

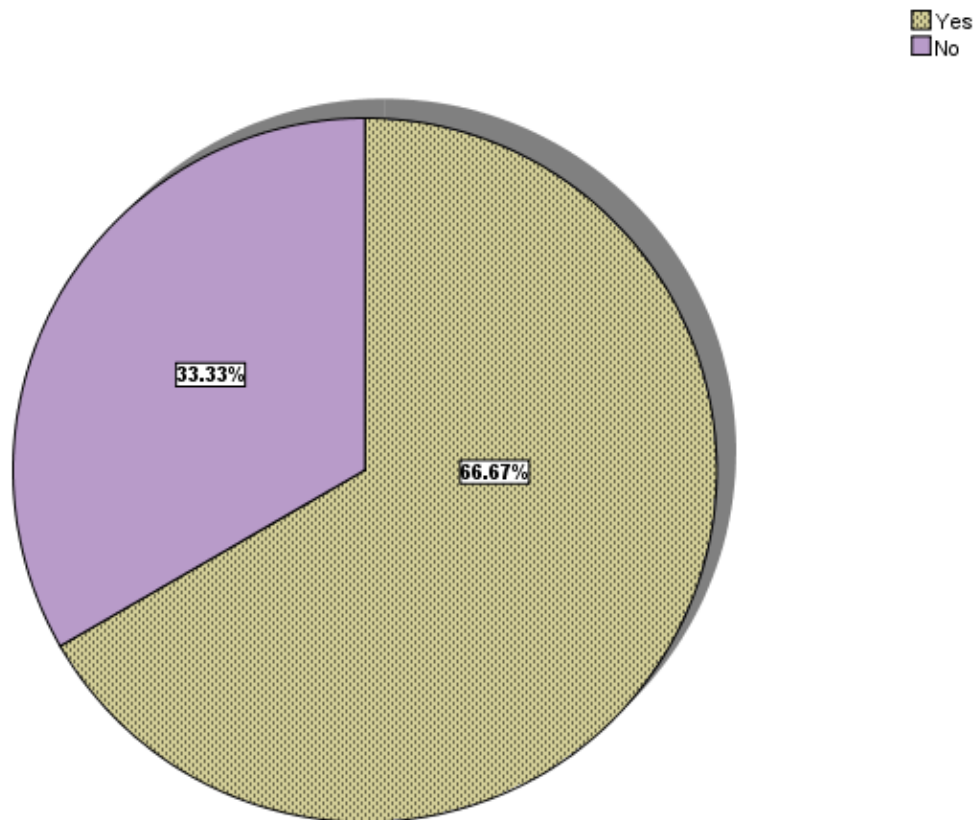
Respondents were required to state if they considered social media a useful tool for organization's intelligence asset. Below were the findings:



80% of them believe that social media is useful as an intelligence asset. Monitors and analyzing social media data so that project official can engage with stakeholders more effectively. Dell Corporation is a very good example of a company using collective intelligence through their social media in their marketing projects. Its purpose is active intervention in the areas of customer service issues, new product ideas, ratings and reviews, brand reputation and marketing, amongst other aspects. Dell can therefore acknowledge feedback, respond to it, understand their market better and spot challenges before they become bigger.

Communicating ideas

Respondents were required to tell if they thought social media was useful in sharing of project related ideas compared to other platforms and below was the response.



66.67% opine that it actually is useful.

And asked whether these discussion were helpful in project management, all respondents were in agreement. Project officials reported “There are new things always and especially technology” indicating that the was something new to report on latest technology necessary for project management.

Respondents were required to state if they considered social media a useful tool for organization’s intelligence asset. 80% respondent in the affirmative. And asked whether they found these idea repository helpful in the management of projects, all respondents were in agreement.

Further, they were required to rate the importance of social media as a tool for collective intelligence on a likert scale 1(Not at all important) to 5 (Extremely important)

Collective intelligence during project implementation**Statistics**

N	Valid	30
	Missing	0
Mean		3.67
Std. Error of Mean		.146
Std. Deviation		.802

A mean of 3.67 indicates that social media is regarded as “important”. Organizations running projects can use the power of social media to foster the culture of learning from each other. If project officials provide a platform and a framework around social computing tools for their people to meaningfully interact and collectively learn, this will become an extremely useful exercise for stakeholders. The Vision 2030 secretariat would want these officials to become more efficient at what they do, and all stakeholders consider growth in learning to be so critical in achieving project goals and hence the Vision’s as well.

Conclusion and Recommendations**Conclusion**

Participatory project management aims at promoting local development projects, address real needs with the support of all stakeholders. Project performance depends on cooperation and teamwork which involves the following: Mutual support, Open communication, trust and respect

Undeniably, from data collected, social media is emerging as a tool the field of project management can no longer ignore. This study revealed that the vision 2030 project officials are embracing social media for work related purposes. However, it did indicate that there is no an overwhelming trust in the quality of information provided via social media despite the fact that these officials spend over 50% of their time on social media along with other activities. This could perhaps point out that perception of social media is neutral. This could further explain why Lovink opine that social media has to draw the line between entertainment and productivity among its users.

Recommendations

Project stakeholders turn to more professional social networks. Many of the respondents use sites like Twitter and Facebook to which are mainly used for communication and fun. In order to connect with more professionals in the field of project management, sites like LinkedIn help develop relationships with these professionals. This is one of the surest ways of tapping into the potential of social media. This study also recommends that all projects be assigned an official account and policies of usage be defined. This would solve the problem identified by this study where respondents agreed that they were willing to share their opinion but with a caution that it all depended on the discussion issue and how sensitive the matter is. Further, it recommends usage of social media on the implementation of the constitution which was identified as the flagship project under the political pillar be embraced. For instance social media technology could be used to collect citizens’ comments on proposed laws as the country implements the constitution passed in 2010.

Acknowledgement

I wish to acknowledge God for His tender care and provision of wisdom during the research period. I thank Vision 2030 delivery secretariat, particularly Mugo Kabati and Ministries' officials for assistance and corporation during data collection. Further, I acknowledge my Supervisor and Lecturer Prof. Henry Bwisa for his guidance during the same period.

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