# Public Sector Marketing Communications, Volume II

## Traditional and Digital Perspectives

*Edited by*
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# Palgrave Studies of Public Sector Management in Africa

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# Preface

In today's world, effective communication tools are essential for public and governmental entities to connect with citizens, initiate engagement, disseminate information, encourage behavioural changes, showcase their offerings, and build a trustworthy brand. The relationship between the public sector and the citizens can be improved through the adoption of appropriate communication channels, including traditional and digital methods. This second volume of the two-volume edited book highlights the importance of both traditional and digital marketing communication tools in enhancing interactions with citizens and achieving critical outcomes for public sector institutions in Africa.

Technological innovation has been driving institutional activities across the globe; therefore, public sector establishments in Africa must take advantage of opportunities in digital tools. While traditional marketing communication tools, such as print, broadcast, and outdoor methods, continue to have value, public service activities are increasingly executed effectively and efficiently through the adoption of various technological tools and platforms. This raises questions about the relevance and contribution of traditional communication tools to public service delivery in Africa compared to the increasing popularity of digital media globally.

Although Africa has a growing number of young adults interested in social media and internet applications, the continent still has a high

percentage of digital exclusion due to high illiteracy level and limited access to the internet. Therefore, the current focus on digital communications should not exclude those who are not digitally savvy. Despite the clamour for the digitisation of public service operations and activities, there must be a balance that incorporates both digital and traditional perspectives of marketing communications. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy. What is important is the message, the channel adopted and the target audience. Therefore, for effective marketing communications in the public service, it is important to consider key components such as agency priorities, target audiences, localities, message contents, and platforms and channels. Additionally, the heterogenous nature of African communities—language, cultures and economic class—may require consideration of diverse communication channels.

Authors in this book offer both practical and theory-based suggestions for public sector institutions on the selection of traditional and digital communication tools that will be meaningful to a citizen-oriented public sector. This volume provides insights into Africa's utilisation of traditional and digital marketing tools in public sector organisations. Topics include public service advertising, celebrity endorsements, government use of digital technology for emergency risk communications, social media as a public sector communication platform, determinants of social media adoption, direct marketing in the public sector, optimising social media for voters' education intergovernmental collaboration, and football administration.

This book is relevant to government institutions, stakeholders, practitioners, researchers and public administration students who seek a more informed and effective utilisation of traditional and digital marketing communications in Africa's public sector. It provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with effective communication strategies and offers practical guidance on how to enhance communication and engagement with stakeholders.

# Structure of the Book

Part I: Introduction

In Chap. 1, "An Introduction to Public Sector Marketing Communications: Traditional and Digital Perspectives", Ogechi Adeola, Paul Katuse and Kojo Kakra Twum explore the intricacies of Africa's traditional and digital marketing communications in the context of public service delivery. The chapter introduces readers to the focus of the book and the core themes that define its contributions to scholarship and practice.

Part II: Public Sector Marketing Communications in Africa: Traditional Perspectives

In Chap. 2, Christiana Appiah-Nimo, Daniel Ofori, Gloria K.Q Agyapong and Kojo K. Twum discuss "Public Service Advertising and Celebrity Endorsement in Ghana." The chapter adds to the currently limited literature on public service advertisement (PSA) in Ghana, identifying factors, including celebrity endorsements, that influence the effect of PSAs on the public. The authors discuss implications for government departments and NGOs in developing information policies and appropriate media to reach the public.

Paul Katuse, in Chap. 3, "Direct Marketing in the Kenyan Public Sector," describes the Kenyan public sector's engagement in direct marketing initiatives, the role of public sector administration, the challenges

faced by the public sector in implementing direct marketing initiatives, the influence of digitisation and recommendations for ways the public sector can reach marketing objectives.

In Chap. 4, "Breaking the Silos: Role of Intergovernmental and Interagency Collaboration in Combatting Insecurity in South Africa and Nigeria," Silk Ugwu Ogbu, Knowledge Shumba and Abiola Babatunde Abimbola describe worries about the rising spate of personal insecurities and violent crimes, especially over the last decade, and how this has become one of the greatest concerns to citizens, governments and other stakeholders in South Africa and Nigeria. The chapter documents the reasons for the communication gaps and siloed approach to security provisioning and proffers suggestions for fostering collaboration among government and security agencies.

Part III: Public Sector Marketing Communications in Africa: Digital Perspectives

Chapter 5, "Digital Technology and Emergency Risk Communication of African Governments: Experiences and Lessons from Covid-19 Pandemic," written by Ogechi Adeola and Olaniyi Evans, explores the potential for digital technology as a medium for emergency risk communications, exemplified by African governments' responses during the Covid-19 pandemic. The authors identified the challenges to emergency risk communications using digital technology, including the malicious use of electronic technology, the spread of misinformation, the digital divide, inadequate ICT skills, weak ICT infrastructure and poor bandwidth constraints.

Chapter 6, "Drivers and Challenges of Social Media Usage in Ghana's Local Government Administration" by Majeed Mohammed, Prince Gyimah and Isaiah Adisa, contributes to the literature by focusing on the drivers and challenges of social media adoption among the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in Ghana. The MMDAs are equivalent of local government administration. The Technological-Organisational-Environment (TOE) framework was used as a theoretical orientation for the chapter.

Chapter 7, authored by Silk Ogbu, is titled "Optimising Social Media and Marketing Communication Strategies for Voter Education: A Way Forward for Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria." The author argues that digital and marketing communications

strategies will enhance INEC's voter education campaigns. The chapter identifies the challenges and opportunities associated with INEC's efforts to optimise voter education in Nigeria, and it recommends steps for successful re-engineering of INEC's voter education infrastructure. Technological Determinism and Social Marketing theories were adapted in the chapter.

In Chap. 8, "Social Media Adoption in Public Sector Communication: Practices, Opportunities and Challenges in Public Sector Organisations," Daniel Ofori, Christiana Appiah-Nimo and Francis O. Boachie-Mensah review current developments in public sector marketing, focusing on the value of social media channels as means to reach the public. The relevance of social media adoption in public sector marketing amidst public sector reforms is highlighted. Two main strategic implications of social media for the marketing of public services are explored: co-production in public service delivery and public service branding.

In Chap. 9, "Using Social Media for Competitive Advantage: The Case of African Public Universities," Eugene Ohu examined the unique value proposition that African public universities have in the wealth of knowledge of the local environment, which is key to educating future talents and leaders of the continent. However, with the growing number of private universities in Africa and the increasing student population, the author suggests that the use of social media can be an effective and efficient strategy for product placement and delivery while respecting the identity of the institutions and their culture, and in some cases, meeting regulatory compliance.

Nnamdi Madichie, Paul Igwe, Robert Ebo Hinson, Chris Mbah, Kobby Mensah and Brian Wesaala, in Chap. 10, examined "Public Sector Marketing Communications: Insights from/for the Primus National Football League Rwanda." The chapter explored the potential of an unexplored African Professional Football League to leverage its brand through effective marketing communications. Recognising the management of football leagues in Africa as an integral arm of government institutions, the chapter adopted a primary documentary analysis method to elicit sponsorship deals available to Rwanda that should advance football league initiatives. Appropriate recommendations were made for stakeholders involved in football administration and management in Africa.

Part IV: Recommendations and Conclusions

In Chap. 11, "Conclusion: Towards Effective Public Sector Marketing Communications in Africa," Ogechi Adeola, Emmanuel Mogaji, Paul Katuse and Kojo Kakra Twum suggest a pathway towards effective public sector communications in Africa. The authors emphasised that focusing on one single method of marketing communication will be counterproductive; public sectors' efforts to reach Africa's multicultural and demographically diverse societies can be met by incorporating both digital and traditional marketing strategies into their communications infrastructure.

# Contents

# Notes on Contributors

**Ogechi Adeola** is Associate Professor of Marketing and the Head of Department of Operations, Marketing and Information Systems at the Lagos Business School, Pan-Atlantic University, Nigeria. Her multidimensional research focuses on the advancement of knowledge across the intersection of marketing, strategy, tourism and gender. Her work has been published in top peer-reviewed journals, and her co-authored articles won Best Paper Awards at international conferences in 2016–2019, consecutively. She is a fellow of the Institute of Strategic Management, Nigeria, and the National Institute of Marketing of Nigeria. Adeola's international marketing consultancy experience spans Africa, Asia, the UK and the USA.

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**Francis O. Boachie-Mensah** is an associate professor in the Department of Marketing and Supply Chain Management, School of Business, University of Cape Coast. He has published and authored books in strategy, management, small business development and marketing.

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**Paul Katuse** is Associate Professor of Strategic Management and has also been a corporate consultant and university faculty member for more than 15 years. Katuse is a strategy and change management expert trainer. He has been an external examiner and a visiting faculty for several universities in eastern and southern parts of Africa. He has supervised several PhDs and DBAs and has been published in refereed journals. He belongs to several professional bodies and associations regionally and globally. Katuse is trained in case writing and blended learning pedagogies and has worked with higher education accrediting bodies and agencies within Africa and beyond.

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# Part I

## Introduction

# 1

# An Introduction to Public Sector Marketing Communications: Traditional and Digital Perspectives

**Ogechi Adeola, Kojo Kakra Twum, and Paul Katuse**

## Introduction

Effective communication facilitates good governance, public administration and information dissemination. It also enhances engagement and collaboration between governments and citizens. Marketing communications encompass the media, channels or tools utilised to communicate with a target audience. The public sector in Africa is not unfamiliar with marketing communications. Different state-owned enterprises in African

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**3**

countries employ a variety of systems and strategies to communicate with their stakeholders. However, for these organisations to succeed in crafting effective communication strategies, they must understand the subtle differences and unique characteristics of their target markets. This is because organisations' cognisance of the social, technological and economic dynamics of target audiences shape their marketing communications strategies (Coffie et al., 2022).

Variations in the public sectors' selection of marketing communication models in African countries are notable because such choices must adapt to the backdrop of demographics and economic systems of the target audience in each country. Hence, context matters. Among those contextual differences are factors of a lack of central data, inadequate or non-existent operational or logistical systems, lack of or lower customer/consumer education, and/ or lack of capacity and capability by the state enterprise (Schultz & Malthouse, 2016).

Salehi et al. (2012) compared both web-based and digital marketing communications with traditional marketing communications and found that digital marketing communications turned out to be more economical and faster in delivering their messages directly to local or global consumers. Notwithstanding the outcome of their comparison, the authors maintained that both forms of marketing communications could still help state-owned enterprises to reach their intended target audiences. This is largely so because each of the two forms of marketing communications has advantages and disadvantages. Traditional marketing allows consumers to see and touch the real goods or services, but its reach is limited; on the other hand, using internet marketing extends the communication boundaries and introduces goods and services to a broader demographic of consumers. Moreover, using the internet may be cheaper, faster and more convenient.

In Africa, various governments are currently transitioning from a traditional economy to a digital economy. An example is Nigeria, where the government aims to align public sector operations and processes through its Digital Nigeria project and the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS). A core objective of NDEPS is to enable the country to become a key player in the global digital economy. This implementation of digital transformation in the public sector is led by the Bureau of

Public Service Reforms (BPSR), with the technical support of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) (Ibanga, 2021).

The remainder of this chapter introduces the reader first to traditional and digital marketing communication tools in Africa and then to the challenges inherent with the adoption of digital tools by the public sector.

## Traditional and Digital Marketing Communications

This section discusses tools of both traditional and digital marketing communications that are available and accessible to both private and public institutions in Africa and have significance for modern public marketing communications.

- *Traditional marketing communication practices*
  Advertising initiatives, in-person sales presentations, exhibitions and sponsorships, public relations campaigns, distribution of print materials, and iconic branding and packaging are traditional, offline marketing communications practices by private public sector organisations.
  When an organisation uses traditional marketing, the aim is to create awareness among the public that there is a product or service for sale or of the existence of a product or service (Bhayani & Vachhani, 2014). Traditional marketing communication tools to reach large audiences include radio, television, and print media such as newspapers. Other notable traditional media are billboards, trade shows, exhibitions, and direct mail. The expected response may be influenced by time and/or location constraints.
- *Digital marketing communication tools*
  The traditional use of marketing communications is gradually losing ground as the continuous, web-based multimedia techniques are taking over. This new communication era is making it easier for businesses, including state-owned enterprises, to inundate targeted consumers with information.

Just as the business environment and consumer-based dynamism have ushered in new ways of conducting marketing activities, marketing communication media have also been evolving. Hollensen et al. (2017) argue that marketing communications have been going through a digital revolution exemplified by an unprecedented diffusion of state-owned enterprises' messaging via podcasting, blogging and social networking; targeted consumers, in return, can post feedback regarding a service or a product. This closes the communication circle in less time and at a lower cost; hence, the potential for more business is enhanced. Compared to traditional marketing communications, digital communications more effectively support organisations' three basic marketing objectives: (1) communicate, (2) convince, and (3) compete. Organisations' choice of digital tools should provide them an increased sustainable advantage in their industry.

Adeola et al. (2020) aver that like any other marketing activity, organisations' digital marketing communications require extensive pre-launch planning led by multiple factors: the impact on society, revenue generation, consumer attitudinal changes and even the execution of government strategies and mandates, especially by state-owned enterprises. Compared to traditional marketing, where customers rarely participate in the communication process, the authors recommend marketing communication methodologies that promote greater and continuous customer engagement. They argue that organisations stir market excitement when they create different strategies for each of their digital media channels, have the right match of personnel for creating and broadcasting content, create virtual communities of consumers with common interests, and ensure innovative products and services.

In the public sector, innovative marketing communication practices gained attention with the New Public Management (NPM) movement, which began in the 1980s to replace the traditional approach of public sector management. The NPM focuses on improving productivity, enhancing public service efficiency and accountability, and ensuring effective public service delivery (Hinson et al., 2021). Dunleavy et al. (2006) identified the characteristics of a post-NPM era and advocated for

the review of practices and ideology to accommodate governance in the digital era, that is, Digital Era Governance (DEG). According to the authors, DEG will involve "reintegrating functions into the governmental sphere, adopting holistic and needs-oriented structures and progressing digitalisation of administrative processes" (Dunleavy et al., 2006, p. 467).

Using the term e-government, Pasquier and Villeneuve (2018) aver that it presents the government with the opportunity to simplify and improve governance processes with the aid of technology. The Organisation of American States defines electronic government (or e-government) as "the application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to government functions and procedures with the purpose of increasing efficiency, transparency, and citizen participation" (OAS, n.d.). When the NPM goal of enhancing trust and increasing transparency is met (Adeola, 2022), e-government will increase the availability of information online through open data, which can facilitate stakeholders' and citizens' participation in governance processes through online platforms (Pasquier & Villeneuve, 2018). Therefore, the public sector can leverage technology to communicate government reforms and improved services resulting from the digital transformation of government services.

Overall, in the public sector, the communication methods adopted will depend on the target audience, message type, level of communication, situational context and available resources. The aim is to enhance participatory and collaborative interactions, ensure effective communication, improve service delivery, facilitate engagement, disseminate civic information, and improve trust between government and citizens.

## Traditional Marketing Communication Tools for the Public Sector

The constituent elements of public sector communication—the content, the structures and the participants—reflect the context of its mandate to society. Traditional marketing communications by the public sector entail

a set of diverse initiatives and programmes for effective communication with a target audience. In the case of the tools used thereof, Civelek et al. (2021) note that communication tools include offline marketing communications, offline promotions, advertising through traditional channels such as radio, television, print and newspapers (Ramasobana et al., 2017); posters, business cards and pamphlets (Kallier, 2017); and brochures, magazines and billboards (Cant & Wiid, 2016). Other channels include personal selling, public relations, sales promotions, sponsorships (Ramasobana et al., 2017), trade fairs, exhibitions and direct marketing (Amirkhanpour et al., 2014).

A traditional marketing communication campaign often adopted by the public sector is public service advertising (PSA). PSA addresses issues of immediate concern to citizens (O'Keefe & Reid, 1990). Also, O'Barr (2012) posits that the need to get the general public to act for the good of society is as old as governance itself. PSA creates public awareness of social issues and also influences public beliefs and behaviours (O'Keefe & Reid, 1990). PSA can use marketing and communication tools to promote behavioural change (Lee et al., 2018). In the view of Ahn et al. (2019), the effectiveness of PSA depends on the message sources and the urgency or quality of appeals in the advertisements. Therefore, PSA must include credible and authentic messages that appeal to the intended audience. Evidence abounds that African countries have used PSA to help resolve societal problems (O'Barr, 2012), including the provision of basic needs in Ghana (Foli & Ohemeng, 2022); advancing new energy paradigms in South Africa (Andreoni et al., 2022); social protection in the copper mines of Zambia (Wolkenhauer, 2022); alcohol consumption and government responses in sub-Saharan Africa (Morojele et al., 2021) and HIV/AIDS prevention or treatment campaigns in South Africa (O'Barr, 2012).

Because Africans with limited education may disregard PSA that uses unfamiliar vocabulary or complex ideas (Yeboah-Banin et al., 2018), it is important to design clear and understandable messages. The challenges presented by this and other challenges associated with PSA in Africa demand research to identify appropriate solutions. Further studies that examine the effectiveness of public service advertising should be encouraged.

Direct marketing is a common, well-established marketing communications tool that draws from many forms of marketing communications including personal selling, telemarketing, direct response advertising, direct mail, catalogues, direct response on TV and radio, magazines, newspaper, telephone and personal selling (face-to-face) (Mallin & Finkle, 2007; Broderick & Pickton, 2005). Organisations that adopt direct marketing communication options do so to obtain an immediate response focused on narrowly targeted customer segments, increase revenue and foster long-term relationships (Arnold & Tapp, 2003; Mallin & Finkle, 2007).

Direct marketing is acknowledged to be playing an important role in not-for-profit organisations (Arnold & Tapp, 2003; Mallin & Finkle, 2007). A study by Sargeant et al. (2006) recommends using direct marketing techniques to raise funds for not-for-profit organisations. Direct marketing is also useful in public sector organisations. Therefore, the use of direct marketing by education and broadcasting organisations, museums, public transportation providers and utility companies may have a positive influence on their sales and fund-raising performance (Arnold & Tapp, 2003).

Higher education institutions use direct marketing channels to enhance student enrolment (Omingo & Mberia, 2019; Uchendu et al., 2015). In Kenya, university websites, alumni interactions, social media and media advertisements are popular direct marketing communications activities (Omingo & Mberia, 2019). In Nigeria, Uchendu et al. (2015) acknowledge the use of face-to-face talks with parents, newspapers and magazines, social media, websites, bulk mailings and public address systems. The findings of the study by Uchendu et al. (2015) confirm that school enrolment can be enhanced with the aid of direct marketing strategies in developing economies. Also, higher education institutions can make effective use of telephone marketing, direct mail marketing and direct response television marketing.

In the health sector, direct marketing is useful in informing customers about existing or new services, locations or staff (Ekiyor & Altan, 2020). Government-run or institutional healthcare organisations can establish periodic communications via direct e-mail, which can be received quickly,

and telemarketing, which can follow up with previous clients or make connections with potential clients (Ekiyor & Altan, 2020).

## Contemporary Digital Marketing Communication Tools for the Public Sector

Digital communication with stakeholders is essentially analogous to the employment of the traditional marketing communications mix, but on a digital platform. Digital public sector communication is not necessarily a singular, one-off act by the state-owned organisation but a process that is put in place to maintain a continuous interface between the citizenry and civil servants. Digital marketing, which is based on web-enabled technology, has been defined by Dave (2009) as the application of digital technologies to form online channels that contribute to marketing activities targeted at acquiring profitable customers and retaining them by gaining more knowledge about the customers and delivering specific integrated communication through online means to meet their needs. These online channels include the web, databases, e-mails, mobile and wireless, and digital and smart TV. Regarding acquisition and retention of information and knowledge of customers, it should be noted that this knowledge is comprised of expertise on such aspects as the customer's buying preferences, profiles, value, behaviour, loyalty drivers and the customer lifecycle. The digital marketing communication mix entails elements such as e-mail marketing (opt-in e-mail marketing), search engine optimisation (SEO), pay per click (PPC), social media, affiliate marketing, online advertisement, online and digital public relations, viral marketing, texting and blogging, really simple syndication (RSS) and news feed.

Minculete (2018) observes that certain specific and interconnected features within digital marketing communication, namely the customer's personality, confidentiality involved, customer service to be rendered, the overall community perception, security concerns and sales promotion initiatives, give evidence of the distinctiveness of digital marketing.

Modern-day infrastructural innovations like the internet have enhanced the potential of digital tools for marketing communications.

Berthon et al. (2012) argue that social media, which is primarily driven by access to the internet, has provided opportunities to organisations, including state-owned entities. The dynamism in the digital world will continue to birth critical changes not just to businesses but also to how the state communicates and the overall consumer behaviour. Mergel (2013) asserts that social media applications extend the communication landscape in the public sector, increasing transparency, participation and collaboration. Many state-owned entities have begun using analytics to understand what makes customers behave the way they do. This is likely to lead to appropriate decision-making in their marketing communications through understanding customer requirements and eliminating unnecessary costs.

## The Challenges of Adopting Digital Tools in Public Sector Institutions

In public sector organisations, contemporary digital marketing communication tools are needed for multitasking abilities, conversing with multiple people at once and using various devices (Kusumawati, 2019). Social media is a way to achieving multitasking since communications can be linked to many channels and people simultaneously. Lovari and Valentini (2020) point out that social media aids public sector organisations in managing media relations, branding, listening to their publics, creating internal communications, participating in public engagement, managing crises, providing government services and ensuring transparency in governance. According to Pasquier and Villeneuve (2018, p. 200):

> A successful adaptation of governments to the digital environment and integration of communication technologies can help to foster citizen information, participation, and service delivery. Government can provide information immediately and continuously; beneficiaries can access up-to-date information at a time of their convenience and select information based on their own needs … Besides improved communication, the use of digital tools also promises to enhance speed of service delivery and communication while reducing the costs.

Leeflang et al. (2014) identified three critical challenges an organisation may encounter when trying to become a digital marketer: (1) the capability to bring out, comprehend and leverage important customer insights, (2) managing brand equity and its imagery in a dynamic market where change is constant and (3) measuring the impact of digital communication. These challenges may be different in the African context, given that the level of adoption of digitisation varies across countries. Faria (2021) in *Statista* reports that in the year 2020, the average coverage of 4G mobile technology in Africa was around 62%: about 87% in North Africa, 65.1% in Southern Africa, 60% in East Africa and 59% in West Africa. These findings suggest that different regions in Africa still face technological challenges (OECD, 2021; Nkohkwo & Islam, 2013). Some of the challenges found across Africa include Ghana with inadequate digital infrastructure (Adu et al., 2018), topographical challenges in Lesotho and Eswatini (Sunga & Addison, 2020), legal framework bottlenecks in Cameroon (Etoundi et al., 2017), and language barriers and inadequate digital literacy in Kenya (Kerkhoff & Makubuya, 2021).

The literature on the use of social media in the public sector documents the misuse of technology such as the spread of fake news and xenophobia in South Africa (Chenzi, 2021), and the political unrest in Zimbabwe and North African States (Benrazek, 2022; Matsilele & Ruhanya, 2021). Loss of privacy and theft of personal information is perceived as a risk by social media users, even by public sector platforms presumed to be secure (Khan et al., 2014). For instance, the utilisation of social media to discuss information about patients may raise privacy concerns for and about public sector organisations involved in healthcare delivery (Abril et al., 2012). These privacy issues underscore the importance of data protection rules, security user surveillance and ethical codes by public sector organisations. In order to curb any marketing communication misadventures, employees and professionals in the public sector should be guided by a charter of conduct or sensitisation by senior colleagues or people more informed about the technicalities of marketing communication (as advocated in Namibia [Staff Report 2, 2017] and Sierra Leone [Hitchen, 2018]). The uncontrolled behaviours of employees on social media platforms may damage the image of public sector organisations. Despite having social media as a valuable marketing and

communication tool, inadequately defined norms pose many legal and ethical questions about this relatively new communications phenomenon (Abril et al., 2012).

A study by Mergel (2016) identifies three main social media challenges:

- Loss of control over the use of technology. In the public sector, social media platforms will hold an enormous amount of data on both citizens and organisations. The question of who controls that data remains a central issue of debate.
- Behaviour of social media users. Communication with and by the public can be difficult to control; employees can fail to meet the standards of a formal, bureaucratic system.
- Low digital literacy level and limited technology access. The move to use social media for government communications may not reach parts of the population that do not have access to the technology or do not know how to use it.

Government agencies must aim to understand their target audience and select the right tools and channels to communicate with that audience.

## Conclusion

State-owned enterprises in Africa typically adopt traditional marketing communication tools. With the emergence of web-based technologies, otherwise known as digital technologies, public sector entities are increasingly adopting digital platforms to communicate with citizens. However, the adoption and use of digital marketing communication tools in Africa is not without its challenges, which include digital illiteracy, digital infrastructure inadequacy, topographical hurdles and even language barriers. Despite these challenges, the successful adoption of digital technologies by government and state-owned institutions will help foster citizen engagement and participation in this digital era. Traditional marketing communication tools remain relevant given their importance to public sector marketing. The utilisation of either traditional or digital marketing

communication tools or the integration of both, would depend on the target audience and the context. The aim is effective communication utilising the right tools and channels.

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# Part II

## Public Sector Marketing Communications in Africa: Traditional Perspectives

**2**

# Public Service Advertising and Celebrity Endorsement in Ghana

**Christina Appiah-Nimo, Daniel Ofori,
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## Introduction

Advertising in the public sector through various media is a valuable way of communication to create awareness among the public and elicit the desired response. Advertising is a paid commercial, promotional tool that involves paid communication or promotion from a source to draw attention to a product, service, idea or even the sponsor itself (Kotler, 2003). Rosenbaum-Elliott (2021) defines advertising as communication that

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encourages consumers to "turn towards" a brand or sponsor. It is a tool employed by businesses, NGOs and government agencies. Concerning governments and other charitable organisations, public service advertisement (PSA) is a non-commercial message typically employed to increase the public's awareness and information on a particular challenge, issues of public welfare or even solutions that concern the public (O'Keefe & Reid, 1990). The philosophy of public service advertisement stems from Kotler and Zaltman's (1971) work on social marketing, which identified the role marketing could play in addressing social crises and challenges. The U.S. government used the first identifiable PSA to raise money through the sale of bonds during the civil war. Moreover, it was adopted later for national campaigns, including railroad travel, due to its success.

Why PSA? The primary purpose of PSA is to raise awareness, resulting in a voluntary but permanent change in the behaviour of the target public. In addition, they act as promotional materials that address societal challenges, which have a higher potential effect on the public. The awareness is created not only for the problem in isolation, but in many instances, there is awareness of possible solutions which may influence the public attitudes or behaviours about that problem.

Additionally, it ensures consistent yet persuasive messages specifically created for a target audience through appropriate channels to elicit the desired response. Globally, PSAs address many social issues, including education, discrimination, health, sustainability, wildlife conservation, sanitation, crime, child abuse, drug abuse, safe driving, family planning, women empowerment, racism and terrorism. Invariably, all countries worldwide use PSAs to create awareness on particular issues that affect their society to bring about a change in behaviour among the public.

In this modern information world, advertising remains critical for the active social development and transformation of values, attitudes, social norms and public awareness, especially during pandemics, social crises or disasters (Alalwan, 2018). Thus, governmental institutions need enhanced marketing plans and policies (Lee & Kotler, 2011) to encourage individual and public consciousness to promote its fundamental ideas and form the necessary public opinion and behaviours to meet the desired response (Shareef et al., 2019). Additionally, there are numerous alternative advertising media, including radio, print, television, Instagram,

Facebook, blogs/vlogs, Twitter, YouTube and institutional websites. Moreover, there is complexity and pressure on firms to make proper and innovative marketing decisions for the public while achieving desired responses through user-generated content. It is noteworthy that in recent times, private broadcasters are heavily involved with PSAs, especially for the public good.

Ghana, over the decades, has adopted and implemented reforms that encourage a more mixed and decentralised economy which would enhance collaboration and accountability in public service. Significant reforms have to do with restructuring the public sector to allow for an effective and accountable public administrative system (Hope & Chikulo, 2000). Primarily, the purpose is to engage citizens (consumers) of Ghana at all levels of public administration to achieve the public good while making the public service administration meaningful, relevant and accountable to the public. One way of achieving such a purpose is public service advertising by relevant institutions to control public behaviour, transform values and encourage a particular desired behaviour and attitude (De Mooij, 2018).

The content of PSAs reflects the interests and concerns of its sponsors. A content analysis by Quarshie et al. (2022) of print and televised media showed some informative and persuasive messages on cybercrime, health issues, drug abuse and its associated crime and smuggling, sensitive issues including sexual abuse, tribal bigotry and suicide. Others included issues of environmental, educational, occupational and political concerns. Institutions such as the National Petroleum Authority, Ghana Health Service, Ghana Education Service, National lottery Authority, Bank of Ghana, Electricity Company of Ghana, Food and Drugs Authority, Ghana Police Service, Ghana Revenue Authority, Ghana Water Company, Ghana AIDS Commission, among others, now actively engage with the public through PSAs. For example, under the health sector, the government of Ghana, through the Ghana Health Service, introduced the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS): a policy to provide quality healthcare and help ease the financial burden on citizens, predominantly low-income earners. The substantial user fees and cash and carry system caused some low-income earners to self-medicate and report late to health facilities for medical attention (Arhinful, 2003). In 2003, the National

Health Insurance Act (Act 650, amended to Act 852 in 2012) was passed to ease the country's financial burden of health service delivery and ensure equity.

The authority organised campaigns through print, television, radio and face-to-face interactions to create awareness of the importance of this policy and how it would solve the enormous user fees of citizens. The action campaign messages also provided accessibility information. A study by Kansanga et al. (2018) confirmed that the mass media campaign of the National Insurance greatly influenced enrolment in the scheme. In the past years, media coverage of health issues has been of great concern globally because there is a broad interest in information on the pandemic by the public. As noted by Mahon (2021), the pandemic caused a lot of news reportage, of which some were untruths and some conspiracy theories. Hence, such messages have backing from a political authority which serves as a direction for behavioural change and a form of reassurance to the public (Noar & Austin, 2020). The contents of a PSA entail videos, prints and audio (radio/public address systems) to convey informative and persuasive health messages to the public (Manganello et al., 2020).

As mentioned earlier, a lot of the government institutions are involved in PSA and to achieve a more interactive response; they have engaged the services of public figures to convey their messages to the public. Extant literature (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019) supports these celebrity endorsements as the public knows who and what they represent in society. However, there are concerns over their indiscretion in their advertising organisation (Sng et al., 2019; Chan & Zhang, 2019). Additionally, Literature on public service advertising is available widely in the developed world but is limited to Ghana Ghana. There are also minimal studies on celebrity endorsement of these public organisations and even how the public perceives them. These constraints may be due to researchers and even broadcasters' lesser importance of PSAs.

This chapter sought to discuss and extend the discussion on what public service advertisement is and how it came to be. It discusses the role of advertising in the public service and further discusses what is "public goods" and what constitutes public goods in Ghana. As more celebrities are involved in creating social adverts, this chapter will also explain celebrity endorsements in PSAs. It will examine the public response to PSAs as

a medium to elicit positive behaviour towards a social issue and finally capture how Ghana responded to the Covid-19 pandemic using PSA. This chapter contributes to the currently limited literature on public service advertisement in Ghana and extends to celebrity endorsement as an area of public service advertising. It will guide future research by identifying factors that influence the effect of PSAs on the public. This chapter also has implications for government departments in developing information policies and appropriate mediums that affect the public.

## Public Good and PSA

In every country, the government plays a vital role by providing education, infrastructure, protection (defence and environment) and health schemes. These common goods and services refer to public goods.

According to Adam Smith (1776), every sovereign or commonwealth has some duties towards its public.

> *The third and last duty of the sovereign or commonwealth is that of erecting and maintaining those public institutions and those public works, which, though they may be in the highest degree advantageous to a great society, are, however, of such a nature, that the profit could not repay the expense to any individual or a small number of individuals, and which is, therefore, cannot be expected that any individual or a small number of individuals should erect or maintain.* (Smith, 1776: Book V, Ch. 1)

These basic infrastructure and services are mainly public goods and services. Public goods, according to Samuelson (1954), are goods jointly owned (non-excludable) and consumed by all individuals in a society without diminishing availability for others (non-rivalrous). These characteristics make it impossible for the government to sell the goods to individual consumers as all own them. Non-excludability means that one consumer cannot exclude others from using the good. Public goods and services include but are not limited to better access to quality education, primary healthcare, clean and affordable water supply, and sanitation services. Governments would generally need to increase investments in the

production and supply of these services because their provision and access constitute an essential aspect of socio-economic development. Notwithstanding its importance, the World Development Report (2004) by the World Bank identified many disparities regarding the quantity and quality of public goods and services supplied across developing economies.

However, the provision of these public goods and services is driven mainly by financial and other pressures from the public towards governments (Armah-Attoh, 2015). Hence, the onus lies on various governments and other stakeholders to effectively utilise national resources and ensure equitable distribution (Fosu & Gafa, 2020). The government of Ghana sought to allocate resources equitably by adopting decentralisation reforms programmes in 1988. This programme aims to give people living in rural areas access to basic infrastructure and services. Furthermore, communication of these public goods and services is through PSA. PSA's use helps the government engage the consumers in the purpose, provision and accessibility of these essential infrastructures and services because advertising acts as a signal which influences a consumer's belief of the quality of that product (Sama, 2019).

According to the Local Government Act (Act 462) in Ghana, the following goods are generally considered public goods:

*Education*: The characteristic of education as a public good, be it formal or informal, is unclear in the literature. Some citizens get excluded from getting an education; hence, gaining a university degree becomes more of a private good than a public. However, the higher the number of the populace educated, the better it is for all. Thus, it should be non-excludable and non-rivalrous for every citizen to acquire. Act 462 spells out the responsibility of local government to build, equip and maintain primary, middle, secondary and special schools. This Act is supported by the Education Act of 1961, which recognises education as a fundamental human right in Ghana. An educated population reflects in strategic and sound policies being debated on, passed and implemented because the pressures on businesses and governments would come from a better-educated population. Businesses will benefit from this through the human resources employed; hence, the economy will thrive, creating a ripple effect of education for every individual.

Furthermore, when an economy thrives, individual citizens cannot be excluded from enjoying it, and if one person benefits from this thriving economy, it does not diminish another person's benefit.

*National Security/Defence*: As Adam Smith explained in his "Wealth of Nations" Book V, the first duty of a sovereign or commonwealth is the protection of citizens from violence and invasion from other societies (Defence). In a more general explanation, people can live freely, peacefully and safely in their neighbourhood or country. Moreover, it achieves this using security personnel, the police and the armed forces. All individuals enjoy the provision of security in a country. It will be difficult to exclude a citizen from such protection. Again, a citizen's security benefits or enjoyment does not diminish others' benefits or enjoyment.

*Justice*: According to Adam Smith, the second duty of a sovereign or commonwealth is to protect from injustice and oppression. The third arm of government in Ghana is the Judiciary which is responsible for interpreting, applying and enforcing the country's laws. The provision of an efficient and functioning judicial system paves the way for the smooth running of every economy. As a public good, justice has the characteristics of non-excludability; as an individual enjoys justice, it does not exclude others from enjoying it too. As a non-rivalry component, justice served on an individual does not diminish it from being used by others.

*Scientific knowledge*: Scientific knowledge is a definitive public good (Chen & Song, 2017). It forms the basis for innovation and development in every economy. While recent technological advancement has accelerated its generation and spread, just like education, there are some limitations on its characteristics as a public good. Powell (1886), as cited in Dalrymple (2003), explains, "the learning of one man does not subtract from the learning of another (non-rivalry), as if there were to be a limited quantity to be divided into exclusive holdings; that which one man gains by discovery is a gain to other men (non-excludability). Furthermore, these multiple gains become invested capital." This explanation links scientific knowledge as having the characteristics of a public good. For example, the innovation or

invention of sustainable energy and improved primary health research benefits the whole economy.

*Infrastructure*: According to OECD (2016), infrastructure is considered a public good. However, there are contentions to this definition as another infrastructure has specific use by society. For example, an ultra-modern hospital is a public good that everyone can use, and the use by one person of the hospital's services does not diminish the use for another. Again, public school buildings are a public good because it has non-excludability and non-rivalry characteristics. However, some researchers consider roads and motorways, necessary national infrastructure, as not public goods because some people can be excluded from their use. Notwithstanding, citizens without private cars may use the roads via different transport mediums. Additionally, the internet, though a necessary infrastructure, not all citizens have access to the signal hence excluding some citizens.

*Environment*: The environment we live in (outside space) is also considered a public good. No one can be excluded from enjoying the benefits thereof; air, sunshine and the enjoyment by an individual do not reduce another person's benefits. Again Act 462 clearly explains the responsibility of local government to regularly inspect for the detection of any condition likely to be injurious to health and to construct and maintain public lavatories.

*Public health*: One can derive varying benefits from a healthy population. Act 462 addresses the promotion and safeguard of public health. For example, during this Covid-19 pandemic, if a small population are infected, or a higher percentage of the population is vaccinated, the less likely the virus will continue spreading. Thus, the benefits to be enjoyed are non-excludable and non-rivalry. Moreover, a healthy population will be efficient in production with positive economic growth.

# Celebrity Endorsement in Public Service Advertising

According to the Cambridge dictionary 18th edition definition, a celebrity refers to a famous person, particularly in entertainment or sports. Culture and media studies refer to the product of cultural and economic processes, including advertisement, promotions and publicity (Turner, 2013). Celebrity endorsement thus refers to advertising by using celebrities to engage the public on a particular product. McCracken (1989) defines a celebrity endorsement as an individual generally recognised by the public and takes advantage of this recognition to appear in adverts to endorse a product. It may also be defined as anyone with public recognition who uses it to promote and endorse a brand or even a social issue (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016). As Spry et al. (2011) explained, celebrity endorsement often results in desirable effects on the target audience. Kumar and Pushpendra (2018) also found that celebrity-endorsed advertisements were more attractive than non-celebrity-endorsed ones. They also found that celebrity-endorsed advertisements significantly impacted a social cause.

Besides their regular career, celebrities engage in advertising services either for private gain or to promote or create awareness of a social cause. In Ghana, celebrity endorsement has increased over time, and the government uses these individuals to create awareness or promote a needed change in social behaviours. Celebrities in Ghana are well-loved and respected; hence, they significantly impact citizens when used for media communications. They are more influential as citizens consider their appearances in these adverts more attractive (Nyarko et al., 2015). The use of celebrity endorsements in advertisements has become a popular and growing trend due to the perceived impacts. As the media space has become increasingly cluttered, organisations need to stand out in communicating to their audience. Using celebrities has proved to have a significant impact on creating brand awareness and prominence. The benefits of celebrity endorsements have been proven by researchers (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019; Domfeh et al., 2018), which adds to the argument for their use even by state institutions and governments.

Governments in most countries are the largest advertisers, and the situation is no different in Ghana. The National Communication Authority revised Broadcasting Bill "introduces a local content requirement which gives a percentage of airtime to be devoted to promoting the Ghanaian culture and creative works". This is in order, as stated in clause 4 (b) of the Bill "to safeguard, strengthen and enrich the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Ghanaian society" and clause 4 (c) (i) "to promote national identity and the national culture and languages of the country" (Broadcasting Bill, 2014, p. 3). This provision is for the announcement of public information for the public interest. Social issue announcements could vary among health and safety, legal obligations, social welfare, public utility and other environmental obligations related to government policies and directions. As a government ministry, the Ministry of Health uses slogans, for example, "If it is not on, it is not in," to create awareness of HIV/AIDS when it became prevalent in the country as a sexually transmitted disease. They used this slogan to reduce teenage and unwanted pregnancies in the country. A study by Adomako et al. (2021) posited that public education reduces adolescent pregnancies. The government uses other communication strategies; however, celebrity endorsement is used to communicate such announcements in the country. The Information Service Department of Ghana transformed to act as a government information disseminating department to bridge the communication gap between the government and the people (ISD website). The department communicates to the public through its websites, newspapers, social media platforms, television and radio, transmitting and enhancing the public's understanding and education of the government's programmes, policies and activities through effective communication strategies.

Notwithstanding the strategies adopted by the information department, it is equally important that the celebrity used in the transmission and communication of the government policies and activities is credible enough to convince the public of the relevant policies or activities advertised. Literature (Spry et al., 2011; Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016) on celebrity endorsement often focuses on celebrity persuasion. Different models exist to evaluate the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement and how it encourages change in public behaviour. Some studies consider the source

credibility, attractiveness and the meaning transfer factors of the celebrity. Whichever model is considered, there is a common conclusion on their effect on public reaction, although varying degrees.

# Response to Public Service Advertising in Ghana

It is indeed common for countries to use the services of celebrities to create awareness and educate the public on a social cause. However, due to celebrity recognition in the country, the cost of employing their services is ordinarily high, while the control of their work is limited. Additionally, although the use of celebrity endorsers is beneficial and practical, the choice of the celebrity or endorser is as crucial as the message. Therefore, the following models were developed and discussed in the literature to assess the effectiveness of celebrity endorsers.

## Source-Credibility Model

Although literature evaluates different models established to assess the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement, the most widely used model is one by Ohanian (1990). Studies that explore celebrity endorsements are grounded on the source-credibility model. The public views celebrity endorsers as credible; hence, their involvement in the advertisements of issues of social interests is more appreciated by the public. According to Kumar (2010), source credibility refers to the endorser's positive characteristics that influence the public acceptance of the message conveyed. It may also refer to how the public perceives the "source" as having an appropriate level of knowledge, skills and experience. Hence, it trusts them to advertise credible and unbiased information. If information comes from a credible source, it can affect the public attitudes, opinions and behaviour because the receiver internalises the information due to the source. Ohanian (1990) clearly states that source credibility draws attention to the endorser's positive characteristics, which eventually influence the receiver's acceptance of the message. The model contends that

the celebrity's positive character is vital to accepting the message. Thus, the celebrity is the core of the information, and their credibility should be an essential criteria consideration for the advertiser (government) (Mensah, 2021; Tegura, 2018)). Source credibility can thus influence the intention of the public towards the advertised message. Celebrities like Okyeame Kwame, a musician, and Jackie Appiah, an actress, are perceived as credible. Hence, their endorsement of national policies and activities carries a good weight for the public.

## Source Attractiveness Model

The source attractiveness model contends that the attractiveness of a source is based on the public's four perceived factors, namely similarity, familiarity, attractiveness and likeability (McCracken, 1989). Similarity refers to the similarity between the source and the public audience. Familiarity relates to the knowledge by the public audience of the source (the endorser) acquired through repeated exposure. Attractiveness refers to the physical attributes and other characteristics such as the source's personality, and likeability stems from the affection for the source based on their physical appearance and behaviour (Amos et al., 2008). Thus, Nana Ama McBrown, identified as an all-around celebrity, captures the audience's attention irrespective of their age, class or social status. Because the public perceives her as someone similar to them and has repeated exposure to her programmes and advertisement, hence being familiar with them, they will find such a celebrity more attractive to listen to. As already stated, attractiveness does not only refer to that physical attractiveness, but it encompasses the celebrity's personality and other characteristics. A perfect fit for attractiveness would be Kwame Sefa Kayi, a media personality; Nana Aba Anamoah, a media personality; and John Dumelo, an actor and entrepreneur. Extant literature (Nyamakanga et al., 2019; Tegura, 2018) on the impact of the source attractiveness on consumer behavioural change has established a significant and positive effect on the receiver. Other distinctive celebrities who fit this model in Ghana are Akwasi Boadi "Akrobeto", Nathan Kwabena Adisi "Bola Ray", a media personality, and Stephen Appiah (footballer). Society relates with

them due to the perceived similarity and familiarity with such celebrities. Hence, their campaigns and endorsement of issues related to national interest are valued.

## Meaning Transfer Model

According to Kumar (2010), the meaning transfer model by McCracken proves further that celebrity endorsers have certain unique qualities transferred to the brand they are advertising. It thus looks at the issue in terms of cultural perspective. Arguably, celebrity endorsers are a crucial component of the government because they add value to the message through meaning transfer (Amos et al., 2008). According to McCracken (1989), the public develops meaning for the celebrity's persona through their recognition and status. The public then gives some "meaning" to the celebrities. So when they endorse a government policy or activity, the meanings are transferred to these communications and eventually cause the desired behaviour. Governments thus have a duty to determine the desirability of the meanings attached to the celebrity. McCracken further stipulated that advertising enables the movement from an established culture to the public; hence, endorsers develop a special status via their roles in society. Eli-Zafoe (2013) study confirmed that celebrities influence consumers through meaning transfer. The Ghanaian culture typically assigns meanings to these celebrities. When these celebrities endorse policies, programmes and activities for the public good, the meanings get transferred to these social causes (Fig. 2.1).

## PSA in Pandemic: The Case of Ghana

Covid-19 was declared a pandemic by the WHO in March 2020, almost three months after the virus outbreak. Governments worldwide devised strategies and measures to reduce the spread and anxiety among their populace through effective communication of causes, symptoms and infection, prevention and control (IPC) of the disease (Anwar et al., 2020). Such measures and strategies, though, were aimed at reducing
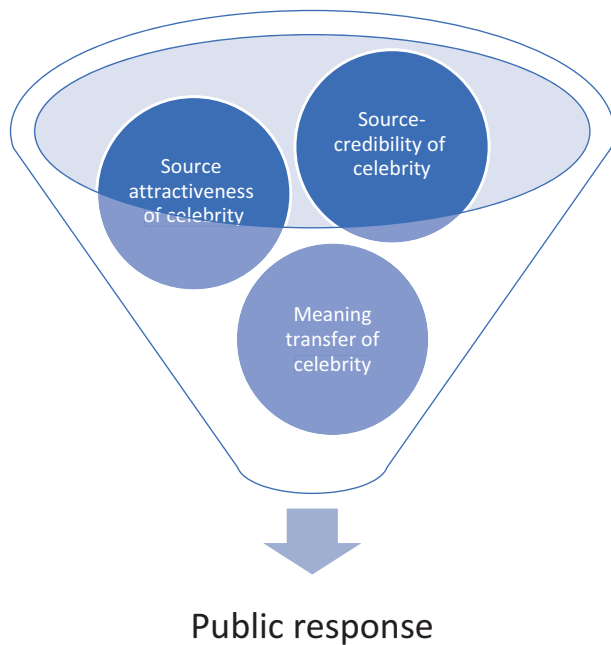
**Fig. 2.1**  Public response model. (Source: Authors' construct)

infection and also gravely impacted the usual purchasing behaviour and perception of consumers causing emergency purchasing situations (EPS) from the beginning. The government of Ghana's expenditure on public policy campaigns towards restricted mobility of citizens increased because it was an unplanned spending.

The Ghana Health Service especially initiated many hygiene campaigns. These campaign messages included mouth and nose covering, safety distances and identification of symptoms (Khoo, 2020). They were mainly broadcasted on national television, social media platforms, local radio stations, schools, community centres and parks, and community public address systems (PAS). Nevertheless, the public response and approach to the virus and its spread was appalling as Ghanaians attached very little importance to it but cared more about being locked down and not getting access to their "regular" lifestyle. However, government communication could be partly blamed for this nonchalant behaviour because

some government officials were still travelling to hold campaigns. After all, it was closer to the general election in 2020.

The Government of Ghana initiated the Covid-19 presidential updates called "Address to the Nation", hashtagged "*#FellowGhanaians*". The presidential updates made by the president himself communicated government restrictions, ease of restrictions and bans, and this was very popular aside from using celebrity endorsements. These updates were communicated live on national televisions and transmitted through other governmental social media platforms, including Facebook and radio stations. The first restriction was closing schools and banning public events from reducing the rate and spread of the virus and increasing contact tracing (Nyabor, 2020). As a public agency, the Ministry of Health gave daily updates on infection cases, deaths and recovery, treating and testing centres in the most widely used local dialects through traditional mediums, press conferences and social media platforms, including Twitter (Nyabor, 2020). As data is considered a powerful tool, some citizens panicked over the rising confirmed cases and took responsible precautions against the pandemic.

The second presidential update passed a travel ban (lockdown) on the principal capital, other metropolitan areas and some red list countries. Ghanaians were persuaded to adopt handwashing, social distancing and mandatory testing with the help of media big wigs, television personalities and celebrities. This use of moral suasion was particularly effective. Ghanaians were receptive to these updates as there were sanctions for non-adherence. Businesses created spaces for handwashing and instant temperature checks of their customers while enforcing social distancing and nose mask-wearing protocols. These updates also gave information on international travels (Nyabor, 2020; Ghana Statistical Service Report, 2020).

These presidential updates have been successfully going on to date with many reaches to all citizens due to the interactive nature of the social media platforms of the responsible government agencies. The Covid-19 update number 27 occurred on December 15, 2021. The president explained the need to reduce the "importation" of the virus (Delta variant) and hence introduced mandatory complete vaccination for all international travellers (inward/outward) and a mandatory test at the

international airport. The government declared December (2021) as a vaccination month, and Ghanaians were encouraged to take the vaccines as they arrived to reduce the spread of the virus to go back to "normal" lives. These measures were to help reduce the effect of the pandemic on the economy of Ghana.

## Challenges of PSA in Ghana

Though the world economy has stood the test of time in pandemics over the past century, this particular virus has stalled many business activities due to where the world has moved towards in terms of international business and tourism. Hence, it is considered the worst the world has experienced since the Great Depression in the 1930s by the IMF (World Economic Forum, 2020). The government included updates and necessary protocols to be adhered to at the various airports for all travels, especially Kotoka, the international airport. Travel bans were announced for red list countries during the presidential updates, and the possibility of testing at the airport even if the traveller tested before travelling into Ghana. However, these restrictions and testing were highly contentious and received much criticism from Ghanaians abroad. Ease of such travel bans and restrictions were communicated as well.

In all, the government of Ghana tried to keep its citizens healthy and save its working-class citizens. That notwithstanding, the pandemic exposed the weakness in government communication on regular days. The government had to learn more interactive and practical media to address its citizens and also get them to adhere. There were a lot of unverified videos shared which could be addressed as fake or not by appropriate authorities and may have even led to severe complications for some citizens who believed and practised them (Anoff-Ntow & Tettey, 2022). Other issues identified were hate speech on the internet and propaganda by locals and some political idealists (Kumi, 2022).

# Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, this chapter reviewed and discussed PSAs and what is meant by public goods under Act 462. It further examined the use of celebrity in PSA models and public acceptance in Ghana. As celebrities have become iconic in creating social adverts, this chapter established the use of celebrity endorsements through models in PSA in Ghana and their influence on the policy advertised. It also discussed PSA use by the government at the onset and during the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 brought much pressure on the government of Ghana in managing its populace against the spread of the virus. As a result, the government consciously used various mediums and the services of celebrities perceived as attractive, responsible and credible to create awareness and further endorse hygienic protocols for the whole population. Television and radio personalities, sports personalities, music and movie personalities, among others, all got involved in helping in this social campaign due to the weight these personalities carry in society. However, as mentioned earlier, PSA in Ghana was exposed to its deficiencies in communicating, creating awareness and coordinating with its populace.

It is recommended that the government of Ghana devises the best approach to communicate to the people even after Covid-19. Research needs to be done to ascertain the best form of media to communicate with the people regarding all other public goods and resources to achieve the needed response.

The personality conveying the message is also critical, especially in our part of the world. Therefore, communication agencies under the government should also engage celebrities whom the populace finds credible and attractive and transfer meanings to government policies for advertisements and endorsements. Furthermore, using celebrities to endorse a social cause is crucial; policymakers should consider all the mentioned indicators.

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# 3

# Direct Marketing in the Kenyan Public Sector

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## Introduction

To date, the need for direct marketing activities has become increasingly important due to the dynamism of the target market and organisational goals and priorities. The term direct marketing entails organisational activities which deal with direct communication or the distribution of products and services to target consumers, without the use of an intermediary. Regardless of whether they are in the public or private sectors, business entities engage in direct marketing. Direct marketing tools in the contemporary world include mail, e-mail, social media marketing, interactive websites, field officers and texting campaigns (Zavattaro & Sementelli, 2014). These marketing tools can constitute a vital component of both the private and public sector's communication and engagement strategies. Both sectors that is, the private and public have in the

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past used different direct marketing tools for the achievement of their marketing communication goals. The sectors have been defined differently since their mandates differ. Seymour (2017) defines the public sector as business entities owned by federal, state or municipal governments that run simultaneously alongside other government mandates.

Direct marketing occurs when an organisation makes use of marketing solicitation initiatives, such as catalogues, direct mailings or coupons, but it is the customer who must decide whether to respond (Sarkar & De Bruyn, 2021). While several authors have explored direct marketing, most of the literature has been specifically generated for profit-oriented firms (e.g. Donkor et al., 2021; Miguéis et al., 2017; Pegan et al., 2020; Reddy, 2021). Direct marketing is also important in the public sector given the various programmes, services, and initiatives of the government that need to be effectively communicated to encourage citizen participation and engagement, and this aspect deserves more research attention on how to improve the practice. Direct marketing in the public sector has various manifestations. The genesis of the public sector enterprises in the African context using direct marketing tools for communication can be traced to the formation of African nation-states. In the Kenyan context, the Kenyan public sector was set on the framework of public administration databases, and the structures laid down in line with the population to be served. These frameworks were based on official databases that facilitated the selection of the targeted market, which was then acted upon by selecting an appropriate communication medium (Hujić & Salihić, 2020; Laing, 2003; Queensland, 2021).

In Kenya, there is a dearth of literature on direct marketing initiatives by state-owned enterprises (SOEs), although they do practice it. This paucity may be due to the assumption that few state-owned entities indulge in this form of marketing initiative and have limited researchers' involvement. Further research and literature generation in this area will significantly contribute to practice, theory and policy framing.

The public sector as a state policy agent, may still have the belief that, indulging indirect marketing initiatives by SOEs may be controversial (Ball, 2007). The argument may be that indulging in direct marketing by a state-owned organisation may be equivalent to undermining the basic

values of the provision of a level-playing ground and consequently distorting the demand for public services (Alford, 2009; Novatorov, 2016).

Despite the importance of the state-owned enterprises to the GDP of a country through business activities such as transport, education, health, manufacturing and financial services, the direct marketing literature on state-owned enterprises is scanty. The Kenyan public sector includes government agencies in different sectors of business and service and are called parastatals. This chapter is based on Kenyan parastatals, especially trading parastatals. This chapter is organised into several sections. This chapter focuses on how the Kenyan public sector operates through direct marketing. It highlights direct marketing as a communication tool and provides a brief history of Kenyan public sector dynamics. This chapter discusses direct marketing as a part of public sector communications, public sector direct marketing communication through the public administration structure and the process of direct marketing as a tool in public sector communication. The hurdles and challenges of direct marketing for the public sector and the role of the Government 4.0 in parastatal operations, especially marketing initiatives, will lead to the conclusion of this chapter.

## Direct Marketing as a Communication Tool

Direct marketing is an important communication tool in the public sector as part of integrated marketing communications. The public sector has been expanding and diversifying. Thus, the target clientele must be aware of the decisions made and their impact on customers (Matviiets & Kipen, 2021; Pasquier & Villeneuve, 2018). In his research on marketing communication strategies on insurance firms' performance in Kenya, Mwaniki (2021) established that advertising, direct marketing, public relations, personal selling, exhibitions and sales promotions positively impact an organisation's performance. In addition to enhancing organisational performance, the choice of the right marketing communication tool can alter target consumer behaviour for the benefit of the organisation (Adhiambo & Wanjira, 2021).

# The Kenyan Public Sector Dynamics

From a philosophical perspective, the Kenyan public sector has been transposing from inputs and procedures to outcomes-based approaches (The Republic of Kenya, 2003) since the early 2000s. The sector has adopted a result-based management system which is a free-market approach, as propounded by Reichard (2010) under the new public management (NPM) concept, which seeks to administer and serve the public sector on the principles of the private sector (Hood, 1995). In 2004, the Kenyan government introduced an economic recovery strategy (ERS) for wealth and employment creation under the new public management concept, targeting enhanced productivity and improved service delivery (Kobia & Mohammed, 2006). A critical outcome of the strategy was results-oriented management (ROM) which was geared towards changing the sector from an unassertive, sequestered bureaucracy to an outward-looking, proactive and outcome-oriented organisation that focuses on satisfying customers and value co-creation.

Despite the differences in approaches, public sector enterprises identify their customers, develop products and services, determine the prices, design distribution and delivery systems, create awareness of the availability, efficacy, and the benefits of their offerings based on information insights from the target groups. Target clients of the public sector and other groups such as consumerists and civil society have increasingly been dissatisfied with the performance of the sector by withholding their participation and non-patronisation but offering criticism (D'Emidio et al., 2021). These actions by target clients are enhanced by either non-response or slow response by parastatals in Kenya (Njuguna, 2015). Factors that enhance marketing interest in public sector are;

1. Decreased revenue and less impact in their mandate
2. Heightened competition
3. Customer dynamism in their traditional market sectors
4. Digitalisation
5. Reducing exchequer allocation.

In 1992, the government issued a public enterprise reform and privatisation policy to outline the extent of privatisation. A total of 240 commercial enterprises were identified, 207 of which were non-strategic commercial public enterprises and 33 were strategic (Privatisation Commission-Kenya, 2021). Most non-strategic commercial enterprises were either fully or partly privatised in 2002. IKEA (2013) advised the Kenyan government to classify state agencies, corporations and parastatals into three categories that should be mutually exclusive. The categories are as follows:

1. State agencies and corporations dealing with direct marketing activities and trading (e.g. ports, ICDC, Kenya Railways Corporation).
2. State corporations that carry out regulatory functions (e.g. the CCK now the Communication Authority, Competition Authority of Kenya and the Central Bank of Kenya).
3. State firms that offer public services and goods, such as primary research (which includes KEMRI, public universities, government think tanks, etc.)

Most of the parastatals, which were set up for trading or commercial reasons, were privatised or decommissioned due to loss-making and deficit running. To date, the performance of the majority of these parastatals has not reached the expected level. Guguyu (2021) avers that, majority of state-owned enterprises are always prone to liquidity gaps and financial shortfalls.

## Direct Marketing as a Part of Public Sector Communication

Communication regarding government policies and intentions in the public sector is critical and intricate. Gelders et al. (2007) argued that state officials face four critical challenges compared with their private business counterparts. These challenges include an unstable and complicated environment, more regulations and formalities, rigidity in procedures, and a high diversity of products/services and objectives.

Garnett ([1992](#)) stated that the process of making a policy and the communication processes thereof has more complications within the public sector compared to the private sector, as there will always be political interference and unregulated impinging of the mass media. This process takes place through the "negotiation process" between the media, government technocrats and politicians; politics will always "float trial balloons" to gain insights into whether the policy intention has support (Meyer, [2002](#)). Feeney and Porumbescu ([2020](#)) noted that contemporary literature on public administration and its communication gives much prominence to the potential of social media to engage the public in government decision-making, policy implementation and reform (Mergel, [2015](#); Zavattaro & Sementelli, [2014](#)).

In the contemporary public communication arena in Kenya, the process deals more with transferring information and persuading than mere information passage. It is used more as a tool in which different actors within the state mechanism play their roles by creating meaning in policymaking. It is about the change of tact from "meaning of a management communication" to "management of the communication meaning". In the sphere of Kenyan parastatal communication and direct connection to the client, parastatals have established networks and mechanisms that are exclusive to the sponsoring ministry and devoid of any synergy from any other government communication channels (Fiebelkorn et al., [2021](#); Kibera, [2021](#)).

The concept of direct marketing entails three elements: the creation of an impactful database of customers, direct response advertising which triggers immediate customer action on the sale, and the creation of direct relationships with the customer to enhance revenues and yields. This practical marketing concept has not been fully utilised in Kenya, not because of the paucity of centrally existing data but because of other extenuating factors. The database within Kenyan parastatal ministries and central government repositories is always plentiful. Kenyan parastatals use various communication methodologies to reach their clients of which direct marketing is one method (Nandain et al., [2021](#); Nyakamba & Muraya, [2018](#)).

# Public Sector Direct Marketing Communication through the Public Administration Structure

Before the onset of the World Bank–sponsored restructuring in the early 1980s, which saw many state-run organisations privatising, most Kenyan public sector firms used the existing public administration system and structure to carry out their marketing communication. The use of the public administration systems and structure continued until the emergence of web-based technologies around the late 1990's and early 2000's. Owen and Humprey (2009) argued that marketing communication before the Internet was primarily through exposure to traditional advertising, viewing brand names and sharing product information through banners.

The Kenyan public sector firm, although not as vibrant as its counterparts in Europe or North America in terms of direct marketing and communication, has increasingly diversified its direct marketing initiatives and communication, this is a consequence of sectoral and segmental mapping.

Glenny (2020) suggested that when mapping the sector for communication purposes, a multidisciplinary approach is necessary because complications may arise owing to the seamlessness of politics and policy. This raises the question of whether the model is sufficient for exclusive use by the public sector when engaging in marketing communication.

Horsley et al. (2010) found that public sector communication should be considered an exclusive discipline within the scope of corporate communication theories and practices. This is because some aspects of public sector communication are intertwined with direct marketing initiatives such as the use of outdoor advertising and emails. The level of understanding of those carrying out public administration and communication must be high because they mostly have direct contact with citizens, who happen to be the end-users of the public sector service. Administrators must know how to interact with their citizens (Thomas, 2013). Mutali et al. (2018) corroborated this fact in their study which revealed that direct communication channels have a greater impact on the implementation of business strategy among parastatals in Kenya. This led to their

conclusion that localised public sector communication methodologies and channels, as per the prescribed government communication policy, are integral during the implementation of business strategy.

The interlinkage dynamics of direct marketing in the field of public sector interaction and communication are changing from a one-way process to a real-time two-way discourse within set contexts (Aguirre et al., 2015). For instance, the use of social media like Twitter in Kenya by the Kenya power company, which is a parastatal, and the use of face-to-face interactions by the Kenya Bureau of standards (which is also a parastatal) when interacting with its customers (Kenya Bureau of Standards, 2018; Suka, 2020), etc.

The dynamics of contemporary Kenyan society have made citizens conscious of the public sector's role, thereby increasing their expectations of service quality. The Kenyan society is not unconnected from these dynamics, making the Kenyan consumer of parastatal communications output unpredictable (Emojong, 2021; George et al., 2021). The study by Ejomong (2021) also concluded that customer quality focus influenced the operations of commercial government-owned entities in Kenya to the extent of an increase in employees' attitudes towards quality, enabling the organisation to focus on core competencies of business and improving services. Kangethe (2015) established that customer expectations influence the operations of state-owned enterprises in Kenya in terms of changed employee attitudes towards quality, organisational focus of core competencies and overall service improvements.

Changes in technology and its adoption have also been a major factor in the evolving expectations of citizens, who are the target audience for government communication (Soltan, 2019). It is expected that in the foreseeable future, public sector firms will need to switch from dominating the context and content of messages and the process of communication to sharing and consulting on the context of the message with citizens for adequacy and effectiveness (Thomas, 2013). This has already been done as part of the communication co-creation by some Kenyan universities, which are defined as parastatals (Nandain et al., 2021). This also becomes part of the feedback mechanism in direct marketing initiatives.

While creating the right communications model for the direct marketing of products and services, public sector organisation administrators

need to bear in mind the operations of governments' communication decisions for synergistic purposes. For example, the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) is the apex body that promotes Kenya both locally and internationally as a tourist destination. Other parastatals and departments within the tourism sector's value chain, such as the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), state-owned hotels and national parks etc in the tourism industry benefit from its communication. Liu and Horsley et al. (2010) suggested that government communication decisions should be based on four interlinked environments that exist side by side.

These are as follows:

1. Intergovernmental (cooperation and coordination among different units of the same government),
2. Intra-governmental (interaction within an agency or institution),
3. Multilevel (when there is more than a single level and collaborations on a single issue, if necessary, for instance, federal and state levels) and
4. External environments (other stakeholders such as the private sector, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, religious organisations, etc.).

In the private sector, organisations must produce and market as per their customers' needs and desires. However, this differs for the public sector. The public sector operates on policy guidelines for production and marketing which are in line with government goals and strategies. Direct marketing in public sector communication concerns the dissemination of information, advocacy and persuasion for policy reforms and change, and citizen engagement (Government of Kenya, 2019; The George Washington University's Elliott School for International Affairs, 2009).

Liu and Horsley (2007) proposed a communication model that differentiates eight factors that determine public sector communication. These factors were as follows:

1. The dimension of politics critically influences the relationships between institutions and lobby groups.
2. Legal requirements and bottlenecks.

3. The basis and the main goal of the establishment of the public sector organisation.
4. Scrutiny by the media.
5. The less than perfect perception by the public.
6. Non-prioritisation of communication in the sector.
7. Unprofessionalism in the public sector in comparison to the private sector.
8. Federalism and the extent of administrative levels.

## The Process of Direct Marketing as a Tool in Public Sector Communication

All parastatals in Kenya use their sponsoring ministry communications policy (Government of Kenya, 2019). Their communication strategy has to be leveraged in the existing public administration systems for synergy. Direct marketing in the public sector entails processes and strategies that communicate directly to the target client without the involvement of an intermediary. On the other hand, the principles and structure of public administration are highly information-intensive and follow direct channels from the state to the citizenry (Taylor & Williams, 1991). An agile and efficient approach to public administration and communication implies that a certain framework must be in place to communicate with different stakeholders. The convergence and similarity of direct marketing by the public sector to public administration communication channels have led to the debate and discussion of the role of public policy in marketing and its importance (Andrews et al., 2022). Many public sector organisations have levels of administration handling different types of information and communicating with different stakeholders, either distinctly or simultaneously. The core target audience of a public sector organisation's communication would be those who consume necessities, whereas the other target audience would be those who receive communication as a secondary audience. Since the early 1990s, many public sector firms have sought the best strategy to communicate directly with the public (Butler & Collins, 1995). Therefore, for communication

efficiency, many public sector firms have had to establish a communication strategy. In the process of direct marketing and communication, many public sector organisations have faced many challenges due to reasons ranging from lack of correct and adequate data about their target audience, shifting expectations of the target audience, misinformation and lack of communication infrastructure, among other reasons. To address some of these challenges, Liu and Yuan (2015) suggested that many nations should adopt e-governance strategies, even though several developing nations may still lag in the adoption process of e-government compared to Western nations (Ifinedo, 2011). According to Götsch and Grubmüller (2013), the prospect of adopting an affable technology that is citizen-driven for public consumption has become widespread in the public's continuous use and adoption of social media (Wandhöfer et al., 2013). Technology adoption and diffusion have been accelerated by several platforms that use real-time interactive ICT applications. Many Kenyan parastatals have adopted social media platforms.

These multiple affable platforms offered through real-time interactive and connected ICT applications, some of which are microblogging and mobile phone applications, would require legislation or policy frameworks. Some countries have legislated and banned some of the applications (Bamman et al., 2011); however, in Kenya, the Finance Act of 2018 increased taxes on telephones and data, making affordability difficult and limiting access to information for users (Freedom House, 2021). These interactive and connected communications on social media platforms provide citizens with opportunities to receive information and feedback to the concerned public sector organisation. The interactiveness and connectivity contributes to the desired completion of the communication loop. The question that arises is whether direct marketing of public sector communication is effective or not. Is direct marketing a part of public sector communication that realises the goals it was set for or not? Mitu (2021) opines that, the sphere dominated by public sector communication is highly regulated principally by the legal and political environment in which it operates. The nature of different societies is moulded by the laws governing the dissemination of and capacity to access information by the government, which mostly leads to policy development for democratic freedom (Alford, 2009). This means that, the sphere taken up by

public sector communication becomes more sensitive not only to issues and dynamisms in the legal and political environment but also in other contexts (e.g. specific societies and communities, technological environment, economic environment, etc.). This is because the public sector, although in some instances privatised, still has the mandate to provide what the private sector would not provide. The Kenyan Parastatal systems digitisation through interactive websites, Twitter and Facebook indicates the eagerness of Kenyan public sector firms to directly communicate to their clients (Nderitu, 2018).

Public sector organisations inform the citizenry about what they do, their rights and obligations, events that may be planned, aspects related to their day-to-day activities, etc. They also collect appropriate information, responses, public concerns, needs and aspirations from all the stakeholders. Fiske (2001) argues that the public sector has to satisfy the needs of the society, the ones for the citizenry and their formations, not just the need to maintain bureaucratic independence from society and community, with limited or no complete responsibility. Therefore, efficient and effective communication for direct marketing must consider the removal of all disruptive factors from the communication process. These disruptive factors may be, but are not limited to, physical barriers, noise, ambiguity, etc., which may lead to the alteration and adulteration of communication signals transmitted at both the semantic and technical levels. Chepkosgei et al. (2020) argued that when communication hurdles are removed, state-owned enterprises can easily realise their performance goals.

# Hurdles and Challenges of Direct Marketing for the Public Sector

## Infrastructure-Based Challenges

Lack of and adequate basic direct marketing infrastructure is one of the major challenge preventing state-owned entities from marketing in Kenya. For the public sector, this infrastructure will facilitate the

communication and diffusion of ideas from the government. In the contemporary world, electric power and its distribution reach is a crucial support for direct communication by the public sector (Idowu et al., 2020). State owned enterprise and public administration systems goals misalignment and inadequate public administration networks are major challenges. The state entity may have to confront this because the networks are not primarily set for business rather than administration purposes, and therefore, goals are likely to differ. Furthermore, the state network for administration may be inadequate in reaching all the target markets as per the business needs. Garland (2021) believes that many governments' capacity to impartially and credibly deliver public communication remains inadequate. The increment of collaboration and participation of other players such as civil society in public communication may be to the extent that their goals align and also subject to the sponsor's permission. Marketing communication may be hindered by the extent of interaction the organisation has with its stakeholders (Munyi & Peter, 2021).

## Personal and Cultural-Based Challenges

These may vary from person to person; they may include, but are not limited to, linguistic, cultural, emotional, attitude, skill-based, psychological and perceptual challenges. Villanova et al. (2021) stated that when information is in the process of being delivered, the target audience might contextualise it for ease of understanding and for their ultimate response. Personal challenges may be due to the diversity of the target audience and their environments. Therefore, tailored communication should be provided, based on what needs to be communicated (Aguirre et al., 2015). Furthermore, many countries tend to have non-homogeneous subcultures. This heterogeneity in culture, especially in the language and beliefs component, would require variations, which will have cost implications (Corritore, 2020). Consciousness of language, religious, and political sensitivities and susceptibilities are necessary for them to form part of understanding the challenges.

## Technology and Equipment-Based Challenges

Technological diffusion, especially in the Kenyan hinterlands, is low. Kipsoi et al. (2012) established that many countries in the sub-Saharan African region have not yet embraced ICT for communication purposes. Citizens mostly adopt ICT in urban settings. In many developing economies, ICT is still regarded as a technical subject and not necessarily a tool for communication. Therefore, the use of ICT-based equipment has not been largely normalised (Alao et al., 2021). The Kenyan government may have good intentions, but the citizenry may not have the means or will to do so. Furthermore, inadequate investment in technology by the government may be a significant challenge (Odero, 2021). The earnings capacity of many developing economies may be low to such an extent that communication gadgets are impossible. Almost all these gadgets would require electric power for their functionality. Connectivity to the national power grid for many rural areas is still below expectations, although many governments have attempted to connect (Mugisha et al., 2021).

## Organisational-Based Barriers

Government-based organisations have several factors that may bar them from adequately, appropriately and efficiently communicating to the target audience. These factors include administrative, structure-based (Rastrollo-Horrillo & Martín-Armario, 2019) and system-based challenges (Furdek et al., 2016; Sanders, 2019; Soukeník, 2018; Wang et al., 2021). Others are organisational power and political bottlenecks (Buchanan & Badham, 2020; Christensen & Lægreid, 2020; Medaglia & Zheng, 2017), underfunding (Auschra, 2018; Williams et al., 2020) and constant bureaucratic interference and even employee competence (Namhata & Patnaik, 2018). The extent to which these factors affect different parastatals may vary.

# The Role of Government 4.0 in Operations of Parastatals, Specifically Marketing Initiatives

Contemporary governments have found themselves at the height of dynamism in technological revolution. Government 4.0 stands for the process of digitising public service administration to optimise work processes and public systems to be operationally efficient and boost public sector productivity. Marcellis-Warin et al. (2020) assert that Government 4.0 is a well-thought, long-term organisational reorganisation for the public sector which is following technological breakthroughs courtesy of the contemporary Industrial Revolution. The Kenyan government, in its position paper, delivered to the UN's Commission on Science and Technology Development on the "Harnessing rapid technological change for inclusive and sustainable development", postulated its mandate and role in enhancing the operations of parastatals, among which was communication to the target market and the citizenry (Kenya, 2020). Kenya is among a few African governments that have an artificial intelligence national strategy that has been integrated for use in the public sector (Communications, 2020).

Through Government 4.0, the public sector can be reengineered to avail plenty of opportunities in the business environment for communication purposes. These opportunities may include, but are not limited to, customer dynamism, market fluidity, lowered costs and synergism. The digitisation process of the public service sector for public sector communication purposes includes the automation of public sector workflows (Long et al., 2021) and the enhancement of cybersecurity (Benias & Markopoulos, 2017). Furthermore, it enhances human capital development (Mukwawaya et al., 2018), reinforces the regulatory framework (Kuo et al., 2019), anchors the technological needs of the private sector (Kim, 2018) and engages the public sector (Nuansomsri & Jantavongso, 2020).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, public sector organisations use direct marketing initiatives similar to their private counterparts. Public sector direct marketing activities in Kenya are similar to public administration communication activities because they use similar channels of communication and mostly target the citizenry. Public sector organisations in Kenya are called parastatals, and long before the World Bank–sponsored structural adjustment programmes, they used public administration procedures to carry out their direct marketing activities. With the onset of web-based technologies, most public-sector firms have adopted various techniques to carry out their direct marketing activities. Some of the adopted technologies include interactive websites and having a presence on Twitter, Facebook and even LinkedIn. Most parastatals derive their mandate from the ministry in which they are interconnected with other agencies and departments within the same ministry. However, the public sector is continuously facing challenges of direct marketing which may range from technological to organisation-specific challenges. Since parastatals are categorised based on what they do, ranging from infrastructural and policy implementation to service and product delivery, different direct marketing approaches are in use. Many use direct marketing as part of their communication strategies. The government of Kenya, through the cabinet of ministers, plays a critical role in policy formulation for each ministry. These policy frameworks serve as guidelines for parastatal operations.

## Recommendations

This chapter recommends that since public sector organisations conduct business in the same environment as private entities, the only option available for them is to utilise appropriate direct marketing approaches for their competitiveness. For effectiveness, each parastatal must evaluate different approaches and initiatives of direct marketing and choose those that best suit its needs. Since the parastatals may have at their disposal, a large database of citizens' details and contacts held by the state, then the

choice of communication methods may range from text messages to emails, newsletters, and even the use of social media. However, the use of citizen information and data must comply with legal regulations.

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**4**

# Breaking the Silos: Role of Intergovernmental and Interagency Collaboration in Combating Insecurity in South Africa and Nigeria

**Silk Ugwu Ogbu, Knowledge Shumba, and Abiola Babatunde Abimbola**

## Introduction

The primary responsibility of government is the protection of the lives and properties of its citizens. Unfortunately, successive African governments have failed to deal with the increasing menace of insecurity across

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the continent. If anything, the problem appears to be worsening by the day, with non-state actors becoming more emboldened, disruptive and daring.

Despite the billions of dollars borrowed and supposedly spent on fighting insecurity by the government of Nigeria, the security situation seems to have deteriorated significantly since 2015. In the North East, Boko Haram and Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) insurgents sporadically attack villages, killing, maiming and kidnapping defenceless citizens—leaving 8.4 million people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and 4.1 million facing severe food crisis (Sanni, 2022). In the Northwest, bandits terrorise and kidnap farmers and school children for ransom despite the region's heavy presence of security formations (Ojewale, 2021). In North Central, the farmer-herder altercations have increased significantly, threatening the region's precarious peace and agricultural output, which feeds the entire nation (Ojewale, 2021b). In the Southwest, cultism, ritual killings and other forms of violent crimes have increased considerably amid agitations for secession by the Sunday Igboho-led Oduduwa Republic separatist group (Osuntokun, 2022). In the South-south, militancy, oil bunkering, vandalism of pipelines and illegal refining of stolen crude by criminal gangs and non-state actors have amplified the problems of air pollution, environmental degradation and the loss of essential revenue from crude oil exports (Oboh, 2021). In the Southeast, the proscribed Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and their paramilitary arm, the Eastern Security Network (ESN) led by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, are increasingly terrorising the entire region. '*Unknown Gunmen* frequently attack police stations and security personnel without provocation and force citizens to sit at home on Mondays, jeopardising children's education, business activities and the peoples' livelihoods' (Chukindi, 2022).

In the face of looming anarchy and descent to the Hobbesian state of nature when life was nasty, brutish and short, the government appears overwhelmed and unable to deal decisively with Nigeria's increasing scourge of insecurity. Admittedly, governments at various levels have made efforts to eliminate or reduce extremism and violent crimes, including providing more funding and other necessary resources to enhance the

kinetic capabilities of security agencies. Also, governments have applied some non-kinetic approaches such as consultations, negotiations, social investments and poverty reduction programmes; amnesty, de-mobilisation, de-radicalisation and reintegration programmes. Still, the security challenges persist. There is, therefore, a need to re-examine the extant approach to dealing with the problem to ensure that the efforts of governments and security agencies are synergised.

In South Africa, the situation is not different. Rising cases of gang violence, xenophobic and racial attacks, vigilantism, civil unrest, violent crimes, cyber-attacks, etc., appear to be overwhelming the nation's security forces, threatening the stability and progress of the continent's second-largest economy (Asala, 2021). To a great extent, these challenges have exposed the cracks in the relationships between the national and sub-national governments and the weaknesses of interagency operations for combatting crime and insecurity.

Without a doubt, the spate of terrorist-related attacks and ethnoreligious or socio-political altercations is increasing dangerously by the day across Africa, negatively impacting the continent's Human Development Index (HDI) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Isroilov et al., 2020). However, it is pertinent to note that insurgencies and violent crimes are symptoms and manifestations of other complex issues or deeper fractures within society. Such problems can only be solved through good governance, anchored upon collaborations and multi-pronged negotiations, and not by bullets or just throwing money at them. More than anything else, initiatives aimed at mitigating the security challenges have been frustrated by poor communication and the lack of cooperation between governments and security agencies. In many circumstances, the national and sub-national governments in Africa appear to be working across purposes, sometimes accusing each other of enabling or supporting gang members, bandits and terrorists (Ojewale, 2021). Misunderstandings arising from these flawed intergovernmental relations and communications exacerbate tension and ultimately affect the effectiveness of security operations.

In Nigeria, this lack of cooperation causes unnecessary friction and tremendous damage to the common goal of curbing insecurity, especially at the level of interagency operations. Several agencies, perhaps too many to count, are involved in fighting crime and violence across the country.

Among the most notable are the Nigerian Police, Nigerian Army, Nigerian Navy, Nigerian Airforce, Nigerian Customs Service, Nigerian Immigration Service, National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Offences Commission, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, Department of State Security, Nigerian Intelligence Agency and Federal Road Safety Commission, amongst others. In addition to the government-owned security agencies, other private security outfits operate in the same space, including neighbourhood vigilante groups and private security firms.

Notably, some of the agencies have overlapping responsibilities and jurisdictions amid weak institutional structures and communication cultures. Consequently, they tend to compete rather than cooperate and, in the end, undermine joint security operations and the achievement of common goals. The factors hampering cooperation among security agencies range from interagency rivalry, perceived superiority, unequal access to resources, poor leadership and lack of adequate training on collaborative protocols or shared objectives, amongst others (Alao et al., 2018).

This chapter posits that the failure of governments and security agencies in Africa to synergise is a communication problem. Many of the obstacles to collaboration identified in extant literature speak to the deficiencies in public sector communication practices and the need to inject market communication techniques to improve outcomes. In that regard, this chapter examines the changing nature of security threats in South Africa and Nigeria, and how communication can foster better intergovernmental and interagency cooperation and ultimately enhance the effectiveness of joint operations against insecurity.

This chapter is divided into sections. The first part provides a background to the study. The second and the third sections offer the conceptual framework and the theoretical anchorage for the investigation, respectively. The fourth part examines the insecurity problems in South Africa and Nigeria, and the prospects of addressing them through intergovernmental and interagency collaborations. In the last section, this chapter takes its position, concludes and proffers some recommendations.

# Conceptual Framework

Although literature on the subject is sparse, the idea of collaboration between individuals or agencies of government is not new. Humans have been working together for as long as we can remember. The great pyramids of Egypt, for example, surely were not products of an individual effort, either in design or Ok in implementation (Stouder, 2009). The same principle behind those architectural breakthroughs underpins other related phenomena that have engaged the minds of scholars for years, such as inter-organisational relations, intergovernmental cooperation, intra-governmental cooperation, inter-sectoral cooperation and inter-organisational coordination (Mohammed et al., 2019). Some concepts often used synonymously to describe collaboration include information sharing, integration, networking, coordination, cooperation, etc. While these concepts may be related, they sometimes fall short of capturing the distinct elements that characterise collaboration in specific contexts. According to McIntyre et al. (2009), the labels themselves are not important, but labelling every initiative as 'collaboration' creates a misnomer that robs organisations of the ability to deploy resources efficiently and effectively to create the most value.

## Interagency Collaboration

A multi-agency collaboration is a form of collective action and governance that brings together agencies to work across organisational boundaries to solve problems that cannot be effectively addressed by any single agency or organisation (Abdeen et al., 2021). Collaboration occurs when people from different organisations (or units within one organisation) produce something together through joint efforts, resources and decision-making and share ownership of the final product or service (Linden, 2002). The essence of interagency collaboration is to galvanise resources and apply them towards resolving complex issues or achieving goals that individual agencies cannot solely attain.

Over the past two decades, public administration literature has emphasised the prevalence or potential for multi-agency collaborations (Varda

et al., 2012; Fountain, 2013; Siddiki et al., 2017). However, as desirable as cooperation between public agencies may be, available evidence suggests that many of them, at the federal and sub-national levels, are still siloed and may not be predisposed to working collaboratively (Ward et al., 2018). The challenge of crossing boundaries or working together is common in the public sector, mainly because of fragmented power bases, processes and procedures. In the USA, the September 11 attack revealed the extent of the communication and coordination gap that existed between security agencies at the different tiers of government and the need to catalyse collaboration to forestall any repeat of such a disastrous security breach (McIntyre et al., 2009). Similarly, across Africa, the prevalence of social and security problems accentuates the inability of government agencies to synergise or pull their resources towards achieving a common goal. In any case, collaboration does not happen by accident. It requires deliberate and thoughtful planning. Thomson and Perry (2006) suggest that collaborations between public agencies will more likely occur if some antecedent conditions are met, including governance, administration, organisational autonomy, mutuality, and norms of trust and reciprocity. Several studies have examined collaborative models, processes and fundamentals (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Fountain, 2013; Siddiki et al., 2017). However, the conceptual framework proposed by Ward et al. (2018) captures the dynamics and challenges of public sector collaborations, especially in developing countries like South Africa and Nigeria. In their study, which focused on the institutional processes affecting inter-agency collaborations in FERMA Corps, USA, the scholars identified four major factors: (a) context and antecedents, (b) formulation and negotiation, (c) governance and implementation, and (d) outcomes and evaluation.

The interplay of the core four factors identified in Fig. 4.1 determines whether collaborative efforts between public agencies will succeed or fail. The antecedents or contexts define the conditions or foundation upon which collaboration can be built. Such conditions may include situational, political, environmental, economic and social factors with varying degrees of complexity, scope, uncertainty and urgency. For example, the pre-existing relationships between agencies and their members at the organisational and personal levels are crucial to effective interactions and

## Process and Patterns of Interagency Interaction

**History** of relationship–patterns of previous interactions

Interactions among **collaboration champions**; **legal** and **contractual** interactions

**Learning** and **feedback**; establishing **new norms** and processes

**Integrating** systems; critical **analysis**

## Institutional Factors Affecting Interagency Interaction

**Context and Antecedents**

• Agency cultures, norms, values
• Agency attributes
• Trust/collaborative history
• Substantive issue attributes
• Community attributes
• Political expediency

Research Question addressed: *Why is interagency collaboration appropriate or occurring?*

**Formulation and Negotiation**

• Determining goals
• Defining rules
• Allocating resources
• Identifying evaluative metrics

Research Question Addressed: *How will interagency collaboration be designed?*

**Governance and Implementation**

• Creating or adapting administrative structures
• Assigning responsibility
• Adapting rules
• Cultivating trust
• Enforcing accountability
• Deploying evaluative metrics

Research Question Addressed: *What rules and processes are governing the Interagency Collaboration?*

**Outcomes and Evaluation**

• Demonstrating impact
• Innovation
• Using evaluative metrics to adapt programs and processes

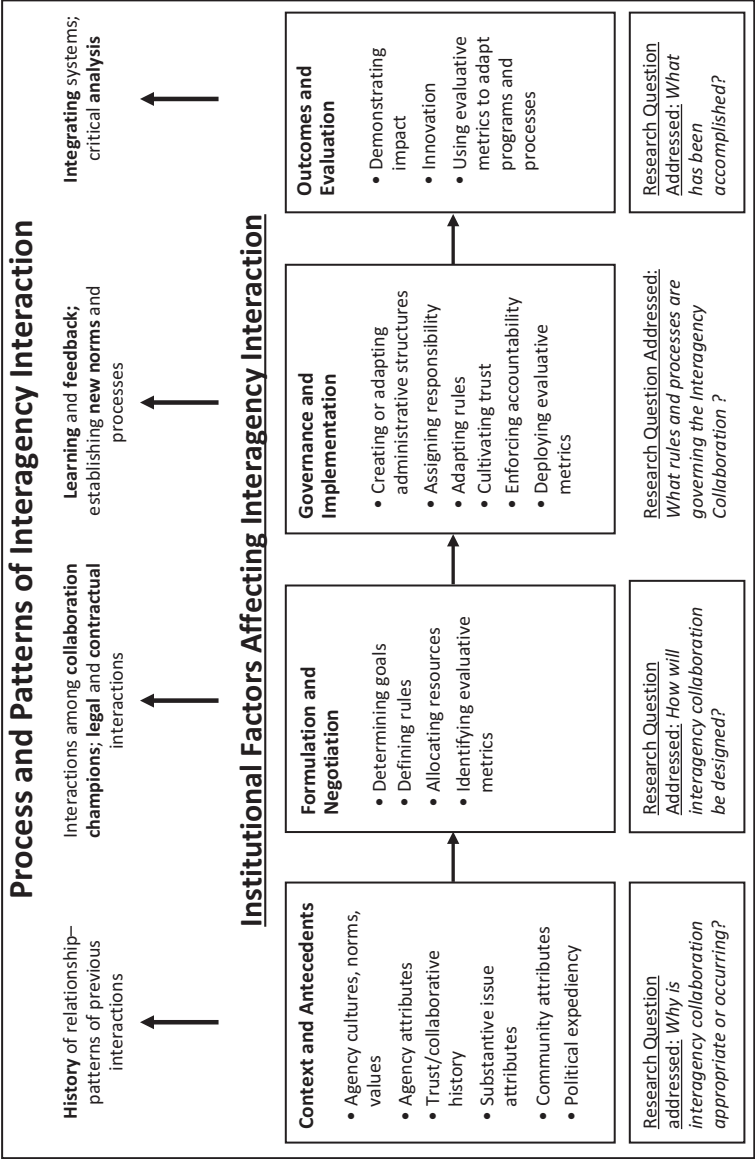Research Question Addressed: *What has been accomplished?*

**Fig. 4.1** Conceptual model of interagency collaboration. (Source: Ward et al., 2018)

trust-building in collaborative missions. Nigeria has a long history of joint security operations involving the military, police, NSCDC and other agencies. Nevertheless, the relationship between these agencies has not improved over time. On the contrary, rivalry, suspicion and sabotage seem to have increased, potentially threatening the success of joint operations (Ashindorbe et al., 2021).

Notwithstanding the antecedent elements surrounding collaboration, the process of formulating and negotiating the goals, resources and evaluation metrics determine the governance and implementation protocols, which in turn influence outcomes and impacts.

## The Whole of Government Approach (WGA)

Providing security in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) economic and socio-political environments like South Africa and Nigeria is daunting. Threats emanate from multiple and unpredictable sources, which can only be mitigated through the collaboration of different security agencies and governments at national and sub-national levels. Unfortunately, the national security infrastructures in many African countries are still guided by the post-World War II siloed approach to security provisioning (Ahmed, 2007; Ngunan, 2013). Those structures allow little flexibility or agility in response to emerging and evolving threats of today. Current security challenges facing African nations demand that governments and different agencies work together to achieve common security objectives.

The Whole-of-Government approach (WGA) is a relatively new concept whose origin is associated with the public administration reform ideas of the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Mr Tony Blair. About 1997, Mr Blair started advocating for a new approach to governance, which he described as a 'Joined-up Government' that would foster both vertical and horizontal cooperation of governments and agencies (Christensen & Lægreid, 2007). The term 'whole-of-government approach' is described as a resurgent form of coordination between various governments and their associated agencies for effectiveness and efficiency in achieving common goals such as disaster management,

combatting corruption and fighting insecurity, amongst others. The spectrum can range from horizontal coordination between different policy areas in the central administrative apparatus to improved intergovernmental vertical coordination between ministries and agencies (Colgan et al., 2014).

The intent of WGA is to create a shared vision and foster the implementation of public policy objectives, such as security provisioning, that cut across multiple functional areas of government and specialised agencies. That implies that all stakeholders should have the same understanding of the problem and the 'same vision and buy-in to the same strategic priorities' where they are part of the consultation process from the agenda-setting stage to policy development and implementation protocols (Christensen & Lægreid, 2007). Conceptually, WGA offers a means of making governments of developing countries like Nigeria and South Africa effective and smart. It also speaks to practical ways of reducing governance cost and improving service delivery and efficiency. Operationally, however, implementing WGA in fragile environments could be confronted with several challenges that require a strong political will and intentionality to overcome.

In Nigeria, although there is a growing demand for reform of the existing constitution and the structure of the relationship between the federal and the sub-national governments, the agitations appear to be motivated more by political interests than the functionality of government. In the area of security provisioning, the lack of collaboration and coordination between governments at different levels in terms of policy direction and priorities has been the most significant impediment to achieving the common goal. For example, while state governors are referred to as the 'Chief Security Officers' of their states, all the security agencies operating in their states report to and take orders only from the federal government. When political or ideological differences exist between the central and sub-national governments, the fight against insecurity is usually compromised as actors pursue divergent and self-serving interests.

WGA, therefore, emphasises the need for all the governments to speak together and in one voice, especially in combating complex challenges like insecurity. To develop a successful WGA framework in fragile states such as Nigeria and South Africa, OECD (2006) recommends strong

political leadership and coordination, creating the right incentive structures, mechanisms and instruments for promoting policy coherence and joined-up working, and the development of an integrated communication and information management system. The Whole of Government Approach can be structured to work in different ways. The typical structures are interdepartmental committees, task forces, interdepartmental partnerships—joint teams, cross-departmental partnerships and special-purpose agencies (Colgan et al., 2014). However, the most crucial factor in operating WGA is enabling effective communication and information sharing between governments at various levels and their agencies. Some models of information sharing that can be applied to foster collaboration in fragile states include direct access to records and databases, mandatory sharing of information, spontaneous sharing of information and sharing information on request (Owens et al., 2020).

# Theoretical Framework

## Process Model of Cooperation

This chapter adopts the Process Model of Cooperation (PMC) as the analytical tool for examining the issues hindering collaboration amongst governments and public agencies involved in the fight against insecurity in South Africa and Nigeria. Janet Weiss propounded PMC in 1987 as a framework for understanding or exploring the pathways that lead to more or less cooperation between public agencies. While investigating patterns of collaboration within nine public school districts in America, Weiss (1987) identified six factors that make cooperation attractive to public managers as follows:

1. A calculation that additional net resources will flow from cooperation;
2. The professional norms and values of agency staff about cooperation with other agencies;
3. The search for political advantage over other agencies;
4. The need to ameliorate internal problems of organisation or effectiveness;

5. The desire to reduce critical uncertainties and
6. A legal requirement to cooperate.

The idea that governments and public agencies should work together to solve complex social problems like poverty, unemployment, insecurity, etc., is both desirable and expedient. However, cooperation does not come naturally to public agencies because of formidable obstacles and costs. By default, agencies seek to preserve their autonomy and independence, organisational routines are difficult to synchronise, goals and functions may overlap but not identical, and stakeholders' pressures and expectations from agencies differ (Weiss, 1987).

Notwithstanding the potential benefits of collaboration, public agencies do not naturally embrace it unless they are pulled into it. Therefore, policymakers who promote collaboration must understand how to overcome the obstacles that lie on the way. Also, agencies must be prepared to bear the cost of cooperation to succeed (Mohammed et al., 2019).

PMC posits that agencies would undergo a three-step process to collaborate effectively in implementing any initiative such as security provisioning. The three steps, as represented in Fig. 4.2, are (1) the perception of the problem as shared across the agencies; (2) the availability of resources to handle the problem cooperatively and (3) the existence of institutional capacity to mount cooperation between the agencies (Weiss, 1987).

| 1. Perceived Problem Shared Across Agencies | |
| --- | --- |
| Legal Mandates, Internal difficulties | Outside Events, Low incidence needs |

| 2. Resources Available to Handle Problem Cooperatively | |
| --- | --- |
| Federal, State, Local Resources, Money, Staff | Expertise, Energy, Enthusiasm for cooperation |

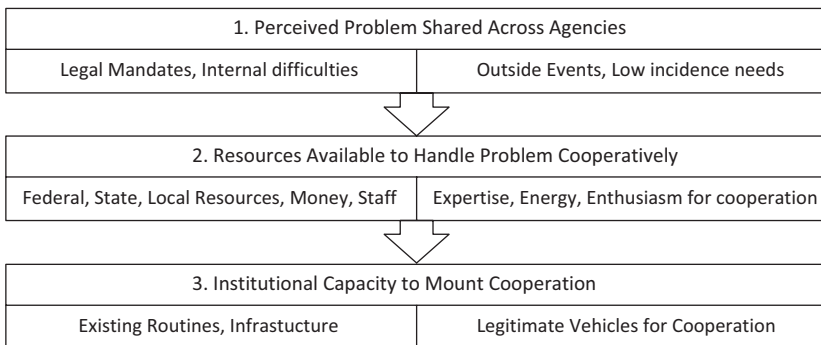| 3. Institutional Capacity to Mount Cooperation | |
| --- | --- |
| Existing Routines, Infrastucture | Legitimate Vehicles for Cooperation |

**Fig. 4.2**   Process model of cooperation among public agencies. (Source: Adapted from Weiss [1987])

Shared problems or goal congruence represents Step One of PMC. This stage is contingent upon the interplay of external and internal influences, which pushes organisations or governments to recognise the complex nature of a problem and the need to solve it through collaboration. It implies that governments and public agencies will not willingly enter into collaborative arrangements unless they are compelled by legal mandate, internal difficulties or external pressures. It also implies that the collaboration will not go any further until cooperation is seen as a practical solution to a problem. Therefore, stakeholders within the governments and agencies must frame the problem of insecurity in Africa as one that requires a unified solution before the collaboration process can move to the next step.

Moving to Step Two of PMC implies that governments at the federal and sub-national levels and their agencies are willing and able to provide the necessary resources for solving the shared problem, including money, staff, expertise, energy and enthusiasm for cooperation. If those resources are not available and explicitly channelled to foster cooperative activities, the process will grind to a halt (Mohammed et al., 2019; Weiss, 1987). That is to say that combatting insecurity in Africa, for example, is dependent on not just the agencies recognising the need to work together but also the governments' willingness to provide the necessary resources to accomplish the task. That is, perhaps, where the most significant challenge lies. The cost of fighting insecurity in Africa is so huge, both in monetary and other terms, that many countries can hardly afford it, even if they are willing to pay. However, if resources are raised through whatever means and deployed to support collaborative activities. In that case, PMC posits that the cooperation process will move to the next step.

Step Three of PMC is anchored on the capacity to institutionalise a cooperative approach to solving the shared problem. Governments and relevant agencies must create and standardise vehicles for working together at this stage. According to Weiss (1987), the effort to collaborate will be stalled unless a legal, workable way could be found to begin and sustain the cooperative programme. Therefore, the legality and legitimacy of organisational mechanisms for cooperation underpin their capacity to succeed. Depending on the nature of the activity, this could range from a trivial matter of reliance on existing mechanisms to a major undertaking of building new infrastructure for collaborative work (Abdeen et al., 2021).

PMC assumes that the progression from one step to the next is linear. Thus, the efforts to create institutional capacity for mounting cooperation between governments and agencies, for example, are bound to fail if resources are unavailable at the federal and sub-national levels and within the agencies to do the job. It means that there are layers of obstacles that policymakers must contend with to energise collaboration among governments and agencies if the battle against insecurity in Nigeria and South Africa is going to be won. Having a shared problem, necessary resources and institutional mechanisms to deal with it does not guarantee that governments and public agencies will cooperate in fighting insecurity. Random elements such as the sudden intensification of the problem and systemic forces like increased demand for performance push governments and agencies to overcome obstacles to collaboration. At every step of the process, however, communication and trust are required to move cooperation forward. Thus, breaking the siloed approach to combatting insecurity in Africa is more about improving the communication culture and systems in the public sector. The asymmetrical and hierarchical approach to communication dominant in security agencies and many public sector organisations does not encourage flexibility and agility in interactions or stakeholder engagements. By applying private sector integrated market-oriented communication techniques such as audience segmentation, edutainment messages and channel selection strategies, security agencies can enhance understanding and relationships among their members. That will enable trust and collaboration to develop among officials of governments and relevant agencies at the top and operational levels and also facilitate the progression from one step of PMC to the next.

## Security Provisioning and the Necessity of Intergovernmental and Interagency Collaborations in South Africa

South Africa faces many security challenges emanating from civil unrest, pressing socio-economic crisis, unemployment, inequality, vigilantism, gang violence, external threats and cyber-attacks. South Africa operates

under a three-tier government system consisting of national, provincial and local levels (South African Government, 2022). Collaboration and cooperation at different levels of governance through government agencies like the South African Police Services (SAPS), South African National Defence Forces (SANDF) military, State Security Agency (SSA) and Municipal Police help to combat and mitigate these security challenges. However, the lack of resources and a well-defined coordination infrastructure among government agencies at different levels of governance has left loopholes in the country's security apparatus. Adopting intergovernmental and interagency collaboration would go a long way in harnessing skills across the divide and increasing the chances of minimising or eliminating these security threats. Nevertheless, the most common sources of emerging threats which require collaborative action are as follows:

## Civil Unrest

Civil unrest is among the chief security threats in modern-day South Africa. Intra-party factionalism in the African National Congress (ANC) poses a security threat to the country. That was illustrated by the July 2021 riots, which erupted after the arrest of former President Jacob Zuma. Zuma's sentencing triggered several isolated incidents of unrest in his home province of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. Property, business stock, jobs, livelihoods, essential services such as medical and pharmaceutical supplies (in hospitals and clinics), farming, financial services facilities, telecommunication facilities, food distribution centres and seaports were all lost as a result of the protests. The South African Property Owners' Association (SAPOA) reported that the damage was worth R50 billion (USD 3,065,526,255.19) and killed over 340 people (Cotterill, 2021; Nicolson et al., 2021). Even though the genesis of the protests can be traced to several socio-economic challenges, the ANC factional battles played a leading role in sparking the riots because the pro-Zuma faction viewed the court ruling as biased.

The SAPS and SANDF embarked on a joint operation to stop the looting and arrest the criminals. The operation prevented protests from

spreading to other provinces since the protests were confined to KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces. However, the failure of South Africa's intelligence services and police to predict the uprisings reveals the absence of a coherent approach to national security. To remedy this problem, an interagency security infrastructure must be developed to gather and assess security intelligence across the three levels of government.

## Vigilantism

High crime rates and the uncontrolled inflow of illegal migrants have led to the rise of vigilantism. Moncada (2017) defines vigilantism as communities' collective use or threat of extra-legal violence in response to an alleged criminal act. *Operation Dudula Movement*, led by Nhlanhla Lux, has been at the forefront of mobilising communities to guard against crimes such as robberies, drug dealing and illegal immigrants. The movement argues that the government and security agencies have failed to protect communities and secure the border from illegal migrants (Mncube, 2022). That is consistent with Dixon and Johns's (2001) view that vigilantism is fuelled by the state's incapacity to police and secure the citizens and their rights. Vigilantism under 'Operation Dudula' resulted in the death of one Zimbabwean national in Diepsloot, who was burnt to death after being accused of criminality (Mncube, 2022).

Vigilantism in South Africa is not only practised against foreign nationals. Major-General Thokozani Mathonsi of the SAPS reported that about 298 murders emanating from mob justice were recorded in 2021 (Maphanga, 2021). That shows that the culture of vigilantism is deep-seated in the South African society and poses a significant threat to human life. To thwart the security threats of vigilantism, the SAPS must maintain visibility in communities and work with community police forums to address reported crimes. It is also vital for the government to establish an interdepartmental task force that includes SAPS, the Department of Home Affairs and the Border Management Authority to curtail and regulate the illegal inflow of migrants.

## Gang Violence

Gang violence is a security threat in all regions of the globe (Van der Westhuizen & Gawulayo, 2021). However, gang violence is a serious and growing security threat in South Africa, and is most prevalent in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg. Gangs fight in order to maintain their territories where they commit crimes like robberies and drug dealing, and these fights are often fatal. The danger of gang violence can be illustrated by gang dominance on the Cape Flats in Cape Town. It is estimated that there are over 130 gangs with a membership of about 100, 000 people (Van der Linde, 2020). What is disturbing is that these gangs commit almost 70% of the crimes in the area. In the 2019/2020 financial year, 821 (or 20.6%) of the 3975 killings in the Western Cape were gang-related (Van der Linde, 2020). Judging from the statistics above, there is no doubt that criminal gang activity presents a substantial threat to the safety and security of the general public.

The SAPS constituted an Anti-Gang Unit in order to curb the spread of gang violence in the country. SAPS efforts have been complemented by the Western Cape Department of Community Safety which has maintained vigilance in the area. At the local government level, the Western Cape Department of Social Development launched a Youth Development Strategy to create support, opportunities and services for all young people to better engage with their environment and successfully transition into responsible, independent, productive, healthy and stable adults (Western Cape Department of Social Development, 2013). Despite these intergovernmental and interagency interventions, gang violence remains prevalent in South Africa. This quandary can be resolved by addressing underlying issues fomenting gangs, such as poverty, unemployment, broken families, and drug and substance abuse.

## Racial Tensions and Inequality

Racial tensions and inequality are some of the apartheid legacies still prevalent in South Africa. According to the World Bank, South Africa is the most 'unequal' society in the world, with 90% of the country's wealth

owned by only 10% of the population (Oxfam South Africa, 2020). The racial tensions that erupted in Phoenix during the July 2021 unrests in KwaZulu-Natal presented a security threat to South Africa. The unrest twisted along racial lines, mainly between blacks from Inanda (a poor black community) and Indians from Phoenix (an affluent Indian community). It claimed 36 lives, 33 of which were black (eNCA, 2021). The intelligence services' failure to forewarn the police and government of the impending violence and the subsequent police absence in the area at the beginning of the unrest are some of the major security failures that contributed to this disaster (The Presidency, 2021). To address these challenges, the president deployed the SANDF on July 12, 2021, to assist the SAPS in restoring order. National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NATJOINTS) also played a leading role in calming the tensions.

According to StatsSA (2021), 64% of black Africans remain poor, 40% of coloured people remain poor and then, on the other hand, 6% of Indians and Asians are poor and only 1% of whites are poor. The government should invest in strategically readjusting its socio-economic policies to allow for transformational, inclusive and equitable economic growth that benefits the poor and vulnerable in society instead of perpetuating the legacy of exclusion and entrenching inequality.

## Economic Decline and Unemployment

The state's national security depends on the country's economic security level (Isroilov et al., 2020). The South African economy has been on a downward sprawl and the recent Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated this. This has increased poverty levels in the country and levels of unemployment. According to the United Nations Human Development Report (2020), 55.5% of South Africans (about 30.3 million) live in poverty. Furthermore, the Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) of 2021 puts unemployment in South Africa at 32.5% and even higher at 46.3% among young people (15–34 years of age) (StatsSA, 2021). High unemployment and economic decline threaten state security as citizens begin to fight for the few economic and

employment opportunities. The government at the national, provincial and local levels should prioritise creating jobs and develop education models that address the country's economic needs to lift people out of poverty.

## External Security Threats

South Africa faces many external security threats directly and indirectly from the region. Declining regional stability attributable to the insurgency in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province and events in eSwatini makes it clear that South Africa's security system must urgently be repurposed for the tasks at hand (Cotterill, 2021). The SANDF's Defence Intelligence should work with other regional intelligence organisations to monitor security threats in the region that may affect South Africa.

## Cyber Security Challenges

The increased adoption of digital technology in South Africa has rendered the country prone to cyber-attacks. Cyber security attacks strike strategic national infrastructure, which can harm the economy or compromise the security of the country. The attack on the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) information technology infrastructure in 2019, which resulted in the disconnection of its servers, is an example of how dangerous cyber-attacks are (Mcanyana et al., 2020). The government can address these challenges by investing in cyber security. The government should also develop cybercrime legislation and law enforcement training for agencies like SAPS and SSA.

# Intergovernmental and Interagency Cooperation to Combat Insecurity in Nigeria: Imperatives for Success

The problem of insecurity in Nigeria has significantly deteriorated over the past decade. Since the 2014 infamous kidnap of the Chibok secondary school girls, which attracted international attention and condemnation, the security situation in the country has degenerated so badly that every Nigerian today, no matter how highly placed, is worried about their safety. Recently, a federal lawmaker broke into tears during plenary at the National Assembly while lamenting the worsening security situation in the country (Obinna et al., 2022).

Without a doubt, Nigeria is a nation under attack, engulfed in a seemingly endless war with internal non-state actors, supported by some external collaborators and funders. As indicated in Fig. 4.3, Nigeria accounted for 13% of the total deaths from terrorist attacks in the world in 2018, second only to Afghanistan—a country that has been fighting a full-scale war against insurgents for decades. The security threats are perpetrated by Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorists and bandits in the Northeast and Northwest; AK-47 trotting herders and cultists in the Northcentral and Southwest; IPOB and ESN in the Southeast; and Niger-Delta militants and oil thieves in the South-south. Apart from these major threats, the
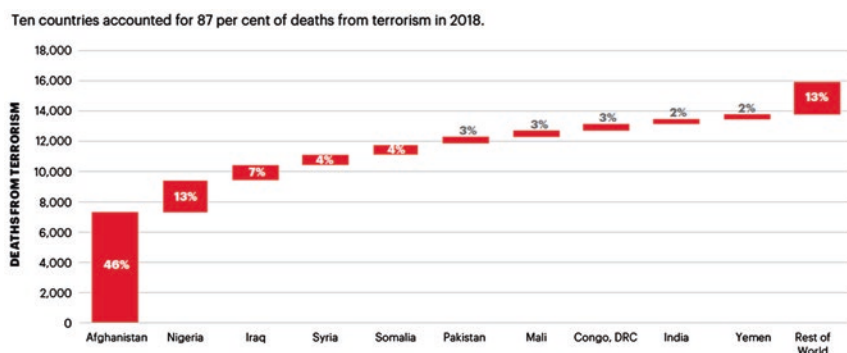


**Fig. 4.3** Deaths from terrorism by country (2018). (Source: Institute for Economics & Peace, 2019)

Deaths from terrorism in Afghanistan increased by just under 59 per cent.



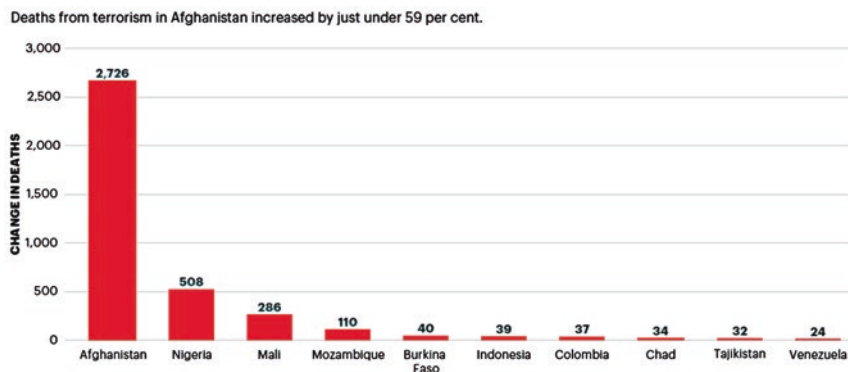**Fig. 4.4** Increases in deaths from terrorism (2017–2018). (Source: Institute for Economics & Peace, 2019)

country is also suffering from several other socio-economic, ethnic, religious and political crises which exacerbate violence, insurrection and conflicts. It appears as if the President Buhari-led administration has been overwhelmed by the sudden intensification of these attacks and unable to contain them anymore despite all the efforts and resources so far committed to the war.

No meaningful development can occur in a state of strife, anarchy or uncertainty. Therefore, security and peace precede the development and growth of any nation because no one invests in an unstable and unpredictable environment. That is why dealing with the problem of insecurity should be the priority of every government and the utmost concern of every citizen. Data from Fig. 4.4 indicate that deaths from terrorism and other violent attacks in Nigeria increased significantly between 2017 and 2018. However, within the same period, deaths from terror attacks in Iraq reduced considerably, as Fig. 4.5 demonstrates. Interestingly, Iraq has been the hotbed of extremism, insurrections and violent altercations, worldwide for decades. Therefore, it seems there is something the country is now doing right that Nigeria, South Africa and other countries in Africa could learn.

Indeed, Section 14 (2b) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) states that 'the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government.' If any
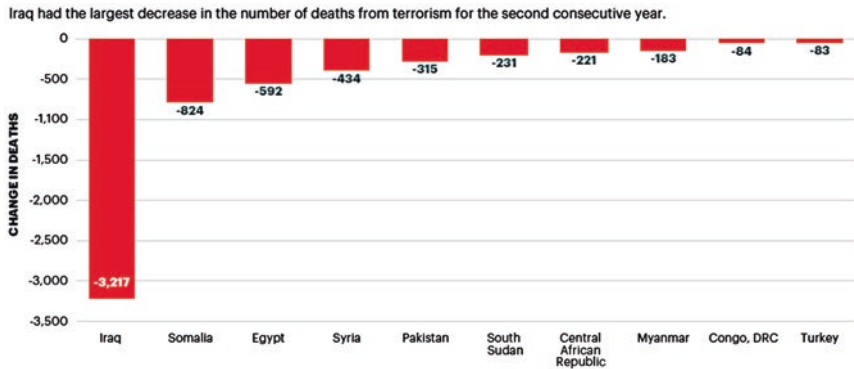
Iraq had the largest decrease in the number of deaths from terrorism for the second consecutive year.



**Fig. 4.5** Decreases in deaths from terrorism (2017–2018). (Source: Institute for Economics & Peace, 2019)

government fails in performing this primary duty, the collapse of a nation becomes imminent and unavoidable. Therefore, it is essential to ask how Nigeria got to this point? Where exactly did the ball drop? And, what should be done to reverse the situation immediately?

Although insecurity may be defined or exacerbated by several antecedent factors, including poverty, unemployment, natural disasters, repression, bad governance, injustice, etc., it is possible to classify threats to national security into two major categories: external and internal. Internal security, which is concerned with internal threats, refers to all actions of state-directed at implementing, upholding and deploying national laws, strategies, policies and state law enforcement agencies towards the maintenance of peace, law and order; safeguarding citizens from fear or threats to their values, livelihood, liberty, lives and property within a country's territory (Arase, 2018). External security, on the other hand, is concerned with preserving the nation's physical integrity and territory to preserve its nature, institution and governance from disruption or control outside of its borders (Onu et al., 2017). While the police may be primarily responsible for providing internal security, the military guarantees a nation's external security. However, these agencies can collaborate with other relevant public and private security agencies to combat internal or external threats.

According to Eji (2016), the lines between the external and internal threats African countries face are becoming increasingly blurred because of globalisation and the internationalisation of crime, spurred by advancements in media and communication technologies. Terrorist cells and criminal gangs, for example, operate across international borders, making it difficult to track and neutralise them without innovative and collaborative action by affected governments and their security agencies. Similarly, the nature and dimension of internal threats confronting African countries are changing, making it imperative for governments at all levels and relevant security agencies to devise new checkmating, proactive and result-oriented methods. For instance, combating Boko Haram terrorists operating in Northeast Nigeria may require working with financial institutions to track the source of their funding, customs to cut their supply of ammunition, directorate of state security and telecommunication companies to monitor their conversations, military to bomb their locations and Islamic clerics to persuade them to surrender, etc.

Collaboration among security agencies to fight Nigeria's insecurity, insurgencies and criminality is not new. Since independence, governments at the federal and sub-national levels and relevant security agencies have worked together to forestall violence and threats to peace in the polity. The Maitatsine riots of the 1980s, the Ogoni and Niger Delta conflicts of the 1990s, the multiple ethnoreligious clashes of the 2000s, and the more recent Boko Haram, ISWAP, herders and bandits' escapades are some of the threats that were managed through collaborative interventions. For example, to curtail electoral violence and the consequent security threats before, during and after the 2011 general elections in Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) worked with relevant stakeholders to establish a Joint Task Force (JTF) (Ngunan, 2013). This special-purpose vehicle, termed Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES), was made up of the following security agencies: Office of the National Security Adviser, Police Service Commission, Nigerian Air Force, Nigerian Army, National Intelligence Agency, Nigerian Immigration Service, Federal Road Safety Corps, Nigerian Prisons Service, Nigerian Police Force, Ministry of Police Affairs, Nigerian Navy, State Security Service, National Drug Law

Enforcement Agency, Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, and National Youth Service Corps (Ngunan, 2013).

Similarly, to deal with the rising wave of kidnapping, militancy and vandalism in the Niger Delta region, the government, on January 9, 2012, set up a JTF codenamed 'Operation Pulo Shield' (Iroegbu, 2016). This JTF consisted of the following agencies: National Intelligence Agency, the Prisons Service, Nigerian Customs Service, Nigerian Immigration Service, Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency, and Presidential Committee on Maritime Safety and Security. Other agencies involved in this collaboration were Nigerian Ports Authority, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation and several oil-producing companies (Iroegbu, 2016). Notably, the operations of this JTF, which covered nine states: Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers, were anchored upon the cooperation and active collaboration of the state governments and many local government authorities.

Today, Joint Task Forces are becoming the default vehicles for addressing the myriad security challenges bedevilling the nation (Ashindorbe et al., 2021). In some turbulent areas, especially in the North, Civilian JTFs have been used by the government to foster greater community support and participation in fighting insecurity, albeit with some controversial outcomes (Amnesty International, 2015; Yusuf, 2020; Ashindorbe et al., 2021). However, bringing governments and agencies to form a 'joint force' does not guarantee that security operations will succeed. If anything, the Nigerian experience proves otherwise. Eme (2018) notes that the effectiveness of JTFs in Nigeria appears to be undermined mostly by interagency rivalry and acrimonious struggles for supremacy, arising from overlapping functions and the lack of clarity around operational systems. The incessant conflicts between and among governments and agencies in JTFs have led to the demise of gallant officers, the degradation of the battle against crime and insecurity, and monumental national embarrassment (Onu et al., 2017). The consequences of not working effectively together culminate in increasing fear of insecurity and diminished trust in the security system's capabilities to protect the lives and property of civilian populations across Nigeria in general and terror zones in particular (Tade, 2021). Mohammed et al. (2019) affirm that the lack

of interagency cooperation is responsible for the death of hundreds of the military, paramilitary, police and Civilian Joint Task Force officers involved in collaborative missions and thousands of innocent civilians. Therefore, interagency cooperation is in the nation's interest and the interests of security agencies and their operatives (Odoma, 2014). Ahmed (2007) attributes the reasons behind interagency rivalries and clashes in JTFs to the following:

- The feeling of superiority by one organisation over and above the others.
- Indiscipline, envy and jealousy arising from a false sense of superiority, ignorance, poor education and training.
- Pecuniary interest arising from poor remuneration, greed and envy.
- Unhealthy rank comparisons between or among agencies.
- Poor internal and external communication culture.
- Ineffective command and control borne out of weak leadership engenders indiscipline at all levels.
- Duplicating of functions without clear delimitation of assigned operational areas and undue interference in the responsibilities, especially when areas of cooperation and role intersection are not properly harmonised.
- Unnecessary and inordinate use of force by security personnel at the slightest provocation.
- The inability to apply appropriate sanctions to erring personnel after the clashes does not serve as a deterrent.

Although several joint security operations in Nigeria have underperformed due to the inability of the agencies to cooperate and other complex challenges, not all of them have done poorly. Indeed, some JTFs have recorded impressive results in combating insurgency, banditry and violent crimes in different parts of the country, despite the unavailability of resources, poor incentives and abysmal working conditions. At the level of governments, successful collaborations between state governments have led to the establishment of regional security outfits to combat insecurity, such as 'Amotekun' in the Southwest and 'Ebubeagu' in the Southeast.

However, communication has remained the common denominator and the double-edged sword underpinning the effectiveness of JTFs—the primary reason behind the failure or success of their operations. Therefore, the essential question is how can communication enhance cooperation between governments and security agencies to energise the war against insecurity in Nigeria?

To perceive the deteriorating security in Nigeria as a shared problem by governments and various agencies, which is the first step of PMC, its communication should be intentional, vigorous and persuasive. Undoubtedly, the borderless nature of the security challenges facing the country makes it impossible for any government or security agency to overcome them without the cooperation and active involvement of others. However, people interpret situations rarely from objective or rational perspectives but more about their self-interest and emotions. Therefore, the clogs in the wheel of collaboration among governments and agencies, including rivalry, envy and sabotage, arise from the perception of opposition to their self or organisational interests, which can only be addressed through reassurances and open communication. Regrettably, the communication structures prevalent in Africa's public sector organisations are still dominated by World War II or colonial bureaucratic, hierarchical and rigid ideologies, which have become obsolete and unresponsive to the emerging needs of modern administrators. According to Eme (2018), the clashes among the various security agencies in the country are mainly due to the dearth of information available to the personnel of these organisations about their counterparts and how they can assist each other in achieving a common goal rather than threaten the career prospects of one another. The absence of regular interaction amongst these agencies' junior rank officers widens the communication gap. It denies them the awareness of areas of cooperation or exclusivity of roles (Arase, 2018). By providing platforms for social interactions and deliberately promoting the benefits of working together via trusted channels, governments and security agencies can overcome the internal difficulties or resistance to collaborations, especially amongst the lower ranks of their personnel. In that regard, it would become easier to align the perceptions of individuals, agencies and governments on the problem of insecurity in Nigeria and to activate the progress to step two of PMC.

The availability of resources to handle cooperation effectively, which represents step two of PMC, can be facilitated through communication. Any increase in federal, state or local governments' allocation of resources to fight insecurity in Nigeria in terms of providing more money, staff, expertise and incentives to agencies would require persuasive communication. Although insecurity is an obvious problem, government expenditures are faced with competing demands from various sectors such as health, education, agriculture, infrastructures, etc. Therefore, public sector officials who want to attract more resources to their mission or organisations must lobby, negotiate and make a compelling case for it during the budgeting process. Notably, Nigerian public sector organisations have poor communication cultures, which adversely affect their internal and external operations (Owens et al., 2020). Generally, public administrators in the country are mostly laid back with an 'entitled mindset' to things rather than pursue them with enthusiasm and market-oriented communication strategies (Obinna et al., 2022). For example, many security agencies perform poorly during budget presentations or defence in Nigeria and cannot galvanise the necessary support and approval from lawmakers for their proposals (Omozuwa et al., 2022). Ward et al. (2018) posit that communication is the most potent tool for neutralising the antecedent and contextual factors hindering interagency collaboration, such as organisational culture, values, norms and attributes. Communication is also necessary for determining goals, defining rules and allocating resources. Hence, it is imperative to continually train and enhance government officials' communication and negotiation competencies to secure the necessary resources for collaborative work and transit to step three of PMC.

Perhaps, it is in building the institutional capacity to mount cooperation, which is the final step of PMC, that communication plays the most significant role. That is the stage where dialogue, understanding and effective planning are leveraged to create routines, infrastructures and vehicles for cooperation (Weiss, 1987). At this stage, the battle against insecurity in Nigeria could be won or lost, depending on the legitimacy and sincerity of the actions of governments and security agencies to foster collaboration. However, organisations' common challenge at this stage is a weak communication culture. In practice, governments at various levels

and security agencies may have different styles or methods of operation, which could naturally clog the wheel of cooperation. Through effective communication, organisations working together can break the silos, remove barriers to cooperation and institutionalise routines to synergise collective efforts in achieving a common goal.

Security operations greatly depend on intelligence gathering and information sharing between governments and relevant agencies to succeed. Understandably, security intelligence is confidential and such information should be carefully guarded. Nevertheless, the necessary information should be shared with governments, relevant agencies and personnel engaged in collaborative work to enable them to act timely and efficiently. The problem is that security agencies combatting crime and insecurity in Nigeria are usually reluctant to share intelligence and valuable information for several reasons (Arase, 2018). At the level of governments, it is imperative that the federal, state and local governments continually share intelligence and work together to prevent attacks rather than react to them. In Nigeria, the centralisation of the security infrastructure appears to have alienated the state and local governments from exercising control over security agencies and operations in their domain. Apart from instigating rancour and mistrust between governments and agencies, the present structure impedes the flow of information among them. Still, the federal government cannot respond to the unpredictable, dynamic and amorphous nature of emerging threats across the country without the active support of state and local authorities. Thus, the need to decentralise the security infrastructure and empower state and local governments with the intelligence to respond efficiently to threats is fundamental to the success of interventions. Every conflict or crime is local, even though the footprints could be diverse and multifaceted. Therefore, the capacity of local authorities to gather intelligence to prevent attacks and deal with threats as first responders should not be underestimated. Nte and Eke (2009) suggest that the obstacles to interagency intelligence gathering and sharing in Nigeria include the following:

- Lack of articulate process for generating and sharing intelligence
- Existence of restriction laws that hamper access to information
- The laborious hierarchical structures of intelligence sharing

- Deficits in criminal intelligence sharing
- Lack of modern technologies to support intelligence sharing

Beyond the barriers mentioned above, the protocols for sharing classified information among governments and security agencies involved in joint operations in Nigeria are still guided by the old principles of *Need to Know*, *Need to Hold* and *Need to Take* (Nte and Eke, 2009; Mohammed et al., 2019). The colonialists established these guidelines to serve a different purpose and time. The nature of the security challenges facing the country today requires a more imaginative and flexible approach to information gathering and sharing anchored upon modern telecommunication technologies and the real-time information needs of actors. Market communication principles such as audience segmentation, content targeting and channel selection provide new insights to information management processes relevant to efficient security operations. Thus, the radical reform of communication and information management processes between governments and security agencies, without a doubt, will enhance collaborations and reposition the battle against insecurity in Nigeria to succeed. It will also enable actors to harness vital intelligence from domestic and external sources and build trust in joint operations.

## Conclusion

In this era of unprecedented advancements in digital technologies and innovations fuelled by the growth of the internet and globalisation, the nature of the security challenges confronting nations around the world has changed considerably and continues to evolve. Security threats are becoming borderless, emanating from identifiable domestic or external sources, cyberspace and other ungoverned spaces. The conventional methods of dealing with these challenges may no longer suffice. The complex and disruptive tendencies of emerging threats can only be contained through innovative and proactive actions. That is why the exigency of effective collaboration among governments and security agencies involved in combatting insecurity is coming to the fore. In South Africa and Nigeria, just like in many other countries in Africa and across the

world, the need to forge a united front against the common enemy by leveraging the collaborative actions of governments and security agencies to fight insecurity cannot be overemphasised. It may be necessary to restructure the relationships between the various governments in South Africa and Nigeria to encourage cooperation rather than dependency in pursuing security objectives. From the perspective of the Whole of Government Approach, that is the sensible thing to do because it reduces cost and overlapping functions while increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of security operations.

This chapter has identified some obstacles hindering the success of JTFs and working committees—the popular vehicles for fighting crime, insurgencies, terrorism, etc., in Africa. They include mistrust, interagency rivalry, poor leadership and weak communication culture in public sector organisations. This chapter also notes that communication is the root of the major barriers to interagency cooperation and, perhaps, the only panacea to resolving them. To address the myriad of issues hindering intergovernmental and interagency collaborations, it recommends capacity-building and customised training to enhance the communication competencies of public sector organisations. This chapter advocates for a radical reform of the asymmetrical and top-down approach to communication in public sector organisations and the injection of marketing communication principles to guide information gathering and sharing. Governments at all levels must continue to prioritise security provisioning to create a shared goal and collective ownership of the problem of insecurity. Without a doubt, it will raise the commitment of all the stakeholders to work together and even provide the necessary resources required to ensure a good job is done.

However, one area of communication that must be improved to break down the silos and facilitate a collaborative response to insecurity in Africa is information management. We live in an information age where intelligence gathering and sharing determine the precision and efficiency of security operations. Actionable intelligence enables governments and agencies to forestall attacks which could prevent the loss of lives, properties and livelihoods. The cost of an attack on a community in Bornu State, for example, would be far more than the destruction of lives and properties. That community's political and socio-economic ecosystem

could also be destroyed, threatening its survival and the future of the unborn generations. Therefore, governments and security agencies in Africa must institutionalise intelligence-sharing routines and overcome the bureaucratic hurdles. By mounting cooperation vehicles on modern technologies and communication infrastructure, it is possible to monitor the changing facets of crime, terrorism, insurgencies, etc., and counter them effectively. In that regard, this chapter agrees with Owens et al. (2020) on the need for South Africa and Nigeria to immediately take the following steps:

- Recognise the need for a clear policy and legal framework for cooperation among governments and all relevant agencies involved in security provisioning;
- Develop a common technology platform to collect information and ensure interconnectivity of databases;
- Undertake capacity-building exercises to train personnel on sharing information and building a culture of cooperation; and
- Establish a national agency responsible for overseeing collaborations and information sharing between governments and different agencies.

Given that security is the primary purpose of government, no price should be too high to pay to safeguard the lives and properties of citizens. Therefore, breaking down bureaucratic silos across Africa and improving communications to institutionalise intergovernmental and interagency collaborations for combating insecurity is not just the right thing to do, but the smart and necessary step to take.

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# Part III

## Public Sector Marketing Communications in Africa: Digital Perspectives

# 5

# Digital Technology and Emergency Risk Communications of African Governments: Experiences and Lessons from Covid-19 Pandemic

**Ogechi Adeola and Olaniyi Evans**

## Introduction

In 2020, the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) emerged in China and rapidly spread to other countries across the globe (Maharana et al., 2021). It is well known that the disease is easily transmittable through close personal contact with infected people and respiratory droplets (Jayaweera et al., 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), in March 2020, declared the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak a global pandemic. As of March 2022, more than 474 million cases and over 6.1 million pandemic-related deaths have been reported globally (WHO, 2022).

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The first case of Covid-19 in Africa was announced by early February 2020 in Egypt, followed by cases in Algeria and Nigeria in late February 2020. In early March 2020, Cameroon, Morocco, Senegal, South Africa, Togo and Tunisia recorded their first cases. Consequently, the virus spread rapidly to other African countries. The African continent accounted for about 2.3% of confirmed Covid-19 infections and approximately 2.5% of global reported deaths (WHO, 2021). Moreover, the widespread measures adopted by many countries, ranging from lockdowns to the closing of institutions like schools, colleges, churches and airports, caused disruptions in daily services (Pandey & Pal, 2020).

The global experiences with previous pandemics and epidemics demonstrated that rapid response rates were critical in curbing these situations (Oppenheim et al., 2019; Tam et al., 2021), prompting governments, business leaders and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to utilise existing technologies to develop unique approaches to combat spread of the Covid-19 epidemic. Due to the pandemic's restrictions on human interaction and the closing of international borders, digital platforms have become key methods to regulate and contain the infection's disruptive impacts. Digital technologies became a crucial tool in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic and crucial to the creation of a response plan to limit the pandemic's social and economic repercussions.

Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are gaining prominence in Africa. Access to mobile telephony, particularly among digitally aware youth, has made information distribution simple and accessible. As the pandemic continues to disrupt global activities, social media platforms are increasingly being adopted to provide information and updates on the state of the virus (Chan et al., 2020; Sahni & Sharma, 2020). Social media has evolved into an active instrument for engagement and communication with both positive and negative implications (Danziger & Andersen, 2002; Depoux et al., 2020; Siddiqui & Singh, 2016).

It has become increasingly important to understand the effectiveness of African governments' digital response to the pandemic. Existing studies have equated successful interventions to control Covid-19 with measures such as lockdowns (e.g., Campbell et al., 2022; Nkwayep et al., 2022; Onuoha & Mbaegbu, 2022) and even debated the issues from an

ideological or political perspective, but few have considered the technical aspects. To fill this gap, this work will discuss the interventions being initiated to control Covid-19 using digital technologies such as the internet, mobile phones, social media and artificial intelligence.

To achieve this objective, this chapter first delves into African governments' adoption of digital technologies for communication during emergencies and, more specifically, the Covid-19 pandemic. It describes not only the challenges but also the critical success factors of using digital technologies for emergency risk communication by African governments. The chapter provides a model for African countries and other emerging markets for effective communications in crisis situations.

# Digital Transformation of Government Communications in Africa

Digital technology has changed the way people go about their daily lives (Evans, 2018; Hanelt et al., 2021; Marion & Fixson, 2021). As mobile communication devices, especially mobile phones, become more available, broadband technologies expand access and the internet provides more channels of communication such as emails, online shopping, fund transfers and research (Onuigbo & Eme, 2015). Not only does technology foster information exchange, but it also ensures the availability of information to a wider range of people while reducing the cost of acquiring and analysing data (Adesida & Abidjan, 2001).

As the internet and digital technology usage grow, governments around the world are increasingly adopting digital technology in governance (Datta, 2021; Steenmans et al., 2021). The application of digital technologies transforms the scope of governance (e-government) (Evans, 2018). E-government generally refers to the utilisation of digital technologies as a key part of government modernisation strategies to create value for the citizenry (Evans, 2018; Huang & Karduck, 2017). E-government can also be defined as the use of electronic communication devices and the internet to provide public services (Bannister & Connolly, 2014). The general benefits of digital government are

unarguable in terms of improving the relationship between the government, the private sector and citizens (Falco & Kleinhans, 2018). The relationship between governments and organisations creates private-public partnerships (Palaco et al., 2019). These relationships promote government transparency and effectiveness (Jiang et al., 2019; Wukich & Daiser, 2015).

E-governments ensure the development of websites where citizens can easily find government information. Many governments around the world now practise or are considering adopting digital government/e-government capabilities (Guillamon et al., 2016). The government agencies in Africa that have gradually adopted digital online platforms have enabled citizens to express concerns and engage directly with those who govern them (Evans, 2018). For instance, in Morocco, the government developed an e-consultation platform for its citizens to access legislative texts, read and download them, and post their concerns for the government to take action (CIPESA, 2020). This created a platform for citizens to effectively communicate their opinions and grievances to the government. Likewise, in Mauritius, the government has developed an online portal and telecommunication infrastructure that allows for effective communication between the government and the people (Mutula, 2008; Oolun et al., 2012).

Government agencies are also using social media to engage and interact with citizens. For example, in Kenya, many government agencies are actively involved in social media conversations. During *Operation Protect the Nation* in Somalia, Kenya Defense Forces regularly updated citizens on the progress of the operation using the official Twitter handle of the defence forces. Similarly, the Kenya Judiciary regularly updates the citizens on the latest events in the judiciary arm through their social media channels (CIPESA, 2020).

Digital technology supports social media channels that allow citizens to participate in politics on various levels (Evans, 2019). This does not entail only the passive receipt of political information by citizens but encourages active participation in political activities. During the 2011 Arab Spring in North African countries, for example, several citizens used social media to spread information while also protesting against the government (Newsom & Lengel, 2012; Russell, 2011; Stepanova, 2011).

The END-SARS protest in Nigeria was made possible by the youth employing social media (Ajisafe et al., 2021; Ekoh & George, 2021).

Social media and digital technology information sources have become a means for citizens in African economies to influence government decision-makers and fight for their rights (Evans, 2019). For example, during the 2011 Egypt revolution, activists relied heavily on the information provided on social media. In 2010, Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution was organised and facilitated through social media to protest government corruption. In Uganda, the citizens used social media to protest the high inflation rate in the commodity markets and the economic hardships it caused (CIPESA, 2020). Social media can thus be regarded as a strong tool to drive action and change in governance in Africa.

Digital technologies have also helped bring democratic changes and increase political participation in Africa, as seen in countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Ghana, Nigeria, Zambia, Uganda, Kenya and South Africa (Bohler-Muller & Van der Merwe, 2011). Around September 2010, then President Goodluck Jonathan announced his candidacy for Nigeria's 2011 presidential election to more than 270,000 Facebook followers (Chatora, 2012). By the month of the election, April 2011, the number of Jonathan followers had spiked to about a million followers. Many political parties, civil organisations and Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) used social media to engage the public and monitor the electoral process (Nnanyelugo & Nwafor, 2011). Similarly, Zambia's 2018 presidential election experienced an increased use of social media platforms, especially Twitter and Facebook (Chibuwe, 2020). That election was supported by a civil society group called Bantu Watch, which encouraged citizens to report cases of electoral violence through the online link "zambialections" (Oginni & Moitui, 2015). As a result, the election went peacefully, and citizens participated fully in the electoral process.

# African Governments and Digital Technology: Communications during a Crisis

Before the advent of digital media outlets, African governments invested heavily in the set-up and maintenance of state-owned TV and radio stations and media houses (Teer-Tomaselli, 2004), which were the primary media sources during national crises. However, when computers and mobile phones introduced a new range of possibilities for public communication, social media and digital technologies became viable tools for government and public organisations to spread unlimited amounts of information to citizens, quickly updating that information as needed. More people can now easily access the internet, as the average time spent on the internet continues to increase (Global Web Index, 2020). African governments are taking this opportunity to intensify their presence on social media, thus increasing the adoption of e-government formats (Twizeyimana & Anderrson, 2019).

African economies have also experienced a meteoric rise in mobile phone adoption and internet penetration—a trend often termed the African technology revolution (Watat & Jonathan, 2020). According to recent figures, Africa accounts for around 22% of the world's internet users, with an exponential increase in active social media users every month (Deutsche Welle, 2021). In the previous decade, the number of Africans engaged in online activity was very low, but it has since risen considerably, with social media accounting for most online engagements (Oginni & Moitui, 2015).

Timely communication is a vital management tool for agencies and organisations responding to a crisis, whether a terrorist attack, natural disaster or public health emergency. Digital technologies ensure such communication to people when speed and accuracy count most (Simon & Adini, 2015). Internet technologies, particularly social media, are now increasingly the first source of public advisories as they can swiftly monitor and update situations, provide guidance, share public opinions and experiences, correct misinformation and fake news, and mobilise local resources to enable emergency responses (Asubiaro et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2016).

To deal with the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, African governments have formulated various precautionary measures that include travel bans, curfews, prohibition of mass gatherings and mandatory quarantines, as well as closure of learning institutions, entertainment spots and borders (Haider et al., 2020). Some of these measures boosted the use of digital technologies as millions of mobile phones were connected on social media channels to increase awareness and exchange rapid correspondence globally as well as in African countries (Budd et al., 2020).

Several examples can be found of social media use to communicate with the public about a crisis:

During the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, governments in that region included digital technologies and social media channels among their communication channels. Through these channels, European countries and the rest of the world were able to keep abreast of the latest updates in the affected countries in real-time (McInnes, 2018).

When the Westgate Mall in Kenya was attacked in September 2013, social media (especially Twitter) became a crucial channel of communication for the government, emergency responders and the public, thereby ensuring fast and efficient emergency management of the crisis. Many organisations in Kenya posted information on their official social media handle to keep citizens apprised of the attack and ensure situational awareness. The threat assessment was updated through the information provided on social media and the internet (Simon et al., 2015).

Alerts about the first coronavirus case in Nigeria were made through social media platforms (Adebowale, 2020), so many Nigerians were able to immediately gather information about the virus. Health Care Agencies in Nigeria, like the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), relied on social media platforms and bulk SMS messages to provide frequent updates on the number of positive cases, deaths and recoveries in Nigeria. This allowed many Nigerians to be fully aware of the latest news about the pandemic and take appropriate precautions (Adebowale, 2020; Obi-Ani, Anikwenze, & Isiani, 2020).

In Ghana, widely used social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs, LinkedIn, Google Plus, WhatsApp, Telegram and other smartphone applications and online platforms assuring the Ghanaian government of a wide outreach to the public during the pandemic (Tabong & Segtub, 2021). By January 2020, Ghana had a total of 6 million

registered active social media users, up from 5.8 million the previous year (Sasu, 2020).

In Rwanda, WhatsApp chatbots were used to provide information and to help in identifying people for rapid Covid-19 testing (Dalglish, 2020). The Cameroon Ministry of Health used its official Twitter account to provide timely updates about the state of the pandemic in the country, along with tips to stay safe (Maharana et al., 2021).

World Health regional offices scattered around Africa used social media to post updates on the pandemic.

Senegal's State Information Technology Agency (AIDE) developed a platform, http://covid19.gouv.sn/, to provide Covid-19-related information, data on the number of active Covid-19 cases, and practical advice and awareness materials. The country also developed a "Doctor Covid" chatbot on WhatsApp as a link where citizens could make pandemic-related inquiries.

The Center for Disease Control in Guinea used caller ringtones and bulk SMS messaging in various languages to relay information about the pandemic.

The governments of Tunisia, Ivory Coast, Morocco and Sierra Leone used drones to spread messages and question people in rural areas about their reasons for being outside when the pandemic's lockdown measures were imposed (European Investment Bank, 2020). For example, Nigeria and Algeria used mobile phone apps to track cases and assess users' risk of Covid-19 based on responses to a detailed questionnaire. In Ethiopia, the government developed a mobile app that aided the contact tracing of individuals (Maharana et al., 2021).

## Governments' Responses to Malicious Use of Digital Technology during Covid-19 in Africa

In today's hyper-connected world, technological exposure as a tool for social communication has increased exponentially (Morgan, 2013). However, there are challenges connected with such exposure. The malicious use of electronic technology is a growing problem across the world (Bradshaw et al., 2018; Morgan, 2013; Pantserev, 2020). For example, some artificial intelligence-based software can create avatars that speak

and act much like humans. The possibility for malicious use of this and other deepfakes is growing: audio, images, text and video transmissions show something that never occurred in real life (Pantserev, 2020). At crisis moments, the nefarious manipulation of public opinion on social media has emerged as a significant policy concern (Bradshaw et al., 2018). With the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, there were examples of the malicious use of deepfake videos for political gain, attracting international regulatory attention.

Digital technologies present a significant risk in many ways. According to Obi-Ani, Anikwenze & Isiani (2020), this posed a significant threat to government efforts to contain the pandemic due to the rapid spread of unverified information about the virus in Africa (Obi-Ani, Anikwenze & Isiani, 2020). Many African governments responded with targeted warnings and press statements aimed at curbing the spread of misleading information. Some governments arrested citizens who violated laws banning the spread of misleading Covid-19 communication (Pomeranz & Schwid, 2021). Social media in many African countries was largely filled with speculation and the spread of misleading information on Covid-19 (Obi-Ani et al., 2020; Adekoya & Fasae, 2021). Due to the widespread misuse of digital technologies and the proliferation of misleading information, many African governments undertook stringent measures to curb what was considered dissemination of misinformation about the Covid-19 pandemic. Several examples illustrate this point:

A vigilante group in Kenya, acting solely on misleading information, wrongfully beat up a man on suspicion of spreading the virus (CIPESA, 2020). The government of South Africa announced that the spreading of false news about the pandemic would become punishable by up to six months of imprisonment or a fine (CIPESA, 2020).

In March 2020, Tanzania's Prime Minister, Kassim Majaliwa, warned the public against the spread of incorrect information about the pandemic, explaining that those who were caught would be punished by the law. The Prime Minister directed the Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority to apprehend the persons disseminating the fake news that was causing social disarray in the country (Mhagama, 2020). These threats were quickly followed by arrests and prosecution of individuals and suspension of licences of cooperating media organisations.

The Kenyan Health Minister announced that misinformation about the pandemic was damaging the government's efforts to fight Covid-19. The government took drastic legal measures and warned that those found spreading false information would be punished, later arresting a citizen for spreading claims that the government was lying about the announcement of the country's first Covid-19 case (Wangari et al., 2021).

The Ugandan Ministry of Health used its social media accounts to correct several false accounts of positive cases that were circulating prior to the official announcement of the first Covid cases. In April 2020, the Uganda Communication Commission issued a warning against the spread of incorrect and unconfirmed Covid-19 information (CIPESA, 2020).

# Challenges Faced by African Governments in the Use of Digital Technology for Communications

Although the digital economy has increased opportunities for communication in Africa (Mafimisebi & Ogunsade, 2021), many hurdles prevent effective e-government utilisation:

*Digital Divide.* Digital divide, a multi-dimensional concept, can be defined as the gap between those who can access computers and the internet and those who cannot; it is an unequal access to the internet (Ndonga, 2012). There is a wide disparity in the diffusion, quality and standards of ICT structures in developed and developing economies (Cariolle, 2021).

The digital divide can also be blamed on the high incidence of poverty across the continent. A significant portion of the population is unable to access the internet because they cannot afford data charges and expensive smart devices (Moyo & Munoriyarwa, 2021). Based on a 2019 report by UNESCO and International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the cost of 1GB of data for the poorest 20% of Africa's population is equivalent to almost half of their monthly income, making their internet usage far lower than the global average. The digital divide exists between Africa and the developed world and within different sub-regions within Africa.

*Access:* Some segments of Africa's population cannot access digital technologies, so the transition to dependence on digital technology threatens to

cause further exclusion. According to World Bank (2022), about 300 million Africans are located more than 50 kilometres away from a fibre or cable broadband connection. This scarcity of high-speed internet remains a crucial barrier to Africa fully leveraging the potential of digital transformation. Only 22% of Africans use the internet (Deutsche Welle, 2021), a digital gap that blocked e-government's efforts to mitigate some of the pandemic's worst consequences.

*E-readiness:* A large proportion of the African economy is unable to use digital technologies, including computers and mobile phones (Ndonga, 2012; Olatoye et al., 2021). A country's possession of requisite ICT skills determines its e-readiness, which indicates the extent to which citizens and the society are prepared to participate actively in the digital economy. The success of digital governance in Africa largely relies on the e-readiness capacity of the citizens and that of the public servants. Therefore, it is not enough for the necessary infrastructure to be present, but there must be e-readiness of all relevant stakeholders involved in the digital government environment (Pardo et al., 2016).

*Infrastructure Deficits:* Many African states experience a deficit of end-user technologies that characterise the new wave of digital technologies. This problem is usually associated with internet-related technologies whose bandwidth constraints cause slow and inefficient connections (Till et al., 2021), creating lower registration rates of internet and broadband users than are found in developed economies. Moreover, the set-up, development and maintenance of government portals, websites and digital media come at a significant cost to the governments. Thus, the ICT infrastructure necessary to support efficient digital governance in Africa has a long way to go before it can match the developed world (Asubiaro et al., 2021).

*Privacy and Security:* Digital technology's storehouse of virtual environments, intelligent applications, knowledge-based systems, machine learning and communication channels pose a risk of violating basic principles of information security and privacy via non-regulated access to secure information and personal data (Romansky & Noninska, 2020). Digital technologies give users direct access to a large volume of information (Cinelli et al., 2020). Typically, information is shared with good intentions; however, some unethical people mislead others by spreading unverified information and rumours or furthering an inherently evil agenda through social media (Homeland Security, 2018; Manda & Backhouse, 2016).

The alarming level of false misinformation through social networks posed a complex problem to governments and health officials across the African region during the pandemic. Misleading information strongly influenced people's behaviours by creating public distrust of government health guidelines and, in some cases, encouraged harmful consumption of products touted as cures for Covid-19 (Alam et al., 2020). African governments are challenged to ensure digital technologies whose security and privacy mechanisms promise trustworthy collaboration between government and citizens.

## The Critical Success Factors for Emergency Risk Communication of African Governments

Overall, the African government has made notable progress in e-governance, yet there is still a lot more work to be done. Many segments of the population in Africa are excluded from digital services as well as internet services (Bornman, 2016; Lovelace, 2022). Many people in these economies are not digitally aware, which can be counterproductive for the economy (Matli & Ngoepe, 2020). The population will become more digitally secure as African governments commit to investing more in digital infrastructure and internet connectivity. When this is achieved, the citizens and the government can benefit significantly from the use of digital technologies.

Trust is the sine qua non for the legitimacy of public institutions and is crucial for social cohesion and political participation (WHO, 2017). At any stage of the Covid-19 pandemic, trust has been essential for governments' rapid response, citizen support and implementation of inclusive recovery from the emergency (OECD, 2021). Trust is a critical issue in Africa. In recent years, Afrobarometer found that, across 36 African countries, more people expressed mistrust in formal executive institutions. The human costs of mistrust can be awful. Consider the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo; some people were so distrustful of authorities that they targeted healthcare workers in sometimes-vicious physical attacks (Gavin, 2022).

In an atmosphere of mistrust, risk communication interventions will fall short of protecting lives and communities against threats (Svendsen et al., 2016). Hence, establishing and maintaining an atmosphere of trust is probably one of the first and most significant steps in effective risk communication interventions. The literature in this area has highlighted community engagement and networking as essentials for building trust (WHO, 2017). Engaging the populace by interacting with them via online service delivery meetings can build trust. Online comment sections should offer a respectful public square supporting an exchange of ideas. Moreover, online communications by authorities should include explicit information about risks, events and interventions, as well as the known and the unknown at any given time. The government can identify social media influencers whom the populace trusts and build relationships with them. Such influencers can be involved in decision-making to ensure collaborative and appropriate interventions and inclusive communications.

Emergency preparedness would require online response teams with well-defined roles and responsibilities for online communications (Denis et al., 2014; Hadi & Fleshler, 2016; Hughes et al., 2014; White et al., 2009). A nationwide emergency risk communication strategy will include trained staff to serve as online spokespersons. Response teams can build on appropriate stakeholder and organisational networks across multiple online platforms. An improved, coordinated information flow can be achieved by creating online groups and communities involving key stakeholders, irrespective of location or cultural/economic boundaries. Notwithstanding the resource implications (i.e., financial, human and time), the benefits of a coordinated information flow can strongly outweigh the troubles and resource considerations (WHO, 2017).

Building risk communication capacities with clearly defined roles and infrastructure is invaluable at both national and local levels (Ansell et al., 2010; Ding & Zhang, 2010; Heath et al., 2002; Vaughan & Tinker, 2009). Preparation and training of personnel for emergency crisis communications can be organised and monitored regularly to ensure coordination among the participating stakeholders. A cadre of social media influencers should be trained in emergency risk communication, with refresher courses provided at least yearly. Media personnel can also be

trained in emergency crisis communications. Incorporating social media training and including media professionals in the training can go a long way in expanding online public engagement.

Existing online platforms and information systems can provide leverage to boost emergency crisis communications (Alfonso & Suzanne, 2008; Hagen et al., 2017). Social media can serve as an invaluable resource for public engagement, peer-to-peer communication, situational awareness, and monitoring and responding to rumours, as well as maintaining awareness of public concerns and local-level reactions during an emergency (Agostino & Arnaboldi, 2016; Hou & Lampe, 2015). When using social media, a wide array of activities and tools can be incorporated: photo/video sharing, social networking, micro-blogging and live streaming, each having appeal in different situations. Integration of traditional media with social media interventions can foster the convergence of accurate information and bolster trust in that information. Social media, notably Facebook and Twitter, can be utilised to spread and verify reliable information and dispel misinformation during public crises. This is particularly imperative for the governments in African countries, where most people are quite distrustful of government campaigns and messages but prefer peers online as a trusted source of information.

It is imperative to address the technology gaps in ICT-poor African countries, develop emergency management information systems, and build the capacity to monitor and use multiple social media channels. The digital divide and unequal access to ICT echo the technological gaps and socio-economic disparities in African countries (Bornman, 2016; Kyem & LeMaire, 2006). To transform into a fully digital society, governments at all levels must accelerate the use of digital technologies in every sector. For example, Rwanda, one of the countries in the continent, is a quintessential example of how sustainable efforts at the expansion of digital technologies can provide gains to the populace. The government of Rwanda has made notable investments in the facilitation of digital technology, which led to 75% of the population having mobile phones and 90% having internet access (Lovelace, 2022). Enabling policies that deliver ICT knowledge and digital technology infrastructure will foster emergency risk communication strategies (WHO, 2017). Overall, African governments need to respond to the urgency to recognise the

significance of digital innovations and put action behind policies that foster emergency risk communications in Africa.

## Outlook and Implications

The innovative use of digital technologies such as the internet, mobile phones, social media and artificial intelligence contributed in no small measure to the control of the Covid-19 pandemic (Agarwal et al., 2022; El-Sherif et al., 2022; Mhlanga, 2022) and ultimately to the African economy. Africa, a rapidly growing market for all digital technologies, has experienced not only many positive but also a few negative outcomes (Danziger & Andersen, 2002; Siddiqui & Singh, 2016). This chapter explores African governments' digitally managed risk communication responses, in particular the effectiveness of such techniques in efforts to address the pandemic crisis.

African governments are implementing e-governance measures in their countries through the creation of websites, portals, agency-specific social media pages and WhatsApp chatbots. Digital technologies deployed by various African governments communicated with citizens largely via mobile phone- and computer-based social media channels to give their citizens regular updates about the number of cases, death and recoveries associated with the spread of Covid-19. However, an unintended consequence was the profusion of incorrect and unverified information about the causes and cures of the virus. Due to this widespread abuse, many African governments adopted strict legislation to curb the spread of such life-threatening misinformation.

Digital technologies are still establishing roots in many African economies and have not fully achieved the current standards now common to advanced economies. Internet services in most African countries are characterised by bandwidth constraints that inhibit connection quality or availability. A large proportion of the African population lacks ICT knowledge and relevant digital skills; many lack the funds to purchase digital devices. E-governance is at a disadvantage because the ICT infrastructure necessary for efficient digital governance in the continent cannot match up to the developed world. Governments' transition to digital

technologies causes further exclusion, especially when posting risk-related communications to the populace, when not all citizens have access to digital information.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The critical success factors for emergency risk communication of African governments are worthy of consideration. It is key for African governments to invest more in digital infrastructure and internet connectivity for increased digital inclusion and, accordingly, increased benefits from the use of digital technologies. To ensure collaborative interventions and inclusive communications, citizen support and trust are sine qua non. Establishing and maintaining an atmosphere of trust requires community engagement and networking both offline and online. Emergency preparedness would require online response teams, the creation of online groups and communities involving key stakeholders.

Building risk communication capacity would necessitate preparation and regular training of personnel for emergency crisis communications, especially social media influencers and media professionals. Existing online platforms and information systems can provide a form of leverage for public engagement, situational awareness and response to misinformation during a crisis. It is also important to address the technology gaps in ICT-poor African countries, enact policies that deliver ICT knowledge and digital technology infrastructure, develop emergency management information systems, and build the capacity to monitor and use various digital technologies for effective emergency risk communications across the continent.

# Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Notwithstanding the vast opportunities afforded by digital technologies for government communications, there are a number of open questions not addressed in the current study. Although the literature has highlighted many uses of digital technologies for government communications, the preference remains, to some extent, non-digital in many African countries. Much remains to be learnt about the factors influencing reluctant users. Identification of such factors is fundamental to an empirical interpretation of why "governments in democratic systems should reflect the preferences of citizens, and attempt to interact with them" (Gauld et al., 2010, p. 185), as well as why various avenues of engagement should be sustained. Moreover, in spite of the rather enthusiastic rhetoric in the literature from practitioners, governments and academics about e-governance measures for emergency risk communications, the benefits of digital technology for government communications continue to be somewhat elusive for many reasons: malicious use of technologies, privacy protections and security, the spread of misinformation, the digital divide, inadequate ICT skills, weak ICT infrastructure, limited access and poor bandwidth constraints. Further studies are recommended to investigate how these constraints can be reduced or eliminated to improve government communications. These areas remain works in progress that deserve further research.

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# 6

# Drivers and Challenges of Social Media Usage in Ghana's Local Government Administration

**Majeed Mohammed, Prince Gyimah, and Isaiah Adisa**

## Introduction

Globally, social media is a tool for disseminating information for informed judgement and decision-making (Asamoah, 2019). Social media enhances firms' long-term goals and operational efficiency (Berry, 2017). Adeola et al. (2020) argue that social media is a marketing communication tool that enhances consumer engagement, innovative business strategies and competitive advantages. Sebola (2017) further concludes that social media is an effective communication strategy that promotes public engagement in emerging economies. Twitter, Facebook,

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Pinterest, Instagram and LinkedIn are examples of social media use in public engagement and communication (Balan & Rege, 2017; Stoian, 2019; Webb & Roberts, 2016). Despite these substantial roles, there is little evidence in the literature highlighting the determinants of social media usage among African local governments.

Extant literature argues that social media contributes to the achievement of missions and visions of local government (Aikins et al., 2022). Asongu and Odhiambo (2019), however, report that there are limited studies on social media usage and developmental outcomes. Currently, there is no theory on the specific social media handles that contribute to the sustainable development of institutions. Moreover, the existing studies on social media focus on natural resource management (Kodila-Tedika, 2021), anti-corruption and democracy (Jha & Kodila-Tedika, 2020), tourism and hotel performance (Asongu & Odhiambo, 2019; Tajvidi & Karami, 2021), marketing communication (Adeola et al., 2020) and e-government adoption (Asamoah, 2019). Though Asamoah (2019) focuses on whether websites and social media increase citizen involvement and interaction, the study fails to explore the factors influencing social media usage by local government. Local government is the central pillar of government that provides essential services to promote an enabling environment for the private sector to partner with local authorities for job creation, poverty reduction, economic growth and sustainable development (Aikins et al., 2022). This chapter fills the gap by exploring the type of social media employed by local governments in an African nation, Ghana.

This chapter makes the following contributions. We provided insights into the contextual elements in social media by looking at how local institutions influence information distribution towards the success of programmes' design and implementation as it relates to the citizens, communities and industries. Also, we highlight why social media usage in local government is essential, the challenges local governments face in using social media and lessons local governments can learn from studies relating to why using social media is vital for accomplishing their goals. We hope the findings will be used as a benchmark to identify the best practices in information distribution projects by other local governments

in emerging and advanced economies. Finally, the findings would be essential for supporting professional practices within local organisations that can increase stakeholder engagement, streamline administrative processes and build a positive reputation in emerging markets.

The rest of the chapter is organised as follows. The next section provides a review of the literature, including the local government context, social media, drivers and challenges of social media and theoretical framework. Primary and secondary data were collected for the study, hence, sections containing the methodology, findings and discussions, suggestion for social media adoption in Africa are presented respectively. The last section offers conclusion and implications for practice in Africa's local government administration.

## Literature Review

### Local Government Context

The local government is the lowest administrative level responsible for collecting taxes and providing goods and services to the local citizenry (Aikins et al., 2022). In an emerging market like Ghana, local government is the lowest level of governance and provides an enabling environment for private and public partnerships for sustainable development and growth (Aikins et al., 2022; Asamoah, 2019). Currently, the local government structure in Ghana comprises four-tier Metropolitan and three-tier Municipal/District assemblies coordinated by 16 Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) and supervised by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD). Thus, local government is categorised into three interlink assemblies: the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs). MMDAs ensure sustainable growth, peace, stability and effective governance systems at the local levels of government (Aikins et al., 2022). Again, the MMDAs generally have administrative and political power in the district and municipal assemblies by providing direction towards achieving the government's goals (Hackman et al., 2021). MMDAs plan, supervise and execute

responsibilities to undertake district infrastructural and other critical social amenities or programmes (Brenyah et al., 2022). We focus on the MMDAs as a proxy for local government, and MMDAs and local government have been interchangeably used in this chapter.

## Social Media Context

Social media has been a core technology tool ensuring MMDAs' activities are disseminated to stakeholders (Aikins et al., 2022). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media includes internet-based apps built on Web 2.0's philosophical and technological basis for creating and exchanging subscriber content. Social media users can easily collaborate and share content that includes images, maps and text for effective communication (Ellison & Hardey, 2014). Mobile devices like smartphones and tablet computers are integrated into social media platforms to facilitate the rapid dissemination of text, music, video and photographs (Chen & Lin, 2019). Today, individuals can constantly search for the most efficient, effective and speedy ways to get their hands on information and stay up to date.

Social media has profoundly impacted businesses' operations worldwide and is a game-changer in content creation, consumption and corporate performance (Deodato, 2018; Tajvidi & Karami, 2021; Wu et al., 2020). Many social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, have grown tremendously, making it possible for businesses of all sizes to participate in social media and include it in their overall marketing strategy (Tarik & Adnan, 2018). Using social media to act on those requirements, entrepreneurs can better understand their customers' wants and needs (Tajudeen et al., 2018). Individuals can connect with friends and make new ones through social media platforms (Penni, 2017). According to Asamoah (2019), social media platforms have opened new avenues for exchanging information between local governments and residents. In 2006, the social network opened its doors to the general public, making it one of the most popular websites for individuals and corporate leaders (Musonera & Weber, 2018).

To fill a critical vacuum in our understanding of how to get people involved in the public sector, a study of social media's effect on public sector accessibility is essential (Woods & Scott, 2016). Government agencies can use social media platforms to improve the quality and efficiency of their constituent relations among the communities and citizens (Falco, 2011). The public can benefit from a wide range of goods and services provided by local, regional, state and federal government entities. For instance, social media is used to post available vacancies, pass information and coordinate activities (Perlman, 2012). Thus, the use of social media applications has grown significantly in recent years, which has been a global tool for making informed judgement and decisions for stakeholders (Sandoval-Almazan & Valle-Cruz, 2016).

## Importance of Social Media in the Public Sector

Connecting with others, getting knowledge and contributing to topical issues are some of the perks of social networking sites (Khan & Khan, 2019). During the recent global pandemic (Covid-19), governments and institutions regularly relied on social media to inform the public about new cases of Covid-19 and measures to take towards safety (Tran & Bar-Tur, 2020). Social media's rise has increased tremendously due to its significance in human life (Aikins et al., 2022). For instance, about 240 million Africans in Africa now use the internet for social communications and interactions (Oginni & Moitui, 2015). Many African countries have orchestrated democratic reforms using social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter (Oginni & Moitui, 2015). Thus, governments or state actors cannot implement flagship programmes successfully without social media support. Social media has sparked revolutions, improved Ghana's, Botswana's and Nigeria's electoral processes, and helped the continent's economy flourish (Dalberg, 2013).

People's feelings, thoughts, intentions, attitudes and responses to their job activities are revealed through social media technologies (Chun & Luna-Reyes, 2012). According to Siddiqui and Singh (2016), social media applications allow public sector organisations to improve their brand image, increase market insight and encourage staff responsiveness.

Numerous studies posit that social media has beneficial and significant effects on various social groups, including the general public, academics and organisations of all kinds in various sectors of society in every country (Ali et al., 2016; Siddiqui & Singh, 2016). Additionally, social media helps to revolutionise society by enabling access to global markets, financial services, and employment prospects in private and public sector organisations (Rehman et al., 2014).

## Challenges and Drivers of Social Media Adoption in the Public Sector

Sharif et al. (2015) identified factors that could drive or hinder the adoption of social media at the local government level: Environmental, organisational and technological. Community demand (increasing use by the community) and bandwagon pressure (because other government institutions have used it and achieved great success) were identified as environmental factors influencing public sector social media adoption. The organisational context includes the existing structures, processes and assets that drive or inhibit social media usage. Supportive institutional settings include skilful labour forces for effective adoption of technology, such as social media. Management drive (the extent the leaders of the public sector organisation are driven by the intentions or vision of adopting social media), social media policies (policies that encourage or hinder the adoption of social media) and the degree of formalisation in the management of social media that is compatible with the organisation will also determine if local government will adopt social media.

The third is technological—perceived benefits, perceived risk and compatibility. Perceived benefit answered the questions: Is social media perceived as beneficial? And is public sector activity compatible with the adoption and usage of social media, or do we have the technological skill to adopt social media? The decision to adopt or hindrances to adopting social media will depend on many factors (Financial, knowledge and technology from TEO perspective), which Sharif et al. (2015) identified. Similarly, on the part of Ndodo and Dhurup (2010), the authors found that a lack of knowledge about the platform's capabilities, technology

incompatibility with the target audience, stakeholder unwillingness to use social media technology and misperception of social media were among the factors that inhibit institutions from using social media. Li (2010) identified cyber-bullying, stalking, defamation, spreading false information and instigating comments as violence committed through social media that could discourage local government organisations from its usage.

Resource constraints and a lack of expertise or awareness have also been cited as internal barriers to implementing social media (Kuikka & Äkkinen, 2011). Also, corporate culture is seen as an obstacle to social media acceptance and use in the workplace. Fuchs-Kittowski et al. (2009) assert that a company's dominant organisational culture rarely accepts the social media mentality. Farhoomand et al. (2000) and Kuikka and Äkkinen (2011) also found issues in the literature linked to attitude and resources.

## Theoretical Framework

This chapter revisited the Technological-Organisational-Environment (TOE) framework to understand factors influencing social media adoption among MMDAs in Ghana. Organisational technology adoption models include the TOE framework (Defitri et al., 2020; Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990) and the tri-core model (Swanson, 1994). Though the TOE framework is primarily used in the context of private sector firms, the theory's assumptions are extended to the public sector in this chapter. We select this framework because it focuses on factors inside and outside an organisation and fully captures the reality observed from the MMDAs in Ghana. TOE has received empirical and theoretical validations in different studies (Awa et al., 2017). Testing the assumptions of the theory in government institutions offers more empirical and theoretical validity for the theory. Governments in industrialised nations have begun to take advantage of the collaborative power of social media and have produced explicit legislation, policies and plans for its efficient utilisation (Mossberger et al., 2013). According to Al-Aufi et al. (2017), emerging economies are still at an informational stage regarding their use of social
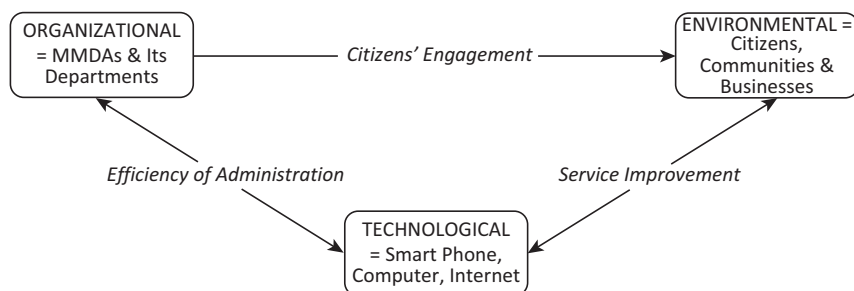
**Fig. 6.1**  TOE framework (adapted from Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990)

media. This means that the governments use social media sites predominantly for news releases and updates and show little interest in engaging with their citizens. For these reasons, we select the TOE paradigm in this chapter. Figure 6.1 shows the TOE framework.

## Technology Factors

The technology factor looks at the ICT, innovation and internet matters relating to local government. They are channels for communicating to the public and working within the firm (Huang et al., 2008). According to Zhang et al. (2017), technology factors are IT Infrastructure, expansion and widespread application, particularly the proliferation of social media applications. It also includes technology competence (Zhu & Kraemer, 2016), relative advantage, complexity and cost (Maduku et al., 2016; Shi & Yan, 2016), technological compatibility, perceived effectiveness (Shi & Yan, 2016), technological readiness (Oliveira et al., 2019), IT infrastructure (Pan & Jang, 2008), compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability of information (Awa et al., 2017). In context, the technological factor of the TOE suggests that the local government must have human resources with ICT skills before adopting social media. Without the availability of technologically skilled personnel, it will be difficult for local government institutions to use social media platforms for their activities.

## Organisational Factor

This factor refers to the degree to which local governments such as the MMDAs have internal characteristics to use technological-driven platforms such as social media. The organisational factors involve the structures and resources accessible to the adopting local or government institution (Pan & Jang, 2008). It concerns the size, revenue, organisational structure, staff networks and relationships (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). Management support, organisational preparedness, ICT experience, size, pleasure and problems are other organisational factors that would affect social media usage in MMDAs (Ramdani et al., 2013).

## Environmental Factors

Competitors, economic and regulatory climates are examples of environmental factors (Pan & Jang, 2008; Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). Zhang et al. (2017) cited the attitude of the local social situation towards technological advancement as one of the environmental factors affecting the local government. The public strongly desires information disclosure (Zhang et al., 2017). Thus, Zhang et al. (2017) outlined that the environmental factors include performance, external and internal pressures, supplier support, commercial dependence, commercial lack of certainty, work intensity, competition pressures, socio-cultural issues, government incentives, technical support infrastructure and access to quality ICT consulting services.

In the context of the MMDAs, environmental elements include the natural environment, citizens, companies and traditional rulers (Singla & Durga, 2015). Additionally, the demands of society and pressures from other related agencies and budgetary procedures influence the technology adoption of local government institutions such as MMDAs (Deephouse, 1996). Among these governance factors, many elements drive the spread of social media in developing nations, including the adoption of social media by peer departments, the private sector, legislative requirements and the lessons learned by other countries (Frambach & Schillewaert, 1999; Zhu et al., 2006). The variation in the extent of social media

adoption among government institutions can thus be linked to the disparity in resource availability and the external contexts in which the institutions operate (Knol & Stroeken, 2001).

# Methodology

This chapter utilises primary data—interviews conducted for selected leaders in MMDAs and secondary data—information from MMDAs websites in Ghana. For the primary data, the researchers conducted four (4) interviews with MMDAs in Ghana on the primary data. Nanumba South District Assembly, Tamale Metro Assembly, Kumbungu District Assembly and Gushegu Municipal were considered for this chapter. Table 6.1 provides information on the respondents interviewed. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling techniques. The table shows that four MMDAs representatives were interviewed, all within the age range of 37–51 years.

For the secondary data, the researchers, through the Google dialogue box, searched for the Facebook pages of MMDAs. The search words and terms were: name of MMDA, Facebook and District/Municipal/Metropolitan (e.g., Wassa East District assembly on Facebook). For Facebook, the symbol √ signifies that the assembly has a Facebook page but is inactive. In the case of websites and WhatsApp, the symbol √ indicates the MMDAs have a presence on those handles. Information on 4 out of the 16 regions was purposively sourced through an online search—Greater Accra Region, Ashanti Region, Eastern Region and the Northern Region. Table 6.2 provides information on the MMDAs selected for the study and their social media platforms.

**Table 6.1** Demographic data of interviewees

| MMDAs | Gender | Age |
|---|---|---|
| Nanumba South District assembly | Male | 37 |
| Tamale metro assembly | Male | 49 |
| Kumbungu District assembly | Male | 31 |
| Gushegu municipal | Male | 51 |

**Table 6.2**  List of selected MMDAs and social media handles (as of 16-01-2022)

| Region/district | Category | Facebook (Comments from citizenry) | WhatsApp | Website |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Greater Accra region** | | | | |
| Ablekuma central | Municipal | 726 | √ | √ |
| Ga South | Municipal | 1600 | √ | √ |
| Accra | Metropolitan | 36,919 | √ | √ |
| Tema metropolitan | Metropolitan | 838 | √ | √ |
| Ada West | District | 43 | √ | √ |
| Ningo-Prampram | District | 3000 | √ | √ |
| **Ashanti region** | | | | |
| Afigya-Kwabre north | District | 1300 | √ | √ |
| Ahafo-Ano north | Municipal | 524 | √ | √ |
| Akrofuom | District | 1356 | √ | √ |
| Asante-Akim central | Municipal | 607 | √ | √ |
| Juaben | Municipal | 591 | √ | √ |
| Kumasi | Metropolitan | 2800 | √ | √ |
| **Eastern Region** | | | | |
| Abuakwa north | Municipal | 402 | √ | √ |
| Abuakwa south | Municipal | 533 | √ | √ |
| Achiase | District | 1332 | √ | √ |
| Akuapim south | District | 514 | √ | √ |
| **Northern region** | | | | |
| Gushegu | Municipal | 292 | √ | √ |
| Karaga | District | 327 | √ | √ |
| Kpandai | District | 887 | √ | √ |
| Nanumba north | Municipal | 1200 | √ | √ |

Source: Online Media of MMDAs

# Findings and Discussions

Table 6.2 shows the list of selected MMDAs and the social media they adopt. Across the 20 MMDAs, they all use Facebook and WhatsApp and also have a website. This result shows that social media communication is an organisational culture in all the MMDAs selected and is used for communication between the local government and the citizens. The usage of social media by the MMDAs is influenced by several factors, as observed by some of the interviews held with the selected MMDAs. "information sharing", "quick access to information", "cost-effectiveness, and the opportunity to reach a larger audience" were identified from the interview responses. One of the interviewees from Tamale Metropolitan said:

"It increases access to information in record time, … and the availability of … quicker social mobilisation tool". This observation further emphasises some of the arguments in this chapter that the availability of tools will influence the adoption of social media in local government institutions such as the MMDAs (Ndodo & Dhurup, 2010; Li, 2010), as proposed by the TOE framework (Defitri et al., 2020; Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). Also, the availability of an audience willing to be served through social media network sites further encourages the adoption.

Some of the challenges experienced in the adoption of social media by the MMDAs were quality internet data access, cyber insecurity, poor network and inadequate financing for digitisation of the communication process via social media. This was observed in one of the interviews:

> Internet data access … poses a challenge to some participants, thereby limiting their access to otherwise critical public information that probably has an expiry; some abuse the platform by sharing unrelated or irrelevant content, network dependant is also an issue etc
> … Tamale Metro Assembly/M/49

Similarly, a lack of technologically oriented skill gaps is also being experienced in some of the MMDAs: "most of the senior members of the Assembly are not conversant with online stuff and hence, will mostly opt for paper works which affect the speed of Information sharing" (Kumbungu District Assembly/M/31). Other challenges mentioned are a misinterpretation of information (Gushegu Municipal/M/51). The responses from the interview data on the motivations and challenges of social media adoption in Ghana conform to the arguments of the TOE that the technology, organisation and environmental context of an organisation will determine the adoption or otherwise of social media. The TOE had argued that the availability of digitally skilled personnel (Technology), resources within the organisation (Organisation) and external demands (environment) would either influence or drive the adoption of social media.

In Ghana's MMDAs, the need to meet the demand of a digital-oriented audience (environment) and the perceived benefit, as suggested by Sharif

et al. (2015), motivates the adoption of social media. When local government perceives that the adoption of social media will create more gains, they will be quick to adopt such social media platforms. The challenges of resource unavailability, cyber-bullying, poor internet network or lack of access conform to the TOEs—organisational context challenge and the perceived risk suggested by Sharif et al. (2015). The fear of cyber insecurity constitutes a risk factor for the organisation.

Although several MMDAs are adopting social media platforms in Ghana, there is still a need to invest in infrastructural amenities in MMDAs across Ghana. Also, there is a need to train the employees on digital usage for effective administration among MMDAs—this will cast away the fears and equip staff members on using digital tools.

## Suggestions for Social Media Adoption in Africa

Based on the primary and second data observed in this chapter, the following suggestions are made for the adoption of social media in public sector organisations.

### Invest in Infrastructure and People

The government must invest in ICT infrastructure that will further enable the adoption of social media for effective governance from national to local levels. Therefore, infrastructure that can ease social media usage and enhance the outcomes of local government activities in Ghana and beyond should be encouraged. Also, infrastructures without people to operate or use them effectively will not achieve the desired goals. Therefore, the government, from national to local levels, should organise digital training skills for staff members, especially the older generation struggling to catch up with the increasing technology-driven work arrangement. With adequate investment in people and infrastructure, local governments such as MMDAs will perform optimally in Africa.

## Continuing Use of Social Media

The rapid and continuing use of the internet and social media is one element that has prompted every government to use social media (Nam, 2012). MMDAs must tailor their social media strategy to fit their resources and competencies rather than copying other governments, self-promotion or political marketing. Instead, it needs to be focused, realistic, context-specific and feasible to put into practice because social media serves as a tool for empowerment and leadership (Agbozo & Spassov, 2019; Aikins et al., 2022).

## Transparency and Confidence

Government transparency and public confidence are two factors that contribute to citizens' trust in the government. Governments are also encouraged to use social media to incorporate categories such as openness, transparency and accountability to the citizens, communities and firms in the country (Criado et al., 2013). Social media can restore public faith in government, and the government can also take advantage of social media platforms (Aikins et al., 2022). Social media can make real-time communication between people and the government possible, accelerating the dissemination of information while simultaneously promoting accountability and openness (Agbozo & Spassov, 2019; Roeingtam, 2020).

## Involvement of the Stakeholders

Using social media could lead to more effective collaboration between parties. Involvement in government activities can be fostered through social media, and the resulting bridge between the state and the people can be built (Agbozo & Spassov, 2019). MMDAs can urge all stakeholders to participate and express their views on various issues using social media.

## Involvement in the Community/Civic Involvement

In addition, social media has an impact on civic participation. The government in emerging markets can openly communicate with the public and solicit their feedback using social media. These technologies allow public organisations to communicate with individuals, other parts of their organisation and groups. With the rise of social media, Kamp et al. (2016) claim that civil society can use it to organise people into action. People can get linked, exchange ideas, build networks and organise for collaborative actions through social media. A "digital civic society" may have evolved due to the internet and social media proliferation. Social media campaigns have brought previously neglected issues into the public eye and mobilised support and resources in the past several years. Arshad and Khurram (2020) claim that online involvement and confidence rise when governments supply more quality information on social media. One of the reasons many governments around the world have adopted social media is its potential to promote communication between government and citizens.

## Initiatives

Some citizens and non-governmental organisations have taken the initiative and built services for the public using social media technology. For example, governments in emerging economies should use social media as a community monitoring tool that allows the public to report service delivery issues to local government authorities (Roeingtam, 2020).

## Efforts to Promote Policy

Smith (2010) argues that citizens must be involved in order to implement policies that have a significant impact on them. Increasing citizen participation in policymaking can also help to improve the bonds between people and make it easier for them to work together. Furthermore, emerging markets can use social media to mobilise the public, open up and

increase public participation in local administrations that contribute to the growth of local governance (Waheduzzaman & As-Saber, 2015).

### Awareness

In the wake of the global pandemic, social media conveyed the word to millions of internet users who donated to disaster relief efforts. It positively impacted people's lives and was a catalyst for volunteerism (Leavey, 2013). As a result of social media, the government has been reinvigorated and has become more efficient, transparent, responsible and open to the active participation of individuals.

### Political Will

Social media has been critical in spreading political messages to the citizenry (Amenyeawu, 2021). According to Morozov (2011), social media tools help political activists achieve their power demands as they can back up authoritarian regimes in the digital age. Most governments used more advanced methods to filter and monitor web-based content and the websites of opposition movements (Morozov, 2011). For instance, most political parties use social media for their political campaigns. Mensah (2017) and Oginni and Moitui (2015) argue that citizens may be left with just social media to influence government, fight corruption or protect their rights. Government, MMDAs and state organisations can, for example, use internet platforms to disseminate information and solicit public participation (Kamp et al., 2016).

## Conclusion and Implications

This chapter conceptually and empirically explores the type of social media employed by local governments focusing on MMDAs in an emerging economy. The chapter highlights the importance and challenges of social media usage, lessons learned from studies relating to why the use of

social media is vital and the factors contributing to adopting social media using the Technological-Organisational-Environment (TOE) framework. The chapter further uses primary data (interviews) of four MMDAs to ascertain the drivers and challenges of social media adoption among MMDAs in Ghana. We find that social media usage cut across the MMDAs in Ghana, and most MMDAs use only two social media handles (Facebook and WhatsApp) to engage citizens, communities and firms. Based on the TOE, the finding reveals that most staff at the MMDAs is unable to use IT tools for social media activities, and the internet connectivity and computers are unusable for some of the MMDAs' staff for effective service delivery to the citizens, communities and businesses. Also, the need for the citizens to be served through social media and the perceived benefits of social media has driven the adoption of social media among MMDAs. The chapter concludes that social media deployment can be achievable by investing in technology-driven infrastructure and staff training, especially for the older generation who are not aligned with digital tools.

Also, concerning issues of competence of employees, we recommend that the MMDAs employ skilled staff to take up the social media responsibility. There should also be in-house training on using social media in the government sector for governance. This training should cover planning, Management Information System (MIS), budget, human resource, information services, finance, coordinating directors and the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives (MMDCEs). Moreover, governments can help ordinary citizens gain practical ICT skills by encouraging public-private partnerships in the ICT industry.

Regarding the technology capability/factors, MMDAs should ensure that computers and internet infrastructure are available to deploy for use by employees and citizens. MMDAs can also use more than one social media platform, such as Twitter, Google+, Telegram and Instagram, together with Facebook and WhatsApp at each decentralised department and agency. MMDAs would allow local citizens to communicate and conduct transactions with authorities and receive services from these portals to avoid the current balkanised decentralised system, which only involves a delegation of residual decision-making authority.

For the environmental factors, MMDAs should create citizens' awareness that they have deployed social media such as Facebook to share information with the public. Top management at MMDAs (MMDCEs[1] and DCD[2]) must deliberately oversee key officeholders responsible for simplifying the usage of the social media initiatives. These bureaucrats must sign performance contracts that specify their task to be accomplished within a specified period. In addition, MMDAs in Ghana could use social media to promote policies such as one village, one dump, one district, one factory and one million dollars for each constituency, free Senior High School (SHS), E-Block (community day SHS), school feeding, National Health Insurance scheme and youth employment agency, among others.

Social media usage can help include all individuals and citizens in decision-making, regardless of gender, age, disability, ethnic group, race, religion, origin or economic status. Again, it would promote equal opportunity and reduce inequalities by disseminating information to all individuals and listening to the voice of people. Further, using social media by the MMDAs can lead to accountability and transparency at all levels and ensure everyone's inclusive participation in decision-making and governance.

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[1] Metropolitan, Municipal and District Chief Executives.

[2] District Coordinating Director.

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# Optimising Social Media and Marketing Communication Strategies for Voter Education: A Way Forward for Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria

**Silk Ugwu Ogbu**

## Introduction

Although pundits agree that Africa is the next frontier of economic and social-cultural revolution, the realisation of that great potential is considerably threatened by political instability, incessant violence, weak institutions and poor governance. The growth and sustenance of democracy in Africa depend on the capability of the electoral process to create a level-playing ground that allows citizens to 'freely' elect their representatives or remove them from office when necessary.

While it may not be a magic wand, education is the most potent tool for breaking down the walls of ignorance, suspicion, apathy, violence and other obstacles hindering electoral processes across the world. In Nigeria,

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since the establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) by Decree No. 17 of 1998, now an Act of the National Assembly, the Commission has made notable progress in conducting elections, especially in the progressive adoption of technology. However, one area where more improvement is necessary and desirable is the intensification of voter education. Without minimising the enormous work INEC has done so far in that space, it is evident that so much more is required to achieve significant changes in the perception and behaviour of voters in Nigeria. Some of the challenges confronting the Commission in this area include paucity of funds, lack of human resources and requisite skills, inadequate support from the government and other relevant organisations, use of ineffective communication channels or messages, deliberate sabotage of its efforts by self-serving political actors, and low level of literacy, cooperation and trust from the general public (Okoro & Nwafor, 2013; Osunyikanmi, 2018; Amata, 2021). Given the enormous obstacles hampering the Commission's efforts in achieving voter education objectives in Nigeria, it is imperative to rethink its current approach and strategically develop actionable solutions. In that respect, this chapter explores how INEC can optimise social media and integrated marketing communication (IMC) strategies for driving voter education campaigns.

Social media is the medium of the moment. Indeed, they represent the future of communications. Although INEC has a presence across many social media platforms and has used them for voter engagements since 2011 (Zoaka, 2021), the Commission's level of activity on social media in terms of stakeholder engagements and voter education is still considerably low (Ayeni, 2019). That is hardly understandable, considering the medium's cost-effectiveness and potential to reach most Nigerian voters today. Within that context, this chapter examines the rationale for adopting social media for most of INEC's voter education programmes now and in the future.

This chapter further interrogates the extant philosophy behind the design of voter education and other public enlightenment campaigns in Nigeria. It examines the possibilities of injecting market-oriented principles for improving their outcomes. Undoubtedly, the traditional top-down, asymmetrical information dissemination approach used by many

public sector organisations, including INEC, has its limitations and has proven ineffective for achieving voter education objectives. Therefore, it is time for the Commission to explore market-oriented communication techniques such as audience segmentation, edutainment messages, brand positioning, etc., to incentivise behavioural change amongst Nigeria voters. The chapter argues that adopting market communication strategies and approaches, such as advertising, public relations, sales promotion and direct marketing, is essential for improving both the brand image of INEC and the impact of its voter education campaigns.

In examining the issues relevant to this discourse, the chapter adopts a conceptual approach, and the analysis of data is drawn from secondary sources. The first part provides the theoretical frame for the study. The second part drills down to the essentials of adopting social media channels and marketing communication principles in voter education campaigns in Nigeria. In the last and concluding part, the chapter states its position and makes some recommendations.

# Theoretical Framework

This chapter is framed by the thoughts espoused in the two theories examined below.

## Technological Determinism Theory

The theory of Technological Determinism (TD) is often traced to Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929), the American sociologist whose early work focused on the link between technology and the evolution of social structures. Over time, scholars expanded that idea to confer deterministic powers over social systems and how they function on technology and how it evolves (Hauer, 2017). The principal idea behind their arguments is that technological development is the motor that controls economic, political and social change. For example, Technological Determinists believe that society's transition from orality to literacy is underpinned by the advancement in printing technology (McLuhan, 1962). Similarly,

digital technology, encompassing the internet and social media, appears to be revolutionising politics, economy and society today (Allwell & Ogbu, 2018).

From the perspective that technology profoundly affects our lives and how we relate to each other, the theory postulates that social problems can be resolved through appropriate technologies (Hauer, 2017). Therefore, communication-related issues, including voter education, can be addressed technologically. Against this background, Media Determinism (MD) theory emerged as an offshoot of Technological Determinism. MD theorists assume that advancements in media and communication technologies are the primary determinants of how society evolves and adapts over time. One of the foremost proponents of MD, Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian-born sociologist, contends that in respect to communication, the technology or medium is as important as the content—"the medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1964). In other words, the 'content' of communication cannot be viewed independently of its medium. Other proponents of MD suggest that modern society has become so mediatised that interactions in the realm of politics, economy, religion, education, etc., submit to media logic and the dictates of media and communication technologies (Hjarvard, 2008). Thus, the evolution of the internet, which enabled the emergence of smartphones and social media, for example, is changing our world in terms of how people connect or relate to each other, transact business, worship, acquire knowledge or do almost everything else (Hjarvard, 2013; Allwell & Ogbu, 2018). McLuhan's prediction that the world will become a 'global village' was based on the premise that advances in media technology will increase the world's interconnectivity and interconnectedness—ultimately shrinking it to a 'small' community of people dispersed by geographical boundaries but interconnected by technology (McLuhan, 1964).

The relevance of Technological Determinism to this chapter relates mainly to how social media or social networking sites (SNSs) affect significant dimensions of human economic, social and political behaviour. In other words, what role can social media play in the dissemination or ability of voter education messages to influence voting behaviours in Nigeria? To what extent can INEC leverage SNSs and strategic communications protocols to enhance its corporate image, reputation and

relationship with stakeholders? To what degree does the continuous improvement of the electoral process in Nigeria depend on INEC's capability to deploy emerging electronic voting technologies? These questions draw attention to the strength of Technological Determinism arguments and the inseparability of social systems from technology.

However, some critics of TD argue that even technology itself is socially determined and that its advancement does not occur outside of the social milieu (Adler, 2008). That means that social systems and technology co-evolve through a non-deterministic and bi-directional process. Thus, the application and effects of technology on society are socially constructed and regulated (Hauer, 2017). Sullivan (2009) argues that technology has limitations and negative consequences that must be socially mitigated to protect humanity. According to Kte'pi (2011), McLuhan's famous 'global village' has been destroyed!—shrunk to a large building with several apartments where residents share common spaces but live in isolation, not caring for each other anymore. The implication is that media and communication technologies can transform and navigate social structures from 'aggregation' to 'fragmentation' if unbridled by human values. This suggests that ethics and effective planning must guide the use of social media in voter education by INEC.

## Social Marketing Theory

The challenges associated with changing human behaviour have been of great concern to businesses, academics and public administrators for a very long time. Social Marketing (SM) theory encompasses other theories that seek ways of achieving positive transformation of society by inducing a change in the behaviour of target audiences through commercial marketing techniques. The theory's origin is traceable to the work published in 1951 by G. D. Wiebe, 'Merchandising Commodities and Citizenship on Television', which first posed the question: "Why can't you sell citizenship and rational thinking like you sell soap?" While recognising that citizenship is not soap, Wiebe (1951, p. 679) argues that "efforts to 'sell' broad social objectives via radio or television are not likely to succeed unless the essential conditions for effective merchandising

exist or can be made to exist". Although Wiebe's rhetorical question stimulated earlier conversations around the adaptation of commercial marketing principles in the campaign for social change, the emergence of Social Marketing as a theory is associated with Philip Kottler and Gerald Zartman. The work published by these scholars in 1971, "Social Marketing: An Approach to Planned Social Change", heralded the surge of academic enquiry into the applicability of social marketing assumptions and their adoption by public sector organisations for social campaigns. The major thrust of Kotler and Zaltman's (1971) exposition is that behavioural change programmes or the *selling* of 'social goods' by public sector organisations should be pursued by planning and applying market-tested principles. In that respect, the essential components of Social Marketing (SM) theory can be summarised as follows:

1. A consumer orientation to realise organisational (social) goals
2. An emphasis on the voluntary exchanges of goods and services between providers and consumers
3. Research in audience analysis and segmentation strategies
4. The use of formative research in product and message design and the pretesting of these materials
5. An analysis of distribution (or communication) channels
6. Use of the marketing mix—using and blending product, price, place and promotion characteristics in intervention planning and implementation
7. A process tracking system with both integrative and control functions
8. A management process that involves problem analysis, planning, implementation and feedback functions (Craig & Flora, 1988).

SM theory offers a framework for designing, implementing and evaluating information campaigns by public sector organisations, such as INEC. It seeks to identify the information needs of a target audience and ways of making that information accessible and acceptable to them in a cost-effective and result-oriented manner (French & Gordon, 2015). In other words, the theory focuses on identifying the various social and psychological barriers that hinder the flow of information through the mass media and offers ideas on how to overcome them to inspire desired

change in behaviours and society (Odiase, 2021). SM theory canvasses for the infusion of creativity and innovative thinking rather than depending on public service announcements and cold communication channels for disseminating crucial information such as voter education messages (Bajracharya, 2018). Central to that prescription is the need for audience profiling and segmentation, awareness creation, message reinforcement, stimulation of interest through edutainment, marketing mix principles, and other implementation, monitoring and evaluation strategies to achieve desired results. In social marketing, the '4 Ps of Marketing'—product, price, place and promotion—are recognised as vital components of a campaign, just like in commercial marketing, but they differ considerably in terms of their meaning and application as follows (Table 7.1).

SM theory offers a practical guide to administrators of non-profits and public sector organisations, such as INEC, on improving their social-oriented campaigns. Thus, to change the behaviour of voters via education, INEC needs to profile and segment the voters in Nigeria, design messages that are appropriate for each segment, adopt suitable channels for 'selling' and reinforcing those messages, and establish adequate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating outcomes. In other words, INEC

**Table 7.1** Commercial marketing versus social marketing

| 4Ps of marketing | Commercial marketing | Social marketing |
|---|---|---|
| Product | Goods and services | Behaviour change |
| Price | Cost of the product or service | Cost of changing the behaviour |
| Place | Distribution strategies through which the target audience can access the product/service | Channel strategies for disseminating behaviour change messages and making the adoption of the new behaviours as easy and convenient as possible |
| Promotion | Content design and promotion strategies to inform the target audience about the product, its availability and desirable qualities via TV, radio, internet ads and so forth | Messaging strategies and platforms used in promoting and reinforcing behaviour change, including the use of edutainment, SNSs and other mass communication strategies |

Source: Adapted from Odiase (2021)

should 'sell' the desired voting behaviour to Nigerians the same way Unilever Nigeria Plc sells 'Omo' detergent to their customers in a competitive market space. Although it is hardly the orientation of public sector organisations in Africa, it makes sense for them to consider the prescriptions of the SM theorists, primarily because of the value and benefits those social campaigns bring to society and humanity.

Nevertheless, some criticisms have trailed the introduction of SM principles in the prorogation of social change campaigns, such as voter education. Some scholars note that the lines between social and commercial marketing are blurred and can confuse practitioners, leading to the excessive and improper use of commercial marketing techniques in social campaigns (Truong et al., 2019). Others argue that too much creativity in content design, especially the increasing combination of educational and entertainment narratives, affect the purity of the messages and cause interpretation problems for even the most discerning audience (Naganandini et al., 2011; Lefebvre, 2013). Also, some scholars reject the use of SM theory in mass communication studies and practice because of the alleged misalignment between their core principles (Levit et al., 2016; Manikam & Russell-Bennett, 2016).

## Social Media as a Tool for Scaling Voter Education in Nigeria

Social media is a concept for which no clear or widely acceptable definition exists. With the speed at which its technology is evolving, it is difficult to define the concept in terms of precise boundaries or functions anymore. Social media technologies include a wide range of personal computers (PC) and mobile-based platforms that continue to be developed, launched, re-launched, abandoned and ignored every day in different parts of the world, at varying levels of public awareness (Obar & Wildman, 2015). Social media generally refers to digital foundations of information created, originated, disseminated and applied by users or consumers, educating each other about products, services, brands, personalities and issues (Ahmed & Raziq, 2017). Social media may also be

described as online content created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies to disseminate information across geographical boundaries and provide interaction among people (Okoro & Nwafor, 2013). According to Carr and Hayes (2015), social media are internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present with broad and narrow audiences, either synchronously or asynchronously, to derive value from user-generated content (UGC) and the interaction with others. Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010, p. 61) definition of social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allows the creation and exchange of *user-generated content*" is, perhaps, one of the most quoted in literature because of two significant reasons. First, the definition captures the dynamic and transformative nature of Web 2.0 technology which enables and continues to fuel the evolution of social media across the globe. Secondly, it highlights social media's 'social' dimension, which encapsulates the production, consumption and exchange of user-generated content (UGC).

Web 2.0 is a term that describes the era (starting from about 2004) in the evolution of web technology when software developers transited from solely creating and publishing Web 1.0 pages to collaboratively co-creating, modifying and sharing the content of websites with all users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Therefore, social media is not a breakthrough innovation on its own, but rather a part of evolving technology, empowered by Web 2.0—which is underpinned by the creation, modification and exchange of UGC on the internet and the shift from simple information retrieval to interactivity, interoperability and collaboration (Campbell et al., 2011). The diffusion of that innovation catalysed the emergence of various social media platforms, including blogs, Wikis and social networking sites (SNSs)—such as Myspace, Facebook and Twitter.

Although SNSs have become the most widely known social media platforms today, it is imperative to note that social media is more than just Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube and Instagram. The classification of social media and their various functions is provided in Table 7.2.

While the classification of social media above is by no means exhaustive, it gives a sense of how diversified the platforms and the services they render could be and how blurred the boundaries between them are

**Table 7.2** Classification of social media

| Categories | Services | Websites |
|---|---|---|
| Communication model | Blogging | WordPress, Blogger |
| | Microblogging | Twitter, Me2day, Tumblr |
| | Social networking | Facebook, LinkedIn, Ning, Cyworld, MySpace, Google+ |
| | Event networking | Meetup.com. Upcoming |
| | Instant messaging | KakaoTalk, WhatsApp, Line, Viber |
| | Video-conferencing | Skype, Google Hangout |
| Collaboration model | Wikis | Pbworks, Evemote, Twiki |
| | Social bookmarking | Delicious, Scoop.it, Diigo, Pinterest, Stumbleupon, Digg, Flipboard, Readwrite |
| | Reviews and opinions | Eopinions, Ciiy-data.com, Kindle.amazon |
| | Community, Q&A | Yahoo! Answers, Askville, Spring.me, Quora |
| Sharing Model | Photo | Flickr, Instagram |
| | Video | YouTube, Vimeo, Vine |
| | Livestreaming | Ustream.tv, Justin.tv |
| | Audio and music | iTunes, Last.fm, Soundcloud |
| | Documents, files, books, magazines | Scribd, Issmi, Slideshare, 4shared, Google Docs |
| Entertainment Model | Virtual worlds | Second Life, The Sims |
| | Game sharing and play | Miniclip, Kongregated, Anipang, Candcrash |

Source: Kutlu et al. (2018)

becoming as the Web 2.0 technology continues to evolve. For example, a microblogging site, Twitter, currently enables photo and video sharing like Instagram and YouTube. YouTube, which started as a video sharing site, is also fast becoming a tool for entertainment, education and communication among users.

Regardless of the categorisations, all social media provide platforms for social connection, interaction and exchanges between users, creating various online communities across different interests, identities and geographical boundaries. With the convergence of media platforms in portable and mobile devices, social media blossomed over the years—redefining the essential media functions of informing, educating and entertaining citizens.

Ngai et al. ([2015](#)) argue that the best way to unpack the concept of social media is by separating the compound term into two: 'social' and 'media'. Thus, the 'social' part refers to the activities carried out among people, whereas 'media' refers to the internet-enabled tools and technologies used to carry out such activities. Although it may seem too simplistic, separating *social* from *media* could help one deconstruct and analyse the opportunities and challenges surrounding social media adoption by INEC for voter education in Nigeria.

## Optimising the *Social* and *Media* Dimensions of Social Media for Voter Education

From the social angle, voter education should be everyone's business. Although Section 2(a) of the 2010 Electoral Act (as amended) mandates INEC to drive the process, the Commission cannot succeed in performing that task without the support and cooperation of the Nigerian people. Voter education covers a broad spectrum of information aimed at guiding the conduct of voters, including details about their rights and responsibilities, voter registration processes, political parties and their candidates, all relevant voting procedures—pre, during and after elections, the role of INEC, election monitors and security agencies, civil society organisations and all other political actors, and so on. INEC may not have the resources required to conduct an extensive and comprehensive voter education campaign across the country, even if it wants to do so. To make any reasonable impact on educating voters about their rights and obligations and the procedures of the entire electoral process, INEC needs to work with and through people. That is where social media can be most helpful. By distilling and promoting voter education messages on relevant social media channels, INEC can easily set the agenda and allow individuals to expand the conversation to their various social platforms with UGC. As people break down those messages by themselves and exchange their views on them via social interactions, voter education is scaled and cascaded in a faster and more cost-efficient manner. Also, INEC can strategically deploy social media to gain insight into the needs,

expectations and concerns of the electorates. IDEA (2014, p. 15) suggests that Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) can do that by leveraging the following tools:

- Online quizzes
- Online polls
- Keeping pages open to allow followers to post or 'tweet' questions and comments
- Allowing users to create and comment on blog posts or articles
- Posting questions that encourage online debates
- Hosting information sharing or question/answer sessions
- Allowing users to post videos
- Using analysis software to identify keywords being used
- Monitoring social media platforms and developing immediate responses to issues of concern.

Social interaction or networking is a currency that can confer credibility and authenticity to voter education messages of EMBs. That is because people speak to themselves using preferred communication styles and platforms—rather than merely listening to the top-down instructions conveyed through distant channels. The *social* nature of social media is significant for voter education purposes because it offers far more opportunities for personalising and cascading messages than the impersonal and asymmetrical mass communication channels that are frequently used by many EMBs in Africa, including INEC (Ayeni, 2019). Indeed, the impact of social media on the creation of political awareness and affiliations is profound. As social media increases in popularity and scope, the social benefits derivable by voters must not be underestimated because the medium provides a platform for everyone to communicate and make decisions on social, cultural and political issues. (Zoaka, 2021)

On the *media* side, social media is powered by far more modern and superior technology, better suited for driving voter education campaigns than the traditional media often deployed by INEC. Several scholars agree that the continuous introduction of technology by INEC to manage all its processes, including communication, voter education and electoral protocols, remains the only feasible option for improving elections in Nigeria (Ayeni, 2019; Zoaka, 2021; Sani, 2021). As Osunyikanmi

(2018, p. 199) notes, "technology is increasingly playing an invaluable role in encouraging citizens to participate in the political process. It makes information dissemination easy and fast. Thus, political culture and political education are simultaneously being promoted by technology". The gubernatorial elections conducted in November 2021 in Anambra State by INEC indicate the role technology can play in reforming Nigeria's electoral processes and future outcomes. Social media was central to information dissemination, social mobilisation, public enlightenment and election monitoring in the face of palpable fear and uncertainties arising from the poor security situation and threats against voters from the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Some of the key features of the social media technology that can facilitate voter education in Nigeria include its accessibility, interactivity, affordability, speed, adaptability, reach and mobility (Ngai et al., 2015).

Following advancements in media and communication technologies, social media are accessible to most voters in Nigeria today, many of whom are young and literate. As of Thursday, December 30, 2021, the population of Nigeria was estimated at 213,747,187, out of which 111,148,537 or 52.0% live in urban areas (Worldometer, 2021). A further breakdown of the population data shows that about 43.49% are aged between 0 and 14 years, while those aged between 15 and 64 years and 65 years and above make up 53.77% and 2.74% of the population, respectively (Statista, 2021b). Out of the 84,004,084 registered voters in the 2019 general elections, over 75% were below 60 years (Premium Times, 2019). That suggests that most of the Nigerian voting population is young, mobile and enlightened enough to access information on social media. Moreover, it indicates that the number of Nigerian voters communicating on social media will continue to rise as those digital natives below the age of 18 years grow to join the voting population in the future.

As of July 2021, over 108 million Nigerians were using the internet, representing 51% of the population and expected to rise to 60% by 2026—a significant increase from the 43% recorded in 2017 (Statista, 2021a). Furthermore, available statistics reveal that

> Nigeria currently has 187.9 million mobile connections. That means that 90 per cent of Nigeria's 208 million population in 2020 may have mobile

phones. About 104 million, or just about 50 per cent of Nigerians, are regular internet users. About 33 million (15.8 per cent of Nigerians) are active social media users as of January 2021. About 93 per cent of users accessing the internet do so via their mobile devices. That represents a 22.2 per cent growth from January 2020—less than a year. (Premium Times, 2021b)

From the data presented above, it is evident that Nigeria's communication landscape is rapidly changing. As the advances in digital communication technologies continue, more Nigerians will likely migrate to social media platforms and increasingly use mobile devices for communication and other forms of interaction. That is not to say that social media will replace traditional media channels of communication. On the contrary, social media could integrate them and enhance their effectiveness. Presently, virtually all the newspapers, radio and television stations in Nigeria are active on social media and are gradually modifying their operating procedures to inject more input and interaction with their target audiences. Therefore, INEC and other EMBs in Africa could focus more energy and resources on leveraging social media for voter education purposes. Unfortunately, that does not seem to be the case at the moment. Although INEC has a presence on Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms, it does not appear that the organisation is actively using those channels to expand voter education campaigns.

For example, the umpire joined Twitter in December 2010 but so far has a record of 1.8 M Followers and 17 K Tweets (@inecnigeria, 2022). On the other hand, a young Nigerian pop artiste, Davido, who joined Twitter in November 2010, has already garnered 10.1 M Followers and tweeted 52.2 K times (@davido, 2022). On Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, INEC has the potential to engage the 84 million voters registered on its database more actively than its current record shows. The majority of those registered voters are young, mobile and willing to interact with INEC on these social media platforms, but the EMB appears not ready or available. Ayeni (2019) wonders why INEC, with contact details of over 80 million registered voters ahead of the 2019 elections, was less active in the social media space than the Central Bank of Nigeria, Guaranty Trust Bank, Channels TV, Wizkid and Senator Bukola Saraki.

Like many other public sector organisations, INEC's potential to scale its communication and voter education campaigns through social media technologies has remained grossly under-utilised. From the perspective of Technological Determinism, this is a huge mistake that must be corrected urgently. The big question, however, is how?

To optimise the use of social media for voter education, EMBs such as INEC need to articulate a strategy focused on clearly defined purpose, audience, methods and risks. According to IDEA (2014, p. 21), a viable plan for social media adoption by EMBs must address the following questions:

1. Why do we want to engage through social media? What are our purposes and goals?
2. What do we believe can be improved or addressed by social media? What added value do we seek from such engagement?
3. What do our organisational resources look like? What assets can we work with?
4. What kinds of conversations are we interested in stimulating/participating in? Why are we interested in these, and how do they relate to our goals?
5. Which different target groups do we want to engage with? What platforms are they using?
6. Why would our target audience engage on our platform(s)? What do we have to offer?
7. Who else is trying to engage with our target groups? How can we be aware of their discourse? Can we partner with any of these actors to increase our outreach?
8. How do we recruit followers to our social media platforms, and how do we maintain their interest?
9. What type of content should we share, and how do we produce it?
10. Are there any specific events or dates that we would like to develop a special campaign around?
11. What potential scenarios do we need to prepare for? What are the potential risks?

However, it is pertinent to clarify that social media is not a silver bullet that can solve all INEC's communication and voter education problems. It will be wrong to assume that all Nigerians are reachable through social media because of its growing popularity and utility. Currently, over 40% of Nigerians live in rural areas with little or no access to basic infrastructures, including roads, potable water, reliable electricity and internet (Worldometer, 2021). Even where infrastructures exist, 51% of the population (more than 105 million people), as of November 2020, still live in extreme poverty and cannot afford to pay for data, internet access or electricity with an income of less than $1.90 (N855) a day (Erezi, 2020).

Undoubtedly, social media offers enormous opportunities to expand voter education campaigns, but they also have inherent weaknesses and challenges. By its nature, social media technology allows the modification and easy dissemination of UGC, which may be prone to manipulation by unscrupulous users and political actors. The absence of gatekeepers on social media platforms implies no control over the quality and authenticity of information disseminated across social networks. As a result, mischievous political actors have derailed and undermined voter education messages from EMBs with various types of falsehood, misinformation, hate messages and fake news. Several studies have associated social media with the proliferation of fake news, electoral violence, ethnic rivalry, cyberbullying, insecurity and voter apathy in many countries worldwide (Okoro & Nwafor, 2013; Sanders, 2016; Osunyikanmi, 2018; Ogbu, 2020a).

In the United States of America—one of the most advanced democracies globally—social media was linked to the near-collapse of its electoral system during the 2016 Presidential Election (Sanders, 2016). Facebook, Google and other social networking sites are increasingly facing investigations in several countries for privacy infringements and various forms of anti-trust offences. On June 4, 2021, the Federal Government of Nigeria, in a curious and unprecedented move, suspended the operations of the microblogging and social networking service Twitter in Nigeria. According to the Minister of Information, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, the government took the step because the platform was being used "for activities capable of undermining Nigeria's corporate existence" (Bagwaiya, 2021). This case brings to the fore the risks associated with social media

and how EMBs can mitigate them in voter education campaigns throughout the election cycles. Effective ways, according to IDEA (2014, p. 41), of engaging an electoral audience on social media platforms can take many forms, including:

- EMBs posing questions which can be answered directly on or through the platform
- Posting information in a way that encourages followers to give their points of view on
- an issue
- Responding to questions or concerns as an avenue of customer service
- Hosting debates with chat functions to allow audience participation
- Having live question and answer sessions
- Cooperating with other organisations through linking to their work and having them link to yours
- Creating polls or surveys
- Posting quizzes
- Posting pictures for comment
- Posting photo journals of election day or other events
- Creating partnerships with other organisations to cross-post information for wider access
- Posting infographics (visual representations of information, such as graphs, maps and timelines)
- Creating short films.

Regardless of the challenges of using social media for political communication, the advantages outweigh their shortcomings (Ogbu, 2020b). New technologies come with shortfalls, which are managed or corrected over time. Social media is no different. Therefore, Nigeria should join the rest of the world in brainstorming to develop lasting solutions to social media pitfalls while leveraging its enormous potential for energising voter education and other public communication initiatives. The ongoing attempt through the National Assembly to gag SNSs operations in the country or their outright ban, just as in the case of Twitter, appear to be knee-jerk reactions, tantamount to 'throwing the baby out with the bad water.'

# Leveraging Marketing Communications for Driving Voter Education Campaigns in Nigeria

Elections are central to political stability and the sustenance of democracy worldwide. In Africa, most of the protracted conflicts and violent insurrections destabilising the continent today are traceable to flawed elections or the repression of the right of citizens to elect their leaders in free, fair and credible elections. Indeed, flawed elections or electoral processes portend great danger to society and human development. They give rise to conflicts, bad governance, poor policy choices, underdevelopment, social exclusion, marginalisation, moral decadence, corruption and many other vices.

Undoubtedly, voter education is the panacea for improving the quality of elections and the behaviour of actors across the entire electoral process. In Nigeria, for example, INEC can leverage voter education to combat most of the problems affecting the electoral process. Some of them include voter apathy, vote-buying, electoral rigging or falsification of results, electoral violence, hate messages, fake news, malicious campaigns and other forms of misconduct by political actors. In other words, INEC can use voter education to induce behavioural change or reinforce desirable behaviours among political actors to improve the quality of elections and the electoral process in Nigeria.

This chapter has made a case for the adoption of social media and other relevant communication technologies by INEC in propagating voter education campaigns in Nigeria. However, achieving success will entail more than simply making the appropriate medium or communication channel choice. The 'message' or content design for voter education programmes is as important as the media used for communicating them.

Unfortunately, most public sector organisations in Nigeria, including INEC, do not pay sufficient attention to the design and implementation of social campaign messages or the measurement of the impact of their communication spend against set objectives with market-oriented metrics. Many public sector organisations, especially in Africa, blast and repeat the same social campaign messages to everyone through traditional

mass communication channels like radio, television and newspapers. Those contents are hardly impactful because they do not respond to the varied characteristics of the target audience or to the different ways people access, interpret and use information. Thus, there is a need for public sector organisations to review and upgrade their communication approach. In the twenty-first century, organisational communication is becoming increasingly strategic and result-oriented. Suppose public sector organisations want to achieve the same efficiency level as those in the private sector, the former will need to adopt competitive and market-oriented principles in their communication and project implementation protocols. That is the core position of Social Marketing theory.

However, some salient questions that require answers include: how can public sector organisations, such as INEC, adopt or apply marketing communication strategies to drive social campaigns like voter education? What are the core elements of this approach, and to what extent does it differ from the traditional or dominant communication methods in the public sector? Are there real possibilities of any significant change in the behaviour of Nigerian voters arising from a change in INEC's communication approach to voter education?

To throw some light at the questions raised above, we can hypothetically envisage how INEC can address the problem of voter apathy in Nigeria, for example, with market-oriented voter education campaigns. Over time, it appears that the participation of Nigerians in elections has been dwindling, reflecting growing apathy, disenchantment and a loss of confidence in the electoral process. In an interview granted to the press and members of civil society organisations in February 2021, INEC's Chairman, Professor Mahmood Yakubu, admitted that voter turnout in Nigerian elections over the past two election circles has been swinging between 30% and 35%, and as low as 8.3% in some by-elections (Premium Times, 2021a). That is a worrisome development and an imminent threat to Nigeria's democracy, especially compared to the 65–70% voter turnout recorded in other countries, even in West Africa (Oduola et al., 2020). According to the umpire, factors responsible for the poor turnout of voters during elections include: "inadequate voter and civic education, ineffective voter mobilisation, the fear of violence during elections, unfulfilled promises by elected officials and low public

trust in state institutions" (Premium Times, 2021a). Unfortunately, after identifying these issues, it appears that INEC has continued to use the same flat public sector communication approach to drive new voter education campaigns—which is same as pouring new wine into an old wineskin.

Consequently, the situation appears to be deteriorating. In the Anambra State gubernatorial elections conducted in November 2021, only 10% of the registered voters participated (Yusuf & Onyeji, 2021). Therefore, there is an urgent need for INEC to rejig its voter education methodology to directly combat voter apathy and other problems undermining the electoral process and the survival of democracy in Nigeria, especially as the country approaches another election cycle in 2023. In this regard, some practical steps INEC can take to improve voter education in Nigeria include the following:

## Market-Oriented Research

From the perspective of Social Marketing theory, INEC needs to infuse market communication techniques into its voter education campaigns to achieve the desired results. That means that to reverse the downward slide in voter participation in future elections, INEC may need first to conduct a formal ethnographic study to confirm why several members of the voting population are not interested in voting in the polls anymore. It is easy to assume that the factors listed by the Commission above are responsible because they sound logical and sensible. Still, one must wonder if they are data-driven or mere generalisations based on common sense. Indeed, it may not be so simple to identify most of the causes because the actual reasons may vary as much as the 84 million registered voters in Nigeria characteristically differ. Therefore, a detailed study is required to collate and crunch that data (Fill & Jamieson, 2014).

## Voter Segmentation

INEC may need to segment registered voters so that voter education messages can be tailored specifically to the communication needs of identified segments, just like in commercial marketing communications (Kayode, 2014; Wardaya, 2016). Segmental bases may include demographic, geographic, geodemographic, psychographic and behaviouristic factors (Thomas & Sullivan, 2005). Voter segmentation will enable INEC to make the appropriate choices in designing voter education messages and the channels for communicating them to target audiences.

Indeed, INEC would need to carefully select the communication channels to ensure that the appropriate media are used to send the relevant messages to all the identified segments (Thomas & Sullivan, 2005). Creativity in content creation by INEC is essential because some elements of the population, especially youths, may not respond positively to the messages if they appear uninteresting or merely instructional, without an appropriate fusion of education and entertainment ingredients (Wardaya, 2016). Therefore, creativity in content creation is necessary to ensure that voter education messages are interesting, engaging and clearly understood by identified voter segments. In the Nigerian context, storytelling techniques offer immense opportunities for making voter education messages resonate more effectively with voters across various segments because of the peoples' rich cultural heritage (IFES, 2021).

## Positioning

As a result of a broad understanding of the nature of its target audience, INEC can use the following strategies identified by Fill (2009) to *position* voter education messages firmly in the minds of registered voters:

- Pull-positioning strategies—these are message-focused strategies intended to influence the target audience to seek more information on voting processes or pull information of interest to them from certified INEC sources.

- Push-positioning strategies—these are channel-focused strategies intended to co-opt channel owners or partners, including traditional and social media platforms, into pushing voter education messages to identified voter segments.
- Profile-positioning strategies—these are relationship and brand-focused strategies intended to enhance the credibility and reputation of INEC and influence a wide range of stakeholders to trust the organisation.

While the pull, push and profile strategies are essential, it is pertinent to emphasise that they are not mutually exclusive. All three methods work to position the market offering of an organisation in particular ways in the minds of target audiences. However, they need to work collaboratively and consistently towards the same goal (Copley, 2004). That means that in applying these market-oriented strategies, INEC should aim to achieve a *strategic balance*. In that regard, the organisation could develop a practical approach by considering the following elements and issues (Table 7.3).

**Table 7.3** Developing marketing communication strategy for INEC's voter education campaigns

| Element | Issue |
|---|---|
| Target audiences | Which type of audience do we need to reach and why? |
| Channel strategies | How do we make our messages available to voter segments—Direct or indirect? |
| Objectives | What do we need to achieve—What are our goals? |
| Positioning | How do we want to be perceived and understood? |
| Branding | How strong is our brand, and what values and associations do stakeholders make with it? |
| Integration | How consistent are our communications, internally and externally? |
| Competitors | How do our communications compare with those of other political actors? |
| Resources | What resources do we have, and which do we need to secure? |

Source: Adapted from Fill (2009)

## Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

INEC may also need to adopt the integrated marketing communication (IMC) approach to promote its voter education campaigns. That entails the strategic mix of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations tools for selling the benefits of desired behaviours to voters through the campaign messages (Kayode, 2014). It means that rather than just speaking to or passing down instructions and information to voters in a top-down manner, INEC could deploy different promotional tools to talk with them and persuade them to buy into the desired voting behaviour, just like commercial marketers would do.

- *Advertising* refers to any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor. INEC can use this tool to reach geographically dispersed voters with its voter education messages. The main advantage of this promotional tool is that the organisation has creative control over the content and can repeat the messages many times, when and where it wishes to do so—television, radio, print and digital media. Although advertising is expensive, it is cost-effective when the target audience is massive, like Nigeria.
- *Personal Selling:* This comprises all forms of personal presentations by a firm's sales force to make sales and build customer relationships. INEC can use this tool to humanise voter education by deploying top officials to directly sell messages to critical voter segments. Personal selling is more expensive and time-consuming than advertising, but it offers unique advantages such as unlocking target audience interests and building better relationships with stakeholders.
- *Sales Promotion:* This involves using short-term incentives to encourage purchasing or selling a product or service. There are different ways INEC can incentivise behavioural change in voters through its messages, including recognition and celebration of actors that epitomise desired behaviours. However, this requires creative thinking to identify rewards that are affordable, inspiring and ethical.

- *Public Relations:* This covers various ways of building mutually benefi-cial relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders. Public relations tools include event sponsorship, lobbying, cause-marketing, media, government and community relations. Unlike advertising, a self-promoted campaign, public relations' target is to unlock goodwill from an organisation's public and to shore up and maintain a favour-able reputation for its brand. It is the most believable and cost-effective tool which INEC could use for expanding voter education and build-ing an excellent corporate image at the same time.

The concept of IMC speaks to the need for organisations such as INEC to integrate the various promotional tools briefly discussed above into a comprehensive strategy to ensure that all voter education messages are consistent, relevant and speaking in the same voice. That is particularly necessary when organisations have limited resources or a small budget for promotional activities.

Finally, INEC needs to develop feedback mechanisms and metrics to evaluate and monitor the impact of its voter education campaigns for institutional memory and inform future improvements. Undoubtedly, market communication techniques can help INEC develop and manage its relationships with critical stakeholders. The outcome of successful stakeholder engagements guided by market communication strategies could foster greater public trust and confidence in INEC's corporate brand, leading to an upward swing in its reputation and stakeholder per-ception. That is one ingredient every EMB in the world needs to succeed!

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The market-oriented techniques discussed briefly above are not exhaus-tive or necessarily rigid in terms of the linearity of their application. Still, they reflect a radical departure from the norm in public sector communi-cations. INEC can also adopt this same marketing communication approach in addressing the myriad of problems undermining the elec-toral process in Nigeria, such as voter apathy, electoral violence; inade-quate knowledge of the voting procedures, rights and obligations of

voters; vote-buying; improper conduct of political candidates, parties and other political actors during elections,

Education does to ignorance what light does to darkness. Voter education can transform the behaviour of voters in Nigeria by shining more light on the consequences of flawed elections, which the majority of Nigerian voters seem to be either ignorant of or unconcerned about. However, the big question is how voter education should be conducted or communicated to induce the desired changes in behaviours. This chapter recommends the following:

- INEC should leverage the advancements in Web 2.0 technologies to ensure that voter education messages reach the youths and smartphone users who constitute most of the registered voters in Nigeria. However, improving INEC's visibility in cyberspace and its use of social media for voter education would require serious work. It may include more resource allocation, training of personnel, consistent promotion of posts, web pages and all social media handles, and increased presence, presentations, participation and engagements with voters on social media.
- Beyond the optimisation of social media channels, the position of this chapter is that INEC needs to review the guiding philosophy underpinning its communication protocols in general and voter education in particular. So far, voter education campaigns initiated by INEC do not seem to have had much impact on voter apathy, electoral violence and other problems affecting the electoral process in Nigeria. Therefore, if the electoral umpire wants to improve communication effectiveness and efficiency, it must adopt a competitive and market-oriented communication strategy, just like some reputable private sector organisations in Nigeria. The plan should include market-oriented research, audience segmentation, positioning, appropriate communication channel selection, including traditional and digital media. Other strategy elements should encompass creative and engaging content design (edutainment and storytelling), regular and objective monitoring, documentation, evaluation and feedback retrieval. INEC should also develop a robust and integrated marketing communication promotion

plan, including advertising, personal selling, sales promotion and public relations tools to drive voter education campaigns.

It is pertinent to emphasise that by recommending an increase in the use of social media for voter education, this chapter is not suggesting that INEC should abandon other channels such as newspapers, radio and television. Since a sizeable chunk of the Nigerian voting population still lives in the rural areas with little or no access to electricity and the internet, it is necessary that INEC strategically balances its communication spending to capture all the population demographics. Applying technology and data analytics in re-engineering voter education and other communication-related activities of INEC aligns with the core prescriptions of the Technological Determinism theory.

Without a doubt, an upgrade of INEC's communication approach to market-level efficiency will positively impact the success of its voter education programmes in Nigeria and also increase public trust and confidence in the electoral management institution. That is what Social Marketing theory recommends. Given the criticality of voter education to the growth of the electoral process and INEC's role in the sustenance of democracy in Nigeria, it is, indeed, the smart thing to do now!

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# 8

# Social Media Adoption in Public Sector Communication: Practices, Opportunities and Challenges in Public Sector Organisations

**Daniel Ofori, Christina Appiah-Nimo, and Francis O. Boachie-Mensah**

## Introduction

Efficient management of public sector organisations (PSOs) has evolved through various administrative reforms. Given the traditional bureaucratic paradigm of governance in public institutions, digitalisation through social media is among the proposed reforms to revitalise communication in PSOs. Across the globe, there are rising stakeholder

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expectations for improved customer service, efficiency, quality and lower cost, especially from PSOs. Accordingly, Laing (2003) examines the characteristics of public sector services and develops a typology of private sector-based marketing and its application to public sector services. Also, Tuurnas (2020), focusing on the concept of co-production and its relevance for public sector communication, contends that the principles and practice of marketing in the private sector are applicable to the public sector. Increasing interest in both scholarly research and the practice of marketing in the public sector is evidence that countries worldwide are implementing reforms to revive the image of public sector organisations, through various forms of engagement with citizens (Piqueiras et al., 2020).

Due to the numerous benefits of technology, governments in both developed and developing economies have accepted the use of information technology, popularly dubbed electronic government or e-government, to enhance the quality of government services to citizens, reduce corruption, promote public participation in government affairs and increase public access to information and essential services. For example, Ghana started its electronic government project campaign in 2004, when the country declared information and communication technology (ICT) as a national priority by issuing an ICT Policy Statement (Adu et al., 2016). Since then, stakeholders have endorsed the promotion of ICT and social media as a tool to accelerate inclusive governance and bridge the "digital divide."

Social media is one of the developments in ICT that has changed communication across the globe (Lovari & Valentini, 2020). The adoption rate of social media platforms has been fuelled by cutting-edge innovations and investments in ICT infrastructure that has improved accessibility and affordability, especially in developing countries (Ofori & Appiah-Nimo, 2019). In Ghana, for example, active social media users grew from 4.6 million in 2017 to 8.2 million in 2021 (Sasu, 2022), a budding opportunity that has attracted Twitter to set up its regional office in Accra, the capital city of Ghana. Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria have also witnessed growth in Tech start-ups in response to growing social media use (Kiogora, 2022). Social media has grown from simple user interfaces to integrating people-centred technology that creates value through real-time interaction (Hujran et al., 2021). It rests on internet

resources that enable shared community experiences through multidirectional conversations, allowing users to create, organise and share content across national boundaries (Appel et al., 2020).

Valentini (2018) describes social media as the backbone that changes the way people interact and communicate. All over the world, people are using social media, not only as a medium of interaction but also as a critical tool adopted by profit and non-profit organisations, and central governments to establish, interact and promote their online presence (Gao & Lee, 2017). Described as a source of competitive advantage, organisations in the public sector thrive on opportunities presented by the developments in social media to develop, build and deepen communication. Public sector communication is a critical tool in a democratic system of governance (Delli Carpini, 2020). As stakeholders and the general public call for participatory, transparent, efficient and quality service delivery among public sector organisations (PSOs), social media platforms serve as an essential tool to foster participatory and inclusive governance. The adoption of social media can help improve service quality (Al Riyami, & Ashrafi, 2016) and increase productivity among public sector employees by taking advantage of public participation to co-create new knowledge (Stamati et al., 2015).

Moreover, public sector communication has transformed as the COVID-19 pandemic becomes part of communities in the world. As some restrictions, such as social distancing, have come to stay, citizens have come to terms with this reality and have readjusted accordingly to access and consume public services with minimal physical contact. In addition, public sector organisations and governments have continued to engage citizens on COVID-19 public health information and, most importantly, manage misinformation about COVID-19 vaccination to reduce vaccine hesitancy. PSOs use social media for listening, branding, media relations, internal communication, public engagement and participation, crisis management, and e-government services (Lovari & Valentini, 2020).

However, in most developing economies, public sector organisations are typically characterised by bureaucratic management structures and hierarchies that impede the free flow of information. Given this, Criado et al. (2017) have shown that social media success in promoting

information flow, in the public sector, is influenced by organisational factors (management strategic objectives), institutional factors (selecting, designing and implementing information technology) and contextual factors (environmental issues). Considering the legal, political, socio-cultural and technological environment differences between developed and developing economies, it is important to understand the adoption of social media and its use in PSOs in emerging economies' contexts.

Accordingly, this chapter discusses social media adoption in public sector communication among emerging economies. It examines the developments in social media and how its adoption can positively affect PSOs' efficiency in communication. Through the perspectives of co-production and public sector branding, the chapter examines public sector service characteristics and how social media improves value proposition. The chapter also highlights the critical success factors (CSFs) for the successful integration of social media, concludes with barriers to social media adoption and draws implications for other developing economies. The study adopts a literature review approach to advance knowledge in social media discourse. Finally, the chapter contributes to the growing literature on public service communication and public sector marketing in developing economies.

## Digital Transformation of Public Sector Marketing in Africa

Since the late 1950s and 1960s, the public sector in most African economies has been pivotal in accelerating socio-economic development. However, over time, as these entities grew in size, inefficiencies were inevitable (Anderson & Van Crowder, 2000). There were widespread economic distress, most of which were attributed to these inefficiencies. Consequently, public sector reforms, such as decentralisation, privatisation, divestiture and public-private partnership, have been implemented as a measure to redefine the role of the public sector and revitalise public sector organisations in developing countries.

Reference is made to Ghana's Public Financial Management (PFM) Act 2016, which aimed at ensuring administrative reforms to ensure judicious use of public funds and the availability of essential public goods and services to the citizens. Meanwhile, the extant literature on public sector marketing points to the significant role of information and communication technology (ICT) in public sector service delivery in most developed economies (Laing, 2003; Palvia et al., 2018). From 2010 and beyond, according to Ponelis and Holmner (2015), the penetration of ICTs across Africa has had a positive impact on democracy, governance and social participation; information sharing and our cultural heritage. The pivotal role played by PSOs is an indication of the need to leverage the ICT revolution to enhance marketing and communication in the public sector, access to public sector services and the transition to the digital economy.

Transition to the digital economy is a significant driver of economic growth and achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). Innovations and digitalisation are stimulating job creation and contributing to addressing poverty, reducing inequality, facilitating the delivery of goods and services, and contributing to the achievement of Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (Union, 2020). Digital transformation is a driving force for innovative, inclusive and sustainable growth (Adejumo et al., 2020). According to Bajpai and Biberman (2021), recent trends in cutting-edge innovations have revolutionised the design of infrastructure and urban environments; laid the groundwork for equitable, quality health and education systems; and redefined how resources are consumed and distributed between ecosystems and human environments.

Public sector communication has been an old practice among central governments as part of democratic reforms. In some countries, specific institutions have been set up to augment government communication machinery, facilitating citizens' discursive role in democratic governance (Delli Carpini, 2020). However, authors such as Bakir et al. (2019) have shown that in most instances, such communication apparatus has been used to perpetuate propaganda and skewed content that only glorifies political parties in power. Over the past decade, PSOs have come under intense pressure to improve performance and respond better to the public interest, making private sector-based marketing principles inevitable.

Private sector tools, methods and approaches have already been adopted in the public sector (Serrat, 2017), and the use of social media has taken centre stage in most communication systems.

Globally, it is estimated that about 4.62 billion people, i.e. 58.4 % of the world's population, use social media for communication (Datareportal, 2022). It is interesting to note that though a decade ago, social media platforms may have seemed like digital toys for teens and tweens, it is reported that about 35% of all those aged 65 years and above use social media (Nusair et al., 2017). While this development might have seemed impossible, today, social media have metamorphosed into viable, credible communication channels for organisations and business entities. Therefore, it is not surprising that this widespread use of social media globally is positively promoting communication across cultures. Leveraging on these developments, enhancement of communication through social media in Africa has the potential to instigate positive social change, develop democratic ways of communication, and deepen good governance.

In particular, social media adoption in public sector marketing has been gaining momentum for more than a decade (Piqueiras et al., 2020). This development has been fuelled by Africa's young population, improvement in ICT education and urbanisation, among others, driving the consumption of electronic government services. Despite the negative world outlook due to COVID-19, analysts predict that Africa's online service is expected to be resilient, and the online service sector is projected to contribute almost 180 billion dollars to the gross domestic product by 2025 (Buckholtz & Oloo, 2020). The tech industry in Kenya and South Africa has witnessed phenomenal growth, and the entry of global tech giants, like Microsoft, Dell, Google and Amazon, has been a positive driving force (Kiogora, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital adoption, such as teleworking, telehealth, online banking and virtual classrooms, among others. Accessing these digital services depends mainly on the availability of and accessibility to faster internet connectivity, so it exposed the growing digital divide, especially in developing economies. Although some countries were able to quickly switch to virtual platforms as a measure to reopen their economies, a considerable number of countries lag in access

and digital literacy on the African continent (Krönke, 2020). The challenge is prevalent in the availability of digital resources and technological infrastructure in some African countries. This has called for unprecedented digitalisation agenda in some countries.

In Ghana, for example, the government has made improvements in the digital transformation of the economy to improve access to e-government services and leapfrogging the economy towards socio-economic inclusion. Presently, many public services can be assessed online with minimal physical interaction through various social media platforms. Such services include access to healthcare, land registration, government procurement activities, business registration, social security, various permitting applications and education, among others. Connecting with citizens through targeted and engaging communications is no more an option but an essential service that must be delivered.

## Drivers of Social Media Adoption in Public Sector Marketing

Organisations of all types and sizes are leveraging social media tools to improve their online presence (Lovari & Valentini, 2020). This has come at the backdrop of sharp growth in the subscriber base of various social media platforms. According to statistics from Datareportal, as of October 2021, there are about 4.55 billion social media users worldwide (Datareportal, 2022). While Facebook remains the most widely used platform, followed by YouTube and WhatsApp, emerging studies, such as Lovari and Valentini (2020), Morah et al. (2016) and Barata (2019), show that the use of social media has fast become one of the defining technologies shaping public sector marketing. Apart from increasing social media usage among the population, Africa's youthful population, growth in internet penetration, booming e-commerce, right to information and laws protecting this right, increasing need for transparent and accountable governance, ICT education and investment in ICT infrastructure are some drivers that present untapped opportunities to improve the marketing of public sector goods and services.

Globally, the total number of social media users is estimated to grow to 3.29 billion by the end of 2022, equivalent to 42.3% of the world's population (Appel et al., 2020). Africa is in an enviable position to propel social media adoption as 70% of the population are under the age of 30. This is very significant, as research shows that the younger generation are active social media users (Orben, 2020; Mutsvairo & Rønning, 2020). Given the massive potential audience who are spending many hours online, it is appropriate that governments re-engineer the service delivery process to meet the needs of their citizens. According to Union (2020), Africa presents many economic opportunities in virtually every sector, and its youthful population structure is an enormous opportunity in this digital era. In the public sector, the use of social media is gaining momentum. The ease of using social media, existing adoption decisions made at the individual level (by citizens and many government officials) and emerging social networking behaviour is augmenting the development of new social structures related to the usage of innovative technologies (Al-Maatouk et al., 2020; Salloum et al., 2021).

Undoubtedly, Africa continues to experience the fastest growth rates, with the number of internet users across the continent increasing by more than 20% yearly (Stevens, 2018). According to Internet World Statistics, in 2020, the internet penetration rate in Africa stood at 39%. Ghana, for instance, has witnessed growth in internet usage among the younger generation, especially. The country, with a population of 30.8 million (GSS, 2021) and a land area of 238,538 sq. km, has about 15.70 million internet users as of January 2021, yielding an internet penetration rate of about 50% (Digital Ghana, 2021). Increased access and affordability of internet connectivity have made it easier for most citizens to seek and find information on global issues in real-time, using social media platforms (Ofori & Appiah-Nimo, 2019).

The ostensible popularity of social media technologies among citizens and accessibility to internet resources demonstrates that government has a growing need to create, distribute, gather and share information more efficiently and effectively (Achiume, 2021; Zavattaro, 2021; Feeney & Porumbescu, 2021). New internet technologies are causing significant changes in how individuals communicate and collaborate on a peer-to-peer basis (Achiume, 2021). Furthermore, these shifts can potentially

influence how public sector organisations carry out their goals and communicate with the citizens (Zhang et al., 2017). Nevertheless, government entities have begun to engage in online social networking despite the numerous hurdles and risks associated with social media.

Another key driver to the adoption of social media in public sector organisations is access to information, increasing transparency and enforcement of the right to such information. This has been augmented with laws and procedures governing the management of personal data, privacy and usage of third-party websites. In Ghana, for instance, the National Information Technology Act of 2008, Act 771, also enhanced and supported the introduction and implementation of electronic government activities in the public sector (Adu et al., 2016). This Act establishes the National Information Technology Agency to regulate the use of information technology. In addition, it ensures high international standards and quality of information communications technology use in the country.

Last but not least is investments in ICT. This includes the continuous development of information and communication infrastructure, and the integration and leveraging of data systems and virtual platforms. The business community has embraced the digital economy, following innovative payment and commercial platforms, and the ripple effect has been felt across public sector organisations. According to Njoh (2018), the rate of development in ICT and its penetration, such as the usage of the internet and mobile telephony, exceeded the expectation of development partners. This confirms Ngugi et al.'s (2010) description of Kenya as an early adopter of mobile money payment systems in the world. These innovations have changed the face of business and payment systems, and similar leverage is being promoted in the public sector through social media. The continent is in the position to hurl its human capital efforts towards innovations that improve inclusion and access to communication technologies.

Improvement in ICT education has also contributed to the spike in social media use among citizens. The various educational curricula have embraced ICT education in different African countries. A survey of online shopping among university students by Ofori and Appiah-Nimo (2019) shows that the adoption of various online platforms to purchase

personal effects and services was growing. The COVID-19 restrictions imposed by governments worldwide had a tremendous impact on educational institutions, such as the closure of schools (Twum et al., 2021a; Haider & Al-Salman, 2020), and these restrictions led to the adoption of social media as an alternative platform for continuous interaction among the people. The closure of schools, for example, led to the use of online learning as an alternative to traditional face-to-face education (Twum et al., 2021b; Haider & Al-Salman, 2020). As some of these restrictions continue to remain in force, the use of social media will continue to increase, creating an opportunity for public sector organisations to improve their online presence.

## Leveraging Social Media in Public Sector Value Proposition

At the centre of digital transformation efforts, in the view of Mergel et al., (2018), is the paradigm shift from designing and delivering public services solely based on the internal, policy-driven logic of public administrations, to an external, open and co-productive logic of co-designing public services. Accordingly, to better appreciate the relevance of private sector-based marketing models as tools to promote better management of public sector organisations, the nature and characteristics of the public sector value proposition are examined. Public sector organisations mostly provide services other than goods.

On this note, Shostack's (1977) four main typology of the nature and characteristics of service and its implication for social media adoption is presented. These characteristics are intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability. According to Vargo and Lusch (2004), these characteristics present service marketing implications for public sector service delivery to citizens. Table 8.1 summarises how social media adoption can overcome the challenges presented by these characteristics and boost service delivery among public sector organisations.

The intangibility nature of service means that services lack physical attributes, which makes it difficult to observe a sample and evaluate for

**Table 8.1** How social media adoption can boost service delivery in public sector organisations

| Characteristics | The nature and implication for public sector marketing | Social media tools to overcome the challenges |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Intangibility | The lack of physical attributes makes it difficult to observe a sample and evaluate it for decision-making purposes | 1. Experiences shared via social media<br>2. Forming mental picture through virtual impression<br>3. Using social media to promote celebrity endorsements |
| Inseparability | The production and consumption of services occur simultaneously | Provision of interactive web content and applications that may be installed on smart devices to improve service identity |
| Heterogeneity | This nature of service presents a plethora of variances in service delivery. Consequently, heterogeneity presents standardisation challenges | The adoption of social media can help reduce physical contact, which can introduce some level of standardisation in service delivery |
| Perishability | Perishability means that service expires beyond a defined period. It cannot be stored for later use | 1. Increasing customer participation in co-design of public service<br>2. Creating a platform to match demand and supply |

decision-making purposes. Again, the intangibility nature of service means that the buyer does not know about the service until it is personally experienced (Ding & Keh, 2017). However, peoples' experiences shared via social media can help minimise these uncertainties. Social media tools could minimise the uncertainty of intangibility by promoting service benefits and perceived satisfaction. Again, through social media, customers can enjoy a virtual impression of public sector services by helping the customer form a mental picture of what they expect. Like the private sector, the public sector can boost its brand image by associating its brands with celebrities and disseminating such endorsements through social media.

Services may be delivered by different people at different times or by the same people at different times. Even where the same person delivers service, different experiences are provided to clients. This nature of service presents a plethora of variances in service delivery (Jacob et al., 2018). Consequently, the heterogeneous nature of service makes product standardisation difficult. The adoption of social media can reduce physical contact, by encouraging interactions and feedback among customers of public services. Again, services are produced and consumed simultaneously because customers are part of the service delivery process.

As a result, customers only experience the service and cannot claim ownership. The role of social media in minimising inseparability occurs through the provision of interactive web content and applications that may be installed on smart devices. So, for example, social media applications customised towards specific services improve customer identity with a service. Finally, perishability means that service expires beyond a defined period. It cannot be stored, so the need to constantly match demand with supply. Increasing customer participation in service design is one way of reducing perishability and improving efficiency in service delivery.

Through various exchanges which occur in real-time on social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Blogs, Twitter, Instagram, Imo, Snapchat and Podbean via comments, webinars, texts and pictures, among others, social media open up a new world of communication by acting as a catalyst in the service delivery processes (Morah et al., 2016; Morah & Duru, 2018).

With these salient features highlighted in Table 8.1, and the role social media play in managing these features, service delivery in the public service requires a distinct approach, especially in an era of social media marketing, where citizens expect improved services and better communication from service providers. Thus, it is motivating for citizens to perceive the public sector as embracing, collaborating and co-producing with its stakeholders to provide better services.

Consumer behaviour has changed post-COVID, and consumers are gradually embracing the digital age as they learn how to live with the pandemic. Therefore, the public sector has to bring public services online by leveraging social media tools to increase consumer interaction

effectively. The next sub-section presents practical examples of the current uses of social media in public sector marketing in sub-Saharan Africa.

## Social Media Adoption in PSOs: Practices and Future Directions

Public sector organisations use social media for a variety of reasons, including marketing services, promoting citizen interaction, increasing citizen involvement, facilitating information flow, sharing security and health tips, and strengthening governance (Al-Badi, 2014). Furthermore, social media facilitates transparent, interactive, participatory and collaborative public engagement (Al Riyami, & Ashrafi, 2016; Karakiza, 2015). During the global outbreak of COVID-19, social media have been extensively used for disseminating essential social distancing protocols among the populace. For example, citizens could directly seek information from World Health Organization through WhatsApp and Facebook. These platforms helped share vital information when it was most needed and could reach a high number of people at a time (Thelwall & Thelwall, 2020).

Security is one key area of concern to every nation, and the integration of ICT tools facilitates the delivery of security services. Periodically, the police service publishes information on specific acts or activities that may be an offence against the laws of a particular country on social media. For example, in recent times, the Ghana Police Service has extensively used social media to reach citizens, share security tips and sometimes publish wanted criminals on their various social media platforms. Occasionally, short videos on security tips are circulated via social media platforms of the service.

Various health bodies, such as the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Service, adopted social media to update the country's citizens on the number of COVID-19 cases recorded and general health measures to take to prevent the spread of the virus. Health professionals in public health facilities have devised another means of reaching out to the general public on health-related issues through social media. Some practising medical doctors use their platforms, notably Facebook, Twitter and

Instagram, to educate the general public on various diseases and appropriate medications. For example, a page on Twitter with the hashtag "#askdrakakpo" is a platform managed by a young medical doctor that seeks to answer all questions on health-related issues of individuals at no cost.

The youthful population catalyse the development of an environmentally conscious population. PSOs in environment and sanitation are increasingly developing social marketing campaigns and environmental education programmes that target the young consumer segment. The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in Ghana is keen on reducing plastic waste, solving sanitation issues and sensitising the citizenry about health-related benefits associated with proper waste management. "Operation Clean Your Frontage" is an initiative promoting cleaning and greening among households and corporate entities. Similar sanitation and greening campaigns with hashtags, such as "#EarthDay" and "#summercamp," organise summer camps for tertiary students and senior high school leavers who convert plastics into other reusable products, like bags, purses and building blocks. Again, individual foundations, celebrities and social media influencers are able to mobilise people for occasional clean-up exercises. All these activities are highly patronised because of the inclusion and involvement of these social media influencers.

WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are widely used among politicians to disseminate and interact with citizens. Tanja Bosch et al. (2020, cited in Mutsvairo & Rønning, 2020), in their article "Facebook and Politics in Africa," analysed the Facebook pages of prominent politicians and concluded with the identification of the potential for internet-based communication to play a role in political activities in Zimbabwe and Kenya. The authors commended how social media have augmented political communication used by government and opposition during and after elections. In another instance, the President of the Republic of Ghana, in the early phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, had weekly updates dubbed "#fellowGhanaians" on social media platforms and citizens who missed the live broadcast of these updates had the opportunity of viewing speeches of the president on flyers posted on all social media platforms.

Other members of parliaments use social media to publish various developmental projects in their constituencies. On the other hand, citizens use the same medium, social media, to channel their complaints and bring forth their plights to the government. For example, the recent popular hashtag on Twitter, "#fixthecountry," is a means of communicating to Ghana's government about the untold hardship in the country and the need to fix the pressing needs of the Ghanaian youths. From Namibia's #ShutItAllDown to Nigeria's #EndSARS, activists across the continent have used social media to call their governments to account.

In the context of crisis and emergency circumstances, the usage of social media is becoming increasingly significant. During natural catastrophes, such as hurricanes, floods and earthquakes, social media channels have proven crucial in handling victims' informational demands (Bruns et al., 2012; Kavanaugh et al., 2012). The public sector and government agencies make use of these real-time media channels, such as Facebook, among others, to quickly distribute critical and life-saving messages to the public during an emergency, collect requests for rescue and aid from citizens in crisis-affected areas, improve public order during the disaster and generate civic support (Graham, Avery & Park, 2015).

Social media also plays a key role in marketing utilities, such as electricity and water, by enhancing effective communication. Unlike previously, where information on maintenance works of Ghana Water Company and Electricity Company was announced in newspapers and radio stations, it is now mainly posted on various social media platforms for faster dissemination. Again, the general public's displeasure is almost always expressed on social media as individual residents of specific areas with affected water or electricity problems can draw the attention of these bodies via their social media platforms. Public sector brands can create important public relations campaigns through social media, find out exactly the customers' needs much faster and respond accordingly, improving the marketing of public sector organisations.

# Barriers to Social Media Adoption by Public Sector Organisations in Africa

Literature on social media adoption in the public sector emphasise that adoption of social media impacts both positively and negatively on the internal processes of public organisations and how they interact with the public externally (Criado et al., 2013). In today's business environment, the survival and sustenance of any organisation depend on its ability to introduce and institutionalise successful change, and no change ever assumes a perfect and smooth transition. In tandem with this view, authors such as Khan et al. (2014) reports that integration of social media in organisational processes brings various benefits as well as challenges. According to these authors, public sector organisations face problems in introducing, embedding and sustaining social media adoption and implementation to support organisational activities. While statistics on internet penetration rate on the African continent is encouraging, there seem to be some clear indications that the digital divide is still considerable. For example, legislative requirements and bureaucracies are a concern when planning social media adoption. Moreover, in line with the technical requirements, changes to organisational architecture and culture are required for a successful adoption (Lee & Kwak, 2012). In addition to the aforementioned barriers, financial and technical resources, commitment to staff development, and perceived risk are other forces that impede on the succesful intergration of social media.

## Financial and Technical Resources

Seigler (2017) argues that one barrier to social media adoption is the requirement of financial and technological resources, referred to as organisational resources. These include having support and assistance for social media usage, financial resources, and access to hardware, software and network services. Again, Zheng (2013) reports that lack of funds, equipment and professional support are barriers to social media adoption in public sector organisations. Social media create new job tasks and roles, such as microblogging, regular content updates, monitoring of traffic,

among others, but due to budgetary constraints, additional funds and technical resources are limited among PSOs in most African countries (Ramawela & Chukwuere, 2020). Ganapati and Reddick (2014) conclude that financial funding is the main challenge for open government implementation. Although social media platforms are free to join, other costs arising from their adoption, like labour costs, are not.

## Lack of Commitment Towards Staff Training

Several authors have underlined the significance of full-time staffing, training and expertise for a successful social media adoption. For example, Chugh and Ruhi (2018) described training as a critical success factor when Facebook is used as an educational instrument for learning and teaching. Experience with social media is a crucial factor since employees with prior experience will have fewer problems and view social media as simple to use. PSOs sometimes regard social media activities as "part-time" work, which anybody with basic internet knowledge can successfully combine with a regular job role. Hoffmann et al. (2014) discovered that many employees who use social media have no prior experience. Social media presents new challenges, such as privacy and security, which call for designated offices accompanied with required resources.

Similarly, Oliveira and Welch (2013) state that the most appropriate qualities required by local governments when using social media are staff skills and talents. This, in turn, prevents some organisations from assigning new but existing staff to operate social media on a part-time and rotation basis, while only a few organisations assign full-time staff. According to Zheng (2013), the fear of social media sanctions, regulations and other uncertainties about the future of social media deter staff from working full time, because they are concerned that their jobs would be marginalised if their managers moved their focus away from social media.

## Perceived Risk as a Barrier

Perceived risk affects users' trust to use a system. Consequently, perceived risk is described by Lăzăroiu et al. (2020) as a critical antecedent to end-user decision making, because it defines one's perceived control to use of social media. Significant risks include information security threats, privacy threats and the influence of a risk-averse culture. According to Sharif et al. (2015), perceived risks are hazards associated with the security of the organisation's infrastructure and data management systems. Another risk is privacy, which includes identity fraud and the disclosure of users' personal information. It has been argued that when using social media, public sector organisations are concerned about the sharing of information. "A closed and risk-averse culture," according to Zheng (2013), is a significant barrier to social media adoption, which is the case of most African countries adopting social media in the operations of their public sectors.

## Recommendation for the Adoption of Social Media for Public Sector Marketing

Margiono (2020) identified two paths of digital transformation: offensive and defensive paths. According to the author, the offensive path is aggressive and involves the rapid acquisition of digital resources through capital investment, mergers and acquisition tactics. In contrast, the defensive path is relatively slow and relies on the organic growth of the digital capabilities of organisations or companies over time. Public sector organisations are owned mainly by the state and depend on organic growth towards digital transformation. Dwelling on Margiono's (2020) argument concerning the two paths of digital transformation, it is recommended that for effective social media usage as a marketing tool, the offensive path to digital transformation should be the approach, since it requires investment in digital resources and infrastructure. Public-private partnerships can also shape social media integration in public service delivery.

Public sector organisations are generally bureaucratic, which impedes the smooth transition towards digitisation (Faro et al., 2021). Cetindamar (2021), therefore, proposed a 4R Model that must coexist to enable digital transformation in the public sector. According to the author, the four hybrid organisational forms presented in the 4Rs model allow networks and bureaucracy to coexist. The 4Rs include Reactiveness, Responsiveness, Resiliency and Rigidness. The existing literature has shown that social media adoption is influenced by internal and external conditions (Tate, et al., 2018). This chapter describes these conditions as "critical success factors" (CSFs) because they determine and influence the speed of adoption and, consequently, affect public sector organisations' responsiveness, reactiveness, resilience and rigidity.

The co-existence of network and technology proposed in the 4R Model also shows the importance of paying critical attention to some of the barriers discussed in this chapter. While public organisations face problems in introducing, embedding and sustaining the use of these technologies within their institutional structure and organisational culture, embracing marketing models to promote public service delivery has the potential to overcome these challenges. Again, Lee and Kwak (2012) propose an Open Government Model (OGM) to augment the rate of social media adoption. This is important not only for marketing public services but also for encouraging citizen participation and deepening democracy. The OGM also demonstrates the African government's commitment to freedom of communication through laws and policies that allow citizens to freely use social media tools to share their concerns.

Finally, two main strategic implications of social media for the marketing of public services are the concept of co-production in public service delivery and public service branding. Since social media involves customer engagement, the perceptions and expectations of customers become important in redefining production and service delivery as part of public sector reforms (Sorrentino et al., 2018). In their view, Sorrentino et al. (2018) believe that unlike the production of goods, the production and delivery of services is challenging without the active participation of the recipients; therefore, co-production has been proposed as an alternative solution to this traditional model of production.

Again, interest in public sector branding necessitates understanding how to leverage private sector marketing tools to promote communication. Leijerholt et al. (2019), in their literature review, show that although public organisations differ from private sector firms in terms of objectives, ownership and finance, however, adopting some of the principles of corporate branding, which emphasise the interrelationship among strategic vision, organisational culture and corporate images and the importance of external stakeholders, is also important for the public sector.

## Conclusion

Traditionally, the concept of marketing has been viewed as irrelevant to organisations mandated to deliver public goods and services. However, the adoption of private sector-based approaches to the marketing of public services in western economies has forced a fundamental reconsideration of the potential contribution of marketing to the delivery of public services. Against this backdrop, this chapter reviews the current development in public sector marketing with a special focus on social media adoption in public sector communication.

Unlike earlier forms of internet-based technologies popularly known as e-government or Web 1.0 platforms that only allowed one-way interaction, advances in technology have produced higher-end innovative tools that aid in communication, interaction and networking among a larger community of citizens. Social media involves innovative tools that make it possible for information sharing, interaction and communication, thus aiding in the marketing of public sector services.

WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are widely used social media platforms among PSOs, to disseminate and interact with citizens. Public sector organisations have employed these tools in the marketing of services, promoting citizen contact and interaction, increasing citizen involvement, facilitating information flow and strengthening governance. Studies have shown that citizen participation in public service decisions improves service satisfaction.

Modern drivers of social media adoption in the public sector include, and cannot be limited to, increasing demand for faster response to public inquiries, the need to decrease corruption levels by implementing and adopting government transparency, need to facilitate engagement and communication from and to citizens, quest to promote a sense of transparency while engaging with customers. Public sector organisations must keep in mind the challenges and risks of adopting social media as an unsuccessful implementation may result in monetary loss, damaged reputation of the agency and reduced public trust in government.

This chapter has shown the genesis of public sector reforms and the relevance of social media adoption in public sector marketing. The chapter proposes a typology of public sector service and how social media improves the management of the challenges that come with service characteristics: intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity and perishability. Also, while public organisations face problems in introducing, embedding and sustaining the use of social media technologies within their institutional structure, embracing marketing models to promote public service delivery has the potential to overcome these challenges. Besides, social media has many advantages that outweigh the cost, and these include social connectivity, social inclusion and information exchange. Other benefits exclusive to PSOs include an improved brand image, efficiency in communication and speed of service delivery.

Finally, many African countries have witnessed democratic reforms and improvement in citizen participation as a result of the use of social media platforms, like Facebook and Twitter. There are still other countries that either ban the use of specific social media platforms or limit their use on the pretext of national security. Although security and safety of citizens are necessities, as one of the fastest-growing continents in technology adoption, governments in the African continent must rather institute measures to maximise the benefits of social media adoption while minimising the downside risks, such as spreading misinformation and social vices.

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# 9

# Using Social Media for Competitive Advantage: The Case of African Public Universities

Eugene Ohu

## Introduction

Out of the 54 countries in Africa, only two, Ethiopia and Liberia, were never colonised (Seger, 2018). The rest had at some point been under the political and cultural dominance of either the English, the French, the Portuguese, the Italians or the Germans ('t Hart, 2016). Despite these influences, Africa remains unique, and the individual countries within the continent are able to retain original cultural traits that distinguish them from others, as well as from the influences of their former colonial overseers. After colonisation, many African countries have made deliberate efforts to restore and highlight the cultural identities, values and philosophies of their indigenous people (Heldring & Robinson, 2012). Africans appear better placed to transmit the continent's wealth, values

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and mindset. Globalisation shrinks the world and removes boundaries, increasing interaction between people globally (Keohane & Nye, 2020). The mediation of digital technology as both a communication and a work tool has removed most barriers to creating truly global teams, albeit virtual, practically eliminating the effect of operating from different time zones.

We can consider two aspects of globalisation with respect to Africa's relation to the rest of the world and their impact on African tertiary education and the evolution of online learning. The first is how it extends the impact of Africans beyond their immediate geographical location. Africa has a young, vibrant and intelligent population who are increasingly getting better educated and are providing a huge talent pool of resources to meet the needs and demands of the workforce of many enterprises (Mader, 2018). Global companies can take advantage of African talents more easily, without Africans having to move far away from home (Banya & Zajda, 2015). If the knowledge and skills African need to be useful to global enterprises are generic, location is no hindrance. By extension, locally trained Africans would also not be limited by their geographical location in providing the services learnt.

The second is "internationalisation", in which businesses founded outside Africa now establish outlets within the African continent. Africa has the fastest-growing population that provides a potentially huge market for the products and services of these internationalised enterprises (Amungo, 2020). Knowledge of the local environment and people would be advantageous if these businesses would make comfortable inroads and be accepted by Africans. As part of the already existing internationalisation strategies, foreign universities are establishing local campuses and partnerships with African public universities. An example is Lancaster University in the United Kingdom which has taken steps in this direction by establishing a university campus in West Africa (Lancaster University, Ghana campus) and partnering with a public university in Nigeria to create a Nigerian Centre for Global Eco-Innovation in the University of Benin.

With the advent of digital and communication technology, global universities (both public and private) have shifted towards online learning due to the thinning of geographic borders, which has facilitated

knowledge management and transfer between continents (Dzvimbo & Moloi, 2013). Universities are utilising this avenue to expand their services and reach and teach resources beyond their immediate geographic region to the world's knowledge seekers. However, in Africa, online learning is still far from being realised, especially for public universities (Egolum, 2021). Faced with the constraints of insufficient technological infrastructure, a widening digital divide and poor implementation (Salawudeen, 2010), social media provides an easy and cheap way for African public universities to level the technology gaps.

Conscious of the need to reflect the African identity while remaining globally competitive, management education trainers would need to be conversant with African local preferences, culture, taste and style, providing them with world-class standards, but with local relevance and functionality. Local relevance implies knowledge of the local culture, market, idiosyncrasies and preferences of the local population. They will also need to have knowledge of the local language, the operating business environment, and government and regulatory agencies.

We argue that despite the shrinking of global boundaries and the seeming incursion (through digital online learning and education) of international universities into the African market, African public universities retain the advantage of indigenous knowledge that ought to give them a competitive advantage, for here too, content is king (Daniel, 1996). Through external marketing on social media, location and infrastructural challenges would not deter African public universities from effectively transferring localised African resources to the global stage. The rest of this book chapter is arranged as follows: it begins with a discussion of online learning and education in Africa, it then explains the digital threats faced by African public universities and the constraints to the adoption of digital technology powered learning in Africa. It goes on to describe the preparedness for remote learning using the case of the Covid-19 pandemic. Following this, the chapter discusses social media and the competitiveness of public universities in Africa. The chapter ends with practical recommendations for the adoption of various social media platforms by African public universities.

# Online Learning and Education in Africa

The digital technologies of computers and the internet are used by learning institutions for product delivery and marketing of their learning content. Product delivery includes the creation and delivery of audio, video or multimedia versions of the classroom experience. This has the advantage that learning can be asynchronous or synchronous, and in both cases, it has the potential to reach an increased number of people, more than can be accommodated in physical classrooms. Asynchronous learning makes the learning (and materials) available round the clock, irrespective of the time zones of learners.

After the computer hit the market in the 1990s, online learning was introduced to Africa (Ravjee, 2007), and in 1997, the first Online African Virtual University (AVU) was created (van Stam, 2013). Through collaborative work among 10 African countries, the African Virtual University created 219 modules of Open Education Resources (Diallo et al., 2011). In 1998, in South Africa, the University of Pretoria (UP) was among the first universities to adopt online learning with the WebCT Learning Management System (Bagarukayo & Kalema, 2015). In Sub-Saharan Africa, the first online university was created in Ghana in 1996. This development was aided by formulated educational policies to promote access to quality education opportunities in order to promote social transformation and increase the competitiveness of universities in Africa.

Beginning around 2006, public universities in Nigeria underwent a digital rebirth, with many establishing online portals for administrative and academic activities (Ibrahim, 2004). This resurgence was aided by a business model used by technology start-up companies who built and managed the portals free of cost to the universities, although users (students) paid a token access fee to the providers. It was a "win-win" situation for all: processes were sped up, efficiency improved and the tech companies made money. Having the portals on the websites increased the importance of university websites as well as pulled traffic to the website. There are now many such tech companies offering these services, but also many universities have taken over the design and management of their own portals. Portals are doorways into the university systems, but it

requires automation of all (mostly administrative) systems. Now, new applicants can apply for admission online via the university portal; they can check the status of ongoing admission processes; students (new and returning) can register for courses, and exams, pay fees, check their results as well as request for transcripts online. Many traditional African universities now have a website; however, it is at best a digital brochure of the services on offer. A visit to the websites of many public universities shows several empty (and yet to be implemented) sections such as a digital library and document archive. To date, but with few exceptions, many websites of public universities in Africa are still limited to such portal activities for the management of mostly administrative activities, with very little actual learning taking place online (Utulu & Bolarinwa, 2012).

## The Start of Online Learning and the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) Revolution

In 2007, developed societies began to explore online learning options, and Africa joined this developing trend in 2014. These began as a complement to in-class activities, allowing instructors to upload materials online for students' self-study outside of class. Later additions included discussion forums for student-student and student-instructor interaction.

In 2007, a professor at the University of Utah organised an online course that brought together 50 students online from 8 different countries (Ng & Widom, 2014). These 50 students joined 5 other students who were physically in class. However, the first successful Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) took place five years later at Stanford University (Ng & Widom, 2014). The course on artificial intelligence in the fall of 2011 by Sebastian Thrun and Peter Norvig attracted 160,000 students. Following this success, Thrun and Norvig began a company "Udacity", as an online platform that would allow universities to offer MOOCs of their own. In 2012, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) offered some courses on its MITx platform, and in May of the same year, MIT teamed up with Stanford to create the MOOC platform EdX, to offer free courses over the internet (Moe, 2015).

# Public Universities and Online Learning

## The Digital Threats Faced by African Public Universities

We consider three threats that African public universities may face, which can weaken their effectiveness even in the absence of external competition, but are definitely made worse in the face of competition. The first is an increasing preference and demand for hybrid or fully online education, from a younger, more mobile and more independent client base. The second is the lack of digital knowledge and the lack of digital resources needed for this new type of education. The third threat is presented by obstacles from the regulators of tertiary education, whose well-intentioned plan to assure standardisation may end up stifling technological innovation.

### An Increasing Preference for Hybrid or Fully Online Education

An increasing number of current and prospective students are showing a preference for more flexible learning options (Sandeen, 2008). As a result, the African Council for Distance Education (ACDE), the African Virtual University (AVU), African Distance Education Association (ADEA), South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE) and open and distance learning (ODL) higher learning institutions such as the Open University of Tanzania (OUT), University of South Africa (UNISA), Kenyatta University (KU), Nigeria Open University (NOU) and Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU) are some of the organisations/institutions showing unquestionable determination to embrace online learning in all African countries (Mushi, 2012).

It is convenient because learning can take place from anywhere, and learners can conveniently combine work and study. It can also save costs that would have been spent on commuting. It would also improve participants' well-being by reducing exposure to stressors, and for dual-income earning couples, a more flexible learning experience can improve work-life balance. Not requiring physical presence to learn may also reduce security risks, as is the case in some parts of Northern Nigeria,

which are more prone to terrorist attacks. It can also reduce security risks, as in the case of violent school protests in South Africa; not being digitally ready, knowledgeable and resource-wise, may render public universities incapable of responding to such preferences and hence, less competitive.

## Digital Technology Resource Constraints and Low Digital Exposure

There is a connection between the dearth of digital knowledge and the lack of digital resources needed for digital learning in public universities (Inije et al., 2013; Salam et al., 2018; Voogt et al., 2013). Access to the tools is essential to understanding and deploying them. Therefore, lecturers in African public universities need access to the latest digital technologies to know them, use them, and teach their theoretical and practical aspects. Such access is limited, partly because of the high cost of computer hardware and software. Some have outdated computers, many of which were received as second-hand gifts from abroad or bought new, but kept under wraps because there was no requisite knowledge to deploy them at that time, until they became outdated. As a result, none are strong and contemporary enough to be used in digital and remote learning. Access to cloud computers as an alternative to physical machines is out of reach of most public universities for the same reasons: lack of expertise and lack of funds.

## Debilitating Government and Regulatory Constraints

Many African governments and regulators are suspicious of innovations they do not fully understand. This is the case with digital technology-powered learning. Digital technologies promise and confer liberty and independence that are often at variance with the model of regulation and control that is expected to be exercised over institutions dependent on government. Education is key to the strategic goals of most governments. For this reason, they are usually anxious that through regulatory agencies,

all those who, by proxy, partner with them in education adhere to certain standards of excellence.

There is some scepticism over how much learning can take place via an online platform where young learners face multiple distractions, with almost no adult supervision. Some regulators wonder if today's learner can be considered disciplined and resilient enough to maintain focus similar to that obtainable from a face-to-face in-class experience. For those programmes designed in a hybrid format (part online and part physical), some wonder if the learner will not abandon their education in between the physical campus appearances, with the result that learning is never continuous: interrupted at the asynchronous times and picked up again for on-campus synchronous meetings. They may thus reason that such inconsistencies, undoubtedly, would make for poor learning.

In Kenya, the Commission for University Education (CUE) is tasked with regulating universities in Kenya. One of the regulatory documents is the "Standards and Guidelines for Open, Distance and E-learning". The CUE ensures that marketing, delivery and evaluation of online learning programmes are carried out in a fair and ethical manner, following acceptable best practices, to comply with all relevant legislation (CUE, 2014). In 2020, the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA) drafted a directive that allows universities to teach undergraduate and postgraduate students online. HERQA is the agency mandated to regulate public and private online education in Ethiopia.

In Nigeria, public and private universities are regulated by the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC). The NUC has long recognised the value of remote learning, or using the term it is familiar with, "distance learning". Its convenience for those who are unable to be physically present and yet desire to acquire education has been obvious to the NUC. The regulator also desired to counteract the negative effect of talent "brain drain", which saw many of the country's knowledge experts emigrate abroad in search of better work conditions, leaving many teaching gaps in Nigeria. Distance learning would make use of these experts irrespective of their location.

One of the NUC regulatory documents is the "Guidelines for Open and Distance Learning in Nigerian Universities" (NUC, 2009). "Open" for the NUC refers to an improved access to education. Although the

internet was acknowledged in the current guideline (which made short- and medium-term provisions to cover the period 2009–2015), and reference is made to email and "internet access", its understanding of remote learning appears however to be far from the hybrid and/or fully online learning as we now understand MOOCs.

According to the NUC:

- "The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) is currently the only Uni-mode university mandated for Open and Distance Learning in the delivery of university education.
- "There are about six universities which may be regarded as dual-mode universities with limited capacity to deliver degree programmes by the open and distance learning (ODL) in addition to the conventional face-to-face mode.
- "All stakeholders agree that the practice of distance learning by these dual mode universities is far below acceptable best practice and that at best, they are in transition from the running of part-time/ sandwich courses to distance learning" (p. 2).

## Preparedness for Remote Learning: The Case of Covid-19

When the WHO declared the novel Covid-19 virus a pandemic in 2020, nobody could imagine the extent to which this was going to limit physical human interactions. Soon, however, the extremely contagious nature of this deadly virus obliged the entire world to go into lockdown for nearly one year. Physical contact was restricted and, in most cases, completely forbidden. Almost all businesses were closed, and schools shut down. Survival of the human race was paramount, Covid-19 only exposed gaps that were already present (Bozkurt et al., 2020). Universities had to confront their readiness, or lack thereof, for the future of learning, which was going to be digital. The changes in the Covid-19 era perhaps even threatened their very existence. Especially because there was no way to determine how long the restrictions on physical activities and movement

were going to be. Long before the pandemic, businesses were already encouraged to consider existing business cases that proposed the adoption of the Global Virtual Teams (GVT) model. The GVT model allows the successful collaboration of teams where geographically distributed teams work together remotely using technology. While virtual team pioneers like IBM and Yahoo were vacillating about the model (Wilkie, 2017), others were keen to adopt it, citing advantages such as the strategic use of scarce human resources, the reduced cost of training workers, and reduced spending on travel and infrastructure. Ultimately, the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown made virtual work and learning compulsory, paving the way for the forced adoption of models such as the GVT model.

"Traditional" academic institutions have long resisted a shift to online learning. Some of them question the quality of learning online, thus conferring on the term "traditional" a perception of quality that recent experiences, data and research no longer support. Some drawbacks may be to online learning, but agile adoption and improved skills by teachers have largely removed these, bringing the learning outcomes from digital learning as close to (some will argue, equal to or even better than) face-to-face learning.

## Private Universities Adapted Better

Like many businesses, some universities around the world (but only very few in Africa) already deliver online learning using digital technologies. One such African University is the Lagos Business School (LBS), the graduate business school of the Pan-Atlantic University in Nigeria. LBS began offering MBA (Masters in Business Administration) programmes in 2003. By 2014, it had begun running a "modular" MBA delivered in a hybrid format, in order to accommodate the varied socio-demographic profile of its participants. The school achieved this using the "E-learn" portal, powered by the open-source learning management system (LMS), Moodle. This platform allowed faculty members to share course outlines with students, upload reading materials and engage in asynchronous discussions between the faculty members and their students, and between

students themselves. Students come to class physically for six intensive weeks (one week per quarter) and use the online platform to complete assignments and interact in between the face-to-face meetings. By 2016, online learning at the Lagos Business School already had a synchronous component with some lectures delivered via video. By the end of 2018, the business school already had other hybrid offerings, such as an MBA for a younger population (the Modular MBA) in a "modular" or part-time structure (40% classroom and 60% online learning). Also, in 2018, the Lagos Business School offered four courses fully online, in Marketing, Decision Making and Operations Management. Thus, when the pandemic forced a total lockdown, the school was well placed to adjust and continue classes with almost no interruption. The lesson from the business school was transmitted to the rest of the Pan-Atlantic University, ensuring that learning continued for all students. This was not the case with public universities in Nigeria because many of these universities had never experimented with delivering learning through digital means.

Another African university that was able to successfully initiate online learning in response to the Covid-19 lockdown and restrictions is Adeleke University based in Lagos Nigeria. While waiting for approval from the National Universities Commission, the university in preparation for the eminent lockdown began training students and faculty members to make use of an in-house e-learning management system. This online learning platform was augmented with the use of already existing video conferencing applications Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Students and faculty members also communicated with each other using WhatsApp (Okocha, 2020).

At Strathmore University, Kenya, the response to the Covid-19 pandemic was almost seamless, as the university had already put measures in place to effectively launch an online learning platform. The iLabAfrica, a research and incubation centre, was set up to help the university develop capacity in delivering teaching and learning online using web conferencing tools for its students and staff—training on the use of web conferencing tools—Skype and Microsoft teams (also for online teaching and collaboration between staff members and students). In the first instance, this initiative was necessitated by a growing need to help students enrolled in iLabAfrica's Master's programmes save time. Rather than have students spend long hours commuting between school and their homes, students

could invest those hours studying on the go. Also, to help students make the most of the online learning platforms, the university made an attempt to placate the difficulties that may arise in terms of having access to internet service. The research lab (iLabAfrica) created a working relationship with a Mobile Network Operator to design mobile data bundles for students' access to eLearning resources. A monthly data bundle of 10GB charged at KES 500/$5 (with Strathmore University covering 50% of this cost for each student) gave students access to necessary learning platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype for Business, strathmore.edu and elearning.strathmore.edu at a subsidised rate (Mwangi, 2020).

# Social Media and Competitiveness of Public Universities in Africa

## Using Social Media for Competitive Advantage

The simplicity, cost and ubiquity of social media are direct answers to the main identified obstacles that public universities in Africa face in the adoption of digital media for learning, particularly those related to constraints about a lack of knowledge of technology and the high cost of deploying technology resources. Other concerns about social media adoption in tertiary education in African public universities are those of identity and reputational fit.

Social media is computer and internet-powered platforms for digital interactions amongst persons, through which they create or participate in communities for the sharing of information of mutual interest. The information shared on these interactive platforms may be for learning, play or work. Social media depends on the global connectivity of the internet to enable borderless networks, and they can be accessed through a computer or small mobile devices. Mobility, intuitive ease of use and ubiquity of both the tools of access and the content are some reasons for the power of social media (Guerriero, 2015).

Social media puts power, which hitherto belonged to big media conglomerates, in the hands of ordinary people, many of whom are young.

Each user can become a media producer of text, audio and video content, as well as a consumer, freely choosing the community or network they wish to belong to, the audience for their original content and generally having power and a voice. The result is that social media allows an individual to have power over their identity: to create, modify or manage the image of themselves they wish others to perceive. Thus, individuals and organisations (including public universities) can be personified on social media as brands with specific reputations and values that can be presented to select audiences.

The marketing potential of social media and its power as a platform for content delivery is owed primarily to the huge number of "eyeballs" or audience it is capable of attracting. This fact is not only due to interest in its content but also because access is mostly free; hence, the entry barrier to both creation and consumption is low. Anybody, with very little identity verification, can create a social media account and begin to either produce or consume content. Social media is an everyday part of living for people globally; they access it regularly and combining this tool with learning would mean that students across Africa can have 24/7 access to learning resources and tutors. Learning will become less intermittent and challenges to continuous learning can be significantly reduced.

Audience numbers that used to be considered huge for traditional media (100,000 newspaper subscribers) have been dwarfed by social media audiences. To put the foundation and growth of social media platforms into perspective, the following notable events are identified. One was the invention of the iPhone by Steve Jobs in January 2007, which was revolutionary because it combined a music player (the iPod), with a mobile phone and an internet communicator, the progenitor of the smartphones we know today. An earlier and important event was the first Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) call, which was made in 1991. Three years later, in 1994 the technology came to South Africa, and six years after that (in 2001), it came to Nigeria (Foster & Briceno-Garmendia, 2011). The GSM technology and smartphones power most of the internet usage in all of Africa and are responsible for the wide and deep uptake of digital communication technologies. According to Statista.com, about 3.6 billion people use social media globally, which is about half of the world's population. Other sources put the number at

over 4.6 billion. The figure for Nigeria says that roughly 34 million people use social media in Nigeria as of 2022 (Statista, 2022).

Existing and established social networking sites (SNS) features are already being integrated into existing learning management systems (LMS) without the universities or institutions having to build entirely new platforms. Some examples of how social networking sites have been incorporated into online learning can be seen in how the University of Cape Town (UCT) adopts it for their learners using the social media platform—Facebook. From their online learning platform, they have found that learners engaged very well with online platforms that incorporated Facebook (Bagarukayo & Kalema, 2015). Staff members who used this platform found that it was more easy to "talk" to learners than they could in a physical class, and students were able to access instructors in formal environments with less pressure and felt more comfortable doing so; this allowed them to ask questions easily (Bagarukayo & Kalema, 2015). Bagarukayo and Kalema (2015) suggest that this LMS with Facebook incorporated in it benefited learners with low self-esteem and low life satisfaction and improved overall learning efficacy of such students (Table 9.1).

## Practical Recommendations for Effective and Efficient Social Media Use

### Understanding the Audience and the Medium

A good understanding of the audience and the medium is key to maximising this new learning and communication channel. Social media is the democratised new media frontier. Where communication and marketing used to be one-to-many, the broadened access to social media now makes it many-to-many, with individuals and organisations having equal ability to be consumers and publishers. In order to make the most of social media, it is necessary to first consider some characteristics of the audience, as this will determine how to get their attention—the first goal

**Table 9.1** Facts about social media platforms in Africa

| | TikTok | Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | LinkedIn | YouTube | WhatsApp |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Content type | Video | Multimedia (text, audio, video) | Multimedia (text, audio, video) | Multimedia (text, audio, video) | Multimedia (text, audio, video) | Video | Multimedia (text, audio, video) |
| When it started | 2016 | 2004 | 2006 | 2010 | 2002 | 2005 | 2009 |
| Number of users; popularity (Statista, 2022b) | 1 billion monthly active users. The world's most downloaded app in April 2020; 656 million total downloads at the end of 2021 | About 2.9 billion monthly active users, making Facebook the most popular social network globally | 436 million monthly active users | 1.4 billion monthly active users | 830 million individual users and 58 million organisations | 2.5 billion monthly active users | 2 billion monthly active users |

(*continued*)

**Table 9.1** (continued)

| | TikTok | Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | LinkedIn | YouTube | WhatsApp |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reach in Africa (Nigeria and South Africa) | By Jan 2020, 16.2 million users in Nigeria 9 million users in South Africa | By Q3 2021, 36 million users in Nigeria 32.6 million users in South Africa | By Q3 2021, 19.5 million users in Nigeria 21.9 million users in South Africa | By Q3 2021, 26.5 million users in Nigeria 27.5 million users in South Africa | By Q3 2021, 12.8 million users in Nigeria 18.4 million users in South Africa | By Q3 2021, 6.7 million users in Nigeria 24 million users in South Africa | By Q3 2021, 4.9 million users in Nigeria 35.7 million users in South Africa (Statista, 2022a) |

*Note.* Adapted from "Most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2022, ranked by number of monthly active users" by Statista, 2022c, (https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/) This table presents information and facts about social media platforms in Africa and their popularity and reach among African users (*Statista, 2022c*). Since early 2000, social media platforms were introduced into African countries and quickly gained popularity. Platforms like TikTok which only began in 2016, in 2022 recorded 16.2 million and 9 million users in Nigeria and South Africa, respectively. This shows that a huge chunk of people living in Africa already have access to and make use of social media platforms

of communication and marketing efforts, which also applies to public universities that wish to use social media for learning and promotion.

We already consider that social media is dynamic, interactive and accessible. Delivered on mobile, it is, in addition, affordable and personal. Smartphones provide a convergence of several media types, such as text, audio and video which makes smartphones as good as a mobile television.

The age, education level, needs, economic status or how busy people are suggest characteristics that will determine their interests and availability to be attracted to social media content. As the volume of social media content grows, users must make an economic decision about which content is most relevant and necessary for their consumption and to which they can devote their full attention. Otherwise, attention fatigue will result. The consequence of user adaptation to this content is a shortened attention span.

Users fight attention fatigue by scanning, which means that for text, they focus on headings and highlighted text or bullet points, skipping many other details. The writer would then have to write more concisely and more deliberately to place important information if they want the audience to capture it at a glance. Images play a role in capturing attention. Research, however, shows that even after being attracted by images, when the eyes settle, they settle on text. The successful social media platforms and apps recognise these characteristics of the audience (many of whom are among the Gen Zs or between the ages of 16 and 30) and have designed their apps and experiences to accommodate the preferences of this demographic group.

## Instagram

Instagram is a photo and video-sharing social networking platform. Users can target audiences with hashtags and geo tagging. Some best practice recommendations for Instagram may help public universities use it more effectively for content delivery and for marketing. Since Instagram shares many of the characteristics common to other social media, some of the recommendations for Instagram may be applicable to others. Instagram

users are first attracted to a cover image on a post, "story" or "reel". Following this, they may further interact with the photo or video and then share with an option to include a caption or accompanying text. It is therefore important that this cover image be very attractive; otherwise, the "browsing" or "scanning" visitor may not stop long enough to engage with the other content.

Posting content frequently on Instagram does not, however, automatically translate to audience engagement or an increase in followership. Public universities that choose to use Instagram need to deploy a hook to catch users' attention and interest. This may be in the form of a "promotion" (promo) that offers some special value to the visitor—a gift, some discount or a rare opportunity. These promotions may also take place outside of Instagram, during which the audience is provided with a link to the institution's Instagram page for further engagement. The account owners may further boost the post of interest by making it a paid Ad, which will then guarantee that Instagram displays it in a prominent position and frequently too. Like most other social media platforms, Instagram uses an internal algorithm to determine the type and frequency of content it shows to the audience, which does not depend on the chronological order in which the content was uploaded. The factors considered by the algorithm would often depend on the user's previous browsing and usage habits, such as search interests, and other content they deliberately interacted with in the past. The algorithm rightly or wrongly tries to infer interest from the pattern of past usage.

Instagram has different media posting sub-platforms: posts, reels, IG live videos and stories, each of which can either get content from others or have unique content. Reels, which are short videos, increase the chance of being noticed because Instagram often presents a random selection of reels to viewers, depending on their usage habits. Public universities that use Instagram to create content can target particular interest areas through the use of "hashtags". Hashtags are keywords, preceded with the hash (#) symbols, which are then matched to unique names on the platform with those tags. Thus, when people search for those keywords, they may be shown content deliberately so tagged.

It would help African public universities to understand that most Gen Zs would automatically go first to Instagram to look up something about

which they want more information: be it a fashion brand or an institution. Because they are more used to social media sites like Instagram, such younger people would have initial recourse to Instagram before visiting an institution's website, including a public university. Instagram's offering for businesses allows institutions to create a catalogue of services, a team's page and other features that mimic a mini-website.

Public universities can post admission notices, school announcements, vacancies, public service announcements and other communications on Instagram. The content (photos and preferably short videos) should be dynamic and attractive.

## TikTok

That TikTok has become the most popular social media platform in some places, in less than eight years of its existence, is a testament to how well it fits with the preferences of its target audience (Koetsier, 2021). This short video posting social media platform is not a "serious" platform, "serious" here suggests a solemn, measured, studious, "traditional", careful and normal offering. This does not imply that there are no serious topics on TikTok, as there are some deep, soul-searching video posts on the platform that have changed lives.

Videos on TikTok can be as short as 15 seconds or as long as 10 minutes and are usually fun and entertaining. It can contain pranks, tricks, jokes or even stunts, properties that are often responsible for the viral nature of the videos. The content can also be more serious, like those that reveal the depth of human emotions, showing viewers that there are others who go through the same situations as them, or showcasing examples of kindness that most people would think are no longer possible. TikTok makes it extremely easy for anyone to create a video. All that is needed is an inexpensive smartphone with a camera, the TikTok app and a creative imagination.

Some considerations that public universities should have in deciding whether to use TikTok include the target audience. The demographic group that falls between 16 and 30 years, is the same target audience of both TikTok and universities. This suggests that these institutions may

consider this social media outlet. Another consideration would be whether the intended message can be packaged as an interesting, entertaining and fun video. Such a video may be to showcase some university activity, an announcement presented in a fun yet informative way, or the use of creative graphics to make an otherwise "talking-head" video more interesting. It is also worth considering whether the university has an objection to adopting a light-hearted approach to addressing issues, which will make it more appealing to an audience that is less attracted to "heavy" materials. Above and beyond the external packaging of TikTok videos, some internal characteristics of the stories showcased are that they should be authentic and show real people, particularly revealing their emotions (helping the audience identify with their humanity). Another feature to consider, embedded where possible, is some comedy or a challenge.

TikTok videos can be original content produced by the public university or user-generated content. It is also important to mention that TikTok is currently being used by account holders to create academic content in history and geology and to expound on difficult mathematical concepts. Because it is possible for users to create their own videos using videos already on TikTok, social media–savvy public universities may find that their content is amplified by other users who use their original videos to create new ones or to record "duets". Some other institutions may even find that materials about them existed on TikTok long before they established an official presence on the platform. In such cases, it would serve them well to search out these "mentions" and engage with them in order to establish and grow their presence.

## YouTube

YouTube is a social media video-sharing platform that was launched in 2005. Anybody with a simple camera can produce and distribute a video for free to a global audience. At first, limited to music videos and amateur acts, YouTube soon became the second most visited website after Google (Statista, 2022). It now has a daily combined viewership of one billion hours, from its 2.5 billion monthly users. Consideration of the short

attention span of viewers and the availability of alternatives suggests that YouTube videos should be short. When users have a choice, they often select short videos: one minute long, or a maximum of about four minutes if the video is about educational content. YouTube could very easily facilitate asynchronous learning, allowing users to learn at their own pace and access course materials and information regardless of location and time zone differences at a low cost. Universities can create a large pool of videos and tutorials that students can access on a need-to basis; content will remain stored on the university account and can have a lifetime availability for students and other users.

## Twitter

This micro-blogging site allows a maximum of 140 characters to be posted as text, even though it has now introduced features (such as a newsletter) that allow for longer posts. The key to its effectiveness is its brevity. Some teachers curate learning content on Twitter, such as a Sociology Dictionary that regularly posts very short definitions of sociology contents. Others use the Twitter "Spaces" (synchronous video conferences) to host meetings, classes and learning sessions.

## Using Social Media Influencers

Followers attract followers. Many social media platforms authenticate their users, usually with a blue or white check mark. This increases the credibility of content posted by such people. When a public university is authenticated, this recognition differentiates it from other accounts repeating its contents or even from parody accounts. When authenticated, users post, repost or comment on content produced by an individual or institution, which increases the believability or authenticity of the post.

Influencers are not only entertainers. There are social media influencers who are so because of their expertise in certain domain areas. On TikTok, for example, there are influencers who are geology experts and

are popular for creating trending topics in the field. The more followers an account has, the greater the likelihood that others will follow that same account, one reason being the "fear of missing out" (FOMO). They would reason that there must be something valuable about this account that makes it worth following. It is therefore important that public universities take necessary steps towards organically growing their followership. Organic growth (attracting people due to their love for your person and content) should be preferable to "buying" followers. The latter category is not likely to be interested in your products, and their presence may harm rather than benefit your brand.

## Conclusion

African public universities face threats from (i) an increasing preference for hybrid or fully online education, (ii) digital technology resource constraints and low digital exposure, and (iii) debilitating government constraints that still follow analogue regulatory models. The result is an inability to attract students with more hybrid learning preferences or a loss of market share to foreign universities. The Covid-19 pandemic also exposed the realities and inadequacies of the educational system of Africa and forced an educational policy that African public universities are struggling to implement.

Despite the severe challenges that African universities face that prevent them from fully embracing online learning and effectively implementing it within these institutions to meet the needs of their students, social media offers a developmental opportunity, a distinct turning point and an opportunity for all African public universities to learn, reshape and revamp the existing systems while building resilience to cope with future changes and resultant challenges.

The government and policymakers also have a unique opportunity to explore social media and how it can be harnessed to deliver an academic infrastructure and system that nears (if not equals) global standards and tackles two of the nation's most urgent pre-pandemic education crises: access to education, with the country having the highest number of

out-of-school children and quality. As is the case with a handful of private universities and tertiary institutions in Africa already (i.e. Lagos Business School, Pan-Atlantic University, Strathmore University, Kenya), the use of online learning platforms augmented with social media platforms such as WhatsApp is very attainable and its adoption by public universities within the continent can easily be modelled after already existing methods set in place by these institutions. Many African public universities already have IT infrastructure or ICT laboratories and departments set up; staff members working in these facilities and departments can be trained on current online learning trends and become skilled at adapting social media platforms for education and continuous learning.

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# 10

# Public Sector Marketing Communications: Insights from/for the Primus National Football League Rwanda

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## Introduction

Football leagues in Africa have received limited, if any, attention in the grand scheme of world football. This marginal representation has been mainly due to the below-par marketing of these leagues. The Rwanda national football team is controlled by the Rwanda Football Federation (Fédération Rwandaise de Football Association, FERWAFA), the

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governing body of football in Rwanda and a member of the Confederation of African Football (CAF). The posturing of this chapter is based on the contention that football leagues are quasi-government entities and deserving of the label, public sector. Consequently, this chapter makes a novel contribution to the literature by exploring an under explored context—Rwanda.

The national team of Rwanda is known as "The Wasps" or "Amavubi" in Kinyarwanda, the local language. At Stade Amahoro in Kigali, Amavubi team plays its home games. The team has never qualified for any global tournament like the World Cup final. It is on record that the team only qualified for their first Africa Cup of Nations in 2004. During the African Cup of Nations (AFCON), Amahoro lost their opening match 2–1 to Tunisia. They drew their next match in the competition with a 1–1 draw against Guinea and beat DR Congo in their final group match before exiting the tournament.

To provide a bit of context to Rwanda national football: The Amahoro Stadium is a multi-purpose stadium in the Gasabo district of Kigali, Rwanda, with a capacity of 25,000. Amahoro is the largest stadium in Rwanda and hosts football and rugby matches, and social and public events.

At the league level, one of the two national brewers, Bralirwa Plc., announced a new partnership with the Rwanda Football Federation

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(Fédération Rwandaise de Football Association, FERWAFA), in 2021. The partnership makes Bralirwa the primary sponsor of the National Football League and confers upon the brewer the title rights to the Rwanda National League and media exposure for its flagship Primus Brand. The partnership, which was signed on 4 March 2021, will also see Bralirwa as an exclusive beverage sponsor of FERWAFA for a period of four years for all associated activities linked to FERWAFA, amongst others, the Rwanda National League, henceforth known as the "Primus National League."

Against this backdrop, the research question, as Igwe et al. (2021) noted in the case of Nigeria, is why there is still a strong "influence of European Football Leagues on the (…) Society." In addition to this, we also investigate if this can be redirected inwards, with a view to being transported outwards. In addressing these questions, this chapter examines marketing communications—from branding to sponsorships, and from fan engagement to digital marketing in an unexplored African context, with special emphasis on Rwanda—and discusses the implications for the rest of the continent.

## Research Context

### Primus National League Team Profiles

There are a total of 16 teams in the Rwandan National League. These include the Kigali-based Armée Patriotique Rwandaise Football Club, which plays its home games at the Amahoro Stadium. Founded in June 1993, the team seems to have been at the top of the league in consecutive years, leading up to 2021/2022 (see Table 10.1).

Rayon Sports Football Club is an association football club from Nyanza in the Southern Province of Rwanda but is now based in Kigali. The team currently plays its home games at the *Stade Amahoro* in Kigali and *Kigali Stadium* in Nyamirambo. Kiyovu Sports Association, more commonly known as SC Kiyovu Sports, Kiyovu Sports or Kiyovu, is an association football club also based in Kigali, Rwanda. The team

**Table 10.1**  Primus National League 2021/2022 (6 March 2022)

| No | Team | P | W | D | L | GF | GA | GD | PTS |
|----|------|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|-----|
| 1 | APR | 20 | 13 | 05 | 02 | 28 | 10 | 18 | 44 |
| 2 | Kiyovu | 20 | 13 | 05 | 02 | 27 | 12 | 15 | 44 |
| 3 | Mukura | 20 | 10 | 06 | 04 | 24 | 14 | 10 | 36 |
| 4 | Rayon | 20 | 09 | 07 | 04 | 20 | 16 | 04 | 34 |
| 5 | AS Kigali | 20 | 08 | 08 | 04 | 30 | 20 | 10 | 32 |
| 6 | Musanze | 20 | 08 | 07 | 05 | 25 | 18 | 07 | 31 |
| 7 | Police | 20 | 08 | 06 | 06 | 28 | 19 | 09 | 30 |
| 8 | Marine | 20 | 07 | 04 | 09 | 22 | 28 | −6 | 25 |
| 9 | Espoir | 20 | 05 | 08 | 07 | 16 | 21 | −5 | 23 |
| 10 | Gasogi | 20 | 06 | 04 | 10 | 20 | 25 | −5 | 22 |
| 11 | Etincelles | 20 | 05 | 06 | 09 | 19 | 26 | −07 | 21 |
| 12 | Rutsiro | 20 | 04 | 08 | 08 | 16 | 22 | −6 | 20 |
| 13 | Bugesera | 20 | 04 | 07 | 09 | 22 | 26 | −4 | 19 |
| 14 | Etoile | 20 | 04 | 06 | 10 | 15 | 30 | −15 | 18 |
| 15 | Gorilla | 20 | 03 | 06 | 11 | 16 | 23 | −7 | 15 |
| 16 | Gicumbi | 20 | 02 | 09 | 09 | 10 | 27 | −17 | 15 |

Standings Primus National League - Football - Eurosport
Source:  https://www.eurosport.com/football/primus-national-football-league/
standing.shtml

currently plays its home games at *Mumena Stadium* or *Amahoro Stadium*. Mukura Victory Sports et Loisirs Football Club, commonly known as Mukura Victory Sports or simply Mukura, is an association football club from Butare, Rwanda; founded in May 1963, the club currently plays its home games at *Stade Huye*. AS Kigali Football Club is a Rwandan football club from Kigali and plays its home games at the *Kigali Stadium* in Nyamirambo; established in 1999, AS Kigali has won the Rwandan Cup twice and also the Rwandan Super Cup on two occasions.

## Stadium Development and Marketing Communications

On a slightly separate note, investments in sports and especially football in Africa go beyond sponsorship deals, as the recent case of the Turkish investment in stadiums in Senegal demonstrates. Only recently, it was reported that Turkish President Erdogan "oversaw the unveiling of his country's latest high-profile construction project in Africa – a 50,000-seat stadium on the outskirts of Senegalese capital Dakar" (Wilks, 2022).

**Table 10.2** A selection of Rwanda stadia and capacity

| Name | City | Capacity | Location |
|---|---|---|---|
| Stade Amahoro | Kigali | 25,000 | Gasabo District |
| Stade Régional de Nyamirambo | Kigali | 22,000 | Avenue de la Nyabaromgo |
| Stade Huye | Butare | 20,000 | Huye |
| Bugesera Stadium | Nyamata | 10,000 | Bugesera District |
| Stade Umuganda | Gisenyi | 5200 | Avenue de l'Umuganda |

Source: https://int.soccerway.com/national/rwanda/national-soccer-league/20212022/regular-season/r66108/venues/

Istanbul-based "Summa" built the US$260 million Diamniadio Olympic Stadium. The same firm is reportedly replicating that development with Amahoro (Table 10.2), the national stadium of Rwanda.

The Amahoro National Stadium had not hosted football competitions since 2021, as it had been undergoing renovation after a series of delays mainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Nsabimana, 2022a). Turkish contractor SUMMA (the same contractor as the Olympic stadium in Senegal) had commenced work on the project which will entail the expansion of different wings of the stadium and some additional roofing expected to shield spectators from extreme weather conditions and also provide comfort (Nsabimana, 2022a). According to Noel Nsanzineza, acting Director-General of the Rwanda Housing Authority, "the contract has already been signed with the contractor and the works are underway. The stadium will be ready by 2024 …" (Nsabimana, 2022a). It is noteworthy that neither the national team, Amavubi, nor local clubs can host their continental competitive matches at any of the current facilities in Huye Stadium, as both were rejected from hosting the Rwanda-Senegal match following a supervision team visit from CAF which deemed them unready—thus forcing "Amavubi" to play their match, day two of the AFCON qualifiers against Senegal in the more ready Senegalese capital of Dakar (Nsabimana, 2022a).

However, the Amahoro National Stadium, a multi-purpose stadium with a capacity of 25,000 seats with ongoing upgrades poised to see the stadium's capacity go up to 45,000, making it the biggest stadium in the country (Nsabimana, 2022a). The stadium is also reported to be part of the proposed "Remera sports hub," alongside the likes of rebranded BK

Arena (formerly the Kigali Arena but was renamed due to the stadium naming rights associated with the Bank of Kigali or BK), which houses the Amahoro indoor stadium, commonly known as "Petit Stade," as well as the Paralympic Games Gymnasium (Nsabimana, 2022a).

In a similar vein, as recently reported by Nsabimana (2022b), the Rwanda Housing Authority had confirmed that the ongoing renovation work at Huye Stadium is projected to cost about Rwf 10 billion (equivalent of just under US$10 million) upon completion. The stadium had been under renovation since April 2022. The contractor had been working day and night to complete the project as soon as possible so that Rwanda can host some of their AFCON qualifiers in the country. However, as reported in the media, "the venue was initially the only option that Rwanda had if it was to host home matches but following delays in renovating both the Amahoro stadium and Kigali stadium, the tie against Senegal was moved to Dakar" (Nsabimana, 2022b).

The recently concluded TotalEnergies Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) took place between 9 January and 6 February 2022 in Cameroon—availing the nation an opportunity to showcase the five main cities and their respective stadia selected as hosts of the tournament, namely Douala and its *Japoma Stadium*, Yaoundé and its *Ahmadou Ahidjo*, and *Olembé Stadiums*, Bafoussam and its *Kouekong Stadium*, Garoua and its *Roumdé-Adjia Stadium* and finally the Limbe-Buea venue which houses the *Limbe Omnisport Stadium*.

## Literature Review

There have been some traction on football development in Africa dating back over a decade. However, branding of national leagues in the African region has become challenging when compared with the successes achieved by European Leagues such as the Premier League (England, UK), Bundesliga League (Germany) and LaLiga (Spain). In 2011, for example, Hinson et al. posited that Ghana has achieved success in branding of its national team (Black Stars) following a successful outing at the 2010 FIFA World Cup; however, the local league and football clubs are

yet to find the branding formula to make the clubs attractive to commercial sponsors nationally or internationally.

In another article, "Re-branding the Nigerian Football League," Madichie (2016) explored the challenges of Nigerian Professional Football League teams at the club level. Madichie opined that although Nigeria's first team players plied their trade in Europe, what remained a challenge is the "disconnect" between the domestic league and the national team composition. Therefore, brand ambassadors were proposed as one of the key conduits for re-aligning the identified disconnect.

There have also been other studies—from a single club case study in an under-explored context to national football leagues. On the one hand, for example, Madichie (2011) documented the growth and development of the UAE Professional Football League using the particular case of one of the oldest teams, Sharjah Football Club, which was founded five long years before the Football Association was conceived. A key question explored by Madichie (2011) was what factors influenced attendance at sporting events. In this case, he posited that based on the expectations that understanding such underlying factors will improve the efficiency of marketing communication between service providers and consumers. As Cunningham and Kwon (2003) put it, this possibly plays significant effect on organisational marketing programmes. It could be argued that attracting more people to the stadium will not only increase ticket revenues but will have a spiral effect on other services associated with the stadium and the location.

On the other hand, Madichie (2016) explored the barriers of Nigerian Professional Football League teams at the club level. The Nigerian national team has been successful in qualifying for the FIFA World Cup on six occasions, beginning in 1994, and the most recent was the 2018 World Cup in Russia. Applying qualitative research approach, Madichie (2016) finds that

> although Nigeria's first team players ply their trade in Europe, there remains a challenge epitomised by the "disconnect" between the domestic league and the national team composition. As a consequence, brand ambassadors are proposed as one of the key conduits for re-aligning the identified disconnect.

In his study on the Nigerian Football League, Madichie (2016) provided some insight from developments in another African football giant—that is, Ghana, runners-up of the recently concluded 2015 African Nations Cup. The author surmised that

> In the long history of the FIFA Football World Cup, only three African teams have ever reached the quarter-finals – notably Cameroon in 1990, Senegal in 2002 and Ghana in 2010.

According to him, "although the Super Eagles relished the label of African Champions going in the World Cup finals, they remain incapacitated, having failed to 'fly' into the round of 16 since their 1994 debut. Furthermore, the alignment at the micro or club level to the meso or country-level remains to be investigated at both scholarly and policy levels."

Ultimately, as Madichie (2016) claimed, his study was among the very few studies which sought to highlight the misalignment between club and country within the African research context. Also, it was identified as one of the few papers that highlighted the need for brand ambassadors as a crucial means of bridging the gap evident in this area.

Similarly, Onwumechili and Akpan (2020) examined intra-national footballer migrations and their effect on family in Nigeria by interviewing 15 footballers from seven clubs. These authors pointed out that "several studies have emerged on migration of football labour. A large number of these studies followed the loosening of transfer rules after the landmark 1995 Jean-Marc Bosman court case. The studies, however, focus on the polarisation of talents and club wealth, wages and effects on minors and family. In essence, macro-structural issues." The authors stated further that "the lack of attention to micro issues such as human agency and the ignoring of the more voluminous intra-national migration of football labour means that there is less understanding of micro issues pertaining to intra-national football migration."

## Integrated Marketing Communications in Football

Manoli and Hodgkinson (2019) examined "the perceptions of the IMC [integrated marketing communications] implementation process from practitioners working within professional football clubs." The study highlighted four diverse scenarios of IMC implementation—strategic integration, practitioners' strategy paradox, unintentional IMC implementation paradox and IMC absence. The scenarios provide a more nuanced perspective of IMC advancement by unpacking the black box of IMC implementation landscape as examined among professional football clubs.

Indeed, Manoli and Hodgkinson (2019) investigated perceptions of the IMC implementation process and the extent to which IMC is being implemented among client organisations operating in the English Premier League. Through this analysis, the study provided the much-needed qualitative investigation of IMC implementation from the client-side of the marketing agency/client organisation interface. The study hence moves the IMC debate away from advertising and PR agencies, as well as "diverges from the tendency toward quantitative methodologies in IMC studies as called for by Kitchen and Burgmann (2010) and Seric (2018)" respectively (Manoli & Hodgkinson, 2019: 2).

Additionally, as Manoli and Hodgkinson (2019, p. 3) pointed out that "an attempt to present a consistent message across the available promotional mix elements […] IMC implementation *is the most advanced state of IMC application*." Nevertheless, while full strategic integration is deemed the ideal state, "extant IMC implementation studies […] suggest that most organisations apply IMC at an executional or tactical levels […] rather than at the organisational level for strategic ends." This is in line with our chapter discussions—organisational-level IMC. Interrogating Manoli and Hodgkinson (2019) further, the authors' research focus on the perceptions that IMC implementation has been increasingly neglected since the early 2000s in favour of investigating its impact via IMC outcomes.

In their exploratory study, therefore, Manoli and Hodgkinson (2019) did "not seek to revisit the definitional properties of IMC, but rather address the perceptions of IMC implementation practices in line with

Kitchen and Schultz's (2001) implementation paradigm to shed new light on IMC implementation advancement." Doing so, according to these authors "will help to move IMC theory beyond its midrange maturity level by developing a deeper understanding of its founding tenant, namely strategic integration."

In their book, *The Economics of Professional Road Cycling*, Van Reeth and Larson (2016) reported on "a growing body of academic literature on the economics of road cycling [having] been amassed." They went on to state that the "book is the first volume to bring together a majority of the academic research and knowledge on the economics and management of professional road cycling" covering "particular economic aspect of the sport, from organizational structure to marketing, labor, game theory, and competitive balance [and thereby] sets an agenda for further academic research while providing insights for all stakeholders in cycling: governments, cycling's governing bodies, team managers, race organizers, sponsors, media."

Similarly, Lagae (2015), on the subject of the "Peculiarities of Sponsorship in Professional Road Cycling," posited that "sport sponsorship is any commercial agreement by which a sponsor contractually provides financing or other support in order to establish an association between the sponsor's image, brands or products and a sport sponsorship property in return for rights to promote this association and/or for granting certain agreed direct or indirect benefits." The author went on to highlight how the cycling sponsorship market can be very dynamic— "the duration and termination of sponsorship of cycling teams as well as a company's motives to invest in cycling sponsorship are discussed, and the importance of the integration of sponsorship into marketing communication is illustrated." Clearly, this suggests the role of cultivating sponsorships into the IMC implementation process—something domestic league football can take a cue from.

## Sponsorship Deals and Soft Power

In their article "Soft Power Sports Sponsorship," Chadwick, Widdop and Burton (2020) opined that "although commonly associated with

commercial organisations utilising it as a form of marketing communication, sponsorship has become an increasingly political activity." In the last ten years, there has been a shift in sponsorship spending. Sponsorships undertaken by state-owned airlines and energy companies and also through sovereign-wealth fund brands have become increasingly commonplace. The study examined the emergence and effects of such agreements and argued that such activities constituted a new form of sponsorship—soft power sponsorship—illustrative of how countries seek to promote their attractiveness, culture, ideas and policies through soft power. Utilising Social Network Analysis, these authors examined the nature and extent of soft power in the cases of three countries (China, Qatar and Russia), and explored how state sponsorship is structurally embedded within soft power networks. Through this analysis, the study provided a definition and conceptualisation of soft power sponsorship and discussed the implications for sponsorship practice.

In their introduction, Chadwick et al. (2020) pointed out that "sponsorship is now an established part of the business landscape, with expenditure on sponsorship programs continuing to grow." According to the authors:

> Typically, organizations engage in such programs as a form of marketing communication, although sponsorship is increasingly being utilized to build relationships and provide a basis for broader organizational strategies. As such, spending on sponsorship is common across a range of industrial sectors, including sport, the arts, and causes. For sponsors, branding, image and relational benefits can be derived from their investments; for sponsees, corporate partners are often an important source of revenue, alongside the potential to realize a range of other collaboratively generated benefits (such as consumer engagement).

Nevertheless, this research argues that a new form of sponsorship has recently emerged—soft power sponsorship—affording nations an instrument through which to exert soft power. The works of political theorist Joseph Nye (1990, 2004) inspired a new paradigm in political theory and international relations scholarship, distinguishing the influence exerted by nation-states between coercive power—wherein entities "influence the

behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants […] from that of soft power – described as an actor's potential to attract and co-opt them to want what you want." As these authors further point out, "in so exerting soft power, the goals of nations are myriad, including the building of political and commercial influence."

A notable example of this exertion of soft power can be gleaned from a 2018 article in the UK *Guardian*, "Rwanda's £30m Arsenal Sponsorship Divides Opinion," where mixed views on the sponsorship deal with Arsenal FC and the government of Rwanda were collated. As the article states:

> Anyone confused as to why Rwanda chose to spend £30m putting its name on the sleeve of Arsenal's football shirts could begin to answer their question by looking at President Paul Kagame's Twitter feed. In common with many of his countrymen, Kagame is an avid fan of his "beloved club" and the president — who has been Rwanda's head of state for almost as long as Arsène Wenger led Arsenal — has regularly offered his view on club matters over the past six years.

From the above quote, three interesting insights can be picked up: the first is the "Twitter feed" of a President. The second is avid fandom, as illustrated in the phrase "beloved club." A third is fan engagement, as captured in the phrase "has regularly offered his view on club matters."

The *Guardian* article goes on to highlight the views of supporters and some in the marketing industry, as "a canny move that is already getting people thinking about the impoverished country's tourism industry, which offers lakeside resorts and walks with mountain gorillas — with one expert estimating that the £30m investment could help to bring in £300m of new revenue." As Kelvyn Gardner, the head of international development at the Licensing Industry Merchandisers' Association, points out,

> Rwanda wouldn't have occurred to me as a place for tourism, so perhaps you do need to shock people […] What you're buying with sponsorship it's brand recognition. Football shirts can be overmonopolised by things like online gaming companies, so it will stand out.

As part of the deal, Arsenal players will visit Rwanda to hold training camps, while the country's logo appears at the side of the pitch at the Emirates stadium and in the background of post-match interviews (Waterson, 2018). According to Timothy Longman, a professor at Boston University (Waterson, 2018):

> This decision demonstrates Rwanda's continuing reorientation from a francophone to an anglophone country […] The group that dominates Rwandan politics, society, and economics today grew up mostly in refugee camps in Uganda, they brought back to Rwanda with them a connection to many things associated with Britain, including Premier League football.

Another illustration of soft power can be seen in the exploits of Turkey across Africa through the Istanbul-based "Summa" and its stadium building projects on the continent.

In an academic article entitled "Is the Middle East the Land of the Future," Madichie (2013a) provided what he considered to be "a holistic picture of the efforts of the Middle East towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, using investments in sports, as a galvanizing force." Based on personal observations and documentary analysis that study concluded that "on the balance of probability, this might not be a given." It also found that although the Middle East has made "front page" news on most global media platforms, however, for a variety of reasons, there are signs not to be too optimistic about whether this geographic entity is, by default, the land of the future (Madichie, 2013a). A rather interesting point also observed was that the inability to leverage the investment in sports in a sustainable global partnership spill over into anticipated development—both social and economic. In this case, we are looking at the connection between sport and sustainable development goals.

In yet another study entitled "Does the Future of Football Lie in the Middle East?" Madichie (2013b) reflected on recent events in the global football landscape and their implications for the Middle East, in their ambitious aspiration to be the future destination of the sport. By drawing on a mixture of interviews, personal observation and a documentary analysis of scholarly papers on sports marketing in general and comparable "small-time" football leagues in England, Madichie (2013b) finds

that "even though the tiny Gulf state of Qatar has controversially won the hosting rights of the greatest football event in the world (i.e., FIFA 2022), the FIFA world ranking of the State puts it just within the top 100 global footballing nations (ranked no. 95 as at November 2011)." He points out further that "its (i.e., Qatar's) sibling, the UAE, fares even worse" despite both countries having "made the most investments in the sport of football in recent years." In terms of practical implications, the same study reported that "countries with established leagues […] lost the FIFA World Cup hosting rights to Russia for 2018 and 'little known' (in football terms) Qatar for 2022" arguing that "all these have implications for the future of football in the Middle East, and [the] sustainability of the discourse and its implication for the global sport."

These insights emanate from a redacted version of the study (Anon, 2014), a review of the latest management developments across the globe pinpointing practical implications from cutting-edge research and case studies. In that review, citing South Africa's hosting of the 2010 World Cup, it was revealed that "football […] has become a global phenomenon in recent times […] This is aptly illustrated by the increase in major international tournaments staged in nations widely regarded as footballing backwaters in the none-too-distant past." The article goes on to state that "perhaps most intriguing was the decision of football's world governing body, FIFA, to announce that this prestigious event would be held in Qatar [as a] palpable amazement that greeted the announcement has hardly abated since." The acknowledgement or endorsement of that article is worth highlighting, "this paper provides strategic insights and practical thinking that have influenced some of the world's leading organizations [as] the briefing saves busy executives and researchers hours of reading time by selecting only the very best, most pertinent information and presenting it in a condensed and easy-to-digest format."

In their study on UK football clubs "managing brand presence through social media," McCarthy et al. (2014) set out to highlight "the issues and benefits associated with managing brand presence and relationships through social media." They point out that "UK football clubs are big businesses, with committed communities of fans, so are an ideal context from which to develop an understanding of the issues and challenges facing organisations as they seek to protect and promote their brand online."

From their findings, "clubs agreed that further development of social media strategies had potential to deliver interaction and engagement, community growth and belonging, traffic flow to official web sites and commercial gain." However, the study cautions that in developing social media strategies of clubs there are two key concerns. The first concern was the control of the brand presence and image in social media, and how to respond to the opportunities that social media presents to fans to impact the brand. The second concern was how to maintain an appropriate balance between strategies that deliver short-term revenue, and those that help build longer-term brand loyalty.

Still on the discourse of image in social media and the perceived trade-offs between short-term revenue and longer-term brand loyalty via social media, Awini (2019) examined the impact of social media and sports fan engagement. According to the author, "social media engagement has a positive and significant influence on fan behaviour and fan loyalty. Sport organisations predominantly use social media to increase their brand visibility and to develop fan relationships." Whether that is the case in Rwanda remains to be seen. Awini (2019) also "found that loyalty [of the] Fans of the two clubs appeared to hold a higher sense of loyalty and control in their devotion to the club." Finally, "the substantial use of social media seems to be primarily directed towards club's visibility and relationship development. Social media usage is significant in improving fan loyalty in football clubs. The study provides evidence of how a fan's behaviour and the club's effort to engage via social media lead to fan loyalty and commitment."

## Discussions

There is no better way to kickstart the discussions on this exploratory subject matter than through a chronological account of the studies reviewed. Starting with a 2010 article "Giving the Beautiful Game a 'Pretty' Bad Name: A Viewpoint on African Football," which attempted to highlight the *good, bad and ugly* side of professional football in Africa (Madichie, 2010), some insights can be gleaned. For example, on the good side, the contribution of *African players to the European premier*

*leagues* has been reported, including the specific case of the English Premier League. On the bad side, the management of African football teams is rather appalling, from the suspension handed down by the Confederation of African Football (CAF)—while FIFA looks on in silence—to the Togolese team for pulling out of the recently concluded African Cup of Nations (AFCON) after being brutally attacked in the border town of Cabinda (Angola) to the sack of the Nigerian coach as well as the entire team and management of the Benin side both for poor performances. *The ugly side* is the current state of anarchy and the politically charged hatred between two North African giants Egypt and Algeria, who have met about four times in four months amidst violence.

In 2011, another article "Whither the Legacy of FIFA 2010 World Cup for Entrepreneurship in South Africa?" by Madichie (2011) focused on the subject of the FIFA 2010 World Cup being a "coveted trophy for players, managers, and competing nations." Therefore, participating in the World Cup was seen as not only a symbol of national pride but also an opportunity for business start-ups, growth and development. However, there were speculations as to what effect this event has and/or would have on entrepreneurial activity in the country.

The following year, some expert views were solicited in an article "The FIFA 2010 World Cup and Football Sponsorship in Ghana," with a view to investigating the sponsorship benefits to Ghanaian football clubs by virtue of the impressive performance of the Ghana Black Stars at the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Although corporate Ghana has demonstrated their capacity and willingness to commit resources to football development, local football clubs and the national team have not branded the football business enough to make it attractive to sponsors. They also point out that "Black Stars' participation in the 2006 and 2010 FIFA World Cup held in Germany and South Africa respectively, has, however, improved the attractiveness of football to the public, which needs to be built on." As the article sums up, "studies on sponsorship in football in developing economy contexts are fairly parsimonious."

In their study of Thai Football, Madichie and Mbah (2015) explored the potential of football as nation branding tool—drawing from contingent literature and personal observation, including the on-pitch performance of the "War Elephants" (Thai national football team) at the Suzuki

Cup organised by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Football Federation. The study sought to advance a potential avenue for a rebrand, and perception change, in global observers (including potential investors) of a country with a historically entrenched negative brand image—sex tourism and murder notably.

In 2016, an article "Re-branding the Nigerian Professional Football League" highlighted the challenges of Nigerian teams at the club level, with a view to aligning this with developments at the country level, especially so in the aftermath of the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil where Nigeria participated alongside four others—Algeria, Cameroon, Ghana and Ivory Coast (Madichie, 2016).

> In the long history of the FIFA Football World Cup, only three African teams have ever reached the quarter-finals – notably Cameroon in 1990, Senegal in 2002 and Ghana in 2010. Although the Super Eagles relished the label of African Champions going in the World Cup finals, they remain incapacitated, having failed to "fly" into the round of 16 since their 1994 debut.

Despite Nigeria and other African countries achieving successful career in football in Europe, footballers in the local leagues still struggle with achieving career success with the national league. Also, African clubs still struggle to attract commercial sponsorship from the multinational corporations. As pointed out by Igwe et al. (2021), "nowadays, the commercialisation, internationalisation and brand images of football clubs are vital [thus examining] the globalisation and glocalisation of football and its influence on culture and society [is pertinent]." Following an ethnography approach and a qualitative method, Igwe et al. (2021) sought to articulate the "European Football Leagues brand internationalisation and evaluate its positive and negative effects on the Nigerian society." The authors also evaluated the impact on Nigerians, and argued, "via a study of 50 participants made up of community football managers, managers of football viewing centres and football fans […] findings reveal the connection of football with booming hospitality and a culture which has positive and troubling relationships." Notably, these authors also cite elements such as "fan faithfulness, devotion and allegiance that creates a

culture of identity, religion and sense of belonging," even while cautioning on the "negative impacts such as a betting culture and online gambling which have devastating effects, especially on young people."

Furthermore, and more recently in 2020, a study on "the English Premier League's success in an emerging market" analysed how professional football clubs have attained success through internationalisation and branding strategies in foreign markets (Hinson et al., 2020). Based on an inductive approach consisting of 27 semi-structured interviews, the study analysed the perceptions of Ghanaian fans of four English Premier League teams and concluded that the strength of professional football brand equity is jointly determined by brand awareness level, brand loyalty and perceived quality. Hinson et al. (2020) cautioned that increasing competition in international markets requires that professional football clubs should clearly define their marketing strategies to improve the perception of their fans in foreign countries. Finally, the authors claim their study was amongst the few studies to utilise country-of-origin paradigm and signalling theory to explain football brand equity building.

Besides the brand equity building alluded to in the above study, part of the "signalling" may be related to fan engagement through social media as one of a range of marketing strategies. For example, and as Pegoraro and Jinnah (2012; 87) once pointed out, "social media [albeit Twitter] provide fans with unmediated access to athletes, thereby increasing their interactions as well as increasing the athlete's ability to influence their fans."

Another dimension to marketing strategy is that of providing *immersive experiences* for fans through stadium infrastructure development. As recently pointed out by Samuel, McGouran, Thomas and White (2022), "sporting stadia are a highly influential aspect of many people's lives that drive the inexorable journey towards team affiliation, immersive experiences, intense loyalty and the creation of an enduring, local identity."

Still on the subject of infrastructure initiative targets for Africa, leaders of the wealthiest democracies meeting at the G7 Summit only recently announced a $600bn lending initiative to fund infrastructure projects in the developing world, "which they say will have a particular focus on Africa" (Komminoth, 2022). The leaders also highlighted the *Partnership for Global Infrastructure Initiative* as an action that would help close the

infrastructure gap in developing countries and also provide an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative—an infrastructure and investment programme which spans multiple continents (Komminoth, 2022). We have witnessed how Turkey is doing just that with the stadium redevelopment in Africa—from Senegal to Rwanda.

## Conclusions and Implications

Overall, this chapter has captured the main challenges and also highlighted some of what may be deemed the "disconnect" or perhaps "missing link" as far as branding and visibility may be concerned. Nevertheless, there are a few pertinent questions and answers that we have provided in the chapter from insights gained through the discussions. For example, does Rwanda have a successful domestic league that can effectively and efficiently attract a global audience? If yes, what marketing communications practices are they using as a means to that end? *The response to this is no, because the league is little known even in the East African sub-region, hence the need for IMC, fan engagement and social media marketing.*

What can the rest of African domestic leagues learn from the Primus National League in Rwanda? *The simple answer here is, not very much currently. However, the stadium sharing formula and stadium redevelopment might be of interest.*

What does the Primus National League need to do in order to improve, and become more competitive? *Evidently, the league needs to capitalise on every marketing opportunity to increase its visibility—be it branding, sponsorships or extensive fan engagement* via *digital and/or social media. Indeed, IMC encompasses the promotions mix—from advertising, through sales promotions, publicity and sponsorships, direct marketing, to personal selling.*

What are the issues? Does the league need to be rebranded through the adoption of marketing communications practices? If yes, why? *The issues include the apparent lack of visibility of the domestic league in Rwanda. Consequently, a viable way of changing this is posited to be in the area of reformulating an integrated marketing communications campaign. This would also require securing, if not leveraging upon, sponsorship deals (soft*

*power or otherwise) and social media marketing, among others, to increase fan engagement.*

Why is this chapter relevant to Football Administration in Rwanda and Africa more broadly? *On this question, it must be pointed out that there are no quick fixes and, therefore, nothing prescriptive as such. However, one clear message is that the football administration needs partners to help with the domestic league's promotional activities. This may, or may not, involve heavy spending as articulated in the #VisitRwanda deal between the Government of Rwanda and the English Premier League side, Arsenal or the stadia development projects at both Amahoro and Huye—with a view to winning hosting rights for mega events such as AFCON and seizing the opportunity to showcase these immersive spaces to a global audience. Ultimately, this would add to the soft power exploits undertaken in other geographic spaces such as Cameroon.*

In terms of managerial and/ or policy implications, FERWAFA and the National Football league may be better served by aligning with two of the most renowned sports in Rwanda, that is, the Basketball Africa League (BAL) and the FERWACY linked *Tour du Rwanda* Cycling event. Indeed, and taking a cue from the Basketball Africa League (BAL), a partnership between the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) and the National Basketball Association (NBA), a professional league featuring 12 club teams from across Africa, some instructive lessons for the football league are clear. The BAL marks the NBA's first collaboration to operate a league outside North America. So, the question re-emerges— what is the visibility of African domestic football leagues? How are these leagues engaging their fans? How can the knowledge of effective marketing communications help enhance both engagement and visibility?

In a bid to answer some of these questions, it is worth highlighting that the main challenge for Rwanda and other African domestic leagues in general is that they have not taken the time to understand and develop their product, the leagues. In developing the league, a different ingredient—primarily the players (including referees, coaches and other supporting roles)—the fans and the infrastructure must be nurtured. Africa is talent-rich, but to create the product, this talent needs to be developed and a right platform designed to highlight it—develop fit-for-purpose infrastructure (Gahanga Cricket Stadium is a perfect case study). Fans

will naturally flock to decent and highly accessible community facilities every weekend to watch their local teams—and thereby developing a football culture. As far as the product of football is concerned, packaging is required for sponsors and those open to "testing" their sponsorship and marketing budgets.

In terms of pricing, the question of who are the customers for the product? Who pays? In Africa, disposable income is low, so fans should not be the primary customers. Rather, we should look at the fans as part of the product we position for potential sponsors and partners, including the government. Next, we need to develop different value propositions, for example, a local bank is looking for "small" deposits (Equity Bank Strategy), the government is looking for health data, security, etc. Can we develop the value propositions to "sell" to these stakeholders, while finding ways to educate/empower fans—beyond fan engagement to fan education and empowerment?

Regarding the place element of the marketing mix, we have already looked at the importance of infrastructure and situating it in the community for accessibility. The challenge for Africa now is to compete in the digital spaces, broadcast media and social media. Can Kenyans, Tanzanians and Ugandans travel to watch the Rwandan derby? Local/regional media houses struggle to bring us, expensive leagues, from abroad. What if NTV (Kenya) struck a deal with the Primus National League? Corporates with regional ambitions immediately see value in sponsoring such a league, think Equity, MPESA, VisitRwanda and so forth.

Finally, from the promotional angle, a recent Deloitte survey on "The future of sports broadcasting" highlighted that "the future of sports broadcasting includes new ways to keep fans engaged and capture their attention with compelling, authentic experiences." Drilling further, it notes:

> In a world where consumers are no longer tied to broadcast and cable schedules to catch their favorite shows, live sports are the exception. Sports is one of the few remaining content types/genres that fans will go out of their way to watch live. This passion equates to a big opportunity for sports teams, advertisers, and over-the-top (OTT) streaming and broadcast media companies.

Indeed, the Deloitte survey asked respondents to "self-identify their level of fandom for each of eight sports/leagues: eSports, Major League Soccer (MLS), Major League Baseball (MLB), The National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR), National Basketball Association (NBA), National Football League (NFL), National Hockey League (NHL), and The Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA)." The levels are quite instructive as they cover fan categories (Deloitte, n.d.):

> For each sport/league fans could self-identify at one of five levels: fanatics, love it fans, casual fans, knowing the sport but not a fan, and not being familiar with the sport. Fanatics were defined as never missing a game—either in person or on TV; love it fans were defined as watching often and going to live events when they can; and casual fans were defined as watching every now and then.

Key findings of the Deloitte survey revealed an "overall satisfaction [of about] 39 percent for the broadcast and OTT experience, leaving significant opportunity for continued technological advancement for fans looking to consume sports across devices and integrate augmented reality, virtual reality, social media, and gambling into their viewing experience."

Evidently, leveraging the digital opportunities may be one of the numerous options alongside an understanding of the intersections between technology and sports—albeit, from the perspective of football. Ultimately, this chapter posits that football can be promoted regionally by leveraging digital and social media. Perhaps, as a starting point, an East African Super League could be promoted on the continent.

Ultimately, this chapter, although rather exploratory in nature, advances a potential avenue for a perception change of a range of stakeholders, including fans and other regional and international observers (including potential investors) of football in a country at the forefront of African development. From all indications, the "soft power" seems to be reaping rewards as Rwanda takes its hard-earned seat (Chair-in-Office) at the table of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in June 2022.

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# Part IV

**Recommendations and Conclusions**

# 11

# Conclusion: Towards Effective Public Sector Marketing Communications in Africa

**Ogechi Adeola, Emmanuel Mogaji, Paul Katuse, and Kojo Kakra Twum**

## Introduction

Effective marketing communications fulfil governments' responsibility to citizens to provide engagement platforms that communicate their actions and plans to deliver a sustainable society in constantly changing times.

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Creating dependable communication channels that connect the public sector with citizens is invaluable to establishing a favourable image of government institutions in the minds of stakeholders. Managing communications with citizens is not complete until the public sector adopts traditional and digital marketing communication methods and tools that appeal to those citizens.

Organisations serving consumer demand for goods and services have added digital communication methods and tools to their traditional outreach efforts. However, digital marketing communication methods and tools have recently gained traction in the public sector because of the innovative engagements and initiatives they offer. Contributors to this book volume have identified the importance and values embedded in the adoption of digital communication tools in achieving Africa's public sector goals. This emphasis on new technologies does not disregard the role of traditional media, which, though gradually becoming less influential, continues to be a valuable source of information.

In this chapter, we have identified emerging marketing communication tools that Africa's government can adopt to drive the performance of public service institutions and improve their relationship with citizens/beneficiaries/the public. A focus on digital tools alone, without collaboration with traditional media, could have unsustainable social outcomes that will further exclude a part of the society in the development plans and trajectory. The public sector's innovative approaches to communicating government offerings and updating the public on government actions must also rely on applicable communication practices that appeal to some segments of the African populace.

This chapter documents the findings of contributors in the book (See Table 11.1), explores emerging issues in public sector marketing communications, develops a roadmap for effective marketing communications in Africa and brings the narratives of the chapters to a close with the affirmation that the social contract between the citizenry and the public sector can be reinforced through appropriate communication channels (Table 11.1).

**Table 11.1** Summary of findings

| Chapters | Authors | Title | Findings |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Chapter 2 | Christiana Appiah-Nimo Daniel Ofori Gloria K.Q Agyapong Kojo K. Twum | Public Service Advertising and Celebrity Endorsement in Ghana | • The chapter established the effectiveness of the use of celebrity endorsements, particularly through models, in public service advertisements in Ghana and their influence on the policy advertised<br>• Government should engage celebrities whom the populace finds credible and attractive towards transferring meanings to government policies |
| Chapter 3 | Paul Katuse | Direct Marketing in the Kenyan Public Sector | • Public sector organisations (PSOs) use direct marketing initiatives similar to their private counterparts<br>• Public sector organisations should apply all appropriate direct marketing approaches to their competitiveness |
| Chapter 4 | Silk Ugwu Ogbu Knowledge Shumba Abiola Babatunde Abimbola | Breaking the Silos: Role of Intergovernmental and Interagency Collaboration in Combatting Insecurity in South Africa and Nigeria | • The conventional methods of dealing with security challenges may no longer suffice due to technological advancement<br>• Breaking down the bureaucratic silos across Africa to institutionalise intergovernmental and interagency collaborative systems is germane |

**Table 11.1** (continued)

| Chapters | Authors | Title | Findings |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chapter 5 | Ogechi Adeola Olaniyi Evans | Digital Technology and Emergency Risk Communication of African Governments: Experiences and Lessons from Covid-19 | • Malicious use of electronic technology, the spread of misinformation, the digital divide, inadequate ICT skills, weak ICT infrastructure, limited access and bandwidth constraints are identified for action<br>• Building risk communication capacity would necessitate preparation and regular training of personnel for emergency crisis communications, especially social media influencers and media professionals |
| Chapter 6 | Majeed Mohammed, Prince Gyimah, Isaiah Adisa | Drivers and Challenges of Social Media Usage in Ghana's Local Government Administration | • Social media usage is widely used amongst the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies in Ghana<br>• Facebook and WhatsApp are the two most utilised social media platforms in Ghana<br>• Government must invest in infrastructure and people to further enhance social media adoption |

**Table 11.1** (continued)

| Chapters | Authors | Title | Findings |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Chapter 7 | Silk Ogbu | Optimising Social Media and Marketing Communication Strategies for Voter Education: A Way Forward for Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Nigeria | • INEC's use of social media and strategic communication techniques are sub-optimal for scaling voter education in the country<br>• INEC should leverage the advancements in Web 2.0 technologies; however, must not neglect traditional methods |
| Chapter 8 | Daniel Ofori Christina Appiah-Nimo Francis O. Boachie-Mensah | Social Media Adoption in Public Sector Communication: Current Practices, Opportunities and Challenges in Public Sector Organisations | • Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are widely utilised by public sector organisations (PSOs), to disseminate and interact with citizens<br>• Governments must, however, institute measures to maximise the benefits of social media adoption while minimising the downside risks, such as spreading misinformation and social vices |

(*continued*)

**Table 11.1** (continued)

| Chapters | Authors | Title | Findings |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Chapter 9 | Eugene Ohu | Using Social Media for Competitive Advantage: the Case of African Public Universities | • African public universities face threats from an increasing preference for hybrid or fully online education, digital technology resource constraints, debilitating government constraints that still follow the norm<br>• The government and policymakers have a unique opportunity to explore the benefits of social media and how it can be harnessed to improve academic infrastructure and system in Africa |
| Chapter 10 | Nnamdi Madichie Paul Igwe Robert Ebo Hinson Chris Mbah Kobby Mensah Brian Wesaala | Public Sector Marketing Communications: Insights from/for the Primus National Football League Rwanda | • The chapter examines the potential of an unexplored African professional football league in leveraging its brand through effective marketing communications<br>• Despite international collaborations with Arsenal Football Club in the English Premier League, and the VisitRwanda project, the domestic league in Rwanda still requires more visibility globally<br>• The chapter projects a potential avenue for improving the global visibility of local football leagues in Africa through marketing communications |

# Emerging Issues in Public Sector Marketing Communications: Technological Change

In this contemporary information era, advances in information and communications technology (ICT) are the order of the day, a reality, which has dawned on public sector organisations in Africa. Aduma et al. (2022) have advocated for the adoption and application of ICT in order to enhance service delivery and increase revenue capacities in the public sector. Aduma et al.'s research corroborated with Buse et al. (2019) on public sector innovativeness and values by way of ICT. The public sector firm communicates with many stakeholders, but fundamentally, the customer is a priority and target of appropriate communication innovations. Bluerush (2022) is of the opinion that effective communication is fundamental to the customer experience; therefore, public sector organisations should manage their customer communications with a view to retaining existing customers and attracting potential customers to broaden the revenue base. Contemporary consumers are setting the pace at which they adopt the style and context of technology to meet their needs. The emerging trends in customer preferences for communication are as follows.

1. Personalised Messaging

Contemporary consumers prefer being treated as individuals rather than being aggregated to a general 'customers pool'. It is the expectation of each individual that they can access messages tailored to their tastes, and that assures them solutions to their problem or answers to their questions. When the message is personalised, the individual feels understood and appreciated, and this enhances loyalty. A good example is the *mHealth system and app* developed and adopted by Kenyan public health practitioners (Sowon et al., 2022).

2. Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

The entry of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) is enabling organisations to have unfettered ingress to analytics engines which are run by algorithms, empowering them with the unprecedented capability to observe, record, analyse and translate customers' actions into insights that accurately foretell customers' decision-making behaviour. Though not yet widely adopted by African government agencies, some have adopted the use of AI and ML. The Ghanaian government, for example, has applied these uses to support the work of infrastructure-centred roads and electric power public sector institutions.

3. Video Engagements

With the adoption of smartphones and the growth of broadband mobile communication, it has become easier for customers to access videos on the go. Video content is among the most often used type of digital media. Its interactive or personalised 'apps' have crossed over from entertainment to a form of communication that sustains customer engagement through infotainment, guaranteeing the sustainability of customer relationships. This is evident by the constant use of videos by state-owned broadcasters in the southern African regions, particularly in Namibia, Zambia, Mozambique and South Africa, in their new wave of re-inventing public service news.

4. Social Media

Many African people and state-owned enterprises are using social media, most frequently Facebook and Twitter, not just to interact socially with others but also to interact with brands. Social media platforms have become a basic communication strategy tool that allows a firm to connect directly with customers and personalise message content. Personalisation strengthens customers' brand commitment and enhances loyalty. Several African state-owned enterprises maintain a social media presence, for example, Transnet in South Africa can be found on Twitter, and Ethiopian Airlines has a Facebook account.

5. Teams and Tools

Customer service teams tend to connect with clients comparatively better than via technology. The human touch in service and hence communication has not yet been overtaken by technological advancement; a good case is in the public sector telecommunications firms in Tanzania. Leveraging live chats and call centre operations, as in the case of the Ethiopian state-owned power utility firm, and instant customer interaction are some of the means of interacting personally with a customer, like in the case of Kenya Tea Development Authority a state-owned enterprise and Safaricom limited in their social media marketing and brand loyalty initiatives. Safaricom is a firm whose ownership is partly owned by the state. This also eases out and encourages the process of customer feedback.

6. Generational Diversity

The rapid growth of the population and historically low mortality rates have guaranteed a healthy mixture of diverse generations. This diversity forms a challenge for a firm that may not be practising segmentation. Predominant classifications include Baby Boomers (mostly retirees born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (mostly mature and working born between 1965 and 1980), Millennials (primarily young and working population born between 1981 and 1996) and Generation Z (teenagers and young adults born between 1997 and 2012). These age groups have different information needs; therefore, when a firm and more specifically a public sector firm is selecting communication methods and modes, they need to keep those differences in mind. Though age segments for generational diversity are not clearly defined by many public sector firms in Africa, state-owned enterprises have responded to those demographic segments with the use of machine learning models.

7. Globalisation

Many public sector firms in different countries are seeking a presence in a diverse global marketplace lacking homogeneity in languages or cultural expectations. Public sector organisations serving in markets unlike

their familiar home territory have to make communication decisions as they serve not only consumers' far-ranging needs but also their own operational goals. Some public sector firms from different African countries have done this in the past; for instance, Kenyan Commercial Bank, which is owned partly by the Kenyan state, changed its name through branding in order to go international.

## 8. Corporate Governance and Bureaucracy

The public sector is open to public scrutiny; therefore, access to information including audited financial statements is fast becoming a great tool of marketing communication on the health of the firm. Further research into this topic has focused on South Africa, Egypt (Abdelfattah & Aboud, 2020) and Uganda.

Since the onset of structural adjustment programmes in the 1980s, to date, state-owned enterprises have constantly faced marketing communication decision-making challenges in some parts of Africa. Bureaucratic bottlenecks and processes of liberalisation and privatisation have not only confounded state-owned firms' management but also split their allegiance between the main (parent) ministry and the other shareholding partners. This hurdle, however, is being resolved by emerging mandatory requirements for public sector firms to communicate through their charter or any other public means, as has been done in Kenya.

## 9. Consumer Dynamics

Customer dynamics is an emerging concept that describes the ever-changing relationship between a business and its customers. Information interchange before, during and after transactions between customers and firms provides data related to the trends and orientation of the consumer base. Uganda's National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC), a state-owned enterprise, has turned around its flagging fortunes by gaining a proper understanding of consumer dynamics and implementing a performance approach to monitoring (and 'self-regulation') which guarantees better performance and improved communication with its stakeholders.

# Guidelines for a Public Sector Communications Manager

Public sector organisations are not exempt from providing quality services, effective communication and engagement with stakeholders. These publicly owned organisations have gained a reputation for demonstrating a lazy approach to customer engagement and service delivery—a notion that has gradually created an unflattering narrative for public sectors. Often, many people do not take these organisations seriously and would prefer to go to a private institution where they believe they will get quality service for their money. It is no surprise that many people are leaving public universities to attend private universities, shun state-owned hospitals to attend private hospitals or travel abroad for medical tourism, or even choose to buy their own cars instead of using unreliable public transportation.

While it is essential to recognise the existential challenges of inadequate funding and service delivery within the public sector, this chapter focuses on their marketing communication strategies—to provide insights into how public sectors can communicate and engage with stakeholders. It is anticipated that for communications to be a key component of business operations, cultural and administrative attitudes need to conform with strong leadership directives to change how things are done to effectively communicate with stakeholders.

Communication is a two-way process. While the public sector is devising ways to reach out to their stakeholders, it is important they also provide channels to receive feedback from those stakeholders—a dialogue that will provide some practical ideas for improving the design and provision of the overall service. To achieve this, it is essential to have a roadmap, a form of direction on how to establish communication strategies that align with the diverse needs and media consumption habits of their key stakeholders.

Developing a roadmap for marketing communications begins with recognising the ultimate need for it—to provide practical information for managers who have been tasked with the responsibilities of managing the public sector. This requires a conscious effort on the part of the

| |
|---|
| 1. Stakeholder audit |
| 1.2. Developing the core message |
| 1.3. Internal communications |
| 1.4. Working on the home front |
| 1.5. Communication channel audit |
| 1.6. The team |
| 1.7. Communication plans |
| 1.8. Making a start |
| 1.9. Evaluation |
| 1.10. Making changes |
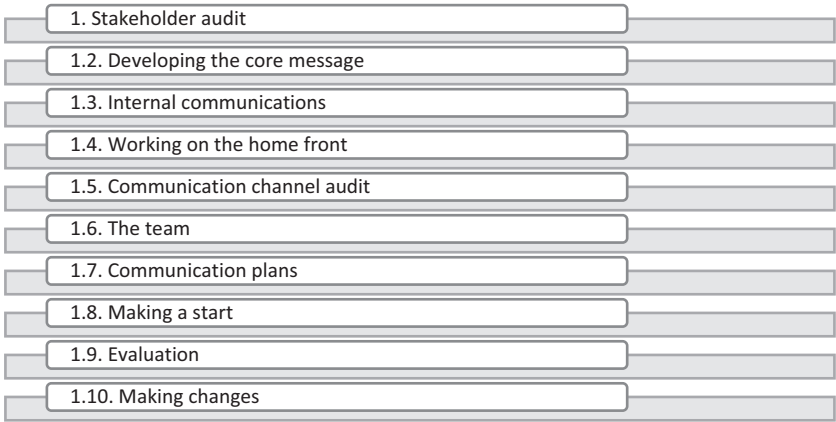
**Fig. 11.1** Roadmap for effective public sector marketing communications

management team to choose to communicate and engage—to create a genuine motivation to do the right thing. The goal is not just to tick boxes but to ensure that the right people are in place, a proper support mechanism is provided, and opportunities for regular evaluation and updates are included in the communications plan.

This roadmap (Fig. 11.1) is generic and open for adaptation by managers of public sector organisations. Variations on the roadmap are inexhaustible, but these ten milestones provide a framework for an action plan for managers and those responsible for leading a public sector organisation.

1. Stakeholder Audit

Public sector managers need to understand their stakeholders. This communication motive will vary among different sectors, but ultimately, managers want to know their stakeholders' demographics, how best to communicate with them and what type of message will interest them. For example, a university may wish to communicate with parents via personal letters, students via social media, and funders and external partners with financial status reports. A transport organisation would expect that customers will be interested in sales promotions, but contractors and

suppliers will pay attention to messages about supply lines or job opportunities. The messages within these communication channels will also vary according to the information needs of their target audiences.

2. Developing the Core Message

   With an understanding of their stakeholders, their choice of media, and touchpoints or interest, managers must develop a communications plan that fits their information needs. This could mean taking a new strategic direction for the organisation, revisiting the mission and vision to identify core values that need to be communicated. Core values are like brand promises from an organisation to their stakeholder—a commitment to enhance customers' experience, boost staff morale and ensure timely service. These core values could be represented by an easily remembered acronym or abbreviation. For example, if the core values are Loyalty, Empathy, Acceptance Diligence, Excellence and Respect, this can be represented with the acronym, L.E.A.D.E.R.

3. Internal Communications

   Managers need to get the buy-in from the staff in order to successfully initiate a new communications strategy. To ensure that staff see the big picture, these strategies could be introduced through in-house training, newsletter communications, town hall meetings and one-on-one conversations with selected developers. It would not be surprising to see an organisation print their core values on their internal and external communications, or have them boldly displayed on the reception wall. Staff may be provided with uniforms with the core values, perhaps as an acronym or abbreviation. This is obtainable in some private sector organisations and can be adopted in the public sector to reinforce the core value, making it more memorable and obtain buy-in. This internal communication may take time, especially in a public sector where morale may be low; consistency, however, is essential.

## 4. Working on the Home Front

With a communications strategy in place, managers must ensure that the necessary resources are in place so staff can fully understand what the organisation and their customers or public expect from them. Strategy begins from the 'home front'. If the manager issues a new directive that a core value of the organisation is to provide prompt service, the staff must be made aware of this promise and be given the training and motivation to do so. This may well involve updating the business operations, including the service design and development of an innovative communications strategy.

## 5. Communication Channel Audit

A communication audit can identify the perceived challenges and appropriate solutions readily available to the team. There is the idea of PESO—paid, earned, shared and owned media, a media strategy or communications model that can provide the basis for segmenting an organisation's communication activities to gain a holistic view or see the big picture. This would serve as a basis for the organisation to properly evaluate all the marketing channels and determine which to pay more attention to or scale up for an integrated mix. Key questions need to be answered: What media is paid (i.e. adverts), what is earned (i.e. non-paid publicity/word of mouth), what is shared (mainly social media) and what is owned (content created by the organisation)? Also, what media outlets are organisations currently using? Is it up to current technological standards; when and how often were websites updated; is the content relevant and well-designed? What media do they need to consider or explore? Do they have interesting profiles on all major social media platforms? Is their email list current or do staff need to be dedicated to bringing it up to date? This is part of the audit required to create the roadmap.

## 6. The Team

If managers are not directly responsible for the day-to-day administration of the communication strategies, it is essential to have a team with a team leader who can coordinate the activities, engage with the stakeholders and report to the manager. Managers and team leaders must ensure

that team members have the necessary skills and experiences to follow through with the communication plans. This support includes having the right set of people for the public relations, the marketing communications, social media managers to design and monitor social media outlets. Some organisations will need to have technical staff or outsource an app or website developers who are fully informed about the organisations' communications plans.

7. Communication Plans

This element of the roadmap highlights practical steps to create a communication matrix of stakeholders and the core message. Compared to other stakeholders, what are the messages that a particular demographic sector needs to get and how can these messages best be communicated? How often they receive similar or unique messages can be structured with a content calendar. How long should outreach campaigns run and when do they need to be updated? Who are the organisation's influencers; what should they say and when? These plans need to be well documented and followed by the communications team to ensure consistency and coherent messages across the organisation.

8. Making A Start

Once stakeholders and communication strategies are in place, communication initiatives can make a start. This start could be subtle to ensure the resources and process are well managed. Depending on the message, the stakeholders and the selected media platform, consistent and well-curated messages that align with the brand's core values can be released. The managers and team leaders need to provide checks and balances to ensure that the messages are coherent and do not cause any harm or damage with inaccuracies.

9. Evaluation

Marketing communication strategy evaluations are necessary if an organisation can expect to understand if they are on track with the

roadmap. What analytics are being used to see if and how people are engaging with messages, and what needs to be changed, reiterated or removed? It is essential to look beyond likes, retweets, and mentions and other social media metrics. Data that shows how many people are engaging with the newsletters, downloading apps or engaging through feedback is valuable and informs decision-making. People want to see responses and value in their communications with brands.

10.  Making Changes

    Accountability is crucial at all steps of this roadmap. When things do not go as planned, managers should reflect on the process and engage with the staff, learn what went wrong and alter the plan going forward. Managers must consider evaluation results which are strong indicators of when and how strategic plans need to change. The manager and the team may decide to go in a different destination, and therefore, the roadmap has to adapt accordingly. Business operations may vary or there could be mergers and acquisitions that affect the company's strategic direction. These changes are inevitable, and it is essential to reflect on the changes, make informed decisions and effectively communicate with stakeholders. The plans need to be evaluated continually as an organisation pursues a sustainable future.

# What is the Destination?

Ultimately, you want a private sector that delivers excellent services equal to or better than that available from the private sector. While this is an uphill task for many public sectors in developing countries, it is imperative to recognise that it is possible and that there is a roadmap leading there. There is no guarantee that it will be a smooth ride as there could be many challenges along the way that were not envisaged while developing the map: the manager may get a new job and the staff may not adjust to the new leadership style or there could be political problems that affect the sectors. However, notwithstanding these challenges, managers need

to be reminded of their motivation to engage and communicate with the public, to provide good services and ultimately to share this goodness with all involved stakeholders.

## Conclusion

The effectiveness of public sector marketing communication methods is measured by the degree to which public sector stakeholders understand the role of public sector organisations and the requirements for effective delivery of services. The social contract between the citizenry and the public sector can be reinforced through appropriate communication channels. The social obligation of the public sector can only be appreciated by the public when they have been made aware of what the government agencies are doing to meet their needs.

A review of the authors' contributions to the book makes it evident that there is increasing advocacy for the adoption of digital media to scale up public service delivery in Africa. Similarly, emphasis is laid on incorporating both digital and traditional media rather than neglecting traditional methods entirely. The roadmap for effective marketing communications in Africa provides sustainable suggestions on how public service delivery can be further enhanced through strategic selection of public sector marketing communications.

Adopting both traditional and digital methods, depending on the context, will create a sustainable framework for marketing communications in Africa's public sector. Given the diversity in cultures, communication barriers and infrastructural challenges across the continent, the editors of the book suggest a context-specific framework for the performance of public sector institutions through traditional and digital marketing communications.

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