How The Use Of Social Media Networks Can Influence The Growth Of Lesotho's Political Economy Beyond The 50 Years Celebration Of Independence.

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on how certain elements of social media networks can be used to influence the growth of Lesotho's economy and development. Social media is seemingly becoming a greater influence on the political campaign space, E-Governance projects such as E-voting, E-democracy and the transformation of the economy. It has been debated in Lesotho whether or not the emergence of digital social media networks have changed the way people communicate for political change and whether there is actually a need to regulate online platforms. The State has received heightened attention since the formation of multi-political parties coming together to form and join the Coalition Government. Social media has become a coordinating tool for almost all political movements around the globe. The prospective of social media is mainly in their support of civil society, governance services and the public sphere. A content analysis design was used. Using social media data from WhatsApp and Facebook of the various groups, content analysis was done and the discussions over time were analysed and grouped in the following themes: description of events, giving instructions, spreading information, mobilizing as expressions of solidarity, abhorrence messages, political campaigns, asking difficult questions and miscellaneous dialogue. Several key issues relating to the use of social media for political economic change are also discussed. This includes active civil society, corruption watch dogs, service delivery reports and public opinion on government ratings. The paper, based on document analysis, public domains, data published on social media platforms such as WhatApp, Messenger and Facebook offers a brief discussion about the initiation of social media networks and how it can transform Lesotho's future economy beyond the Jubilee celebration. The paper concludes by putting forward some strategic recommendations to all stakeholders on how to fine-tune their strategies in handling citizens' views, behaviour and interaction on social media networks. It is time for governments of today to review their vision for 2020 so as to integrate the emerging technological issue - stakeholders should be joining citizen social network groups and acting as moderators and mentors, especially to the youth, as this could avert misleading information at an early stage and assist the country to achieve its strategic vision.

Keywords: Lesotho, Political economy, Social Media Networks, Messenger, Information

1. INTRODUCTION

The paper is based on document analysis, analysing data information on social media and the political development from Lesotho's perspective and a global view. It shares a general background of Facebook and WhatsApp, its significance or influence on global development and Lesotho as a global member (Bakardjieva, 2015: 986). It also discusses and analyses examples of incidents and events where social media has played an influencing role in economic development, health care and government service delivery. The paper is intended to share information with Lesotho academia, global researchers, technology experts, interested companies considering investment in the Lesotho economy, political leaders, senior government officials or anyone wishing to keep abreast with social media platforms and the political economy. It is believed that it will add value and insight for those wishing to undertake data mining and analyse social media platforms, particularly pertaining to political economies and the practise of good governance (Barbier, Gundencha, and Liu, 2013).

1.1 Brief history of Lesotho

Lesotho is a democratic, sovereign and independent country with the unique characteristic of being totally surrounded by its neighbour, the Republic of South Africa. The country, formerly known as Basutoland, was renamed the Kingdom of Lesotho upon independence from the United Kingdom in 1966. In 1993, following 23 years of military rule, a new constitution was implemented, leaving the King without any executive authority and proscribing him from engaging in political affairs. In 1998 violent protests and a military mutiny following a contentious election prompted a brief but bloody South African military intervention. Constitutional reforms have since restored political stability and peaceful parliamentary elections were held in 2002. However, Lesotho is one of three remaining monarchies in Africa. The year, 2016, is a very special year for Lesotho, as the country will be celebrating its Jubilee (50 years) since independence in 1966. There is an expected array of exciting events from Government, Companies, Organisations and members of the international community contributing in many ways(Ratha, Eigen-Zucchi, & Plaza, 2016)

1.2 Background to Social Media

Social Media is a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows for the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010:60(Social Networks/Blogs now account for every four and a half minutes online, 2010). The global average time spent per person on social media sites is now nearly five and half hours per month (Heiberger and Harper, 2008).

1.3 Political Economy (PE)

Espen's (2003) belief that new and ever more complex technologies are in and of themselves democratic is not only false but dangerous. New technology creates new opportunities, but there is no reason to believe that the increased complexity of our technological lives points towards an increased equality for all subjected to that technology. Political economy (PE) is an approach to studying media where the focus is attenuated towards the ways in which media is produced, distributed and consumed rather than on analysing the interpretations of the signs and symbols found within texts. The combination of the terms 'political' and 'economy' which make up PE is an explicit reference to the fact that media texts are produced within specific and historically contingent systems which are not merely an ideologically neutral form of exchange, but are conditioned by a range of complex interactions between nation states, international organisations, legal institutions and frameworks, cultural traditions and heritages, other organisations (such as media corporations), technologies and economic pressures. In other words, PE focuses upon the ways in which politics and economics are not separate entities, as we often encounter them within educational contexts, but that economics and politics are fields which are best understood as being entangled – meaning that they are functionally inseparable – and that understanding elements of this entanglement is pivotal to understanding the way that any society and culture works (Espen, 2003).

PE-led approaches to the study of digital media fall into several distinct areas which approach the production of digital media from disparate areas. While Marxist approaches are again often central, there exists an additional series of approaches which consider the ways in which production of digital media, and of digital commodities in general, depart in certain respects from other modes of information access and distribution. Some of the early approaches to new/digital media focused upon the ways that the increasingly widespread distribution of networked computers afforded a mode of access which was a radical departure. Previously, media had been dominated by broadcast technologies and mass media generally, whereby a very small volume of individuals were entrenched within a privileged position as content creators and were able to broadcast mediated content from centres out to the millions of citizens who could only receive this type of media. Mass media can then be understood as both a one-to-many model of communication as well as a one-way model, as only those who work in broadcasting can produce media, whilst the vast majority of citizens can only receive information. Such a one-to-many system of communication corresponds to the model of a centralised network (Barabasi, 2003:56-57).

By contrast, the Internet heralded the arrival of an alternative model, in which any network user was able to connect to any other network user(s), and was able to both send and receive mediated communications. Rather than being a one-to-many mode of communication, the Internet allowed one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many forms of discourse, taking the form of a distributed network. Additionally, the hierarchical restrictions to access had seemingly disintegrated, with any citizen who possessed a computer, modem and internet connection able to produce mediated content. This led to a wave of early Internet scholarship which saw the Internet as a technology which contained a vast democratising potential, realising some of the formal elements discussed by socialist theorists of media such as Bertold Brecht, (1932) and Hans-Magnus Enzensburger, (1970) as necessary preconditions for the formation of a democratic and participatory media and culture, negating the criticisms made by Jurgen Habermas (1991) which posit the media as a fundamentally anti-democratic mode of communication which turned active citizens into passive consumers.

There is no doubt that a political economy approach is definitely a useful tool for explaining how the media works, but it is extremely debatable as how best to use this to advance the economic transformation and the needs of the large territories of electorates. As Alan McKee(2005) states: "here is no such thing as 'objective' knowledge. We know that every methodology is partial, producing particular and quite limited kinds of information." The assorted media texts that are produced by the recording industry don't fall easily into set categories, and often appear through other mediums such as television, the internet and the printed press (Postman and Smith, 2001).

1.4 WhatsApp
WhatsApp is a cross-platform smart phone application that lets you send messages free of charge, using your data allowance. WhatsApp Messenger is a propriety cross-platform instant messaging client for smart phones. It uses the internet to send text messages, images, video, user location and audio media messages to other users using standard cellular mobile numbers. In addition to basic messaging, WhatsApp provides group chat and location sharing. It was founded in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum and as of February 2016 WhatsApp had a user base in excess of one billion, making it the most globally popular messaging application (Drake, Claireaux, Khatri, and Chapman, 2016; WhatsApp Inc. 2016). There are dozens of these services, referred to by telcos as a telecommunications company) 'OTT' (Over The Top) services if they're feeling polite, 'parasites' if they're grumpy and 'arbitrage services' as they allow you 'arbitrage' between SMS and data pricing, if they're being precise. BBM (Blackberry Messenger), with 60 million users, is perhaps the most generally known, but WhatsApp is one of the biggest.

1.5 Facebook

Facebook is a social network service launched in February 2004. As of January 2011 it had more than 600 million active users (Ayiah and Kumah, 2011) . According to www.mashable.com Facebook is a social utility that helps people communicate more efficiently with friends, family and co-workers. The company develops technologies that facilitate the sharing of information through social graphs and the digital mapping of people's real-world social connections (Sumitra 2013). Anyone can sign up for Facebook and interact with the people they know in a trusted environment. Facebook is a part of millions of people's lives and half of the users return daily.

1.6 Goals and Objectives

The main objective of this study was: To demonstrate the potential use of social media networks as a tool for economic transformation, political development, advocacy for good governance, promotion of civil rights, enhancement of civil and voter education programmes and the promotion of health care campaign programmes versus the current use which is spreading awareness of public strike plans, abhorrence messages, mobilization of public protests, dissemination of offensive, vulgar, rude language and the distribution of pornographic pictures and videos clips.

2. SCOPE AND LIMITATION

Lesotho has enjoyed a rule of law under a democratic government since 1993 and the single Political Party always won elections with a landslide victory. Since the development of a new political movement which realised the establishment of new political parties under the Parliament of Lesotho, the coalition of political parties has become the order of the day. The recent 2012 and 2015 general election results demonstrated that the will of the people in Lesotho was to be governed by a multi-party leadership. This paper will focus on the use of Facebook and WhatsApp as tools for taking the country forward to a better future. There are many social networking platforms that may have contributed to the strong exchange of political views and rural development between 2011 and 2016, but it is important for the paper to analyse the two mentioned platforms as it is believed that they were used for active exchanges of political ideas before and after the 2012 elections. Face book and WhatsApp seem to be the most prominent social media platforms in Lesotho.The paper submits specific recommendations to improve civil and voter education programmes, good governance, general health care and the development of political economy.

2.1 Lesotho Economic Outlook

After four years of robust growth averaging 4.3% annually, growth dropped to an estimated 3.4% in 2015, largely due to a weakness in the construction and manufacturing sectors and it is expected to remain subdued in 2016 and 2017. Unemployment, poverty and inequality have remained pervasive in the face of non-inclusive growth. The high rate of urbanisation has outpaced the ability of the authorities to provide necessary services, and the sustainability of living conditions for much of the urban population remains a critical challenge (African Economic Outlook, 2016).

Economic growth in Lesotho slowed to an estimated rate of 3.4% in 2015, down from 3.6% in 2014. Growth is projected to remain subdued at 2.6% in 2016 and 2.9% in 2017. Growth in 2015 was significantly affected by a low implementation of the public investment budget, which weighed heavily on the construction sector and other inter-related sectors highly dependent on government spending. Slow growth in manufacturing and spillovers from slower growth in the South African economy were a further brake on growth. Despite the country's solid economic performance in recent years (2010-2014), growth remained non-inclusive. Consequently, a large proportion of the population is still languishing in extreme poverty. Unemployment remains high at 24%, and the country's Gini coefficient of 0.5 means that inequality is still a problem. Based on the poverty headcount ratio at USD 1.25 a day, 56.2% of the population is still trapped in extreme poverty. Efforts to promote inclusive growth are constrained by the pressure of high HIV prevalence (22.9% of the total population) and the volatility of receipts from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), which finance 50% of the budget (African Economic Outlook 2016).

A massive influx of the population from rural to urban centres has led to rapid urbanisation. This has been triggered by a multitude of factors, the most important being climate change, which has led to low agricultural productivity, and spatial differences in the provision of services and the location of opportunities which often favour urban areas. With urban dwellers estimated at 22.8% of the overall population and the urban population growing at a rate of 37% every ten years, sustainability remains a critical challenge. The urban population has outpaced the ability of the authorities to provide commensurate social services. This in turn has often resulted in other challenges, such as poor waste disposal, pollution of water bodies, poor housing and inadequate social and economic infrastructure. For urbanisation to remain sustainable, innovative policies are required, along with a commitment towards their effective implementation. The government plans to link urban growth poles to the rural economy, and its commitment to implement climate change adaptation initiatives are highly commendable (African Economic Outlook 2016).

3. METHODOLOGY

The specific research objective was addressed through qualitative content analysis of WhatsApp and Facebook messages which were categorized based on the purpose of their message, and classified as either providing a description of events taking place, such as giving instructions for demonstrating, spreading information, mobilizing as expressions of solidarity, asking difficult questions, disgusting speech or miscellaneous dialogue. Generally, Krippendorff (2004:18) defined content analysis as "a research technique for making applicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use". Hsieh and Shannon (2005:1278) offered an elaborate definition of qualitative content analysis as "a research method for subjective interpretation of content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns".

4. THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS UNDER A GUIDED APPROACH

Cohn (2010) argues that simply because you are connected to social media doesn't mean that one is using it correctly. When using social media, one needs to use it authentically and it must reflect the designed brand. A proper social media marketing strategy must have a solid foundation, similar to any existing marketing strategy. There must be a serious commitment to the marketing initiative and the values of any business services or government agency which will either cause the success or failure of the strategy. The values of a social media marketing strategy must include transparency, commitment, a sense of value, relevance, and honesty. Social media channels do not only intend to self-promote.
The content that is posted on social media sites does not have to originate from the website of the person doing the posting. They can post content from other sources as well. Pieces of information can be contributed from all over as long as it is considered valuable and helpful to others. It is important to note that social media sites are just that - they are for social purposes, not selling purposes. If one tries a hard sell, you will not be successful. There are ways in which one can use social media effectively and ways in which one cannot, without even realizing it Sumitra (2013).

When trying to self-promote through social media networks, it is important to remain ethical
Even if self-promotion is the most important reason why one gets involved with social media, certain rules of behaviour still have to be followed. Firstly, spamming is always a bad thing. There is a need to have a unique identity that lets people know who you are as a person, business, political party or government agency and that you are trying to help them by furnishing them with useful, high-quality information (Sumitra, 2013).

Never have more than one profile or identity
If you have more than one account with the same IP address, you run a high risk of having your profile banned which will prevent you from even getting started. The correct way to use social media is not only to take from your readers, followers, etc. but to also give back to them. It is not a bad idea to find someone who is using social media successfully and mimic what they are doing. There will be a need to provide your own brand but one can use an existing foundation. The concept can apply to any niche. If

users who are subscribed to digital networks are not really making an effort to take advantage of social media, they might missing out on valuable insights about information, consumers or customers (Cohn, 2010).

4.1 Open opportunities for Lesotho's economy under the right approach

Cohn (2010) attests that with the advent of the current, deplorable economy in the United State of America, the business world has been leveraging social media for marketing purposes in a tremendous way. At the moment, most countries economies seem to be recovering to a point, therefore the use of social media by businesses has not decreased at all. If anything, it has increased a great deal. The more business people get to understand social media and discover the many advantages that using social media channels have for their businesses, the more viral its use becomes. It is no coincidence that social media became so popular during one of the worst economic periods that Lesotho as a country has known in ages. It is helpful to determine why that is and to learn from the research (Cohn, 2010).

The success of social media is based on one thing and that is conversation. When one uses social media sites for business, it allows one to magnify the conversation (or buzz) that surrounds the brand. One needs to understand, however, that if you are using social media platforms properly, you must be as dedicated to the conversations through social media as your customers are. There is a need to devote time to respond carefully and to go easy on the hard sell of the products and/or services. When social media first started being top of mind in the business community many considered it to be no more than a cost-effective method of disseminating new brands because of the leanness of their budgets. The full potential of social media as a marketing tool was certainly not realized at that point. The decision by business people at that time to use social media as a marketing tool was because times were tough and social media was cheap. Today, business decisions to use social media as an effective marketing tool goes way beyond the purely cost-effective original decision (Cohn, 2010).

Cohn (2010) attests that an emotional result of the recession was that people no longer trusted business. Because of the extreme conditions of the economy, many businesses made bad (and unethical) decisions that impacted on customers negatively which in turn impacted on people being willing to spend money. So, how could businesses win back their customers' trust? Enter, social media. Not only was social media an inexpensive method of advertising but it also provided opportunities for businesses to offer their brands in a way that was transparent. Social media, by nature, allowed (and still allows) two-way communication between the brand and the customer. Social media allows customers to react to what brands offer without having to listen to any of the hype that has always been a part of traditional marketing. Customers are able to voice concerns and communicate their customer service issues. Also, if customer feedback is ignored by the brand, the customers simply go elsewhere. They will not show loyalty to a brand that they feel lacks credibility. (Cohn, 2010).

Cohn (2010) concludes by saying that as valuable and worthwhile social media is, it really is not free. It takes an investment of time to make social media work for you and your business and time is money. It is vitally important that one uses social media channels not only to advertise the brand but also to interact with customers and potential customers. Government office bearers and decision-makers need feedback from citizens and customers so that solutions to their problems can be offered. One very important lesson to learn from social media marketing is that even though a business budget may be modest, it should be taken seriously and the social media strategy should include objectives, roles, processes and metrics like any other marketing strategy. Social media is not a quick fix in terms of marketing a brand but it is an effective way to promote your brand and to form relationships built on trust, mutual respect and loyalty. Simply because the economy has slowed down a great deal does not mean that the pace of social media marketing needs to slow down. If you invest the proper amount of time and effort into your social media strategy now, you will most likely come out of the recession stronger and more successful than ever (Cohn, 2010).

5. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The paper tracked the volume of peaks in the messages revolving around the Lesotho political landscape and economic exchanges of ideas from Facebook and WhatsApp messages at different times between the period 2012 general election and post 2015 under a new administration where there were many important national, political and judiciary cases worthy of discussion. The paper analyses the possibilities of engaging social media networks to influence the growth of Lesotho's economic predictions and how best to use it in the interests of taking Lesotho forward beyond the Jubilee celebration. Correctly managed social media could transform the Lesotho political economy, advance the new sources of business entrepreneurship and create new sources of employment. Social media networks are very powerful tools for diffusing global knowledge and information to society which is a fundamental aspect of the development process (Chadwick, 2013: 16).

The analysis of research data and information does not in itself provide answers to the research problem. Thus, it is essential to interpret the data and information gathered from the results to ensure that the research questions have been answered. It is also imperative to interpret and discuss the data to establish whether or not the objectives of the study have been met. The aim of this section is therefore to discuss and interpret the findings made from data collected and how the use of social media networks could influence the growth of the Lesotho political economy beyond the Jubilee celebration of independence (Sethunya, Letsolo, and Hlomani 2016).

The messages were received and collected from different political group campaigns between the period of the 2012 general elections and beyond the 2015 general elections. It is important to note that some of the group profiles were created to remain anonymous while other groups were very clear that they were aimed at a particular political party or for individual views. Most of the analysed messages were from daily group gatherings and radio interview clips. An estimated value of 340 were at the researcher's disposal of which 180 messages were analysed. It is important to note that it was not easy to code them due to the bad language used that requires a researcher to interpret some of the messages. The content analysis was done and the messages were categorized based on purpose, grouping and classification (Shirky,2011).

It is important for the paper to highlight that the full impact of social media on politics was not felt in the Lesotho landscape or Africa as a continent, whereas the opposite was true in the United States of America when Barack Obama, America's first black president, ran a prolific social media campaign in the run up to the 2008 US election. According to Kimachia (2014), this election was dubbed the "Facebook Election" and saw Obama getting 70% of the youth votes (Gundecha and Liu, 2012). In the March 2013 general election in Kenya President Kenyatta devised an aggressive social media campaign targeting the youth. By election time his Facebook page had over 500,000 'likes', making it one of the most 'linked' pages in Africa . The power of social media was also felt in South Africa's parliamentary and provincial legislature elections in mid-2014. The social media following of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and that of new parties like the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), was massive and this contributed to them winning some of the parliamentary seats This was also seen in Botswana's 2014 general elections where the newly formed Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC) alliance received recognition due to its being led by the youth who marketed their party slogan through social media, by both traditional and online means. This resulted in the UDC increasing its voting footprint in urban areas becoming the second most voted for party with regards to councillor and parliamentary seats (IEC-Botswana, 2016).

The role of social media has been a major theme in the analysis of the turbulent events following general elections in some countries such as the Presidential elections in Iran in June 2009, the UDC in Botswana 2014 elections (IEC-Botswana, 2016) and the rise of the EFF in the South African 2014 elections (Kimachia, 2014). Many observers see new media as being the underlying cause influencing these events, as well as the increase of protest movements following the elections, even though there are some subsequent backlashes which seek to dismiss its significance (Aday, Farell, et. al., 2010).

Social media is largely credited for the successes of the protests, campaigns and victories such as in the Obama and Kenyatta campaigns plus the uprisings during the Arab Spring where it was used to plan and organize protests and share information with the rest of the world. According to Toivo (2014), in view of political developments as diverse as Occupy Wall Street in the United States, the rise of Indignados in Spain, protests in Moscow and Tehran and the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, it has become increasingly clear that social media is now an integral part of global political activity (Jackie*2001*).

In Lesotho Maseru between 2015- 2016, Lira Moeti and Mohato Seleke were arrested early in the morning and taken to Ha-Mabote police station at around 5:30am without any clear reason", their lawyer, Attorney Tumisang Mosotho, told the *Lesotho Times*. "One police investigator (name withheld) denied me access to my clients and didn't give me clear reasons why the two were arrested," Attorney Mosotho said. "He only told me they were taken to the station to help police with investigations which he refused to tell me about. I am currently not in a position to tell you what the investigations were about, but can only tell you that from Ha-Mabote Police Station, they were taken to Police Headquarters and released after working hours." (Lesotho Times, 2016).

Again it is further reported that, a source close to the matter told the *Lesotho Times,* "Mr Moeti and Mr Mabote were arrested for allegedly being administrators of a Facebook group called 'Count Down to Elections 2015, 2016 or 2017'. According to the source, the country's security agencies were keen to establish the identity of a shadowy Facebook character called Makhaola Qalo who posts sensitive information about government operations. Makhaola Qalo has been posting information on the 'Count Down to Elections 2015, 2016 or 2017' group before it is in the public domain. For instance, he or she posted the list of soldiers who were going to be promoted after the killing of former army boss Maaparankoe Mahao claiming it was a reward for carrying out the operation," said the source. "A day after Makhaola Qalo's post, some soldiers were promoted in the army and people started to believe the claims he or she made." Lt-Gen Mahao was killed on 25 June 2015 outside Maseru during a military operation to arrest soldiers suspected of being part of an alleged plot to topple the Lesotho Defence Force command" (Lesotho Times, 2016).

The Lesotho Times (2016) also reported that it had been revealed that Bidvest Car Rental's contract to provide vehicles to the government would be extended by two months. The extension was made after one of the companies that failed to qualify for the tender lodged a complaint alleging irregularities in the process. "Makhaola Qalo posted that the contract for Bidvest, which had been managing the government fleet for six months, would be extended. After a few days, it was announced that the contract had been extended for two months," the source said. "The authorities," said the source, would not discover the identity of the shadowy character through Mr Moeti and Mr Seleke since the duo 'also did not know'. The police did not succeed in establishing who Makhaola Qalo is because Mr Moeti and Mr Seleke said they did not know him even though they appeared to be the administrators of the social media group," the source added. Contacted for comment, police spokesperson Superintendent Clifford Molefe asked the *Lesotho Times* to call after an hour. However, his mobile phone was no longer available at the time of going to press (Lesotho times, 2016; Organisation Against Torture ,2016).

Furthermore in his discussion about the use of social media networks, Mahao (2015) argues that, "I am not sure if anyone told Minister Dlangamandla that Basotho first learned of a hit list that included the names of businessman Thabiso Tšosane and Lt. General Maaparankoe Mahao from social media and that the two eventually got eliminated. Why should Basotho therefore not trust social media? Our national radio and television stations never provided this information and would not even dare considering that those with evil and murderous intentions would want to keep it secret. And, by the way, both our radio and television stations have never been known as news-breakers. Their mandate is understood even by my five-year old son. SADC leaders should rather focus on improving their appalling style of governance instead of wasting resources chasing after the public that ends up finding social media as their main outlet of pent-up frustrations resulting from this bad leadership. After all, who would honestly consider a government mouthpiece like Lesotho Television and Radio Lesotho as authentic sources of information?" (Lesotho Times, 2016).

According to Lerotholi (2012) new media is an essential tool for transformation, and this ideology is gaining momentum in most countries and cities around the world. According to Internet World Stats (2010) only 4% of the population in Lesotho is exposed to the internet and only 0.7% of the population uses social media. The Maseru community, sadly, has not yet adopted a Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). This study examines the probability of engaging online communication for social and economic development in Maseru. It has been proven that the success of Information Communication Technology in rural development yields better results when social, political, and economic factors and various modes of communication are taken into account. Such modes of communication include: computers and other related services, such as e-mail and the internet; wireless technology, satellite technology, traditional media communication technology, such as video and discussion groups - all of which have to be seen to work together.

The Jubilee celebration to mark Lesotho's Independence will be held on October 04, 2016. The country gained its independence from the British Government on October 04, 1966 (Ministry of Communication, 2016). It is important for the paper to note that His Majesty King Letsie III has on Wednesday 12th August,2016 launched the independence Torch relay as part of the country's preparation to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Independence. Speaking at the event held at Makoanyane Square in Maseru, His Majesty reminded Basotho that Lesotho with her unique future is the only country they have hence their only pride, therefore, urged them to pray with one voice to God for the torch to provide light in the country and direct the way into the future and another 50 years to come. His Majesty emphasised the saying, "**O ka nketsang ha e ahe motse, motse ho ahoa oa morapeli",** commenting that this is commonly used in the country to promote peace. His Majesty called upon Basotho to support all activities intended to enhance celebrations to mark the 50th Independence of Lesotho countrywide, appealing to them to celebrate with joy, compassion and love for one another. He further urged Basotho to strive for the development of the country, hence the paper proposes the use of media networks for the benefit of every citizen of Lesotho (Ministry of Communication, 2016).

6. CONCLUSION

Indeed, social media has gradually become an integral part of the Basotho in everyday life. Lesotho people use social media to share content on various things for various reasons (Sethunya, Letsolo, and Hlomani, 2016). It is the opioin of the paper that social media usage has impacted on Lesotho politics and has had a great influence in shaping the future election voting patterns of Lesotho and the political economy of the country. Personal communication via social media brings electorates, stakeholders, and political parties closer to their potential voters. It allows politicians to communicate faster and reach citizens in a more targeted manner and vice versa, without the intermediate role of mass media (Mattoni (2014). This aspect has been shown in some of the discussions of certain events mentioned in this paper Reactions, feedback, conversations and debates are generated on social media as well as support and participation for offline events which are sometimes presented in radio talk shows. Messages posted to personal networks are multiplied when shared, which allows new audiences to be reached. As indicated in some of the aforementioned discussions in the paper, some issues were organized faster and large audiences were reached by the use of social media sites. But, this does not mean that everything posted on social media will have a positive end result. For example, some protests arranged through social media have exposed participants to the threat of violence. However, in many cases the use of social media has been beneficial, for example, in South African, Kenya, Tanzania and the United States of America (Treré 2015).

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommends that the National leadership of Lesotho should fine-tune their strategies in handling social media users' behaviour and interaction with the key national issues of development. Lesotho should review its vision going forward to 2020 in line with the proposed recommendations so as to make its people a part of the emerging technological issues within the country (Uldam, 2013).

1) Unified National strategy: The leadership of Lesotho should provide an executive sponsorship and guidance to ensure that social media strategies and tactics are aligned to the good recommended economic policies and direction to the benefit of Basotho people.
2) All policies relating to the use of social media, the internet or cyber-activities should be reviewed. Service guidelines should also be reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with the overall social media policy and engagement principles.
3) Educating users about the responsible use of social media by the Government of the day, support of the existing donor community, non-governmental organisations, private business, media, all stakeholders and the citizens of Lesotho should all consider reviewing social media training and the way it is prioritised and delivered in order to ensure consistency. The review should include relevant resources, guidelines and support mechanisms.
4) Provision of required resources/national budgets and human and software resources should be defined and provided to support the understanding and management of social media in the country. Resources could include incremental specialised personnel, software to monitor, measure and understand online activity and engagement and moderating tools (Cammaerts,2012).
5) Channel/content plan: Members of security agencies in Lesotho, the Ministry of Communications, media practitioners, the Lesotho technology office, members of Lesotho computer association, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Development planning, academia, researchers, members of higher education learning institutes and the Ministry of Education should all come together to investigate the benefits of aligning content strategies across official social media. Local social media teams should define and share content strategies and consider predefined plans, such as a five-day calendar of events for each working week. All the mentioned stakeholders above should consider recruiting 'test and learn' methodology within official security social media presences. Further consideration should be given to the effects of immediately deferring recruitment enquiries made in the social media space.
6) Crisis management: all active stakeholders should develop a social media crisis plan that aligns with existing plans, marketing and brand communication plans. Although crisis management is usually reactive, a plan could be developed in conjunction with key stakeholders to consider proactive strategies as well.
7) Branding: all active stakeholders should maintain the current brand direction of 'people first' in its social media activities. This review will be tasked to define a brand strategy to enhance security brands in social media. The review team believes that the brand direction of 'people first' if adopted in security will be the ideal method for engaging in social media. The pursuit of that underlying principle should continue.

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