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Social Media and the Empowerment of Businesswomen in Kampala, Uganda

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CHAPTER ONE- Introduction

1.1 Background

Major technological innovations and advances have often caused important and drastic upheavals in human history. Advances in technology saw humanity move from the Stone Age, through a long period during the agricultural revolution and allowed for the beginning of the industrial era that saw human beings being able to perform tasks in much more efficient and effective ways (Toffler, 1981; Carter, 2007). Further technological advances enabled the development of the printing press, and from here, a significant increase in the way in which information could be disseminated to the masses. No longer were there single copies of manuscripts that needed to be hand copied in order to be shared (Whipps, 2008). This technological advancement began a wave of information sharing that allowed ordinary men and women to access information that was previously beyond reach. Books, articles and newspapers grew in popularity, and with this growth, the growing importance of educating people that were not only able to consume this material, but also contribute to its growth. It is said that knowledge is power. Having this power shared with the masses in information packages of various kinds meant that opportunities for creativity, innovation and idea generation were greatly increased as more people could use the knowledge gained to develop new ideas (Toffler, 1981; Hao-Chang *et al*, 2011). Information was therefore created, packaged and shared/disseminated, which resulted in new information arising from the knowledge gleaned, allowing the cycle to continue endlessly. The sharing and increased dissemination of information has been further encouraged by the increasing rate of globalisation.

Globalisation has been a part of human progress for a long time. From the time when the first explorers decided to leave their lands to discover new peoples and new lands, people worldwide have realised the benefits of accessing from other lands that which their own lands could not provide (O'Rourke & Williamson, 2002). And thus began the movement of people and goods that would result in the phenomenon known as globalisation. Globalisation, with its numerous advantages and disadvantages, has among many other things ensured the rapid flow of information and knowledge from one part of the world to another. It has also ensured that new innovations are not restricted to one geographical region but are able to spread across the globe.

One of the greatest technological advances/innovations that arose from the need to be able to share information quickly across great distances is the internet. Development of this innovation was as a result of the growing understanding of what the invention of the computer could achieve. The internet or more specifically the World Wide Web, as we know it today, was the brain child of Tim Berners-Lee in the early 1990s (Leiner *et al*, 2009). Since then, remarkable advances have taken place in leaps and bounds that resulted in information creation, dissemination, sharing and communication on unprecedented levels. Emailing, instant messaging, websites and videoconferencing are only some of the advances of the development of the internet. The telephone, that helped do away with time and space barriers, pales in comparison with this innovation that instantly connects people and businesses in some of the remotest regions of the world (Leiner *et al*, 2009).

1.1.2 The advent of Online Social Networks

As with most innovations, the internet has allowed people to think up new ways in which this development can be advanced to continually improve and increase the number of benefits offered. With the increasing utilisation of the computers and the internet globally, new ways to communicate, share and access information have sprung up. One of the most prolific ways to date is without a doubt, online social networking. Online Social Networks are a fairly recent development as far as computer and internet use go. Online Social Networks have several definitions according to different authors. Boyd & Ellison (2008: 212) define them as “...web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”.

Although the first known Online Social Network came into existence in 1978 with the establishment of the Electronic Information Exchange System at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, true widespread use can be traced to 1998 with the launch of Six Degrees (Acar & Polonsky, 2009). This was the first Online Social Network that allowed users to set up individual profiles and to connect with a network of people based on certain unifying factors. Rapidly growing internet usage rates, particularly in the United States of America in the late 1990s and especially the early 2000s gave rise to the springing up of a multitude of Online Social Networks (OSNs). Networks such as MySpace, Friendster, Orkut and Hi5 were some of the major OSNs that captured huge markets at the start of the public's love affair with OSNs (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). These OSNs quickly spread out and were in use in many

countries globally, even as other OSNs were starting up in other countries. These sites helped to bring together people from similar nationalities, backgrounds, occupations and interests. The years 2007 and 2008 are however earmarked as the period in which use of OSNs truly “exploded” globally and became a force among internet users (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012).

Of all the OSNs in existence to date, none has been able to capture the market quite like the mega success story that is Facebook. With close to one billion registered members as of December 2014, Facebook has taken the social networking world by storm. Other fast rising and very successful OSNs include Twitter (304 million active users) and LinkedIn (364 million registered members), which altogether have managed to gather a massive collective network of over a billion people worldwide (Internet World Stats, 2014). These represent enormous potential for individuals and businesses alike that are registered on these sites, as the ability to reach friends, strangers, potential consumers and clients across large regions has been increased on a vast scale.

It is important to note that, for purposes of this study, the terms Online Social Networks and social media will be used interchangeably. Online Social Networking has the connotation of people building networks within which they collaborate and communicate, while social media implies that information is “published” in this form of “media” (Veerasingam, 2013). “Publishing” (meant here as the ability to disseminate information at large) in various formats, as well as building networks in these environments, are both important and this study is interested in both types of activities and their implications for the target population.

1.1.3 Online Social Networking and businesses in developing countries

Many businesses today, whether they be small, large and anything in between, are finding it harder to ignore the prospects for connection and communication with consumers that these sites offer. Hypothetically, a small business now has the ability to reach the same number of consumers as does a large business (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2008). It used to be that a company had to have large advertising budgets to reach millions of consumers. The more financially able a company was, the more people that it could reach with its messaging. OSNs have flipped the script for many of these companies however. Word of mouth has similarly reached very important given that one individual with significant influence could make or break a business, whether it be big or small (O’Murchu, Breslin and Decker, 2004). With the right support from a network of influential people, even a one-man business could grow

exponentially. OSNs also offer the opportunity for individuals and small businesses to access valuable information and network with hitherto unreachable sources. This raises the question: “How can the power of online social networking be harnessed to build networks, communicate with and disseminate information to others in ways that result in the success and development of individuals and businesses? And how can this power be especially leveraged for use by people in developing countries in a way that will see them become competitive on a global scale?”

Developing countries have for a long time been on the disadvantaged end when it comes to the adoption of innovations and new technologies. With specific regard to computer and internet usage, developing countries in Africa fall far behind their counterparts in more developed regions of the world. 2014 statistics put Internet penetration in Africa at 19% as compared to 78.6% in North America, 65% in Europe and 32% in Asia (Internet World Stats, 2014). Much of the labour force in more developed regions is employed in white collar jobs. These jobs require the utilisation of information and knowledge for task completion and decision making in the workplace, which are supported by increasing internet penetration rates and therefore access to more information. The rise in the amount of the labour employed in this manner has led to the rise of the term “the information society”. This is a society in which the economy is primarily driven by “information” jobs such as teaching, law, banking and advertising as distinct from manual labour e.g. farming, mining and carpentry. “Brain work” as opposed to “manual work” (Karvalics, 2007).

The trend towards an information society for many developed countries owes a lot to the widespread use of computers and the internet for information dissemination, communication and retrieval. As a result, online social networking is also more widely spread in these countries. Many benefits have accrued for companies and businesses using these platforms in reaching current and potential consumers. Many consumers now believe it necessary that a business be registered on an OSN in order for it to be taken seriously (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012). There is now, however, a discussion in the shift from an Information Society to a Knowledge Society. This shift addresses the more empowering idea of knowledge societies and encapsulates “freedom of expression and freedom of information; universal access to information and knowledge; quality learning for all; and respect for linguistic and cultural diversity” (Mansell & Tremblay, 2013: 6).

A major upside of the online social networking frenzy is that, given the ease with which they can be joined, with most not requiring any sort of payment for registration, many people from all walks of life and backgrounds have been able to join one or more OSNs. This also means that individuals and businesses in developing countries have not been left out. Although internet penetration is still very poor in many regions, this is changing rapidly. The fast and ever-increasing usage of mobile telephony in many parts of Africa especially has meant that more and more people are able to access the internet via this technology. A Deloitte report (2012) states that Africa is the second largest mobile phone market after Asia and that therefore, online social networking is available even for those without computer access, provided their mobile device has internet capabilities. Given the opportunity provided by increasing mobile telephony and subsequent internet accessibility, businesses and individuals in sub Saharan Africa are realising the opportunities that are also availed to them through the growing number of members on OSNs. Figures put the number of Facebook users alone in Africa at around 120 million people (Deloitte and Touche, 2014). Given the fast-rising population growth and the increasing numbers of people who are joining the middle class in Africa, these statistics seem set to rise dramatically in coming years. Experts in the Deloitte and Touche report (2014) are now questioning whether there will soon be Facebook and Twitter equivalents developed in Africa, for Africans.

1.1.4 Online Social Networks in Uganda

One particular country in Africa that is enjoying a growth in its economy and seeing ever-increasing numbers of the populace achieving middle class status is Uganda. A country in East Africa, which has in previous decades seen much political instability and the resulting negative economic effects, Uganda is steadily gaining ground and seeing greater economic development in recent times. It has been named one of the fastest-growing economies in the Sub Saharan region (African Economic Outlook, 2012; KPMG, 2014). With specific regard to developments in computer and internet penetration, 2000 statistics put Uganda's internet penetration at 0.1% which grew to 18.2% in 2014 (Internet World Stats, 2014). Online social networking usage also shows that approximately 17% of internet users are registered on OSNs (Internet World Stats, 2014).

With ever-growing numbers of individuals and businesses registering on OSNs, new platforms have emerged for people and businesses to connect with each other on the Ugandan business scene. It remains to be seen how these platforms, specifically Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn will be utilised for business growth. As these platforms offer new opportunities for

small and large businesses as well as individuals, one could argue that it could offer unique opportunities for disadvantaged groups. An important group with slow progress in the business sector of developing countries, and particularly Uganda, is women (Ellis, Manuel and Blackden, 2006).

Women may be a growing force in the work place in Uganda, particularly in urban areas, but there is still a long way to go before they fully realise their potential impact on the economy of the country. A World Bank report (2013) states that the marginalisation of women in the professional work force holds many developing countries back from achieving the kind of economic growth they could attain if they took advantage of empowering women to pursue more avenues in the formal/professional work environment. This can be achieved, for example, through girl child educational initiatives and support systems for women in business, among others.

Ellis, Manuel and Blackden (2006) were, however, quick to point out that businesswomen in Uganda must take it upon themselves to take advantage of the opportunities available to them that can promote them in their working environments. These opportunities might enable them to establish and grow their own ventures or businesses. They may also allow businesswomen who are formally employed in various organisations to promote and develop themselves to rise to the highest ranks of their professions. Given that information or knowledge constitutes potential power, having the right information for growth, learning, development and networking could boost women in their respective fields. The study by Ellis, Manuel and Blackden (2006) on the challenges faced by businesswomen in Uganda states that many of the issues faced by businesswomen in Uganda arise from a lack of information on a number of pertinent aspects. Some of the issues pointed out include:

- Lack of information on formalisation and registration of their businesses;
- Limited information concerning their legal rights in the work place;
- Being less educated and having fewer formal business skills than men;
- Inadequate information on capital and financing opportunities; and
- A major underlying challenge consistently mentioned was the unavailability of sufficient mentoring and support networks. (Ellis, Manuel and Blackden, 2006: 21-24)

Given the numerous challenges that these women face, OSNs offer potential solutions as a result of the wealth of information accessible through these platforms.

1.1.5 Benefits of OSNs

There are numerous benefits touted when it comes to OSNs. DiMicco *et al* (2008) list some benefits of OSNs including: provision of avenues for networking on a much larger scale than many people would have access to in their day-to-day physical interaction with others. Secondly, OSNs can transform the way in which ideas are generated and shared. An example is the Personal Learning Groups on Twitter that enable professionals in various fields to make connections, generate ideas, share best practices and even set up physical meetings that can bring together individuals who would otherwise have never met (Fisher, 2012). OSNs are outstanding sources of information on consumer behaviour and their needs. They are a rich mine of data “straight from the horses’ mouth”. For anyone in a particular business, or anyone trying to get their foot in the door, OSNs can permit access to the minds of consumers, which knowledge can be utilised to tailor products and services that are truly wanted or needed by the market. DiMicco *et al* (2008) go on to state that OSNs provide unique insights into what competitors are offering and what their consumers are saying about their products. This can provide a competitive edge for the professional business woman running her own business or working at a strategic level in an organisation.

Many organisation pages provide regular information on setting up of businesses and announce events where like-minded professionals are brought together. Advertising these events through traditional media might prove expensive and OSNs offer the opportunity to reach significant numbers at low cost. Networking sites like LinkedIn are a way for members to expand their networks in a professional environment while “displaying” their expert competencies (O’Murchu, Breslin and Decker, 2004). It is reported that more and more employers are using OSNs to conduct background checks on potential employees before the decision to hire is made (Cook, 2012). Professionals can take advantage of this to fully market themselves to the right people. Possibly one of the most common uses of OSNs is for individuals and businesses to market their products and services in an affordable manner to a large audience.

Given that online social networking provides many benefits, and with an ever-growing array of features and functions to ease information sharing, dissemination, gathering and networking for people in all walks of life, it seems reasonable that this is an avenue worth

investigating for businesswomen in developing countries. Ugandan women can for example leverage OSNs as information and knowledge mines, marketing platforms and networking centres to transform their business and professional lives. The growth of businesswomen can in turn boost the economy of the country, as the compounding effect of empowering just a few thousand women can result in a huge impact (World Bank, 2006). Organisations such as the Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association Limited (UWEAL) and Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) are just some of the organisations that are in a firm position to facilitate this empowerment (see 2.13.1.1 & 2.13.1.2).

Much literature (see chapter 2) expounds on the impact that OSNs have on small, medium and large businesses globally. With this in mind, one may ask how the most popular platforms (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, in particular) can be leveraged to empower African businesses with women in strategic and decision making positions. It is critical, however, to understand first how online social networking is actually used by businesswomen in the workplace. Knowledge of this can provide a starting point for future research into ways in which online social networking can be tailored to better suit the needs of businesswomen in Uganda, how to educate and train them, and how to market the benefits of these platforms for business and for professional development (see working definition in 1.6).

1.2 Research questions and sub-questions

Given this background, the following main research question, and related sub-questions, will guide the investigation.

1.2.1 Main Research question

How can social media (Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) contribute to the professional development of businesswomen in Kampala, Uganda?

1.2.2 Research sub-questions

- How are social media changing the way African businesswomen work today?
- How are businesswomen in Kampala using these social media for professional purposes?
- What guidelines for social media education will contribute to the professional development of businesswomen in Kampala?

1.3 Research methodology

Systematic research is necessary to better understand the views, perspectives and actions of the target group for this study. There is little information available in the literature concerning the implications of social media usage amongst women in Africa.

The study will therefore include a theoretical and an empirical component. The theoretical component will comprise an in-depth study of the literature of the topic, as well as an assessment of the gaps and research opportunities. This will shed light on the issues that need to be specifically addressed in the empirical component (see chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of the research methodology).

1.3.1 Theoretical component

It is vital that before an empirical study is undertaken, the theory and key concepts and ideas behind the topic are well understood. A theoretical framework will provide deeper understanding and insights into the topic, as well as helping to identify areas that require further investigation. A thorough literature review will be conducted to produce this understanding. Literature from a range of secondary sources such as journal articles, book chapters, monographs, websites and news stories will be sourced and reviewed for this purpose.

1.3.2 Empirical component

The empirical component of the study will use qualitative and quantitative methods to gauge the attitudes, views and actions of the target groups to generate data in conjunction with the literature review, in order to address the research questions.

1.3.2.1 Research methodology

The research methodology that has been selected for this particular study combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. Using a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews will be undertaken with a few carefully selected respondents. Using the quantitative approach, a questionnaire will be constructed and disseminated via email to a wider group of respondents. The questions will be based on and shaped by feedback from the in-depth interviews. A predominantly closed-ended questionnaire has been selected as the tool of choice for several reasons, including among others:

- Ease of dissemination;

- Respondents answer the exact same questions, which is useful for comparative purposes;
- Individuals can complete it in their own time ; and
- Compilation of data using computerised systems will make for easier analysis and deductions.

For a fuller discussion of these aspects, see Chapter three.

1.3.2.2 Target group

The target groups of this study are businesswomen in the urban areas of Kampala, Uganda. There are two target groups; one for the in-depth interviews and one for the questionnaires. The target group for the interviews will include six respondents while the target group for the questionnaires will consist of 50 respondents. In both groups will be women who are formally employed in various institutions/organisations. The age bracket will be limited to individuals between 25 and 55 years of age. Respondents will be selected from different sectors, namely: banking, marketing/advertising, and education. The target group has been selected as they best represent a group of women that could have access to, and use, social media in their professional lives. (see chapter 3 for more detailed information on the target group).

1.3.2.3 Sampling method

Within the established target groups for both the interviews and questionnaires, the chain referral/snowball sampling method is the chosen method of selecting possible respondents. Chain referral/Snowball sampling is a process in which one or more suitable candidates in the target group helps to identify/recommend other suitable candidates (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Chain referral sampling is ideal for this study as it is often noted that individuals in any given setting tend to have rich extended professional networks.

1.3.2.4 Data collection

An interview schedule will be utilised during the qualitative component of the study while online questionnaires will be utilised to gather information during the quantitative component. The questionnaires will be disseminated via email, after which the online survey system being used will summarise findings in a format that will make analysis and interpretation easier.

1.4 Benefits of the study

The following are some of the benefits of this study:

- Improving understanding of businesswomen in Kampala, Uganda and their awareness of the opportunities provided by various social networking sites e.g. online networking, professional groups etc.;
- Increasing awareness of the perceived challenges they face with regard to social networking and internet usage e.g. language barriers, inadequate on-going training, technophobia etc.;
- Ascertaining empirical data about businesswomen in Kampala and if they see social networks as a vital aspect for their business development. and
- Determining how active women in Kampala as far as being contributors of information and knowledge in the information society rather than simply users, through social media.

1.5 Limitations of the study

Some limitations of this study are that:

- Findings of this study may not be generalizable to businesswomen in other developing countries outside Uganda or other parts of Uganda, although they may be helpful to researchers conducting related and similar investigations; and
- There are different sectors in which women may be involved in, each affecting the way they utilise social media. The study cannot generalise the findings to businesswomen across all sectors as it will only address findings from women in banking, advertising/marketing and education.

1.6 Key terms used in the study

Businesswomen – For the purposes of this study, “businesswomen” refers to those individuals formally employed in various institutions/organisations across business sectors.

Developing countries – Also known as low-income economies and are defined as those with a GNI per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method, of \$1,045 or less in 2014 (World Bank, 2015).

Formal business sector – Sector which encompasses all jobs with normal hours and regular wages, and are recognized as income sources on which income taxes must be paid. (BusinessDictionary.com)

Globalisation – The rapidly growing interpenetration and interdependence of countries worldwide through increasing border transactions in goods, services and capital, and through the more rapid diffusion of technology (van Meerhaeghe, 2012).

Information society – A new type of society, where the possession of information (and not material wealth) is the driving force behind its transformation and development and where human intellectual creativity flourishes (Karvalics, 2007).

Knowledge Society - A society that operates within the paradigm of the economics of information. It values human capital as the prime input to production and innovation. A knowledge society is well connected via modern ICTs to the dematerialized economy, and has access to relevant and usable information. A highly sophisticated physical infrastructure underpins this economic model and allows the delivery of the material objects that are accessed and manipulated in the dematerialized world of modern ICTs (Lor and Britz, 2003).

Online Social Networks (OSNs)/Social media – For the purposes of this study, the terms OSNs and social media will be used interchangeably (see 1.1.2). They are described as web-based services that allow individuals to: (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Professional development- Process of improving and increasing capabilities of staff through access to education and training opportunities in the workplace, through outside organizations, or through watching others perform the job (BusinessDictionary.com). For this study, the phrase gives more specific content to the idea of empowerment (see section 2.12.1 on empowerment, and the guidelines for a social media education program in chapter five, for fuller discussions and elaboration).

1.7 Division of chapters

Below is a brief overview of what will be addressed in each chapter of the study.

Chapter 1- Introduction

The introduction includes a brief background of the study providing a summarised theoretical background and justification for the relevance of the study.

Chapter 2- Literature Review

This chapter expounds on the literature currently available concerning the topic of the study. A review is provided of the different opinions, views and facts as espoused by various authors as relates to the topic at hand. This allows an understanding of the information available and provides a point of departure for the empirical component to follow.

Chapter 3- Research Methodology

This chapter explains and justifies the research methods and techniques selected for the study including the research instruments, sampling method, data analysis method, and target groups. The chapter details how the research study proceeded.

Chapter 4- Analysis and interpretation of data

Following the research process, this chapter synthesises the data gathered and makes sense of the information in order to develop inferences that address the research question.

Chapter 5- Guidelines for a social media education program

Guidelines will be proposed in this chapter for a social media education program that can be established to empower businesswomen in their professional lives.

Chapter 6- Findings, recommendations, and conclusion

The findings, recommendations, and a conclusion are presented in this chapter

References

Appendices A B C

2. CHAPTER TWO- Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of tasks is a common reality in the modern world. It is a rare profession that has not been significantly impacted by the use of these technologies. Many technological innovations have revolutionised productivity and efficiency levels involved in performing the tasks faced in the completion of many jobs and projects (Jerzmanowski, 2007). Technological advances and the diffusion of ICTs in different regions are significant factors in determining which countries are developed and which are still developing. It is therefore unsurprising that many countries are actively working towards becoming information and knowledge societies. These are societies where the importance of information and knowledge is recognised as a vital input for the development of the socio-economic and political sectors. Agnieszka (2012) states that it is of the utmost importance that not only should information be recognised as key for development, but that a strong emphasis must be placed on acquiring the technological innovations that allow for its creation, retrieval, manipulation and sharing.

Some of the most important of these innovations have been in the form of, but are not limited to, computers and the internet which have dramatically changed the way we work and communicate (Acar & Polonsky, 2007). A major advantage of computer technologies and the internet is the seemingly endless possibilities that they provide with regard to the innovations that can be built upon them. ICTs and the internet, since their inception, have proved to be anything but static. Creativity abounds in these areas with complex and dynamic ideas in continuous development, some of which fizzle out quickly, while others continue into mainstream use (Leiner *et al*, 2009; Galarneau, 2012).

With the rapid pace of creativity and the increasingly dynamic personal and professional environments that people find themselves in today, these phenomena soon become part and parcel of people's daily lives. Examples include: emailing, instant messaging, cloud computing, mobile phone apps, and large data storage devices (Acar & Polonsky, 2007: Vasluianu, 2010).

Many of these innovations have allowed for increasingly rapid information creation, diffusion and communication globally. Given the recognition of information as a driving force in development the world over, the impact of these technologies cannot be underestimated. Their effect on the way businesses are run has transformed industries and entire economies

(Agnieszka, 2012). It is for this reason that new technologies must be studied and analysed in order to understand what their potential impact might be, and that thereafter conscious strategies are developed to fully leverage their benefits. This is not only important for companies/organisations but also governments at large, as information and communication technologies have been proven to have significant and lasting bearing on development across all sectors (Sevgi, 2010; World Bank, 2012).

Often, it is difficult to understand what, if any, influence new technologies may have in the short and long term within society. Nonetheless, they must be taken note of and their diffusion tracked to understand if and when to incorporate them into overall strategic planning (Sevgi, 2010). Often, these innovations make it into mainstream use before they are even fully understood in terms of the influence they might have. Considering the fact that many countries now have a growing population of “digital natives”, an understanding of ICT innovations has become more important than ever. Bolton *et al* (2013) describe digital natives or millennials as the first generation to have spent their entire lives actively engaged in the use of ICTs, which now profoundly affects the way in which they work and play.

One innovation that has indeed become part and parcel of many individuals’ and businesses’ lives is online social networking. Given their fairly brief history of roughly 10 years, it is quite remarkable that Online Social Networks (OSNs) have managed to gather a collective network of over a billion users worldwide by 2012 (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012). OSNs have found ready and willing users in all corners of the globe. They have allowed for the growth of massive networks comprising individuals of all races, classes, genders as well as people in niche categories that share specific interests (Acar & Polonsky, 2007; Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Ghannam (2011:4) highlights the purposes that OSNs serve by stating that they “inform, mobilize, entertain, create communities, increase transparency, and seek to hold governments accountable.” Businesses have also joined the bandwagon and are recognising the immense potential that these sites offer in the way of reaching established and new markets, among many other possible uses (Raman, 2013; Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012).

Individuals in professional environments are also discovering the potential benefits that could arise from being a part of these social networks. They provide opportunities for networking on a massive scale. Networking in offline environments has been known to improve people’s chances for growing businesses by establishing business connections, gaining employment and achieving knowledge through peer and mentorship relationships (Leader-Chivee,

Hamilton & Cowan, 2008). Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) explain that OSNs have taken these possibilities and multiplied them significantly. Whereas in the past people often connected on a primarily physical level, they can now achieve many of the same objectives through these online social networking platforms.

Individuals also utilise OSNs for a variety of reasons. Among these reasons are the sharing and receiving of information from a host of sources. The possibilities offered by this massive information sharing exchange can provide unique opportunities for disadvantaged and information-poor groups from various sectors of society (*Deloitte*, 2012). Specific groups may find themselves lagging behind in the knowledge and information society, but access to OSNs can potentially bridge the gap between ‘information haves’ and ‘information have nots’ by narrowing of the digital divide (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Ali, 2011). The majority of these information have-nots are typically found in developing countries where access to information resources is limited for a variety of reasons, including the lack of access to information technologies such as computers.

Lacking access to computer technologies in many cases also means lack of access to the internet and consequently, Online Social Networks. A *Deloitte* report (2012), however, states that increased use of mobile telephones is providing headway in terms of the numbers of people that have access to the internet in these developing regions. As a result of this, online social networking has managed to grow at a tremendous rate year on year, with the vast majority of people in developing regions logging on for the first time via their mobile phones.

There is no doubt that developing countries stand to gain socially, economically and politically from the improved dissemination and access to information that OSNs provide (Bertot, Jaeger & Grimes, 2010; Shirky, 2011; Ali, 2011). One special group in particular that stands to benefit from the information and networking rich environment of OSNs is businesswomen in developing countries. Given the special challenges faced by this group, OSNs offer an opportunity to address professional and development challenges, and present new pathways for growth and advancement (Bossari, 2012; Mourtada & Salem, 2011). Some of these challenges include an inability to access capital, lack of information for business growth and development, lack of knowledge about competitors, an unsupportive business environment, and other forms of discrimination against women.

This chapter will examine the literature on online social networking, focussing on its history, trends, and the possibilities for businesswomen in these environments. A brief overview of

the power of ICTs, in particular social media for development, will be followed by an analysis of traditional and new media to explain the ways in which the two types of media differ from each other. This will show how new media, which include OSNs, have developed from traditional media. This will highlight the continuous evolution of media, and more particularly the mass media and communications, and their impact on society. The chapter will then delve into aspects of information behaviour and how they relate to OSNs. The chapter will also discuss the research site, Kampala Uganda, in more detail. This will include background information on the country and its economic landscape to provide a perspective of businesswomen in Kampala. This is in order to understand the challenges they face in their work lives, and the opportunities offered by OSNs.

2.2 ICTs for development and addressing the digital divide

The discourse around ICT for development (ICT4D) is one that has gained serious traction in the last decade. With the increasing amount of ICTs in societies, the glaring differences between those that have access to ICTs and the internet, and those that do not, have become more visible (Ali, 2011; Pedrozo, 2013). ICTs have without a doubt changed the manner in which people live and work. Seeing the improvements that ICTs have made in developed countries, the natural implication is that if poorer countries were to also have this access, they could start to improve their socio-economic and political sectors to reduce poverty and produce better standards of living.

This thinking has led many international development organisations to push for improved access to technologies in an attempt to bridge the digital divide. Proponents of ICT for development believe very strongly in the power of ICTs to transform the education, business and social sectors. Inasmuch as their beliefs hold some truth, there are critics who say that this is an overly optimistic attitude. According to Ali (2011), their argument is that many of the champions for this cause come from organisations in developed countries that may not fully understand the context of people in developing countries. This has led to faulty assumptions about ICTs in developing countries, and subsequent failures of many ICT for development initiatives.

ICTs can indeed transform poor societies, but only if their true needs and challenges are clearly understood. The internet can be a remarkable tool for development but the challenges of making it available, and ensuring it is actually utilised are issues that must come to the forefront in the discussions of ICT4D. Bridging the digital divide is important but the

challenges faced by developing countries must be understood in order to assess how ICTs and the internet can make a difference (Jeffrey, 2004). It cannot and should not be assumed that simply providing technology and the internet will change the lives of the underprivileged. ICTs can only have a significant impact if there is meaningful use (Ali, 2011). What constitutes meaningful use is an area that must be seriously considered. The digital divide is not simply concerned with access to ICTs and the internet but has much to do with what they are used for. There are those who believe that the digital divide is not even an issue worthy of serious discussion as regards developing regions. What is more important, they say, is providing access to basics such as food, water, health care and adequate shelter before discussing whether there is access to the internet. Others believe that there is no urgency in discussing issues surrounding the digital divide as it is a temporary phenomenon that will pass with time as information technology prices decrease. Microsoft founder Bill Gates, in Ali (2011:191), supports this view:

“Do people have a clear view of what it means to live on \$1 a day. . . There are things those people need at that level other than technology.. . About 99 percent of the benefits of having [a PC] come when you've provided reasonable health and literacy to the person who's going to sit down and use it . . . People with elephantiasis aren't going to be using their PCs. I'm suggesting that if someone's interested in equity, you wouldn't spend more than 20 percent of your time talking about computers. It's almost criminal more money isn't spent on curing malaria, which kills 1 million children a year”.

A major criticism of the this type of thinking stems from those who believe that ICTs do have the potential to empower people in developing countries to come up with solutions to the challenges they face. Proponents of bridging the digital divide discourse state that by equipping people with ICT skills and infrastructure, economic woes, poor education and inadequate healthcare can be addressed (Pedrozo, 2013). Given how the internet has revolutionised social, political and economic sectors, developing countries have much to gain from the opportunities it can provide (Jeffrey, 2004).

There are those that believe so strongly in the power of technologies and the internet that they are fighting to bring it to the majority of the world's population. An example is *Internet.org*, a Facebook-led initiative by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg whose goal is to connect two thirds of the world to the internet through partnerships with technology leaders, non-profits and local communities (Ali, 2011). Recognising the massive impact that social media

has had in connecting people and providing an avenue for information sharing and exchange, it became critical to understand how everyone can become connected via the internet. Although social media has been identified as potential tools for empowerment, they are still very limited to privileged elites in developing countries. The poorest in these societies are not part of these networks. *Internet.org* (2015) states that the main reasons why more people are not connected include:

- “Devices are too expensive;
- Service plans are too expensive;
- Mobile networks are few and far between;
- Content isn’t available in the local language;
- People aren't sure what value the internet will bring;
- Power sources are limited or costly; and
- Networks can’t support large amounts of data.”

Ali (2011) states that access to the internet can allow developing countries to skip ahead in the provision of basic services such as opening up access to vast amounts of online resources for educational purposes and through the creation of healthcare networks where experts across the globe are able to pool knowledge and expertise. It is for these reasons that proponents of ICT4D push for the uptake of these technologies in developing countries. Former UN secretary general Koffi Annan, in Ali (2011:201), stated at a telecom conference in Geneva in 1999 that *“People lack many things: jobs, shelter, food, health care and drinkable water. Today, being cut off from basic telecommunications services is a hardship almost as acute as these other deprivations, and may indeed reduce the chances of finding remedies to them.”* He went on to state that ICTs are the driving forces for globalisation and development, but the gap between the information haves and have nots continues to grow at alarming rates which could result in the world’s poorest being unable to participate in the emerging knowledge based global economy.

If development is then to be taken seriously, the skills and access to the technologies that are often at the forefront of that development must become a right. Pedrozo (2013) and Jeffrey (2004) warn that access to ICTs and having the requisite skills are not enough, however. As mentioned under the reasons to why not everyone is online, people are not aware of the value that being online could have for them. This often has to do with the fact that most of the information available via this platform is highly westernised. This means that it often cannot

be applied meaningfully in the lives of those in developing countries. English is the predominant language on the internet and the cultural relevance of the information is minimal. In order for people everywhere to benefit from the information being disseminated in cyberspace, it must be in a language they understand and, very importantly, must suit their contexts.

In the context of the digital divide, and specifically looking at meaningful use, we can see how social media can potentially become a beacon of hope in providing developing countries with relevant information. This is because social media are already attracting a very wide user base even in developing countries. The reason is that social media often do not have a target population but are communication channels for all who are interested in creating networks and expressing themselves.

Furthermore, social media generally require less advanced ICT skills, and therefore little formal training is usually required for their use. The informal nature of many social media sites also provides less pressure, which encourages even technophobes to explore. The relative ease of using social media has meant that people are able to improve their ICT skills, which can be transferred to platforms beyond social media sites. Although little research has been conducted on this, initial studies indicate that social media are indeed having a major influence on developing effective ICT skills among users (Powell, 2012; Mugahed *et al*, 2015). That most popular social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are available for free is another major advantage as regards their uptake in developing countries where purchasing bandwidth may already be a problem. It is most likely a reason why social media uptake has been able to transcend socioeconomic barriers.

As social media allows people to create their own content, it has resulted in a massive amount of culturally specific information on the internet (Ali, 2011). People are able to produce and view information that is relevant in their contexts, and in languages they understand. This is breaking major barriers that traditionally prevent many from participating in online activities. Social media have the added benefit of allowing users to express themselves in multiple formats such as text, image, audio and video. Individuals are no longer passive receivers of information, but are able to create and share information with others. In order to address the digital divide, we must look beyond simply providing ICT skills and access, as well as at the issue of meaningful use. Social media can provide headway in this area by ensuring that

previously marginalised groups are now able to create relevant and usable content that can be shared via these platforms.

The following sections will now turn to the historical developments of traditional and new media. It is important to compare and contrast traditional and new media (under which Online Social Networks fall) so as to understand how OSNs differ or are similar to pre-existing media. This comparison will show that although new, many of the features and functions of OSNs are themselves not new. It is the manner in which these features and functions are utilised via these platforms that OSNs are so special and worth investigating as tools for the professional development of businesswomen in Kampala.

2.3 Historical development of media and communication technologies

Communication among humans has always been a key aspect of survival and development. Communication can be defined as “...the process of transmitting and receiving ideas, information, and messages” (Ogunsola & Aboyade, 2005:8). Millennia ago word of mouth was the predominant means of communication. Fast forward a few centuries, and the use of hieroglyphics and the alphabet were used in some parts of the world to represent communication in a written and structured form, which allowed even those that did not have face-to-face interaction to communicate (Damitio, 2012). It is with the development of more structured forms of writing that the idea of mass communication and particularly mass media began to take form.

Mass media are a fairly new development as far as the history of humankind goes, even though technically, mass communication is not a new concept. Mass communication simply refers to communications reaching large numbers of people (Ogunsola & Aboyade, 2005). Mass media have, however, been a crucial factor in the growth of mass communication. Stober (2004) refers to mass media as those elaborate technologies that are used to send information or communication messages across time and/or space to a public audience, although one-to-one communication is also a possibility. Earlier technological advances and the pressures of society with regard to growing information needs resulted in the development of new media technologies. It is often noted that many new technologies simply adopt and build upon older versions of mass media and are rarely entirely new (Neuman, 2010; Stober, 2004; Peters, 2009; Bruhn, Schoenmueller & Schäfer, 2012). Barrow (2009) states that as communication technologies evolve, they often build upon and add new features to previous ones, while sometimes eliminating obsolete features.

There is a debate as to whether new technologies will usurp older technologies, often with established institutions such as governments seeking to control their diffusion into mainstream use so as to reduce their potential for threat (Neuman, 2010). This is because the massive impact that mass media have had on countries globally in political, social and economic arenas cannot be denied. Damitio (2012) notes that the use of mass media has enabled those in control to wield their power over these various arenas by ensuring that their messages are spread far and wide, beyond time and spatial constraints. An example is the considerable influence exerted by the Catholic Church using mass media in form of a book (the Bible) transcribed over a thousand years ago. Mass media have been used for these and other purposes, many of them positive, which include resulting in an increase in literacy levels, standardisation of language, spread of religion, promoting democracy, growth of early capitalism and shaping markets through advertising and marketing messages (Lee, 2002; Damitio, 2012).

Mass media, it would seem, are a double-edged sword in that they give those in control a tool to control the masses, while at the same time spreading positive messages and interestingly enough, giving the oppressed information that they can use to empower themselves against those in control. This idea will be examined in sections to come as the impact of new media on freedom of access to information and freedom of expression is examined.

As mentioned previously, mass media have a fairly short history when compared to the history of mankind and have only really been in existence for about five centuries. Before this, information was typically passed on through word of mouth (Neuman, 2010). This form of communication was limited in the sense that much of the time, the messages passed on could not be recorded and were left to rest in human memory says Barrow (2009), which meant they were subject to error and could be lost at the end of one's lifetime. It is believed that books were one of the first forms of mass media in existence. Books were, for a very long time, not created for the masses even though the first book is believed to have been written in Egypt possibly as far back as 2400 BC on Egyptian papyrus (Fang, 1997). Prior to this, text was often inscribed into clay tablets by civilisations like the early Babylonians. With the advent of books, the masses were still unable to access these media as they were handwritten and only available for the wealthy and a very small literate minority of people. It was only through the development of the printing press in 1456 by Johannes Gutenberg that greater numbers of books could be printed (Fang, 1997). Although the printing press grew the number of books available in circulation, they were still fairly expensive and literacy

numbers were still low. A variety of topics was published including politics, science, religion and romance. These were mostly found in England and a few other European countries. Whereas the state and church once controlled information, books allowed for the dissemination of information and ideas that often times threatened the power of these ruling bodies.

Many countries at one time or other sought to restrict their printing and those who could access them. This situation still arises with the advent of new media such as the case when social media is used to discuss political ideologies (Ali, 2011). Damitio (2012) goes on to say that mass media communications can be used to define and shape cultures. He states (online: 2012) “Culture, after all, is meaning that is shared. This shared meaning is exhibited through the mass media and thus it can be concluded that communication is not only communicating culture, but communication is in fact creating culture”. Damitio believes so strongly in the power of mass media that he questions whether media is a result of modernity, or whether in fact modernity is a result of media. New types of media such as online social networks that foster wide-spread national and global interaction can inadvertently lead to the sharing/spread of new cultural values/norms (Galarnau, 2012).

Specific mass media will be looked at in the following sections to analyse how they came into being and how their presence has had an impact on societies. Traditional and new media are often very similar, the difference arising from the scale of their impact and influence. An analysis of these different types of media will allow for a comparison between old and new media, later showing how social media specifically expanded the features and functions of old/traditional media.

2.3.1 The evolution of traditional media

When it comes to mass media, there are several technologies that come to mind, based on the massive influence they have had in the field of communications worldwide. These media are often referred to as traditional media given their dates of conception and the large extent of knowledge regarding their impact on society. These include media such as newspapers, the telegraph, telephones, radio and television (Fang, 1997).

Newspapers are believed to have been the first true version of mass media available. This is due to their being established with the public in mind instead of an elite minority. The first newspapers were introduced in England during the 1600s (Lee, 2002). Their growth was slow and it was only by the 1700s that daily newspapers came into existence, both in Europe and

in North America. Neuman (2010) believes that the historical birth year of the newspaper should be 1833 as this was when Robert Hoe's modern rotary press came into use and newspapers were sold at a penny, a price that made them affordable to a large population of North America. The kind of information communicated was primarily to do with commerce as well as local social scene stories. Demand continued to grow for newspapers and they began to cover more political content. They were further boosted by the rapid growth in the advertising industry in the 21st century that sought to leverage their mass reach to market products and services (Lee, 2002). Newspapers, in spite of their being more affordable than books, were for a long time still restricted to only a literate few.

The invention of the first long distance electric telegraph in 1843 added a new dimension to communication as it allowed for quick and instant transmission of messages over wide geographical distances. It still had limitations, however, as it was still communication via textual means, with all the accompanying literacy, or rather illiteracy, issues that plagued newspapers. The birth of telephone in the late 1800s (Bellis, 2000) added a new dimension to the telegraph. It allowed participants in a conversation to communicate orally in real time over time and space. The main drawback with this medium was the lack of visual interaction that meant a loss of visual cues that are often crucial in transmitting messages. The first radio with tuners was a communication technology that soon followed around 1916, with the 1930s earmarked as the "golden age of radio" in the western world. The radio allowed for audio mass communication, both in real and delayed time. Even with its lack of visual cues, it enabled a one-to-many style of communication (Barrow, 2009). The telephone was able to join forces with this medium on some occasions, and in many cases now, the audience can take part in radio discussions through phoning in.

Television brought with it even more features than the radio possessed. Invented in 1923, with real diffusion beginning in the 1940s in western countries and particularly North America, television added a visual element to radio (Bellis, 2000). It was finally possible to experience audio-visual messages. The communication was still similar to radio in the sense that it was primarily a one-to-many style of transmitting messages, with little opportunity for back and forth interaction.

The newspaper, telegraph, telephone, radio and television are examples of technologies that had a huge impact on the way communications were transmitted. They are the forerunners of today's technologies that have built upon these innovations in ways that their inventors may

not have been able to foresee. Stober (2004) mentions that it is very difficult to know what future impact a new technological innovation will have on society. It is only with hindsight that historical developments seem linear and straightforward. Often with the invention of a new technology, it is society that institutionalises the innovation and determines the course that the medium will take by deciding how it will be used. Media built for one purpose many times end up being adapted upon to perform new purposes. For example Arpanet, predecessor of the internet, was developed to facilitate communication within military and educational institutions. It was then adapted for use by the masses a few decades later, and the ways in which it is utilised now most likely far exceed the purposes its original users could have envisioned (Lee, 2002; Neuman, 2010). Mobile phones were developed as wireless telephones but now have many uses in the way of internet capabilities and the seemingly infinite number of applications that are developed for downloading every day.

In light of the way new technologies gain acceptance and mainstream use, Stober (2004) discusses the theory of evolutionary economics that involves three elements: invention, innovation, and diffusion. Invention refers to the development of an original product. Innovation occurs when society perceives the invention as useful and accepts it, and diffusion is when the new technology is used in society and there is widespread utilisation. This is the path generally taken by new technologies and mass media globally, with different innovations taking much longer than others to become commonplace. One can compare the diffusion of television which took several decades to really become embedded in societies as compared to online social networking that has grown tremendously in less than a decade (Vasluianu, 2010).

With the theory of evolutionary economics in mind, one begins to fathom how traditional media became so commonplace. It also explains how new media such as OSNs today move from being cutting edge innovations used by only a handful of early adopters to becoming part and parcel of the everyday life of people globally. An examination of new media and their impact on mass communications will be presented in the sections to follow.

2.3.2 New media

Mass media has for many decades been associated with press, print media and electronic media. The upsurge in the use of computers and the internet in particular has given rise to the concept of new media. These new media are universal information carriers capable of transmitting information in a variety of formats or multimedia (Schmid, 1998). Peters (2009)

mentions the fact that the study of new media is a tricky one as what is new soon becomes old. He nonetheless offers a definition of new media as;

“...emerging communication and information technologies undergoing a historical process of contestation, negotiation and institutionalization”.

Peters (2009:17) goes on to state:

“New media are media we do not yet know how to talk about. They are uncertain objects, their terms are unclear; their use, purpose and impact are not yet fully understood.”

For the purposes of this study we will choose to work with the definition provided by Amobi (2010:6) who defines new media as “... a term which encompasses interactive digital media, computerized, or networked information and communication technologies, such as the Internet, as opposed to traditional media such as print and television.”

Although new media often do not mean the death of old media, they do influence the way in which older media are used. Also, what we refer to today as traditional media were once new media that had an impact on the way even older media were utilised. Neuman (2010) gives the example of the advent of television resulting in radio not being the primary means of family entertainment and its subsequent move to the bedroom, kitchen and car. Mobile telephones also greatly displaced fixed line telephony especially with the youth. Some traditional media have all but disappeared e.g. the telegraph, while others have been resilient such as the radio. Referring to the radio, Neuman (2010) asks whether it will be able to survive the internet as it survived television.

New media are always more difficult to discuss in the beginning, just as the impact of television was more difficult to discuss 30 years ago, and mobile phones 10 years ago (Peters, 2009; Damitio, 2012). Their widespread dissemination makes it easy to forget how young most of these new media really are. They are not to be dismissed as fads though. As stated by Damitio (2012), mass media means mass communication and mass communication has the power to define and shape entire cultures. The bigger the impact of the medium, the more likely it is to stay and evolve.

It is not simply the form of new media that makes them worthy of discussion, but rather the characteristics of the information in these new media. Some of the characteristics of information in these new media, as provided by Schmid (1998:3) include:

- Democratic access- access to all people at any given time;
- Low cost- generally affordable as compared to other media, at the click of a mouse;
- Updated contents- updates and new entries become instantly available;
- Approach to the contents- the use of powerful search engines that allow users to find information; and
- Disposal of contents- information comes in a variety of formats and can be interactive, therefore can be used for different purposes by users.

Schmid (1998) refers to the type of information available on these new media as “living” information. Traditional media carriers could only transmit one way or “dead” information. New media provide avenues for more interactive exchanges. They allow for interaction at a level that is beyond the capabilities of traditional media, for example when an individual views an interesting newsworthy occurrence he can take a photo or video with his phone, immediately post it on one or more online sites and both receive and reply to feedback or questions- all before any official media outlet agents make their way to the scene (Damitio, 2012). This is in contrast with printed media, for example, where any feedback is delayed by a time lag (Barrow, 2009; Damitio, 2012).

New media continue to grow and develop globally. Regions across the world can attest to the impact of new media. Africa, as one of the least developed regions in the world, has nonetheless not been left behind as regards this new media trend (*Deloitte*, 2012). New media have had, and continue to have, a growing impact on the continent. Before the impact of media in Africa can be discussed, however, a general discussion will highlight the differences and similarities between traditional and new media.

2.4 Traditional versus new media

New media, as mentioned before, have not meant the death of traditional media. Often new media simply complement traditional media (Lawson-Borders, 2003). In examining the literature, some comparisons can be gleaned about the similarities and differences between new and traditional media.

In the way of similarities, both traditional and new media have been instrumental in shaping cultures through the spread of messages that have fostered national unity and solidarity (Ogunsola & Aboiyade, 2005; Vasluianu, 2010). They have also been key to growing markets through the wide dissemination of messages that allows businesses to reach existing and

potential clients. New and traditional media also provide avenues for information sharing, retrieval and dissemination for people at all levels of society. Furthermore, they are both used for education, entertainment and news. Both types of media have had a tremendous influence on the spread of globalization through expansion of global markets and providing a greater understanding of remote regions and cultures (Krishnasamy, 2013). They have been used to instigate wars, spread propaganda, empower citizens and foster revolutions (Ghannam, 2011; Pierskalla & Hollenbach, 2013). New and traditional media have without a doubt been powerful tools in the growth and development of modern civilisations.

For all their similarities, new and traditional media do have some major differences. The major difference between the two stems from the sheer scale with which new media enable users to achieve tasks, retrieve, store, share and disseminate information (Jerzmanowski, 2007; Vasluianu, 2010). New media also have the added advantage of allowing for far more interaction than traditional media do. Looking at the case of websites such as YouTube versus a television programme, Krishnasamy (2013) provides an example highlighting how they differ in terms of the manner in which information is disseminated. With YouTube a viewer can access a video of interest uploaded from halfway across the world seconds after upload, comment on it and share it across other websites with any number of people.

With television, the ability to provide instantaneous feedback or share what has been viewed is much more limited. News sites on the web are for this reason becoming increasingly popular as they allow readers to select only what they are interested in and provide forums for them to post comments/feedback and interact with other users. The interactivity features offered by new media as well as the scope they provide for searching, storing and accessing infinite numbers of information resources that can be shared with massive networks at the click of a button are the defining differences between traditional and new media.

With a specific focus on Africa, traditional and new media are having a growing influence on various areas of society. Since Kampala, as the research site for this study, is an African city, a broad overview of the evolution of media on the continent will be provided as many African countries have had a similar history regarding the spread and impact of traditional and new media.

2.4.1 Traditional media in Africa

Like the rest of the world, Africa has not been immune to the powerful impact of the media on its social, economic and political landscape. Africa is often viewed a single entity by

countries in other parts of the globe due to the perceived similarity of challenges and opportunities that the countries on the African continent experience, a view that sometimes proves right but many times is actually wrong (Farah, Kiamba & Mazongo, 2011). Vast differences exist across countries in Africa. In this case, an investigation of literature on the evolution and impact of media in Africa shows that many African countries have indeed had a somewhat similar experience when it comes to the proliferation and evolution of media such as radio, telephony and television, among others.

Although many mass media are fairly recent developments, mass communication is not a new concept in Africa and has existed for centuries. As quoted from Emmanuel Ngwaimbi, in Fatoyinbo (2000:9):

"Rural residents who constitute the majority of the continent's population use traditional means to disseminate information: a town crier walks through the village at night striking his gong to summon villagers to community activity; a drum beat communicates death, imminent invasion, or the spread of an epidemic; and the lyrics in publicly performed songs aim to reduce stress and help workers improve their ethic. Certainly, traditional communication systems are a marketplace of ideas and skills."

It is with the advent of electronic technologies and the press that mass communication reached new heights, but it was not a new concept by any means. Strong economic and political powers in the world such as the USA, Britain and France have been credited with swaying the manner, practices and standards with which most mass media and communication in the rest of the world and Africa in particular, are run (Esipisu & Kariithi, 2007). Those places were also where traditional media were invented and developed before their introduction to Africa.

2.4.1.1 Newspapers

In conjunction with radio and television, newspapers have been an important medium of mass communication in Africa. Given the low literacy rates on the continent even to date, it is interesting to note that the first newspapers are reported as having been established as far back as 1801 in Sierra Leone, and in Liberia in 1826 when returning slaves set up the *Liberia Herald* (Esipisu & Kariithi, 2007). Aker & Mbiti (2010: 11) bring to light that even today "...less than 19 percent of individuals in sub-Saharan Africa read a newspaper at least once per week, with a much smaller share in rural areas". Still, newspapers have a long history in Africa and the idea of the press grew very quickly in western African, where several

newspapers were established that later addressed the information needs of indigenous communities. East and Central Africa were much slower to develop their own press. Even when they did, it was controlled by ruling colonial powers who dictated the content, which was primarily targeted at the European settler communities' needs. News press in British colonies of West Africa is believed to have been in existence for over 175 years, while those in East Africa and Francophone Africa are barely 100 years old.

Burton (1979), in Esipisu & Kariithi (2007), believes that the reason East African countries were not able to achieve independence as early as their West African counterparts stems from the lack of a strong nationalist press. With the inception of more indigenous newspapers in the 1940s, the press was seen as a major tool in ideological mobilisation, nationalism and independence. Many African leaders were indeed previously journalists who used the media to communicate messages of freedom, national unity, political change and development (Fatoyinbo, 2002). A major challenge with this medium has always been the low literacy levels in many African countries. Growing literacy levels across Africa have, however, ensured that this medium continues to grow in popularity, and nearly every African country now has several examples of flourishing newspapers.

2.4.1.2 Radio

It is widely acknowledged that radio is the most widespread mass medium on the African continent. Its widespread proliferation has been attributed to its flexibility, cost effectiveness and oral nature of communication, all of which perfectly suit the African condition (Domatob, 1988; Fatoyinbo, 2000; Mytton, 2002). The fact that the medium is not entirely dependent on the availability of electricity is an incredibly important factor on a continent where electricity is still a distant dream for many.

Radio in Africa was first introduced in South Africa in the 1920s (Esipisu & Kariithi, 2007). The ruling European settlers introduced the medium and none of the content at the time was produced for the indigenous African communities. In the 1940s and 1950s, radio began to spread through the rest of the continent. As was the case with South Africa, the programming content was similarly directed at the European colonist community. Francophone African countries had radio programs coming directly from France, while English colonies had radio programs from popular foreign broadcasters like the British Broadcasting Commission (BBC). There was a significant change, however, when many African countries began to attain their independence in the 1960s. Newly formed governments began to take over radio

stations and most, if not all, stations on the continent were state owned (Musau, 1999). Much of the programming was skewed towards promoting government information and propaganda, and this remained a reality for most radio stations in Africa until the late 1980s. Musau (1999) explains that radio programming at this time began to deliver more content in indigenous languages.

The late 1980s saw the establishment of the first independent radio station in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Many more independent FM radio stations have since been established across Africa. These have many times found themselves in conflict with the state, as they sometimes communicate messages that governments feel might encourage dissent among the population (Mytton, 2002). It is not uncommon for independent radio stations in African countries to experience forced shutdowns when governments determine that they are abusing their freedom of press and communicating information that may cause citizens to see their leaders in a negative light (Musau, 1999; Esipisu & Kariithi, 2007; Mukhongo, 2010). Given its widespread reach on the continent, it does indeed warrant alarm from many governments. Radio, nonetheless, has been credited with impacting African societies in several important aspects ranging from economic, social, and cultural to political.

African radio has impacted the economic landscape by becoming a major tool for the dissemination of advertising and marketing messages that have created and built massive market bases for all types of products and services. Regarding culture, many African radio stations have been responsible for promoting the arts in the way of music, on-air plays/dramas/comedies and poetry among others. Domatob (1988) purports that radio has allowed these entertainment avenues to reach the most remote areas and shape the social culture of communities and countries at large, thereby defining and differentiating countries by their specific “sounds”.

Politically, radio has been used by those in power, as well those in the opposition, to attempt to retain their supporters and sway others to their political ideologies. Van der Veur (2002) stresses the remarkable power that this medium has to garner support for, or topple, empires. Radio has offered a platform where both positive and negative messages have been spread, many times resulting in uprisings and support. Deadly examples include the use of faction radio stations in countries like Somalia and Eritrea by different rebel groups to incite violence against non-supporters (Mytton, 2002). Radio was a particularly powerful tool used to incite violence during the Rwandan genocide in 1994, when hundreds of thousands of people were

killed as a result of ethnic hate messages spread through the local radio station *Radio des milles collines* (Mytton, 2002; Esipisu & Kariithi, 2007). Radio is a truly powerful tool for spreading information and garnering support.

The massively positive impact radio as a medium has had cannot be ignored. In Africa, radio has been extremely powerful in disseminating important information on health, education, gender equality and the changing role of women to people in the remotest areas. Several NGOs currently back humanitarian radio stations that have promoted peace and democracy in African communities (Esipisu & Kariithi, 2007).

2.4.1.3 Television

Television (TV) is another popular mass medium on the African continent. Although it is gaining in popularity and the number of sets sold in Africa grows every year, the continent still has the lowest penetration rate when compared with other continents. Fatoyinbo (2000) lists some major reasons for this low penetration including the economic situation of many Africans that still does not allow them to afford a TV set. Lack of proper infrastructure that enables reception of signals also hampers the ability of television to reach many areas in Africa. The fact that a large population of Africa does not have access to electricity as yet is, furthermore, a big hindrance.

The history of television in Africa is not a particularly long one. The first television broadcast in Africa occurred in Nigeria in 1959 (Nwulu *et al*, 2010). This was shortly followed by Egypt in 1960. As with radio stations, the first television broadcast stations in most if not all African countries were fully state owned, a situation that saw big changes in the 1990s with the establishment of many privately owned stations across the continent (Fatoyinbo, 2000). These state owned stations gave way to the emergence of many privately owned stations that have increased the diversity of content plus opinion, and often have provided major competition that have left state owned stations fighting to retain their viewership (Esipisu & Kariithi, 2007). The majority of African countries saw their first TV broadcasts occurring in the 1960s and 1970s. In spite of its low penetration, many people in Africa who do not have a TV set in their own homes still have access to TVs as a result of the availability of sets in certain central or accessible locations in many rural communities where residents can gather to occasionally view programs. These can be in neighbours' residences, local town halls, schools, churches and recreational venues like bars. Television in Africa has been credited with disseminating important information that has resulted in fostering of national unity,

spread of educational messages and for entertainment purposes. The use of television for advertising purposes is important also in creating and expanding markets for numerous products and services in Africa.

As with all technologies, it is possible to identify negative and positive contributions. As far back as the 1980s, Domatob (1988) saw television as a possible tool for neo-colonialism given the predominantly western programming featured. Esipisu & Kariithi (2007) also highlight that this is still a cause for concern as many African TV stations rely on western programming for much of their programming line-up. Kato (2001) and Hsin-Lan *et al* (2014) contend that TV as a mass medium can in fact be used to empower disadvantaged groups such as women who can receive inspiration from the positive imagery of women in more developed countries. As quoted from Kato (2001:15), “On a more educative and participatory level, television and radio listener clubs of women in Zimbabwe have helped counter the isolation of domesticity and sometimes consciously prepared women for participation in industry”. The argument concerning television in promoting or eroding African culture based on its programming is an ever-present one in literature as regards its impact on the continent (Fatoyinbo, 2000).

Traditional media have had an important impact on the African continent. Its remarkable role in bringing together disempowered peoples was a vital element in the end of colonialism. In the same way, the ability of these traditional media to bring powerful messages to people on the African continent has allowed for drastic changes that are helping to end practices that disempower women. These include practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), early marriages, early pregnancies and little to no formal education for the girl child (Skalli, 2006). By continuously spreading positive messages on the importance of empowering of girls and women, a growing number are able to rise above their circumstances and join the workforce as businesswomen.

The implications of new media in Africa will be delved into briefly in the following section to determine how they compare and contrast with traditional media. It can already be inferred that traditional media offer many of the same functions as new media do now. However, how these functions have evolved as a result of the types of features in new media will be reviewed.

2.5 New media in Africa

Stemming from Amobi's (2010:6) definition of new media as "...a term which encompasses interactive digital media, computerized, or networked information and communication technologies, such as the Internet, as opposed to traditional media such as print and television", we can conclude that new media has much to do with the proliferation of computers, the internet and other digital technologies. Much of the influence of new media has to do with, but is not limited to, the connectedness provided by the internet. Hargittai (1999), in Ogunsola & Aboyade (2005:10), defines the internet technically and functionally as follows "... a worldwide network of computers, but sociologically it is also important to consider it as a network of people using computers that make vast amounts of information available".

These new media are not necessarily bringing an end to traditional media, but as with previously new media, are complementary to existing media (Esipisu & Kariithi, 2007). A major difference in the new media age is the ability for "many to many" communication. New media, especially in the form of mobile telephony are seen as a key to Africa's development, enabling the continent to leapfrog certain stages of infrastructural development (*Vodafone Policy Paper Series*, 2005). In countries like South Africa, Kenya, and Uganda mobile telephony is being used not only for text messaging and phone calls but also to deliver information on current news, money transfer, weather and market prices. Given this emphasis on the importance of ICTs and new media for development, it has become a key issue in development strategy discussions of organisations such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) and the World Bank (Katiti & Jere, 2010; Kwaku, 2012).

It is argued that rather than causing an extinction of the traditional order of society, the internet and other digital technologies will serve to amplify activities that were already in place. Where old media may have tended to exclude certain marginalised groups and minorities in society such as women, indigenous peoples *etc.*, new media could include these groups (Mehra, Merkel and Bishop, 2004).

The internet is an innovation that has dramatically revolutionised the manner in which information is retrieved, shared and communicated around the world. Its impact has been proven the world over in all sectors of society. Economically, socially and politically- the influence of the internet as a tool is a force to reckon with.

The internet is not unique to any one region of the world and has helped to foster globalization through the virtual elimination of borders. As with many technologies and innovations, however, the internet has seen higher penetration rates in western or developed countries. Statistics show that the average penetration rate of the internet in Africa as a region is at 19% as compared to the Americas at 65%, Europe at 75% and Asia at 32% (ITU, 2014). This has contributed to the global digital divide and the concept of ‘information haves’ and ‘information have-nots’. The majority of people in Africa are considered to fall in the ‘information have-nots’ bracket as a result of their limited access to information, a condition exacerbated by the lack of access to the internet, or the information super highway as it is sometimes referred to (Mehra, Merkel & Bishop, 2004).

There are several reasons offered for the limited internet access across the African continent, and particularly sub-Saharan Africa. These reasons mostly boil down to the infrastructural and financial constraints that prevent many from having internet access (*Deloitte*, 2012). This condition may have continued to create a widening gap between many in Africa and the rest of the world, were it not for the advent of mobile phones (*Deloitte*, 2012; ITU, 2013).

2.5.1 Mobile telephony in Africa

Given the significant influence mobile phones have had in enabling internet access in Africa, it is vital that this technology is discussed in some depth. Mobile telephony was introduced in Africa in the mid-1990s. This was also about the same time that their usage began to gain serious traction around the globe. Even though the penetration rate of mobile phones in Africa is not as high as other regions of the world, taking into consideration the high poverty rates of many in the region, the growth in the use of mobile telephony has been unprecedented (Goodwin, 2013; *UNDP Human Development Report*, 2014). Across Africa, the year on year growth in the use of mobile phones has exceeded expectations. For example, in 1999 Kenyan based telecom company Safaricom predicted that the market for mobile phones in Kenya would reach three million by 2020. As of 2009, Safaricom alone had fourteen million subscribers (*Safaricom*, 2009).

Mobile phones have had a significant impact on the African continent and have gone from being an accessory for the elite to an essential asset for many. At a Connect Africa summit in 2007, Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, reiterated this point: “In 10 short years, what was once an object of luxury and privilege, the mobile phone has become a basic necessity in Africa” (Aker & Mbiti, 2010:3). A 2008 *Economist* article (online) reported that: “A device

that was a yuppie toy not so long ago has now become a potent force for economic development in the world's poorest countries.” Mobile phones in Africa can be especially potent drivers for internet connectivity as the cost of phones with internet capabilities continue to reduce. This has allowed a significant proportion of the population to bypass expensive technologies such as laptops and PCs that were at one point a requisite for establishing an internet connection (Aker & Mbiti, 2010). Mobile phones, as a result of their comparatively low costs and ease of usability, have enabled Africa to leapfrog several stages of infrastructural development and bring the internet closer to the people.

Internet-enabled mobile phones allow access to the seemingly infinite sources of information on the internet in addition to being a means of communication and information sharing. Aker & Mbiti (2010) provide several benefits of accessing the internet via mobile phones that are having a profound effect on the African continent. These include:

- Mobile phones reduce search costs;
- Mobile phones allow people to obtain information immediately and on a regular basis, rather than waiting for weekly radio broadcasts, newspapers or letters;
- Rather than being passive recipients of information, mobile phones allow individuals and firms to take an active role in the search process, enabling them to ask questions and corroborate information with multiple sources;
- Mobile phones are more accessible than other alternatives in terms of cost, geographic coverage and ease of use; and
- Require lower skill levels than computers.

Mobile phones have furthermore brought OSNs closer to people in Africa. Online Social Networks such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn among others have transformed the new media landscape further by incorporating features and functions that expand possibilities relating to communication and information dissemination. Popular OSNs, with combined global membership numbers of over a billion people, are continuing to redefine how people in online environments can go about their activities, and connect with others in their networks.

Online Social Networks in Africa will be investigated in the following sections to analyse their impact as new media.

2.5.2 Online social networking in Africa

The rapid growth of online social networking has been observed globally. With the already high penetration rates of the internet and ICTs in developed regions of the world, it is unsurprising that the membership base of OSNs is much higher in these regions than in developing regions.

Africa as a region lags behind the rest of the world in the uptake of online social networking. Low computer and internet penetration rates have had much to do with the low membership rates of OSNs in this region, as a result of the poor economic conditions that are barriers to the set-up of the infrastructure necessary to provide internet connectivity. Essoungou (2010: online) states that:

“Africa's Internet users (more than 100 million at the end of 2010) represent just a small percentage of the 2 billion people online around the world. In the US alone, more than 220 million people use the Internet. Within Africa, one person out of every 10 is estimated to be an Internet user (up from one in 5,000 back in 1998), making the continent the region in the world with the lowest penetration rate”.

Mobile telephones are, however, offering a beacon of hope in this respect. A 2012 Deloitte report highlighted the dramatic increase in the use of mobile telephony across the African region. The continent is the second largest mobile phone market after Asia, with a mobile subscription penetration of 72%, estimated to grow to 97% by 2017 (Deloitte, 2014). With the lowering costs of mobile phones that enable internet connectivity, Wasserman (2010) purports that more people in developing regions such as Africa are finding that they are able to access the internet outside of conventional fixed line connectivity. This also means that the majority of existing OSN members on the African continent are signing in through their mobile phones (Essoungou, 2010; Lamb, 2013; Deloitte, 2014). This has dramatically increased the year on year new membership numbers arising from the continent. Facebook is currently the most visited site on the continent (ITU, 2014).

Deloitte (2012) points to the impact that social media is having on an ever-growing middle class on the African continent. It is vital that special attention is paid to the ways that social media is being used on the continent and the trends that are developing as a result. Social

media is moving away from a predominantly socialising activity, to one where business and personal needs intersect in one environment. Businesses and individuals meet in this common ground where interactions and conversations can result in success or failure (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012). African-based businesses are recognising and imitating the ways in which global powerhouses are taking OSNs seriously to reach and engage their clients. Individuals are also recognising how OSNs can promote them in their professional lives, allowing them to have a more profound say by giving them a wider audience to communicate with at one go. Shaughnessy (2012) and Marse (2013) have noted that this is encouraging people to express themselves in online political, social and economic discussions facilitated within social media.

The massive growth in the use of mobile telephony and the resulting effect of connecting Africa on the global network is not to be underestimated. Echezona and Ugwuanyi (2010) note that this has been identified as a major step in connecting Africa to the information super highway. They, however, stress that the value of connecting to this super highway or cyberspace cannot be measured simply by how many people are able to access the internet. It is also vital to understand what kind of information is primarily being retrieved. Wasserman (2010) supports this point and adds that the kind of information accessed determines the kind of decision making problem solving and innovation that can be achieved. It can be difficult to determine and analyse the kind of information retrieved and for what purposes, however. This is because there is not a lot of data, or culture of collecting data, on existing and potential customers in developing countries (Hill, 2012).

Current popular OSNs, in the beginnings of their still short life span, were looked at as sources of entertainment and as a preserve of the young or young at heart. With the growing membership numbers, however, the potential for them to become rich communication and information sources is becoming harder to ignore. These media have become platforms where ideas and valuable knowledge are shared from sources globally. It has been said that "...mobile telephony and social media may rid Africa of tyranny", when looked at from economic and political perspectives (Deloitte, 2012:7). Wasserman (2010) warns of being too optimistic in this regard but none the less points out that the quick and easy exchange of information, in an informal online setting, has the potential to reach and empower significant numbers of people. It is with this in mind that the question arises, if enough information can be shared through these media often enough, what kind of transformative effect can it have on "information poor" societies such as those found in Africa? What kind of impact can it

have on people in the professional context in terms of the avenues they choose to pursue, the mentoring they receive and the connections that can help them grow in their respective fields?

An overview of selected Online Social Networks will be discussed in the following sections in order to define what is meant by online social networking and which sites are especially popular. The OSNs selected for this study are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Facebook and Twitter have been selected as they comprise the largest membership numbers as compared to any other OSNs. LinkedIn comprises the largest membership base of any professional OSN. Given the focus of the research on businesswomen in Kampala, it therefore represents an important platform.

2.6 Overview of Selected Online Social Networks

A study of existing literature brings to light the fact that there are hundreds of active Online Social Networks in existence on the World Wide Web today. OSNs bring together individuals of similar and diverse interests and backgrounds into networks where they can connect and communicate with one another. Many OSNs share similar characteristics in that they allow members to register or sign up, usually for free, set up a profile and thereafter indicate who they would like to add to their networks. Boyd & Ellison (2008) define OSNs as “...web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system”. Many differ in the functionality and features they offer but the underlying concept for many of them is their provision of avenues for people to form networks within which they can create, share, view and disseminate information.

OSNs were established to tap into the growing need for instant connection and networking among the ever increasing numbers of users in cyberspace (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012). The need to bring together people based on similar interests and networks was recognised, and capitalised upon, to bring about the first OSNs. Their development was most likely derived from an understanding of similar innovations from two decades before such as the Electronic Information Exchange System developed in 1978 at the New Jersey Institute of Technology which allowed its users to send emails, view bulletin boards and make use of the list server. Innovations such as these were the forerunners of today’s OSNs (Acar & Polonsky, 2007).

When people think of OSNs, some names instantly come to mind. These include: MySpace, Friendster, Hi5 and the currently most popular: Facebook and Twitter (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012). Before all these came into being, however, there were certain pioneering sites such as AsianAvenue, LiveJournal and SixDegrees all launched between 1997 and 1999 (*McKinsey Global Institute*, 2012). SixDegrees, although not in existence anymore, is particularly noteworthy. The site was launched in 1997 in the United States of America and was the first OSN that allowed users to create personal profiles and identify other individuals that they wanted to make connections with on their networks. SixDegrees was able to accumulate millions of users who used the site to send messages and share information with online contacts (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). The site was, however, not able to sustain itself and was closed a few years later in 2000. The reason for this unsustainability was that even though members found the site attractive for networking, lower internet usage rates/penetration at the time meant that after signing up, there weren't many people they knew in real life that they could add to their online networks. SixDegrees was seemingly an innovation beyond its time (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Nonetheless, many other OSNs continued to crop up in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These included among others: Google's Orkut, Asian Avenue, BlackPlanet, Cyworld, Ryze, Tribe.net and Friendster (Acar & Polonsky, 2007). Some are still active today while many others became defunct, most notably Friendster whose rapid growth was ultimately the cause of its downfall given the inability of its creators to anticipate the enormous surge in popularity and resulting maintenance problems, among other issues (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

From 2003 onwards, the OSN scene saw an increased frequency in the development of new networking sites. The most popular OSN during this period (early 2000s) was MySpace, launched in 2003. It particularly gained a wide fan base in the United States of America (USA), birthplace of majority of the most popular OSNs. Other OSNs that can credit their beginnings to this period are Facebook (2004) and LinkedIn (2003).

At this time, the potential of OSNs to become true profit making ventures was questioned. Fast forward a few years and the massive involvement of big and small businesses on these sites would result in major advertising revenues, allowing for OSNs such as Facebook and Twitter to announce their Initial Public Offerings (IPO) on the stock exchange, thus proving their true profit potential.

Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, as the OSNs that will be investigated will be discussed briefly in the following sections.

2.6.1 Facebook

As far as online social networking goes, Facebook is truly the biggest player in the game. Starting out as an OSN for students at Harvard University in February 2004, its popularity soon outgrew these borders resulting in its spread to a number of Ivy League colleges in the USA. The site was founded by Mark Zuckerberg, himself an undergraduate student at Harvard University at the time, as well as Eduardo Saverin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes.

Initially, in order to gain membership to Facebook, individuals had to have an email address that indicated they were enrolled in a specified higher institute of learning. Soon, however, high school students joined the fray and before long, the site was open to others outside academic institutions, provided they were invited by an existing Facebook member (Acar & Polonsky, 2007). This approach also did not last long, and soon membership was open to the general public, invite or not, provided they specified that they were 13 years and older (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). From this point onwards, membership saw a tremendous surge in numbers. Facebook has since seen its membership numbers skyrocket every year since its inception with 2013 estimates placing the number at 1.1 billion people (Zeevi, 2013).

To register as a member on Facebook, an individual is expected to provide their name and profile picture (optional). They may also provide additional information including: work, marital status, school, date of birth, place of residence/origin and their interests among others. Following this, members can proceed to send friend requests to other members of the site and build their networks while sharing information via inbox messaging, wall posts and sharing of links, pictures and videos (Ross *et al*, 2009; Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

The rapid growth of Facebook has not been without its share of controversies, however, many of which have stemmed from privacy concerns (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Facebook has often been challenged with improving its privacy features in a bid to prevent unauthorised access to members' information by those not in their network. A recent incident came to light when a Facebook member posted a message on founder Mark Zuckerberg's wall to highlight a flaw in the system that allowed people to access others Facebook profile pages regardless of whether they are friends or not (Grandoni, 2013). Facebook's privacy settings currently allow

members to restrict their profile information to levels they deem necessary, which should ideally restrict access to any unauthorised persons.

Facebook generates revenue primarily via advertising and particularly through site banners (Zeevi, 2013). It has become a major marketing and communication tool for many small, medium and large businesses globally that opt to advertise through this platform. Facebook has furthermore been beneficial for individuals in professional environments. Facebook has provided platforms for individuals to establish connections with others. Although known primarily as a platform for connecting individuals with already existing offline connections (Boyd & Ellison, 2008), Facebook also allows individuals to “follow” high profile individuals. High profile individuals in relevant fields can provide peer and mentoring information that may prove beneficial for career growth and personal development. Members can also join relevant professional groups on Facebook that foster networking between individuals with similar interests.

2.6.2 Twitter

Twitter is an OSN and microblogging site that was established in 2006 by Jack Dorsey. The inspiration behind the development for the site was for people to have the ability to share information with specific communities in short SMS type communications. These communications are typically 140 characters or less. According to twitter founder, the definition of twitter “...a short burst of inconsequential information”; perfectly suited the kind of information they envisioned their members would share (Zeevi, 2013). The messages shared by twitter members are referred to as “tweets”. Members can subscribe to other members’ tweets by “following” them. Unlike many other OSNs, this relationship does not need to be reciprocated and one can have many “followers” without having to follow them back (Haewoon *et al.*, 2010). Followers can further share the information communicated by those they follow by “retweeting” it.

Twitter, upon its launch, gathered an immediate small following. Its major growth spike, however, occurred in 2007 at a South by Southwest interactive conference where two large plasma screens were set up to allow attendees to communicate with each other with live screening of tweets (Green, 2007). On this day, the site saw the number of “tweets” increase dramatically from the daily average of about 20,000 to 60,000. As a result of the increased publicity, membership numbers climbed sharply after the event and Twitter is currently one of the top ten most visited sites on the net along with Google, LinkedIn and Facebook, among

others (Alexa, 2014; webneel, 2014). By 2011 it was reported that of the over 100 million active users, 50% logged in on a daily basis to receive news and information (Arab Social Media Report, 2012). Estimates for 2013 put the number of accounts at a little over 517 million (Lunden, 2013).

Twitter has been very influential in the quick sharing of information especially following major events. It has seen massive spikes in activity or tweets following highly watched sports events such as the soccer World Cup in 2010, and even experienced server crashes following the death of pop star Michael Jackson 2009 as a result of unexpected massive activity by users (Haewoon *et al.*, 2010; Shiels, 2009).

Twitter users can “group” together in the discussion of a specific topic by preceding a defined word or words with a hashtag (#) (Naone, 2008). When a particular topic gains popularity among a very large group of people it is known as a “trending topic” and may even be highlighted on the twitter homepage. Twitter has become an important source of information during important events most notably during the Arab spring in 2011 where users utilized the site to share information that many times contradicted what was reported in some state-owned media in several Arab countries (Comninos, 2011). The site is also often used to share emergency information quickly following major happenings e.g. the Boston marathon bombings in 2012 and San Diego fires of 2007 (Naone, 2008; Comninos, 2011). Many heads of state and politicians worldwide are known to have active twitter accounts, with a significant number believed to be managing these accounts on their own.

Twitter achieves much of its revenue through advertising sales. The site does not post advertising messages but legally shares members’ personal information with third parties who can then target specific members with communications.

Twitter differs from Facebook in the sense that connections are often made between people who do not know each other in the offline environment. As a microblogging site, active users share information regularly with each other, which can prove highly beneficial for individuals following a high profile or influential individual in their field of interest/industry. Many companies/organisations also have active Twitter accounts and utilise them for information sharing and communication. Adams (2012) believes that Twitter can be an excellent tool for professionals who can utilise the site to find employment, grow and develop by:

- Creating an account that highlights one’s skills in the professional sphere;

- Following relevant people and institutions;
- Creating and posting links to content that can get you noticed; and
- Sending private messages to potential mentors.

Twitter, with its rapidly growing membership base, and as the second largest social network, may have a prominent role to play in facilitating creation, sharing and communication of information that could potentially empower individuals globally.

2.6.3 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is an online social networking site that was developed for the primary purpose of connecting professionals in cyberspace. The site was launched in May 2003 by its founder, Reid Hoffman (Rouse, 2009). The company is highly profitable and is listed on the New York Stock Exchange. It has grown in popularity over the years and currently boasts of about 250 million members in more than 200 countries/territories, making it one of the most popular OSNs today.

LinkedIn allows registered members to set up profiles where they provide names and profile pictures (optional). They may then proceed to provide additional information that mainly relates, but is not limited, to their professional or work status. This includes current and past employment as well as relevant skills they possess (Zeevi, 2013). Users utilize the site to create connections with other individuals and companies. The site allows users to search for jobs and keep up to date with possible employment opportunities. People searching for jobs can make connections with others in hiring positions through taking advantage of their intertwined networks. LinkedIn differs from some other OSNs such as Facebook in the sense that members often make connections with people they might not actually know in their offline environments (Rouse, 2009).

Like other OSNs, LinkedIn generates revenues via advertising with features like pay per click where companies may be charged based on the number of individuals that click on job advertisements for example. Companies can also pay for access to resume`s and other information on the site as well as for a branded corporate page on the site.

LinkedIn has faced privacy concerns in recent years concerning the hacking and retrieval of personal information from users' accounts (Zeevi, 2013).

2.7 Benefits and limitations of Online Social Networks

From their humble beginnings as platforms through which friends could connect with each other in cyberspace, OSNs have taken on a life of their own. Their ability to gather massive networks of users has resulted in their being utilised for a variety of purposes. Though many existing OSNs display some similar basic features, they nevertheless differ in certain aspects, which may enhance benefits of some over others. To reiterate the stance held by Boyd & Ellison (2008), the OSNs we are investigating in this study have some basic/core features that enable members to create public or semi-public profiles, define who they wish to make connections with, and thereafter traverse their networks sharing and receiving information.

2.7.1 Benefits of OSNs

OSNs have achieved unprecedented growth across the globe by people of all races, cultures, age groups and social classes. This is because they offer avenues for people to perform and take part in some of the most basic human traditions- communication with others, forming groups and sharing stories/experiences, and enjoying entertainment (*McKinsey Global Institute, 2012*).

OSNs have proven very valuable in the field of enhancing communications and connections. One benefit of OSNs is the fact that they allow for quick and easy connection to other individuals, regardless of their geographical locations (*Waters et al., 2009*). On the personal side of things, individuals can utilise OSNs to foster relationships with their family and friends, allowing them to keep up to date with the happenings in each other's lives on an informal basis. *Subrahmanyam et al. (2008)* state that the benefit of OSNs in this regard is that information can be received passively i.e. as long as one is connected to certain individuals, accessing the OSN can enable them to view the shared information in a chronological manner.

Cachia, Compano & Costa (2007) explain that OSNs are remarkable tools for the advertisement and marketing of goods and services. They allow not only companies and businesses to utilise them for this purpose, but individuals as well. *Papasolomou & Melanthiou (2009)* go on to state that in line with this, members of OSNs can use them as a way to discover information about products that they may or may not have been aware they wanted/needed. It is a fairly cost-effective way for businesses and individuals to get themselves known by a potentially very large audience.

OSNs are furthermore very valuable for businesses in the way of consumer research. The massive involvement of so many people on these sites means that businesses are able to view what consumers have to say about the products they use and services they experience (DiMicco *et al.*, 2008; Raman, 2013). Businesses can see what customers have to say about their offerings as well as those of their competitors, and can enable businesses to improve on their product and/or service offerings, as well as exposing them to new ideas (Subrahmanyam *et al.*, 2008; Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012). This kind of consumer research and analysis can result in business growth and development.

OSNs have become an avenue through which people can share and spread news quickly. This can prove extremely vital in the case of disasters such as the Boston bombings, earthquake in Haiti and San Diego fires, allowing information to disseminate and helping to avert even wider calamities by providing early warnings to the public (Naone, 2008; Comminos, 2011; Naaman, Becker & Gravano, 2011).

Politically, OSNs are used to share information from formal and informal sources. The Arab spring of 2011 was an important lesson in the manner in which these sites could be utilised to influence people and effect change (Ghannam, 2011). OSNs are used more and more to share information that may differ from that reported by official media. They also offer an arena in which people can engage political and opinion leaders who are active on these sites (Naaman, Becker & Gravano, 2011). More government organisations are using OSNs as platforms to share information that may be beneficial to citizens.

Given the wide networks that are able to be formed on these sites, OSNs allow networking between people who may otherwise have little opportunity to meet physically (Waters *et al.*, 2009). These networking opportunities can result in mentoring, support, encouragement and advice giving that can be extremely beneficial for individuals e.g. through viewing regular updates from successful personalities within and outside an individual's immediate environment.

2.7.2 Limitations of OSNs

As with many new innovations, OSNs have not been without their share of controversies. Given that cyberspace is rife with privacy and security issues, OSNs have had to contend with these as well (Tynes, 2007).

A significant disadvantage of OSNs stems from the fact that members often post significant amounts of personal and professional information such as: full names, physical and email addresses, phone numbers, photographs, job, school and specific information concerning family links among others. Access to this kind of information in the wrong hands can result in a violation of one's privacy, as one is unlikely to be aware of what their personal information will be used for (Lenhart *et al.*, 2010). Businesses have to ensure the security of their consumers information revealed on these sites lest they risk losing valuable clients (McKinsey Global Institute, 2012).

OSNs allow people to share information in various forms including text, images and videos. Damaging information shared about an individual in any one of these formats can spread very quickly on these sites. It can be extremely difficult to trace and delete this information, as the potential for replication using technology is great. This can also happen to companies and businesses where damaging information can destroy reputations before affected parties have the opportunity to counter it (Raman, 2013). In the same vein, any sort of inaccurate information or news can spread very quickly and have far-reaching results in a short space of time such as the false news of the White House bombing in 2013 on Twitter. Domm (2013) reports that this caused an immediate 25% drop in the stock exchange before it was discovered as a hoax.

Raman (2013) also notes that it has been a common complaint by employers of various organisations that membership of their employees on these sites results in reduced effectiveness and efficiency of their workforce. This has resulted in many organisations restricting some of the sites that can be accessed by employees while on the job. Raman (2013) and Tynes (2007) believe that it is important to have set social media policies to guide the use and behaviour of employees on these sites.

OSNs have, regardless of the pitfalls, continued to grow at unprecedented rates and have had important effects on business and professional development.

2.8 Online Social Networks and Businesses

Over time, the way in which businesses approach their consumers/clients has been affected by the onset of various innovations. Innovations and technologies such as the telephone, radio, television and emailing among others have allowed companies increased access to their existing and potential consumers. With the advent of OSNs, the level of interaction between businesses and their partners, suppliers and consumers/clients has grown considerably. A

common method of interacting with their audience entailed a typically one-way communication. Online social networking has flipped the script in the way these interactions now occur. Although businesses and individuals can now use these cost effective methods to communicate, consumers are now able to decide how they will respond to these communications, an *Ernst and Young* (2011) report states. This has opened doors for solicited and unsolicited customer feedback, both negative and positive, that can instantly be shared with extensive networks of individuals.

A McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) report (2012) examines the economic impact of social media globally and indicates that these technologies have the potential to realize billions of dollars for enterprises around the world. With more than 1.5 billion members and growing, social media present new challenges for the business of today and tomorrow. These challenges/risks include loss of intellectual property, identity theft, privacy violations, and reputation damage. Social media, however, present such compelling benefits that business leaders, policy makers and individuals must and will find ways to circumvent and mitigate these challenges. It is reported that 90% of businesses using social media report some business benefit (MGI, 2012). MGI further estimates that \$900-\$1.3 billion is the annual value that could be unlocked through social media/technologies. With consumers reporting that they spend on average 1-5 hours daily on social media sites, companies have woken up to the urgency of having social media policies and strategies in place. Businesses have latched onto social media, with their wide range of capabilities, to deduce consumer insights in a cost effective and quick way, while also watching how consumers interact with one another. This type of feedback is generally unfiltered and honest. Social media have added value to social interactions by enforcing them with the scale, speed and economics of the internet.

Social media can influence enterprises by affecting certain defined sectors. MGI (2012:59) lists these sectors and the way social media can influence them:

- “Product development- developing new insights and co-creating products;
- Operations and distribution- leverage connections to forecast and monitor, as well as to distribute business processes;
- Marketing and sales- derive consumer insights; marketing and communication/interaction; generate and foster sales leads; and social commerce
- Customer service- provide customer care via social media; and

- Business support- improve collaboration and communication; match talent to tasks.”

Authors such as Raman (2013) and Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) emphasise the need for organisations to develop a social media strategy and believe it is of key importance that there be a social media strategy that is in congruence with the overall strategy of the organisation. Below are some recommendations provided by Raman (2013: online) for incorporating social media in an overall business strategy:

- “Ask the question “If I knew my customers better, what parts of my business will be better off? Identify areas of your business that can thrive in a social media setting. These areas can include: Sales, marketing, support, customer relationship management, human resources, and research and development;
- What information do I need to know about my customers? What information do my customers want to know about me? What communication medium do they prefer? Involve stakeholders from each specific area in your strategy discussion;
- Investigate how social media can support the goals of each area of your business;
- Determine how you want each area to engage in social media;
- Identify beforehand a ladder for success and how you will measure each step taken. It is important for entrepreneurs and established businesses to realize the influence social media has and use that to their advantage; and
- Continually optimize your engagement in social media based on how high each area climbs the success ladder.”

It has been a common complaint by employers and managers that employees tend to waste much company time when using OSNs (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This has resulted in the banning of the use of OSNs in certain organisations. Some organisations attempt to meet employees halfway by allowing access only during certain periods such as predefined lunch hours. Other companies on the other hand have recognised the value that active involvement on OSNs has on their workforce, and encourage the utilisation of OSNs for their benefit and ultimately the organisations benefit. And organisations do benefit indeed from employees involvement on social networks.

One way in which organisations can benefit from employees’ online networking is through the kind of information provided on these platforms. Much of the information is serendipitous in that it is often provided without active searching. OSNs therefore act like current

awareness services, if you will. OSNs such as LinkedIn use the professional information provided by individuals and send targeted information to them concerning topics that are relevant to the individual's field of work. It is an excellent way for people to keep up to date with trends in their fields or receive thought-provoking articles on aspects important to their profession (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This in turn ideally improves the quality of their performance and output in the organisation.

OSNs may encourage networking in cyberspace, but this occasionally spills over into interaction in the physical environment. Various professional groups begin by attracting members in their online spaces but may eventually turn these into real life meetings where people in related fields can meet to share ideas and best practices that can enhance their job performance. Sheninger (2012) gives an example of the Personal Learning Networks (PLNs) on Twitter whose members number in the thousands and who have been able to organise events that attract individuals from different parts of the world.

Employees can also play the role of brand ambassadors online. By sharing information in the form of text, video or pictures on OSNs about their organisations, employees can provide positive "word of mouth". This can inadvertently improve the image of the organisation in the eyes of the public.

By encouraging responsible use of OSNs, organisations can directly and indirectly reap benefits from allowing employees to explore the various features and functions of OSNs.

With all these potential benefits, businesswomen in Kampala owe it to themselves to utilise OSNs not just for social and entertainment purposes, but also as stepping stones for professional development. With this in mind, an investigation into the information behaviour of OSN users can provide a basis upon which OSNs can be maximised for both professional and personal purposes.

2.9 OSNs and Information behaviour

The study of information behaviour became an important area of research in the field of Information Science in middle of the 20th century. The study of information behaviour was deemed necessary as it allows researchers to better understand how people in various fields undergo the search for information (Wilson, 2000). Information is vital for people in all walks of life and contexts. However, when the stakes are higher for locating the right information in a particular field, it necessitates a higher level of research into information

activities. Generally, the more that people are affected by the information behaviour in a certain field, the more research it will attract (Case, 2007; Bates, 2010), e.g. the information seeking behaviour of a person looking to buy a house as opposed to that of a scientist whose information needs will feed into development of a vaccine that may affect billions. It may be more beneficial to investigate how the scientist can be assisted to find information in the most convenient manner. This does not, however, trivialise everyday personal information needs as the cumulative importance of these decisions can be massive, e.g. individuals looking for information on how to start small businesses.

The idea of investigating how users set about seeking and using information dates back to the early 20th century when research was carried out on used and unused sections of libraries (Case, 2007). In understanding how people went about the information searching and utilisation process, progress could be made in ensuring that information was packaged effectively and that information retrieval systems truly reflected the needs and behaviours of their end users. Wilson (1999:249) defines information behaviour as “...those activities a person may engage in when identifying his or her own needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and using or transferring that information”.

2.9.1 Background to information behaviour studies

Thousands of articles and papers have been written on the topic of information behaviour since the concept was coined by information scientists. Several studies by some well-known information scientists have resulted in the development of information behaviour models that seek to explain the stages/moments that human beings go through in their quest to fill an information gap. Case (2007) describes information behaviour in terms of the phases that people go through when they recognise a need for information including: encountering, needing, finding, choosing, and using information. Encountering an information need can result from an acknowledgement of one’s lack of adequate knowledge needed to fulfill a task or make a decision, or could arise from accidentally happening upon information that increases one’s curiosity about a subject.

Studies into information behaviour began to gain momentum, particularly in the 1960s, when information needs and uses of scientists and engineers became increasingly salient. Case (2007) and Wilson (1999) note that information behaviour studies at this point were more focused on the information sources and systems themselves rather than the users. It was only in the 1970s that more focus was directed towards the user rather than just the system. An

example is Kuhlthau's 1991 model and Dervin's 1983 sense making model where we see an exploration of the associated feelings, thoughts and actions of users in the information seeking process (Wilson, 1999; Foster, 2004; Weiler, 2005). Dervin's model explored the relationship between a person's situation, the information gap and the outcome of the information seeking process. Kuhlthau's model involves the information behaviour process through the stages of: starting, chaining, differentiating, extracting, verifying and ending. Dervin's research in particular called into question the idea that human beings are rational, objective creatures who only utilize formal sources to select the best choice when seeking to fill an information gap (Case, 2007). Most of these models attempt to resist restricting the findings to particular contexts or fields, but rather try to generalize the stages that might be passed through when filling an information gap in different environments.

2.9.2 Information behaviour and ICTs

The internet or World Wide Web has significantly influenced studies of information behaviour. Case (2007) points out that the internet has changed the way in which information can be found, and especially how information is packaged. He compares making travel arrangements a few decades ago with doing so today. A few decades ago, one would have to consult numerous discrete sources to determine the weather forecast, compare ticket prices, make accommodation arrangements, *etc.* The internet has made it possible that all this information can be sourced right from one's desktop. The internet has also facilitated and encouraged browsing of information in a manner that is less laborious than with previous information packages, as it does not require one to access several physically separate books, articles, libraries *etc.* Case (2007) states that the internet has had a huge impact on the way information behaviour occurs in school and work environments as a result. The growing number of innovations in the online environment is further creating opportunities for research into information behaviour. One of the innovations demanding greater investigation is Online Social Networks.

2.9.3 Online Social Networks and information behaviour

As stated by Case (2007), research into information behaviour is motivated when the information needs of the majority in a particular field have the ability to affect a large number of people. Nonetheless, the cumulative effect of the information behaviour of individuals can also warrant serious study of the information activities of people in these contexts. Online Social Networks represent an important area of study when it comes to information behaviour as their massive membership base presents an opportunity for researchers to investigate how

their users seek, search, utilize, and share information. What began as a source of entertainment for many and a casual way to “waste time” on the internet has rapidly become a phenomenon deserving in-depth analysis and study (Subrahmanyam *et al.*, 2008; Raman, 2013). OSNs have emerged in recent years as the fastest growing online activity across the globe, with little sign of slowing down (Hernandez, 2013). Studies have shown that given the unique characteristics of social media as compared to traditional information sources, users now need to develop new strategies and techniques for evaluating the information they retrieve from these sites.

Specifically concerning the business community, OSNs have developed into powerful information sources where business people in small, micro, medium and large businesses are using these sites to undertake consumer behaviour analyses and discovering ways to reach and market products/services to existing and potential customers. Customers are using these sites to find out specific information on products and companies, and many believe that a company must have an active presence on major OSNs if it is to be taken seriously (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2009). The importance of excellent information organisation and knowledge management as regards OSNs is increasingly recognised, as they have become valuable data mines.

2.10 Online Social Networks and Business Professionals

Literature is replete with the possibilities that OSNs offer professionals with memberships on these sites (Leader-Chivee *et al.*, 2008; Fucoloro, 2012; Onuoha, 2013; Evans, 2015). Although many individuals utilise OSNs for primarily informal networking purposes, there are numerous benefits which can be attained that can promote one in the business environment. People continue to utilise OSNs as a result of the value they receive from membership on these sites. They are able to create and foster valuable networks, glean important information and establish communities sharing similar personal and professional interests (McKinsey Global Institute, 2012).

The ability to network and interact with an extensive group of people and organisations can provide access to information and resources from others in similar industries, with whom they might not have had a chance to interact with otherwise (Kriescher, 2009). From this may arise new business ideas, sharing of best practices and even more or better employment opportunities. Links can be made that may allow people in diverse geographical spaces to interact and enter business ventures together. DiMicco *et al.* (2008) and Kriescher (2009) both

highlight the mentorship opportunities that are also opened up as OSNs allow mentors to share knowledge and lessons with thousands or even millions at a go, by sharing one tweet, link, or status update.

More and more businesses are reporting the use of OSNs for identifying and researching potential employees to determine if they are the right fit for the company. OSNs such as LinkedIn are particularly important for this purpose with increasing incidences of hiring being done based on information available on these media (Cook, 2012; Raman, 2013). A study undertaken by the applicant software tracking company, Jobvite, indicated that 92% of recruiters in 2012 already stated that they have used or are planning to use OSNs to evaluate potential candidates (Schawbel, 2012). The study was based on responses from over 1000 companies, mainly based in the USA. This number is up from 78% in 2007. This provides a great opportunity for those looking for employment to utilise platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook to “boast” of their professional achievements which could improve their chances of finding employment (Quast, 2012; Schawbel, 2012).

In this technological age, it is vital that individuals in professional environments have good information technology skills. There are still many individuals, however, who use computers simply for basic typing and emailing. By signing up to OSNs, professionals may be accorded the opportunity to build up their IT skills (Solis, 2013). OSNs often have a variety of features that expand the way in which an individual might use them such as personalisation of profiles and bringing awareness of security issues through privacy settings. Using OSNs might then have the indirect effect of improving IT skills of professionals that extends beyond just OSNs. Solis (2013) proposes that in this way they are informally trained in the improvement of vital skills for the 21st century.

Keeping up to date with various types of information (work related, social or political) through connecting with different individuals, groups and organisations can potentially increase the knowledge base of an individual. This can improve an individual’s ability to interact with people at all levels of society through improved knowledge of local and world facts and events. Becoming well versed in a number of issues can increase one’s chances of creating positive impressions in different circles and improving opportunities to build a reputation as a knowledgeable person.

For business owners, OSNs can allow them to take their businesses to the next level by providing an avenue for competitive intelligence, consumer research and interaction as well

as being a platform for advertising products and services (Naaman, Becker & Gravano, 2011; DiMicco *et al*, 2008). They can use this to appeal to existing customers or attract new consumers. OSNs have proven to be a fairly cost effective way of performing these activities.

2.11 Social media as tools for business in Africa

The success of businesses globally has to do with several factors. These factors are ever changing and have never remained static. New ideas and innovations continually develop that provide businesses with new ways of thinking about how they manage their employees, production and customers. Businesses in developing countries often find however that due to the different environments and contexts they find themselves in, they cannot always simply replicate the practices of businesses in flourishing regions (Lekhanya, 2013; Adeiza, 2013). The internet and other ICTs have done wonders for the business world globally in ensuring greatly increased communication and efficiency and effectiveness in performing tasks. For a long time, many international organisations were wary of doing business in Africa given the reluctance and inability of African organisations to adopt modern technologies. Many African businesses, whether large or small, either would not or could not adopt most of these technologies.

The majority of African countries still face major barriers in adopting modern ICTs and the internet given barriers such as poor technological infrastructure, very high cost of accessing the internet and ICTs, as well as low literacy levels amongst most of the citizens (Lekhanya, 2013; Chikandiwa, Eleftherios & Edgar, 2013; Akpomuvie, 2010). Improving internet penetration and ICT rates have done much to encourage foreign investment in Africa. However, the majority of African businesses, which still fall under the description of micro enterprises, are yet to adopt these technologies. Many African businesses either do not understand the impact these technologies could have or simply do not have the resources, financial and/or human, to manage them. Akpomuvie (2010) highlights that it is without a doubt that there is often a major investment that must be made by any business that wants to incorporate ICTs and the internet into its daily practices. For many African businesses, it is not believed that returns on such investments will justify the initial and on-going costs. For technology to be appreciated by the majority on the African continent, it must meet certain basic requirements of being low cost as well as easy to adopt and use. It is with this in mind that mobile telephony continues to be hailed for the tremendous impact it has had across Africa.

Mobile telephony usage in Africa has continued to grow dramatically across most countries on the continent. In recent times, smart phones with all their unique features and capabilities have allowed many Africans for the first time to be able to connect to the internet. It is estimated that over 90% of Africans online are connected via their mobile phones (*Deloitte*, 2012). People are connecting to many different sites, one of the most common being online social networking sites such as blogs, Facebook and Twitter. One major problem noted in the online environment is the lack of abundance of content relevant to African people, whether it is in terms of subject matter or language (Ali, 2013). OSNs provide the unique opportunity of allowing African individuals and businesses to easily author their own content and share it locally and globally. They are no longer passive receivers of information but can now place their own content online. In their article *A Relationship between Social Media Platforms and the Financial Success of Modern African Entrepreneurs* Ukpere, Slabbert & Ukpere (2014) discuss the powerful impact social media is giving African business people from all sectors and industries in terms of being able to market their products, services and brands in a cost effective manner.

Traditional marketing tools such as television, radio and print have always been far too expensive for most start-up companies (Akpomovie, 2010). Chikandiwa, Eleftherios and Edgar (2013) state that social media has provided these businesses with the platform they need to reach existing and potential customers far and wide. Coupled with new technologies such as the ability to transfer money cheaply using mobile phones in many countries, the African business landscape is set to change dramatically if more people can see the potential in these platforms. Ukpere, Slabbert & Ukpere (2014) provide many excellent examples of case studies from Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa where businesses and individuals have expanded their brands and achieved recognition using OSNs. They go further to state that the mentorship and networking opportunities offered by these platforms are doing great things for individuals who would otherwise have not met physically. There are also a growing number of business to business connections being made in these online environments.

The number of individuals who also state that Online Social Networks are a source for entrepreneurial ideas is much larger than expected. People have stated that through OSNs, they are able to copy the ideas of others or come up with their own and start money making ventures (Maurice, 2013). Those already running small ventures have noted the invaluable information they are able to acquire through analysing the information shared by others on these social networks. They are able to use this information to improve their offerings or add

to their services to give themselves a competitive advantage. Some ideas are adopted by people in formal employment who are then able to improve the way tasks are run in their organisations.

2.11.1 Social media as tools for businesswomen

It has been noted in a number of recent studies that OSNs are providing women in particular with a competitive edge in the business world (Sripiya, 2013; Maurice, 2013; Ravi, 2014). It has been reported that female business owners are more likely than males to utilise OSNs to connect and maintain relationships with potential and existing clients. Men seem to focus more on training and capacity building in their businesses. As a result, female business owners appear to be better placed to survive economic downturns due to the relationships they have nurtured with their clients. Many women in developing Arab countries are especially reporting the use of OSNs for establishing and maintaining business relationships. In a region where women are often held back from participating in the business or professional world, the use of OSNs have begun to garner interest as to their impact in empowering Arab women to become more financially independent (Maurice, 2013).

A study organised by the Dubai School of Governance across 8 Arab countries in 2012 brought to light that many more women are utilising OSNs as tools for economic development (Daher, 2012). Many of the respondents in the study mentioned that following the Arab uprisings of 2011, they began to see how OSNs could be a tool for reaching many people. After voicing their opinions concerning the political issues at the time, they saw how OSNs could continue to have an impact in their daily lives, beyond the Arab uprising. Many of these women have utilised these platforms for networking and mentorship opportunities as well as entrepreneurial idea generation. Even in an environment where women are often encouraged to stay out of the work force and be homemakers, they are able to carry out these small business ventures as they are technically still in the home.

Maurice (2013) and Sipriya (2014) provide examples of these small business ventures which include catering businesses and art and craft sales. Many of these businesses, these women say, give them a little financial independence and mean they can afford to pay for some of their needs or wants while still respecting the decisions they have made to be stay home mothers and home makers. Given the somewhat similar context that many African and Arab women find themselves in with regard to patriarchal societies and being marginalised in the

workplace, women in these societies stand to gain a lot if they can learn from each other how to take advantage of simple technologies to empower themselves.

2.12 Women, empowerment, and media in East Africa

Individuals around the world, and particularly in developing countries, have to contend with predefined gender roles that are part of the cultures they are born into. Many cultures globally still believe in articulating what is expected of individuals based on their genders from a very young age. Boys are taught from childhood to aspire to the role of family provider/breadwinner, while girls are raised to become nurturers and grow into the role of mothers and caregivers (Wamala, 2011). These predefined gender roles do not exist only in the personal and social lives of individuals but spill over into careers. As a result, there are certain jobs where males are more likely to be found than females. These generally include sectors such as medicine, engineering and information technology, etc.

The fast-growing ICT sector in developing regions like East Africa is dominated by males (Nanyonga-Tamusuza, 2005; Olatokun, 2008; Gillwald *et al*, 2010). With increasing educational opportunities for boys and especially girls in East Africa, females are gaining ground in previously “all male” professions. Wamala (2011) points to the crucial role that increased ICT penetration has had in the region by stating that ubiquitous ICTs like computers and mobile phones are challenging socially constructed roles, particularly through more open dialogue on forums like social media.

The future of ICTs in every region of the world is an exciting one. This is as a result of a number of drivers shaping the future of the workplace which are underpinned by the ICT sector. Tandon (2012:13) outlines these drivers, which include “longer life spans; a rise in smart devices and systems; advances in computational systems such as sensors and processing power; new multimedia technology; the continuing evolution of social media; and a globally connected world”. Advances in the ICT sector heavily influence all these drivers. The ICT sector in Africa has particularly been nothing short of revolutionary due to human capacity development, infrastructure developments and policy reforms (ITU, 2012). As quoted from Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, while addressing Rwanda’s 2006 ICT strategy: *“We have high expectations of ICT and its transformative effects in all areas of the economy and society. Communications technology has fundamentally changed the way people live, work, and interact socially, and we in Rwanda have no intention of being left behind or standing still as the rest of the globe moves forward at an ever increasing pace”*

(ITU, 2012: 32). These sentiments have been echoed by leaders across East Africa, while stressing how critical it is that women take an active role in the sector.

An increasing number of women worldwide are receiving improved educational opportunities that have enhanced their knowledge and skills in the ICT sector. Tandon (2012) strongly emphasises the importance of women's participation in the ICT field as it opens up the number of opportunities for their growth and development in various positions in the workplace. Improving women's participation has an enormous effect on the economy of any country (Ellis, Manuel & Blackden, 2006). Tandon (2012) further states that ICTs are the leading factor in boosting innovation and creativity across different industries and sectors globally. For professionals of the future to add value to businesses, they must know how to navigate the turbulent and ever changing environment brought about by the internet and ICTs.

Knowledge and skills of ICTs are particularly important for women in developing regions. An ITU (2012: 34) report states; "In developing countries, like Uganda or Nigeria, or in large emerging countries and economies with still untapped rural areas like Brazil, the conventional ICT sector is very much a growth sector, offering employment and income opportunities for skilled and qualified women". Knowing how to utilize ICTs will provide avenues for women to improve their social and economic conditions.

ICTs are by no means the first media that have offered empowerment opportunities for women. Traditional media such as radio, television and the press have for a long time been information sources that have enabled communication and sharing of messages on gender equality. Traditional media have been instrumental in uplifting women worldwide in various fields. They have been important sources of information on women's rights, gender equality, business opportunities and ideological mobilization (Fatoyinbo, 2000). New media in the form of ICTs and the internet have added a new dimension to these messages by influencing their reach and drastically improving opportunities for communication and networking.

Tandon (2012) proposes that as women worldwide make up a larger consumer base for most products, it only makes sense that they should then take the helm when it comes to utilizing ICTs and the internet to develop and market products and services. Governments must therefore prioritise the development of enabling environments for a growing ICT infrastructure that allow their populations access to fast affordable internet. This is vital in sub Saharan Africa especially because, even as the region has achieved much progress in the

computer, internet and mobile telephony rates, their overall penetration is still comparatively low when looking at other regions of the globe. Their continued progression nonetheless offers opportunities for growth and development, especially of marginalized and disempowered groups such as women. ICTs alone will not lift these groups and must be combined with other strategies and policies if significant change is to be observed (Lowe Morna, 2004). In East Africa, the ICT4Democracy network is an example of an organization that has made significant headway by aiming to address gender gaps through challenging the stereotypes of women and technology, and especially ICTs (Wamala, 2011). ICT4Democracy is still a young organization but seeks to put women at the forefront of the ICT revolution by having young ladies take up leadership positions in the network.

As traditional media have done in the past, new media and in particular social media have begun to elicit interest as far as their influence on the activities and empowerment of women in social, political and economic arenas. The following sections will examine this influence. Before examining this impact, however, it is necessary to explain that the term “empowerment” is used quite often in the text while referring to the influence of ICTs, the internet and social media. Empowerment as a concept will be discussed very briefly in order to reduce ambiguity concerning the term.

2.12.1 Empowerment explained

Empowerment is a term often used ambiguously in discussions concerning development without concrete attempts to define what it entails (Rowlands, 1995; Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010). Part of the confusion surrounding the term empowerment has to do with the uncertainty regarding its root concept- ‘power’. This is because power as a notion is experienced in different ways by different people. Rowlands (1995) refers to two kinds of power; ‘power over’ and ‘power to’. ‘Power over’ is often times that which is wielded by dominant social, economic, cultural and political groups over marginalized groups, e.g. men over women.

In referring to ‘power to’ however, this can refer to the ability of some to positively influence and boost morale in others such as leadership that seeks to enable a group to fulfill their potential while setting a collective agenda. This kind of power is not a zero-sum, meaning that giving power to another does not imply that one thereby becomes less powerful. It is this power that empowerment refers to, and it challenges the idea of ‘power over’. Empowerment thereby gives people the confidence that they are able and entitled to make their own

decisions. Cattaneo & Chapman (2010: 648) refer to this as “experiencing oneself as a powerful or capable person”.

Cattaneo & Chapman (2010: 652) provide certain attributes that constitute the empowerment process:

- “Self-efficacy - an individual’s beliefs about his or her abilities;
- Knowledge - understanding the relevant social context, power dynamics at play, possible routes to goal attainment, resources needed and the ways to attain them;
- Competence - an individual’s level of actual skill relevant to a task;
- Action - in order to achieve goals an individual must take action; and
- Impact - an assessment of what happens after an individual takes action.”

Viewing empowerment in this way creates a more concrete definition of the concept. In understanding how OSNs influence businesswomen in developing countries, the above attributes guide the research process and inform the manner in which respondents are engaged to understand their perception of how they are empowered by this technology. Drawing on Cattaneo and Chapman’s attributes, empowerment, as it is discussed in this section and this study, is therefore understood in more concrete and specific terms as ‘professional development’ (see 1.6), which refers to the process of self-improvement and increasing both the confidence and skill levels of businesswomen through access to education and training opportunities in the workplace (see chapter 5).

2.12.2 Women and social media: political, economic, and social empowerment

As more and more people interact via ICTs, the internet and social media, the concept of an individual as the citizen of a country is changing. This is due to the ability of people to express themselves on issues within and beyond the boundaries of their countries. Glenwright (2011) refers to this as being “glocal”, and Aslama (2009: 32) goes on to make an important statement about OSNs by saying:

“The period of “individualistic experimentation” with participatory media is probably over as all kinds of digital platforms and services are currently being embraced by communities, businesses, civil society organisations, political parties and universities. The trend may be expected to grow as broadband penetration grows in the West and elsewhere and as the

importance of mobile communication also takes off. Social networks are far from only for younger generations today. A variety of organisations for the most varied assortment of publics have established a viable presence in popular social networking sites”.

Rebick (2009) feels that feminists, particularly in the global south have yet to fully appreciate the power of social media, but that once they do, they will recognize its ability to affect not just women but indeed everyone. Feminism, she feels, is more than simply empowering women but rather has to do with presenting every individual with equal rights.

There are various ways in which social media/OSNs can be used as tools for change and empowerment in different areas. Politically, social media have been a tool used by many to attempt to garner support for democratic or social change. Politicians the world over are recognizing the immense opportunities provided by social media to reach segments of society that are typically not politically active or empowered, especially the youth, who are usually viewed as apathetic in matters of politics. USA President Barack Obama’s successes in the presidential elections of 2008 and 2012 have been credited to the significant investment of his campaign teams on social media sites Twitter, MySpace and Facebook. In Japan, politicians are increasingly using social media to engage and educate younger generations on policies and social issues in “softer ways” rather than using large amounts of potentially confusing text (Glenwright, 2011). In Nigeria, President Goodluck Jonathan used Facebook in 2010 to announce his presidential candidacy and to engage in political discussions. With politicians around the world realizing the potential offered by OSNs, it remains to be seen how they will continue to use these sites to engage their constituents and mobilize support in the future.

Wamala (2011) particularly notes how women in East Africa are especially marginalized in issues of political debate and technological skills. Social media offers a platform for women to be heard more strongly. As shown by the Arab Spring, ICTs and social media can bring those in leadership positions to account. It can similarly help to address gender inequality issues faced by women. The economic impact of social media has received much attention as it has been invaluable in linking businesses with consumers. Looking at economic benefits from a micro point of view and with women in mind, social media have allowed for online networking and mentorship facilitation, platforms for advertisement and marketing of goods/services.

Social media have been used to establish dialogue on key issues affecting women. These include: gender based violence, polygamy, religion and homosexuality. Creating dialogue

through these forums has resulted in empowering women in the use of new technologies, encouraging them to speak out more freely, linking people across borders as they discuss issues of similar concern and acting as accountability forums where women can directly address policy and decision makers. These “cyber dialogues” are potent tools for discussion and empowerment.

2.13 The internet and social media in Uganda

Information and Communication Technologies have had, and continue to have, a remarkable impact on the manner in which social, political and economic activities are carried out in countries globally. Uganda has not been left behind regarding this impact. Specifically regarding the proliferation of the internet, the country has witnessed a dramatic rise in the internet penetration rates recorded. Internet penetration has risen from an estimated 1 million people in 2007 to 6,523,949 as of 2014 (InternetWorldStats, 2014). This dramatic rise, although promising, still only accounts for around 18.2% of the population. The vast majority of these internet users can be found in urban areas, and it is estimated that 80% of people in rural Uganda have no access to the internet at all.

Recognising the impact that improved access to ICTs and the internet can have for its citizens in various aspects, the Ugandan government has developed and implemented several initiatives with the goal of improving access and usage levels, particularly in rural areas. The National Information and Technology Authority of Uganda (NITA-U) and the Uganda Communications Commission have been at the forefront of developing such initiatives whose goals are to ensure affordable and timely access to ICTs in rural Uganda. Privately owned telecommunications companies, however, are found to heavily invest in establishing strong ICT infrastructure in and around urban areas where they are likely to attain large returns on their investments. Heavy investment in this area has led to reductions in mobile tariffs and bandwidth prices.

The government has attempted to create a favourable policy environment for the ICT sector. This has resulted in the increased presence of many companies and government institutions in the online environment. With ICT services being inaccessible to most Ugandans, however, many of these initiatives continue to act as barriers to information for the majority of the population. The main challenges and barriers to access of information via ICTs and the internet include: the high costs of these ICTs and a severe lack of proficiency (language and literacy) required to access internet and mobile based platforms. The massive uptake of

mobile telephones has done much to address some of these issues. It has been noted that most internet users (97%) in the country access the internet via their mobile phones. With the ban on the importation of second-hand computers and laptops by the Ugandan government in 2009, the cost of accessing an internet capable device became a huge barrier. The ban was instituted to restrict the importation of faulty and poor quality devices into the market. Mobile telephony therefore came as a beacon of hope for many Ugandans. With the mobile phone penetration in the country estimated at 53.3% (*Uganda Communications Commission, 2014*), these technologies may offer Uganda the opportunity to leapfrog the ICT development process experienced in developed countries. With the establishment of the national fibre backbone, bandwidth prices have continued to fall drastically resulting in internet subscriptions growing at a rate of over 100% per year.

With the growth of Uganda's economy, there has also been a rise in the utilization of ICTs and the internet. 2014 internet penetration rates stood at 18.2% (*Internet World Stats, 2014*). The utilization of ICTs and the internet are particularly concentrated in urban areas such as the capital city, Kampala (*Uganda Communications Commission, 2014*). Statistics indicate the most visited web sites are Google, Facebook and Yahoo, in that order (*Alexa, 2013; ITU, 2014*). Twitter and LinkedIn rank 6th and 8th respectively.

Online social networking in Uganda, like the rest of the world, is the fastest growing online activity. Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn represent the three most popular OSNs respectively. Analysis of users shows that the majority of users on these sites are within the 18-34 year age category (520,000 users), out of an estimated 640,000 total users (Page Viral, 2011). It is estimated that there are about 440,000 male (66.7%) and 220,000(33.3%) female Facebook members in Uganda. Daher (2012: 15) states that "In its report, the Gender and Public Policy Program mentioned that the virtual world is perceived as a means of empowering women despite the discrepancy between the numbers of men and women on the social networking websites."

Further study needs to be undertaken to understand the user behaviour of Uganda's internet users. Hill (2012: Online) states "...the country also needs a way to collect data on Internet users to begin to better understand Internet, mobile and consumer behavior via business analytics". This will provide guidance for policies and strategies that can enable ICTs to become a veritable force in the growth and development of Uganda (Baryamureeba, 2009).

2.13.1 Women in Uganda: a socio-economic perspective

Uganda is a landlocked country located in East Africa. The country borders Kenya, Tanzania, South Sudan, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The population of the country is estimated at approximately 38.8 million people (*World Bank*, 2014). The country is a democratic state, ruled since 1986 by H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. It is divided into 112 districts with the highest population density in the central part of the country. Uganda's major economic activity is in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry, which in 2010 contributed 22.9% to the GDP, followed closely by wholesale retail trade, hotels and restaurants contributing 22% (*World Bank*, 2014). The World Bank's *Doing Business Report* puts Uganda at the 123rd position out of 187 in terms of the ease of doing business in 2013.

According to a 2014 UNDP report, Uganda's Human Development Index has steadily improved over the years and as of 2013 stood at 0.484, placing it at position 164 out of 187. The index is measured on the basis of health, education and general living standards. This position, however, indicates that Uganda still lies in the low human development category and requires much in the way of policies and initiatives to improve the socio-economic climate and living standards in the country.

Uganda currently has one of the highest youth populations in the world with those aged between 15-24 years making up 19.3% of the total population. According to a study by the United Countries Social and Economic Affairs Division, by 2012, the country had the second youngest population in the world after Niger (Natukunda, 2013). This figure brings with it many opportunities and challenges. One major challenge relates to the very high youth unemployment rate in the country. Some factors influencing these high unemployment rates are "... the lack of employable skills, limited access to financial and technical resources, the insufficient emphasis on vocational training and a mismatch between skills and requirements in the job market" (*African Economic Outlook*, 2012: 13). Several initiatives have been set up to tackle this critical problem including the Youth Venture Capital Fund and the national Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) program. Many of these programs attempt to utilize the power of information and communication technologies as avenues through which the youth can develop and share entrepreneurial ideas (Baryamureeba, 2009).

The government of Uganda has endeavored hard to eliminate gender discrimination at all levels of society. Many educational programs to improve the attendance of girls right from

primary school level have seen much success. The introduction of universal free primary and secondary school education in 1997 and 2007 respectively have done much for drastically improving the ratio of boys to girls that receive formal education (*African Economic Outlook*, 2012: 16). Further to this, 2012 estimates indicate that “...the number of women in parliament rose to 130 (out of 375 members, about 35%) in the current session, compared to 98 in the previous parliament. In the cabinet, there are 10 women (out of 29) holding a senior ministerial position and another 12 (out of 47) are state ministers” (*African Economic Outlook*, 2012: 17). Also, for the first time, the current parliament appointed a female speaker. These figures portray an encouraging environment in which women are taking advantage of the empowerment opportunities to take up leadership positions and inspire the rise of women in various sectors and industries. A study by Ellis, Manuel & Blackden (2006) of the challenges faced by professional businesswomen in Uganda states that many of the challenges faced by businesswomen in Uganda arise from lack of information on a number of pertinent aspects that could assist in achieving business and work success. Some of the challenges pointed out include:

- “Lack of information on formalisation and registration of their businesses;
- Limited information concerning their legal rights in the work place;
- Being less educated and having fewer formal business skills than men;
- Inadequate information on capital and financing opportunities; and
- A major underlying challenge consistently mentioned was the unavailability of sufficient mentoring and support networks.”

The above issues must be tackled using any and all resources available, and ICTs should be leveraged in order to achieve empowerment for women in this sector.

In spite of the country’s position in the low human development category, it has been hailed as one of the fastest growing economies in the sub Saharan region (*World Bank*, 2012; *Index Mundi*, 2013). The economy of the country has laid fertile ground for both local and foreign investment. Especially important for this study is to note the existence and work of several organisations in Uganda whose overarching goals and objectives concern the empowering of women. Two of these organisations that also have a focus on networking and/or social media are discussed below.

2.13.1.1 The Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association Limited (UWEAL)

UWEAL is a non-governmental organisation located in Uganda whose main objective is “to support women entrepreneurs through the provision of Business Development Services and advocating for enabling environments that meet the specific needs of women in Uganda.” (UWEAL, 2015: online). The organisation attempts to accomplish its goal through several ways, including: capacity building, advocacy, networking, access to a resource centre, breakfast meetings and a women investment club. The organization has been in existence for 25 years and it has strong ties to influential women such as the first lady, several women politicians, and high-profile businesswomen. The organization does not only target women but also has initiatives aimed at girls such as the mentorship program and the girls’ entrepreneurship program. Through a series of events that occur throughout the year, the organisation has been able to engage with and support many women at different levels in tackling many aspects of business education. The organization is based in the capital, Kampala, but has several branches across the country.

UWEAL also aims to meet its mission of “Empowering women entrepreneurs to create wealth through capacity building, networking and advocacy” through several objectives which include:

- “To train, mentor and counsel women to start, sustain and grow their businesses;
- To support product development, provide Business Development Services (BDS) and linkages to markets;
- To build women entrepreneurs' capacity to access both local and international markets;
- To support businesswomen networking exchanges and mentorship forums; and
- To support the Women Investment Club (WIC), promote a savings and investment culture while encouraging the growth and sustainability of women entrepreneur businesses.”

The goals set out by UWEAL over the last few decades have enabled the empowerment of businesswomen in both urban and rural areas of Uganda, a situation that is bound to continue as the organization grows from strength to strength. In particular, and of relevance to this study, is their objective of supporting businesswomen in networking and mentorship. The

hidden potential for the organisation to facilitate this objective using social media is great and will be explored further in chapter five.

2.13.1.2 Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)

WOUGNET is a non-governmental organization that was established in Uganda in the year 2000. The organization's main objective is to identify ways in which ICTs can be utilized to provide opportunities for Ugandan women to improve their chances of employment and making them active participants as far as governance is concerned. The tremendous potential that ICTs offer for addressing many of the challenges that Ugandan women face was the driving force behind the establishment of the organisation. The goal as stated on the organisation's website is "to improve conditions of life for women by enhancing their capacities and opportunities for exchange, collaboration and information sharing" (WOUGNET, 2015: online). WOUGNET proposes to achieve its goals through the following main program areas:

- "Information Sharing and Networking;
- Technical Support; and
- Gender and ICT Policy Advocacy."

WOUGNET engages and partners with several local and international organizations, including UWEAL, to fulfill its goals and objectives across Uganda and has set up several initiatives in different districts.

The above are only two examples of organisations that have been established in Uganda with the goal of empowering women. WOUGNET especially stands out given its strong focus on the use of ICTs to attain this important goal. The organisation is therefore already in a good position to leverage social media to meet its objectives.

2.13.2 Challenges and opportunities

As with any new innovation or technology, both opportunities and challenges are bound to arise as they permeate society and become mainstream. OSNs are no exception. The challenges and opportunities surrounding OSNs, particularly in developing countries will be discussed below.

2.13.2.1 Challenges

The high cost of accessing ICTs such as mobile phones, computers and the internet holds many back from participating on these platforms. Even with the growing numbers of Africans that are being connected daily via these technologies, there are still far too many for whom it is a distant dream.

Low literacy levels and connectivity especially in rural areas means that the ability to communicate via these ICT platforms is very limited for many in Africa. Given that much of this communication is expected in text format means that those with minimal reading and writing abilities cannot participate.

Pierson & Heyman (2011) and CIPESA (2014) discuss other challenges in the use of OSNs for business purposes in Africa that include:

- Communication via OSNs often lends to anonymity of users which makes verification of information accuracy difficult;
- Privacy and security issues which plague ICT usage;
- Disabled people are often not catered for when implementing these tools;
- It is difficult to quantify the effect that messaging via these tools has had;
- Technophobia and distrust associated with communicating via OSNs; and
- Lack of knowledge of the existence of many of these platforms.

These challenges must be met head on if online social networks are to be utilised effectively for empowering users in Africa, and particularly traditionally disempowered groups like women.

2.13.2.2 Opportunities

The major opportunity arising from the use of OSNs for business development in Africa, and specifically Uganda, comes from immense networking potential they offer their members. They offer people the chance to communicate, share and retrieve information with/from a vast number of sources. They are also relatively simple to use for those with basic ICT skills. The ability to access these platforms from mobile phones means they are furthermore squarely within the reach of many Ugandans for whom internet access via expensive computers and laptops seemed unlikely.

2.14 Gaps and opportunities in the literature

The use of OSNs in Africa has grown on an unprecedented level in the last 5 to 7 years. Even though total numbers are not enough to rival those in other regions, the percentage year on year growth has been tremendous. There is growing interest in how these platforms are being utilised in a variety of fields and the impact they are having. This is especially noted following major events such as tragedies and serious political issues.

Although there is a growing body of literature on OSNs and their impact in Africa, the literature tends to be more available for a few particular countries. These tend to generally be the countries with larger economies such as South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria and Kenya. The impact that OSNs are having in different sectors in other African countries is not as well covered. Given that Africa as a continent differs from one region to the next, it is not sufficient to have data from only specific countries being used to determine what is happening across the continent. Much research needs to be undertaken by governments and higher institutions of learning if the potential impact of social media in society is to be appropriately assessed. In particular, with the understanding that most internet users in Africa log on from their mobile phones, there needs to be an understanding of how this medium can be leveraged to a greater extent as a channel for information creation, manipulation and dissemination.

There is also not much literature regarding the usage of OSNs among women in African countries. An information search on OSNs and their impact on women in developing countries will bring back an overwhelming amount of information on women in Arab and Asian countries. This is therefore an area where more research can and should be done, given that women are joining these sites in almost equal numbers as men. In relation to this, there is an opportunity to specifically investigate different demographics to determine how technology is assimilated and takes effect among them e.g. across age groups, education levels, etc. this can inform how policies and strategies can be implemented when targeting different groups in an African context.

The above opportunities and challenges highlight the fact that social media is having an important impact in societies globally, and are worthy of investigation. In Kampala, Uganda, where the uptake of these media is rising, but where little data exists to understand its effects, it is vital that studies are undertaken to do so. Disadvantaged groups like women stand to benefit greatly if these media can be used as tools to empower them. Organisations like

UWEAL and WOUGNET that have been discussed in previous sections are in prime positions to take up these challenges and turn them into success stories.

2.15 Conclusion

As Online Social Networks continue to grow and more people from all walks of life become members, their impact will require continuous research. When these platforms first appeared, it was difficult to know what bearing they would have on society. Like technologies and innovations before them, we can often only really understand them in hindsight. Just as home appliances like electric stoves and washing machines unexpectedly empowered women by giving them more time to explore opportunities outside the home, we need to begin to understand how innovations like OSNs can continue to empower women in different ways. By understanding how they can serve this purpose, decisions can be made regarding how to make these platforms a way to empower businesswomen in Kampala. By investigating how businesswomen across various sectors and age categories in Kampala use social media, this study will provide a departure point for determining how these can be leveraged for their empowerment. The research methodology required to do so will be discussed in detail in chapter three.

CHAPTER THREE - Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will introduce the research methodology for the study. The research methods and techniques that will be used to answer the research question and sub questions will be explained and motivated. Also discussed will be the sampling methods that will be utilised for the selected target groups.

Research is a vital undertaking when seeking clarity on a topic. Research is used in numerous fields and industries when attempting to put hypotheses to the test or when trying to find generalisations that can be applied to specified groups. Research can be undertaken on small or large populations and can be defined as the scientific and systematic way of gaining knowledge about a particular subject (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Carrying out research allows one to justify reasons for coming to certain conclusions.

The main research problem of this study involves the use of selected online social networks among businesswomen in Kampala in Uganda, and the kind of impact they have on their professional lives. In the following sections, the types of research approaches, methods, sampling, target population, and data analysis methods will be discussed in order to provide a basis for understanding how the investigation proceeded. The data generated from these activities will be presented, analysed, and discussed in detail in chapter 4.

3.2 Research Design

Research approaches refer to the overall strategies that are utilised when attempting to address a research problem. There are two main research approaches that are identified, namely: qualitative research approaches and quantitative research approaches. Qualitative and quantitative styles of research differ in the manner in which data is gathered, as well as the types of data collection tools that can be used under each method. There is no best approach for gathering data in research, and the method one selects is dependent on the type of research problem to be addressed. One is also not limited to either one or the other in a particular study. As far back as 1979, Jick explained that a combination of methods can be used to gather data in a study. For the purposes of this particular study, techniques that fall under both approaches will be used to gather data that will assist in answering the research questions.

The two approaches will be discussed briefly to provide an understanding of what each entails, as well as their advantages and disadvantages.

3.2.1 Qualitative Research

This research approach is highly recommended when statistics, graphs or numbers are not sufficient to explain a phenomenon. Qualitative research seeks to understand the underlying motives, feelings and thoughts behind certain behaviours (Madrigal & McClain, 2012). There are several techniques/methods that can be utilised under qualitative research. These include: in-depth interviews, focus group interviews, case studies, narrative analysis, and observation among others (McClintoch & Garrett, 2012).

Madrigal & McClain (2012) discuss some advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research.

Advantages of qualitative research

- Allows respondents to justify reasons behind their behaviour. Can allow for greater insight into the research problem;
- Allows researchers to clarify any questions that are not easily understood; and
- Researchers can discover and explore new information through discussions with respondents that they would not otherwise have known.

Disadvantages of qualitative research

- Typically more time consuming as a researcher has to engage directly with respondents;
- Can allow for researcher bias where the subjective views of the researcher influence how the respondents answer;
- Respondents may be less honest and respond the way they think they are supposed to, as opposed to how they truly feel; and
- Given time constraints, researchers may not be able to gather much information from a significant number of respondents, affecting their ability to generalise results.

The following section will briefly discuss the characteristics of quantitative, before a juxtaposition of qualitative and quantitative research is presented (see pages 4-5).

3.2.2 Quantitative Research

In undertaking quantitative research, numerical and statistical data derived from the study usually provides the basis for a researcher to make generalisations based on the numbers of respondents that conform to a particular viewpoint (Madrigal & McClain, 2012). Examples of popular techniques or methods that can be used under quantitative research include structured interviews with questionnaires and opinion surveys (McClintoch & Garrett, 2012). These can be distributed/collected in various ways including physically with a researcher present, or via telephone, mail, and email correspondence.

Some of the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative research, as provided by Madrigal and McClain (2012), are as follows:

Advantages of quantitative research

- Allows researchers to reach many respondents in a short space of time;
- There is little opportunity for researcher bias as the researcher is often not present when respondents are answering questions; and
- Ensures that each respondent answers the exact same questions which makes it easier to make generalisations.

Disadvantages of quantitative research

- Many times researchers aren't present to clarify queries for respondents; and
- Does not allow respondents to justify their behaviour, attitudes or feelings. Two people might select the same response but for very different reasons.

It can be deduced from the above that qualitative and quantitative research methods offer different opportunities for a researcher gathering data.

The table below, as taken from Johnson & Christensen (2008), contrasts qualitative and quantitative methods to further indicate the differences between the two methodologies.

3.2.3 Comparison between quantitative and qualitative approaches

Criteria	Qualitative research	Quantitative research
Purpose	To understand & interpret social interactions.	To test hypotheses, look at cause & effect, & make predictions.
Group Studied	Smaller & not randomly selected	Larger & randomly selected.
Variables	Study of the whole, not variables.	Specific variables studied
Type of Data Collected	Words, images, or objects.	Numbers and statistics.
Form of Data Collected	Qualitative data such as open-ended responses, interviews, participant observations, field notes, & reflections.	Quantitative data based on precise measurements using structured & validated data-collection instruments.
Type of Data Analysis	Identify patterns, features, themes.	Identify statistical relationships.
Objectivity and Subjectivity	Subjectivity is expected.	Objectivity is critical.
Role of Researcher	Researcher & their biases may be known to participants in the study, & participant characteristics may be known to the researcher.	Researcher & their biases are not known to participants in the study, & participant characteristics are deliberately hidden from the researcher (double blind studies).
Results	Particular or specialized findings that is less generalizable.	Generalizable findings that can be applied to other populations.
Most Common Research Objectives	Explore, discover, & construct	Describe, explain, & predict.
Final Report	Narrative report with contextual description &	Statistical report with correlations, comparisons of

	direct quotations from research participants.	means, & statistical
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It can be inferred from the table that the different research approaches have distinct characteristics that offer opportunities for researchers to gather data effectively. Often, utilising just one is insufficient to answer the research questions. A combination of two or more can offer a better alternative for a researcher. Jick (1979:605) refers to this as triangulation and he defines it as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon.” Agami & Kiger (2005) state that triangulation enables researchers to confirm apparent findings but also to ensure the completeness of research.

With this statement in mind, two methods/techniques from the different approaches will be adopted in a survey of the target groups for this study. Under the qualitative approach, the in-depth interview will be used and the questionnaire has been selected under the quantitative approach. These will be discussed in more detail in later sections.

3.3 Site of Research

Kampala, Uganda is the site of the research study. This is an area that the researcher is familiar with, being a Ugandan national, and which fits the description of a developing country where the usage of online social networking is growing steadily. Kampala has been specifically selected as the largest city and capital of Uganda. A 2014 estimate indicates that the population of the city is 1.6 million people (Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), 2014). This is quite a large number given that the average number of people in urban areas of Uganda is around 25,000 (UBOS, 2014). The rate of urbanisation is steadily increasing, especially in the capital city. The country is ranked 9th out of 46 African countries on the economic freedom index (Heritage, 2015), with an unemployment rate of 3.8% and a GDP of \$54.6 billion and a 5.1% five year compound annual growth. Online social networking statistics point out that in 2014 there were 6,523,949 internet users in Uganda (*InternetWorldStats*, 2014), 562,240 of whom were on Facebook. Although this is quite a high number in comparison with most African countries, it pales in comparison with Facebook figures from countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt, Algeria and neighbouring Kenya (*InternetWorldStats*, 2014).

3.4 Target Groups

The target groups of the study are businesswomen in Kampala between the ages of 25-55 years of age, across the following sectors: banking, education and marketing/advertising. These have been selected as they constitute some of the largest sectors in the Ugandan economy. This group has been selected as the target population for the study as the study seeks to understand how businesswomen in Kampala utilize online social networks as tools for professional development in the work place. All respondents are members of at least one social media site, especially Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn which are discussed in detail in chapter two. These sites were chosen as they have the largest numbers of members on social media globally, and it is therefore highly likely that any businesswoman that subscribes to social media will be a member of at least one of these.

The first target group comprises six respondents for the in-depth interviews. Two respondents represented each of the sectors selected. This initial small number of respondents was selected in order to act as a test group for the questions that were to be posed to a bigger group during the quantitative component of the study. Any questions that are not clearly understood by this group of respondents were then reworked before the final version of the questionnaire was disseminated. Furthermore, any points worthy of further investigation raised during the interviews were added to the final version of the questionnaire. The responses provided by this target group are integral to the study and were interpreted and analysed in chapter four. They also provided input for the guidelines proposed in chapter five and recommendations in chapter six.

The second target group consisted of 50 respondents who completed the online questionnaire, which was edited based on any unclear information or any points deemed relevant for addition after the interviews. The respondents were selected from the same three sectors and age categories as those in the interviews.

The women have been divided into three distinct categories based on age. This is due to the fact that distinct generations of women in this society will most likely have major differences in experience when it comes to the use and uptake of ICTs and online social networking (Feist & McDougall, 2013). Treating them as a homogenous group might therefore make it difficult to identify any insights emerging over the differences in utilization of OSNs among women at various levels of professional development. The three groups that will be looked at have been divided as follows:

- 25-34 year old women (young) who have most likely been in the professional environment for just a few years (no more than a decade perhaps). Most likely to be more adept at the use of ICTs having possibly been introduced to these during early school years for study and social purposes
- 35-44 year old women (middle-age) who may not have been highly exposed to ICTs in early parts of their life/schooling years but perhaps more in the later school years or beginning years of their professional careers for both work and social purposes
- 45-55 year old women (senior) for whom ICTs may not have been a key factor at all during their schooling years. Also, ICTs were most likely introduced after a significant amount of time spent in the work environment. May not be as adept as younger women

The focus is on women working in banking, marketing/advertising and education industries. The women in education are those in administrative and managerial roles where business principles and practices are standard job requirements.

3.5 Sampling Method

The chain referral sampling or snowballing method was applied in this study. Chain referral/Snowball sampling is a process in which one or more suitable candidates in the target group helps to identify/recommend other suitable candidates (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). The “chain” grows until a predetermined sufficient number of respondents has been reached. The researcher must decide beforehand how many respondents will constitute a sufficient number, depending on the nature of the research being carried out.

Chain referral sampling is ideal for this study as it is often noted that professional individuals in any given setting tend to have rich extended professional networks (Penrod *et al*, 2003). This will prove beneficial for the study as businesswomen in similar settings will be able to connect with one another and provide encouragement for participation. Penrod *et al* (2003) do, however, point out that researchers have to be careful when using this method as the pool of respondents could possibly be very limited in diversity and opinions. This is because people generally tend to associate with others very similar to themselves personally and professionally.

The researcher's familiarity with the site of the research allowed for the identification of key respondents in the specified sectors who were able to recommend others in their fields and personal/professional networks. Due to the scope of this study and lack of resources, it was only possible to generate six experts for the interviews and 50 potential respondents for the questionnaire target group.

3.6 Data collection instruments

Data collection instruments are the tools that a researcher utilises to gather data from respondents to assist in answering the research questions. The data collection instruments for this study are: in-depth interviews, and questionnaires. These will be discussed below.

3.6.1 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews refer to intensive one-on-one interviews between a researcher and a small number of respondents in a study to understand their views, opinions and perspectives on a subject (Boyce and Neale, 2006). This method has been selected as the data collection method under the qualitative component. When conducting in-depth interviews the researcher has the opportunity to ask questions and then delve for and probe the answers provided by respondents.

This method has been selected as the initial data collection tool to allow the researcher to explore and identify, through a first interaction with the target population, the important issues that emerge. These issues will then be used to compile the second data collection tool in form of a questionnaire. This method also allows the researcher to probe deeper into any specific areas that require more than a yes/no or true/false response, and allows respondents to clarify if there are any questions that may not be clearly understood. These can then be edited before inclusion in the final questionnaire to be sent to a larger pool of respondents.

Boyce and Neale (2006) and Pope and Mays (1995) identify some advantages and disadvantages of using the in-depth interview method, namely:

Advantages of in-depth interviews

- Researcher can clarify any points that are misunderstood by respondents;
- Allows researcher to probe deeper into any important points; and
- Allows respondents to explain their answers in more meaningful ways beyond selecting from predetermined options.

Disadvantages of in-depth interviews

- Might allow for researcher bias where the researcher's subjectivity influences how respondents answer;
- It is usually limiting in the sense that the researcher cannot interview a significant number of respondents due to time constraints;
- Researcher must be adept at facilitating and guiding the interview process; and
- Respondents in face-to-face interactions may feel the need to answer questions in a manner that puts them in a more positive light as opposed to how they really feel.

The in-depth interviews will be carried out by the researcher with 2 women from each age category. Each sector will also be represented by two women. Important information and insights coming out of the interviews will form part of a qualitative analysis report (see Ch 4), and be used to develop an effective and appropriate questionnaire that will be distributed amongst the target group for the questionnaire. For the in-depth interview schedule, see appendix A.

3.6.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are a very popular data collection tool. Questionnaires allow researchers to compile a set of standard questions that are then distributed amongst the selected target group of respondents (Munn & Drever, 1990). Questionnaires often include questions that have predetermined options of answers for each question. Respondents then simply select the most appropriate answer from the options provided.

This tool has been selected for the study as it will allow the researcher to test all respondents equally on the same issues. It will then be easier to make inferences based on the statistics retrieved after analyzing all the responses. Making generalizations is also easier if all respondents have answered the same questions.

Some advantages and disadvantages of questionnaires as provided by Goodman (1997), and include:

Advantages of questionnaires

- All respondents answer the same questions, making analysis of data and generalisations simpler;
- It helps to do away with the issue of researcher bias where the views of the researcher may skew respondents towards a certain point of view;
- Under the veil of anonymity, respondents are more likely to be more honest with their responses; and
- Is a more efficient tool as questionnaires do not require the presence of the researcher and can therefore be distributed and completed by numerous respondents simultaneously.

Disadvantages of questionnaires

- Researcher is not present to clarify any misunderstood issues;
- Respondents may not have the opportunity to explain their responses further or expand on a point of interest; and
- Answer options provided may not represent all the possible views of the respondents of the study. Respondents may select an answer that does not necessarily match how they truly feel.

The questionnaire will be sent via email to all potential respondents (see appendix B).

3.7 Data Analysis

BusinessDictionary (2014:online) defines data analysis as “The process of evaluating data using analytical and logical reasoning to examine each component of the data provided...Data from various sources is gathered, reviewed, and then analysed to form some sort of finding or conclusion”. Analysis of data gathered through a research study allows for sense to be made out of all the discrete bits of data collected. Deductions and conclusions can then be made that answer the research question and sub-questions.

A qualitative analysis of the data gathered under the in-depth interview method will be undertaken by the researcher. Answers gathered through this approach will be analysed and used to infer general attitudes and perceptions of respondents based on how well they address

the research problem. The responses will be summarized in report format to convey data from the interview process. These will then be used to compile a set of questions for the questionnaire that brings together all the salient points that were raised by the interview respondents and identified by the researcher as points that warrant further investigation.

The Special Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) software will be used for data collected via the questionnaire as it is an excellent tool for displaying simple summaries of data. This software will provide descriptive (not inferential) statistical analysis of the data gathered.

3.8 Reliability and validity of research

The reliability of a research investigation relates to the extent to which similar results would be retrieved by any other researcher on replication of the study and application of its methodology (Golafshani, 2003). The validity relates to how well the study measures what it proposes to measure. A study might be replicable and therefore reliable, but if it does not measure what it states it will measure as articulated in the research question/problem, then it cannot be deemed valid.

Reliability and validity in this study will be sought in the following ways:

- Pre-testing of the questionnaire will be done amongst a few respondents to ensure that questions are well understood and draw appropriate responses;
- Questions in the in-depth interviews and questionnaire will be explained as simply as possible but in sufficient detail for overall general understanding;
- Anonymity of respondents will be guaranteed at all times to ensure honesty in their responses; and
- All questions to be addressed in the in-depth interview and questionnaire have undergone review and approval of the University of Pretoria's Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology (EBIT) Faculty Ethics and Integrity Committee before administration.

Through the above considerations, it is hoped that the highest levels of reliability and validity will be achieved throughout all stages of the study.

3.9 Limitations of the methodology

There are certain limitations that are part and parcel of any research study. For this particular study the following limitations should be kept in mind;

- As the target group will comprise businesswomen from Kampala, Uganda it is difficult to generalize the data gathered to businesswomen in all other developing countries. Different countries have varying situations that might influence the manner in which they approach OSN usage.
- Due to time and resource restrictions, there are only a limited number of respondents that can be approached for the study, particularly when carrying out the in-depth interviews.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

In undertaking of this study, ethical issues have to be considered. The ethical guidelines as stipulated by the University of Pretoria EBIT Faculty Ethics and Integrity Committee regarding carrying out of research studies were strictly adhered to. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the research and full disclosure of how the responses gathered were to be analysed and reported on was also provided. Respondents were fully aware that participation in the study was optional and they were not obliged to answer all questions, although they were advised to. See appendix C for the ethics committee approval letter.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter presented the research methodology that has been used to carry out the study. The methods and techniques allowed for the gathering of data that is crucial for addressing the research questions. Chapter 4 will provide an in-depth presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the data collected from the two target groups.

CHAPTER FOUR - Data analysis and interpretation

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the data collected using the different research methods and techniques described in chapter 3, will be presented and interpreted. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:295) explain these processes as "...ways in which the researcher moves from a description of what is the case to an explanation of why what is the case is the case." Data analysis allows the researcher to describe and summarise the data and, through interpretation, meaning will be given to the data. Insights derived from the qualitative and quantitative assessments in this chapter will provide an informed basis for the proposals and recommendations presented in chapters five and six. Collection of the data for the study used both qualitative and quantitative tools, namely an interview schedule and a questionnaire. Qualitative data was collected via in-depth interviews undertaken through telephone calls, Skype, and the Facebook chat feature. The quantitative data was gathered through online questionnaires distributed via email. Descriptive statistics (as distinct from inferential statistics) will be used to present and analyse the quantitative data so that the sample for the target group of women in Kampala can be described and discussed as fully as possible.

This chapter will therefore compile, analyse, and interpret the data retrieved via both research approaches with a view to answering the main research question and sub-questions, which are as follows:

Main research question

How can social media (Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) contribute to the professional development of businesswomen in Kampala, Uganda?

Sub questions

- How are social media changing the way African businesswomen work today?
- How are businesswomen in Kampala using these social media for professional purposes?
- What guidelines for social media education will contribute to the professional development of businesswomen in Kampala?

4.2 Qualitative data analysis

The gathering of qualitative data was undertaken using in-depth interviews. This allowed the researcher to test the usefulness and relevance of a set of questions among six specially selected respondents before compiling and distributing an appropriate questionnaire to a larger group of fifty respondents. Besides the pilot-testing value of preparing a more relevant data-collection tool, these in-depth interviews are a substantive methodological component of this study. They provided the opportunity to explore the topic in much greater detail with experienced businesswomen, and offered a basis for comparing interview and questionnaire responses through corroboration, contradiction, and elaboration. In brief, these interviews both sharpened the data collection process and enriched the analysis and interpretation of the data. The in-depth interviews were carried out using an interview schedule of open-ended questions (see appendix A) to collect data from the six respondents. The in-depth interview method enabled the identification of key issues that the researcher was not aware of. These were then used to compile a questionnaire that was distributed via email. Respondents were also able to expound on various issues beyond simple yes/no responses. This provided greater insight into some of their responses.

The in-depth interviews were carried out among a small group comprising six respondents working in different sectors in Kampala, including: banking, education and advertising/marketing. These sectors were selected as they represent the services industry which accounts for a little over half of Uganda's GDP (*Index Mundi*, 2014). Given that there were defined age categories intended for the questionnaire 25-34 (young), 35-44 (middle-aged), 45-55 (senior)) it was deemed appropriate to have two respondents representing each category. The age categories were decided upon as businesswomen across these age categories will most likely have different experiences concerning social media (see 3.4). This reasoning was explained to respondents before the interviews as requesting age data may be sensitive to some. All respondents are members of at least one of the popular OSNs (Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) discussed in chapter 2. Different avenues were utilised in carrying out the interviews including phone calls, Skype, and even using OSN features like Facebook chat to conduct the conversations with respondents.

It is worth noting that OSNs can now be utilised in such a fashion to facilitate instant communication. The Facebook chat feature was utilised to interview one respondent. Respondents were allowed to select the most convenient method of instant communication and although Facebook chat is a text-based format of communication, the respondent mentioned that it was a convenient way to communicate while simultaneously multitasking. The text-based nature of communication meant that responses were slower, although generally in real time. However, it also made it very easy to capture the data verbatim as the entire message history was available for easy reference. The verbal interviews via Skype and phone calls were advantageous as respondents could provide lengthier answers, but also meant that the responses had to be paraphrased in some instances. These pros and cons can be weighed depending on the nature of the research being carried out.

The following sections present a summary of the information collected via the in-depth interview method.

4.2.1 General usage

- **How regularly do you access social network sites?**

Senior respondents spend a lot less time on OSNs. Access ranges from once a day to twice a month as opposed to younger respondents who report accessing these sites from three to twenty times daily. One of the senior respondents (45 years) communicated that her use is so irregular that she was considering abandoning social media altogether.

- **Are you a member of any social networking sites? If so, which social networks are you a member of?**

Facebook is the most popular site across all categories, followed by Twitter. This differs slightly from the data collected in the questionnaires where Facebook is still the most popular, but is followed by LinkedIn (see figure 5). In this instance, only one respondent reported being on LinkedIn alone. This also happened to be the oldest respondent (52 years).

- **Do you find that many of your friends or colleagues are members of online social networks?**

Young respondents are more likely to be members of more than one OSN than middle-aged and senior respondents, and also report having the majority of their friends on OSNs. One of the young respondents stated “I think it’s possible that almost all my friends are members of at least one social network. Facebook at least”. One of the middle-age respondents pointed out that she is seeing more of her friends joining over time, including those that seemed unlikely to join at first. The senior respondents also speculate that more of their friends might be joining these sites, but this was said with less certainty. They believe their younger friends and colleagues are especially active on these sites.

- **Where do you access social networks from the most (cell phone, laptop/PC).**

Where respondents access social networks from might indicate the ease of access and therefore increased usage times. Laptops are the most common access device to OSNs for respondents over 40 years while younger respondents utilise mobile phones more frequently. Using mobile phones means that younger members have more flexibility in accessing these sites and might explain to some extent why they use them far more frequently.

- **What would you say you spend the most time on when it comes to social networking? Communicating with others, viewing status updates, pictures, posting status updates, pictures and sharing/following links to stories or articles?**

Most respondents reported using OSNs mostly for purposes of keeping up to date with family and friends’ activities, the same reason given by respondents during the quantitative study. Only one respondent mentioned using OSNs primarily for professional purposes. This, not coincidentally, was also the respondent that is on LinkedIn alone.

- **Do you think using online social networks has had any impact on your computer skills? Are you more comfortable with technology as a result?**

Becoming more technologically adept may imply they are more empowered to use technology in other aspects for networking, searching, sharing and creation of information. Most respondents reported some improvement in their IT skills as a result of frequent access to OSNs. The young and middle-aged respondents seem to think simply spending an ever increasing amount of time online must be having some

effect on their IT skills, even though it would be difficult to measure this effect. Senior generally feel, however, that there has not been much improvement in their IT skills through using OSNs which was unsurprising as they report not spending much time on these sites anyway. One of these older respondents expressed that she does not feel that she has gained any more skills that she had before she started sending emails.

- **Do you feel that membership on social networks has been detrimental/disadvantageous to you in your professional work setting? If yes, how so?**

There is an overall positive attitude towards OSNs and respondents do not feel as though use has been detrimental in any way. No respondent stated that OSNs have been disadvantageous in any way, although the respondents over 40 generally leaned towards being more neutral about its effects.

- **Are you encouraged to use social networks at your workplace? Is your workplace policy negative, positive or neutral in this regard?**

This question was posed as their workplace policy might also influence how much time they spend on social networks. Most work places were reported as being generally neutral with regard to OSN access during work hours. As long as OSN use is not excessive, respondents report that their workplaces appear not to object to employees accessing OSNs during work hours. It is entirely possible, however, that most respondents simply have no idea what their official work place policy might be concerning social media and therefore simply regulate their usage time as they deem fit.

4.2.2 Online Social Networks and Professional development

- **Have you ever shared or received information on an employment opportunity through an online social network?**

All respondents said they are willing to share important information on employment or other work-related issues if they came across such through OSNs. Two respondents said that they had actually applied to jobs whose information they came across via OSNs, which led to an interview for one of them. The two oldest respondents (45 and 52) both conveyed that they strongly prefer to share such information verbally, and

would rather make phone calls or meet people in person if they have important information.

- **When you find information that could be useful for a professional on different sites, are you ever motivated to share this information on social networking sites? E.g. by sharing the link directly or posting an update about it.**

All respondents feel they have seen potentially valuable work place information at one point or other shared through stories/articles on OSNs. One respondent stated “If it wasn’t for Facebook I might not have known that information can just be shared with others so easily online”. LinkedIn was especially mentioned as providing links to seemingly work-relevant articles although some respondents say they are often too busy to actually follow these links. Young respondents report sharing information more frequently by ‘re-tweeting’ it or using the Facebook ‘share’ button.

- **Have you ever made a new connection with someone via online social networks for professional reasons?**

Nearly all respondents mentioned that they still prefer face-to-face meetings as opposed to networking online when it comes to interaction on a professional basis. Interestingly, this sentiment was shared across the age groups. Most professional relationships are still established and nurtured in the offline environment. LinkedIn was, however, mentioned by two respondents as a site that could potentially encourage professional networking. This is as a result of the information available on peoples’ job positions, roles and responsibilities which could help one to determine if the connection is worth making.

- **Are you a member of any group/ do you follow any organisation on these social networks that you feel is beneficial in your work context e.g. professional bodies such as marketers in Uganda, teachers, entrepreneur groups, international professional bodies such as Harvard business review, CPA etc.**

Answers to this question, the researcher reasoned, might help to highlight existing mentoring and networking opportunities. All respondents are members of, or follow, certain professional groups and organisations on OSNs, save for one. Not much information sharing/interaction appears to occur in many of these groups though.

There are, however, a few groups that are very active and share a lot of valuable information.

- **Does being able to view other people’s lives and information that they share through online social networks ever inspire you to want to improve your life professionally?**

Some respondents are inspired by the information posted by others to improve themselves professionally. These were respondents below the age of 40. Information viewed on OSNs also occasionally inspires entrepreneurial ideas and some respondents have gone on to implement their ideas. One respondent further mentioned the use of OSNs to then promote/market her products and services.

- **Do you follow/are you “friends” with any high profile businesswomen on social network sites? If so, has this enabled you to receive information that is of relevance to you?**

The young respondents appear to follow, and are more inspired by, high profile women on these sites. The senior respondents seemed to have a much harder time remembering if they were friends with any high-profile businesswomen.

The information gathered through the interview schedule provided some interesting and relevant points that were used in the development of the questionnaire (see appendix B). Following the interviews, most of the questions were deemed appropriate for inclusion in the questionnaire. However, an additional section was considered necessary to capture the views of respondents specifically regarding empowerment and social media (see 4.2.4). This emerged from the interviews, which revealed that some respondents believe that social media can offer benefits such as promoting gender equality and empowering businesswomen to become role models. These aspects were included in the questionnaire to test if these views are widely held.

The data from the quantitative study will be analysed in the following sections.

4.3 Quantitative data analysis

Following the in-depth interviews, a questionnaire was compiled that was divided into three main categories that each touched on various aspects. These categories will address the research questions and sub-questions and include: general Online Social Network usage,

Online Social Network usage at the workplace, and Online Social Networks and empowerment.

The questionnaire was distributed via email amongst businesswomen in Kampala in three main sectors, including: banking, marketing/advertising, and education. For each sector, the ideal was to have at least 15 women to complete the questionnaire. See figure 1 for actual numbers of respondents from each sector. Of the 50 questionnaires that were sent out, a total of 44 responses were received, with the marketing/advertising sector contributing the most responses. The overall response rate therefore stood at 88%. Several follow-up reminders to complete the questionnaire were ultimately very effective and led to responses from the majority of the respondents.

The data from the respondents will be discussed in the sections below. A total number of 44 respondents answered each question (n=44).

4.3.1 General Information

Question 1 – Employment sectors

Respondents were selected from three sectors, namely: banking, education, and advertising/marketing. This was so that similarities and differences in the use of Online Social Networks can be compared across these sectors.

The sectors are represented in terms of numbers of respondents as follows:

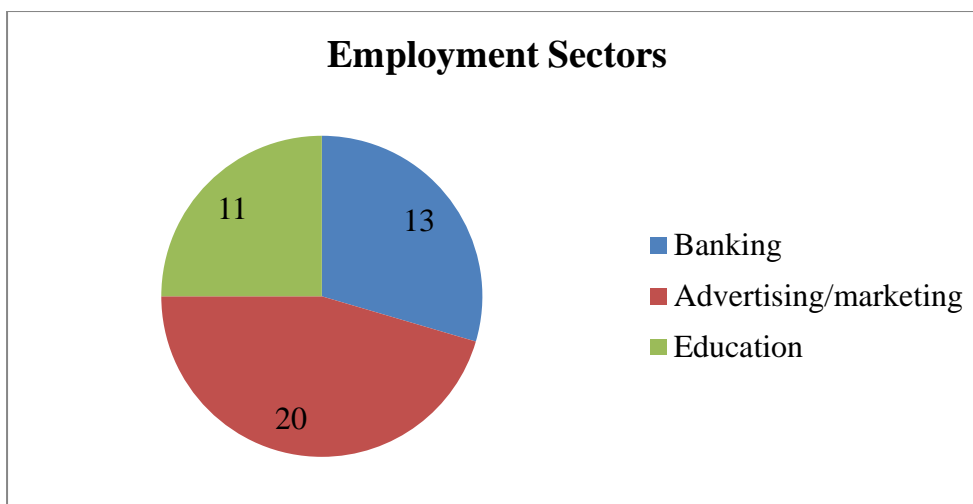


Figure 1

In the end, no significant differences were identified when analysing the data across the three sectors. The advertising/marketing sector is represented by the largest number of responses simply because there were more respondents for this group.

Question 2 - Age bracket

The age bracket is limited to individuals between 25 and 55 years of age split into three categories: 25-34 (young), 35-44 (middle-age), and 45-55 (senior). This is due to the fact that different generations of women in Kampala will most likely have major differences in experience when it comes to the use and uptake of social media. Understanding differences in use across age categories provides insight into how best to develop initiatives to reach women across these age categories. The numbers of respondents in the different age categories were identified as follows:

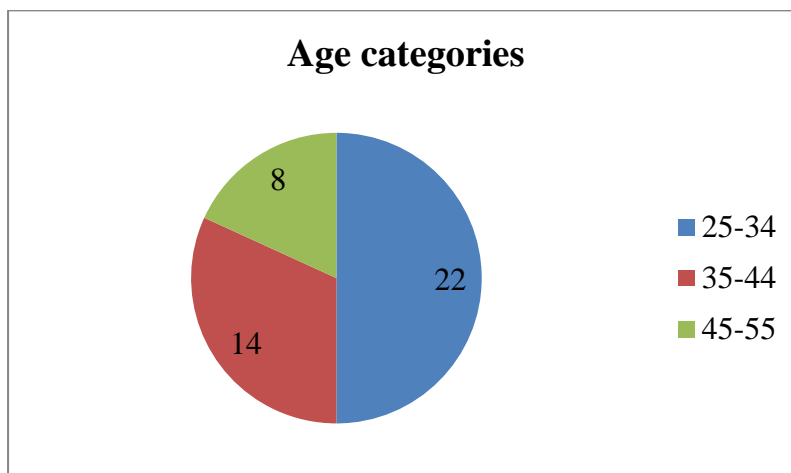


Figure 2

The largest number of respondents in the study came from the 25-34 year old category. This is because of all potential respondents approached by the researcher and other respondents through the snowball sampling method, it emerged that businesswomen in this category were more likely to be members of at least one Online Social Network.

4.3.2 General online social network usage

Question 3 - How often do you use Online Social Networks?

The purpose of this question was to identify how often respondents are using Online Social Networks. If they are accessing Online Social Networks often then it means these platforms

hold significant value in their lives. Respondents were presented with several options to indicate how often they utilise Online Social Networks.

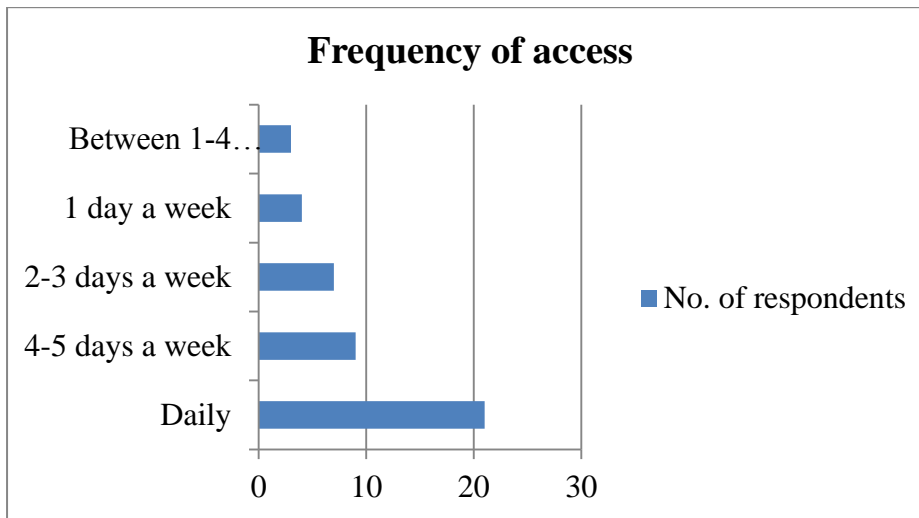


Figure 3

The data shows that social media use amongst the respondents is fairly regular with most respondents reporting daily access. However, it is important to draw a distinction between the different age categories. It was again unsurprising to discover that more individuals in the 25-34 year age category are accessing OSNs daily as compared to the other age categories. This was also noted in the qualitative study (see 4.2.1). All individuals accessing OSNs between 1-4 times a month were in the 45-55 age category, which corresponds with the responses in the interviews (see 4.2.1). The 25-34 year olds are accessing these sites far more often than those in other age categories.

Younger segments of society will usually adopt new technologies faster than those in older demographics. As social media becomes an important tool for development in different areas (see 2.2), a lack of participation by women in older age categories might mean that they lose out greatly on the opportunities currently offered via these media. If participation on these platforms becomes increasingly commonplace, as it is for owning an email account now, a whole segment of women in society that are still active members in the work force might find themselves lagging behind. How effective or efficient they are in the workplace will depend on how well they take advantage of the technologies put in place to facilitate work processes.

Question 4 - Where do you access social networks from the most?

Understanding where respondents access OSNs from most often will give an idea of the ease of access.

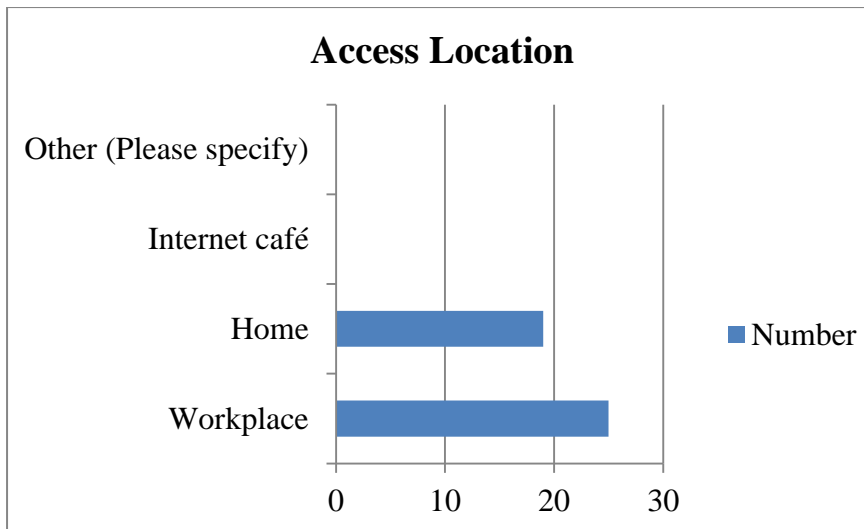


Figure 4

The majority of respondents across all age categories and sectors tend to log on most often while at the workplace. This most likely has to do with them simply spending much of their day at the workplace, but could also have to do with the free internet provided at many workplaces. It is unlikely that each respondent has access to OSNs from just one location, but where they gain access from the most confirms how much time they spend on these platforms. It would be interesting to know if accessing social media at home means members can spend more time browsing, as opposed to the workplace where access might be more frequent but with shorter overall browsing periods. Increased browsing periods might encourage more engagement/interaction.

The knowledge that many businesswomen log on to social media during work hours could encourage more work-related interaction via these sites. What better time than during work hours to tap into the collaborative and networking needs of businesswomen.

Question 5 - Which social networks are you a member of?

Respondents were asked to check all options that applied regarding which OSNs they are members of. This is to get an idea of the most popular OSNs among businesswomen in Kampala. OSNs that are particularly popular could indicate ease of use of these networks in term of their features/functionality, or could simply imply that people are more likely to join networks already experiencing high usage rates amongst people they already know.

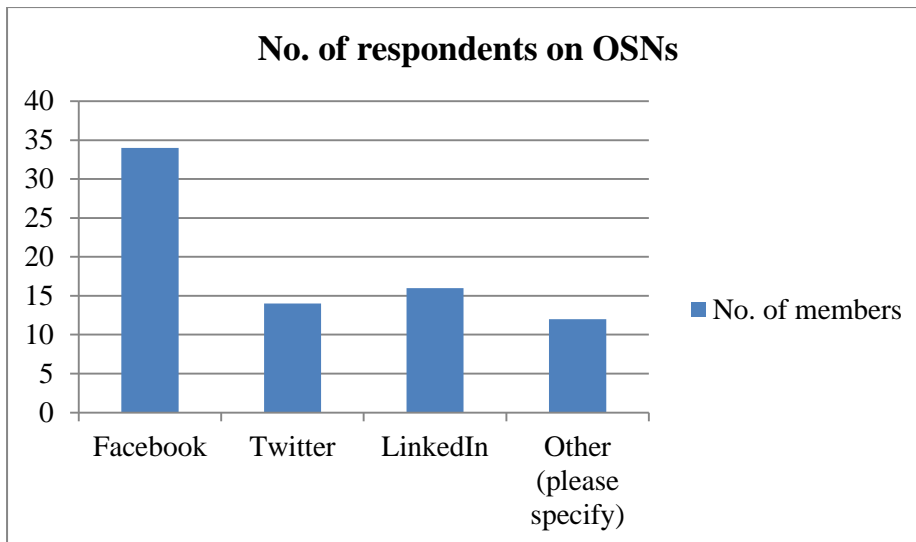


Figure 5

As Facebook is the world’s most popular OSN, it was expected that most of the respondents would have a Facebook account. It was interesting to note that the majority of respondents (6) in the 45-55 year age category had a LinkedIn account whereas only 4 are members were on Facebook. Perhaps the common impression of LinkedIn as a professional site encourages an older demographic to join (see 4.2.1). Other OSNs mentioned included Instagram and Google plus. These sites are worthy of inclusion in a social media education program given their rising popularity.

Question 6 - Which social network do you visit the most?

Although several respondents are members of more than one network, it is important to know which networks are the most popular and which they visit most often. Simply being a member of an OSN does not automatically mean that one is particularly active on the site.

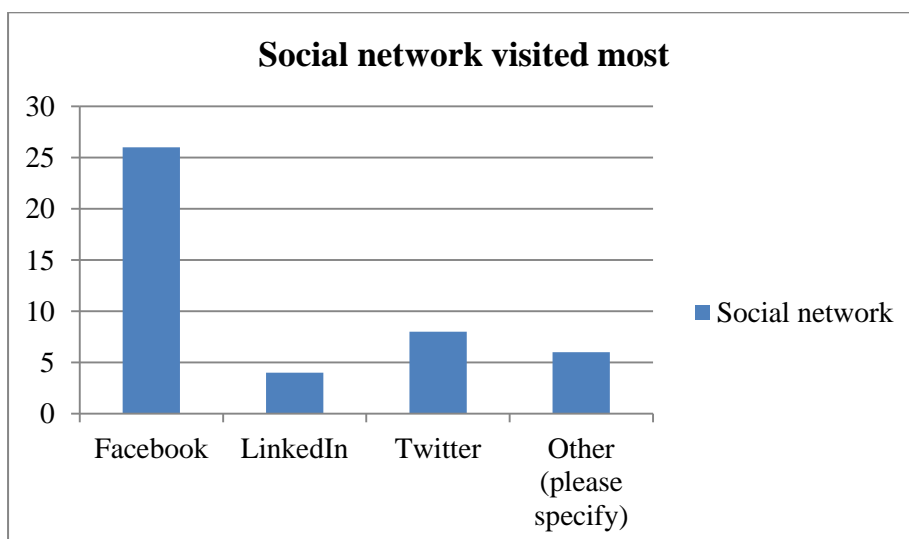


Figure 6

Facebook was the most visited social network, particularly among the younger respondents. As the world’s most popular online social network, this was predictable. For any individual or organisation therefore looking to leverage social media for empowerment, a Facebook presence might be the place to start. This is especially in the case of organisations that may be in the position to provide an education to women concerning social media, such as UWEAL and WOUGNET (see 5.2). It is interesting to note that although LinkedIn is the second most popular site according to the study in terms of numbers, it is not the second most visited. It might be that many respondents would like to use the site for its professional networking benefits, but find that there is little activity or engagement from others subsequent to joining. The other sites most visited likely include sites like Instagram and google plus mentioned in figure 5.

Question 7 - Which device do you use most to access Online Social Networks?

The device used most often by respondents can help to determine the ease of access as well as give an idea of how often they are able to access OSNs. More access from a mobile phone as opposed to a laptop might imply that the respondent is able to log on from numerous locations with ease, thereby increasing the amount of time they spend on OSNs.

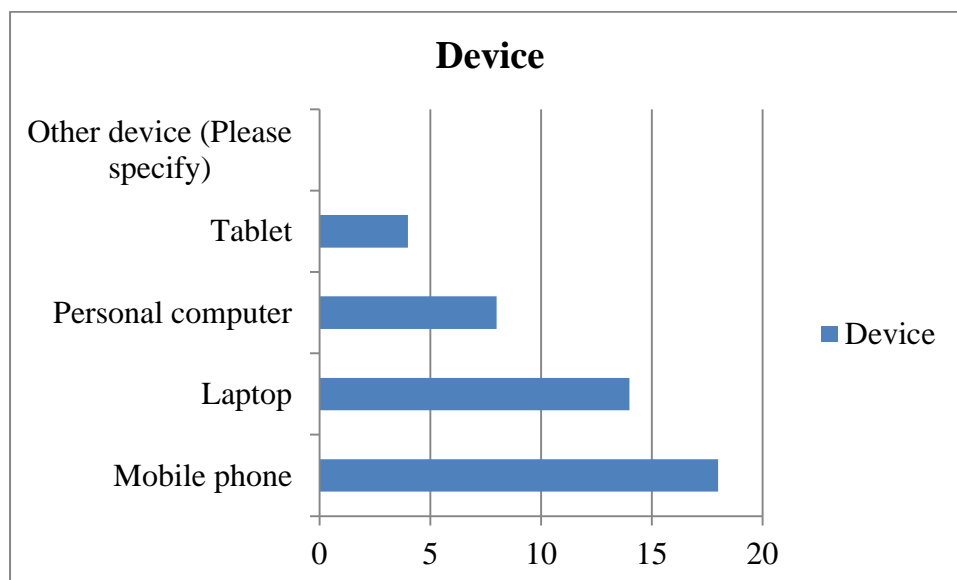


Figure 7

Mobile phones top the list when it comes to devices most used for accessing OSNs. Their mobility most likely contributes to them being available to use any time and from any place. Although the majority of respondents across the age categories indicated that they log on

most frequently at the work place, the devices they use differ depending on their age. Middle-aged and senior respondents were more likely to log on using lap tops while young respondents tend to use mobile phones more. This also corresponds with the data recorded during the in-depth interviews (see 4.2.1). Mobile phones as access points allow for greater accessibility across different physical or geographic locations. Young businesswomen are therefore able to access information/communications sent via social media much faster and even in real time than are middle-aged and senior women. Given that having the right information at the right time is very valuable, this could mean that simply being on social media does not guarantee that one is up to date. It is becoming very common for breaking news to be released via social media sites like Twitter and Facebook before it hits formal media outlets (Naone, 2008; Comminos, 2011). If this trend continues, being among the last to find out important business or market information could place one at a very disadvantageous position.

Question 8 - What would you say you use online social networks for the most?

OSNs are still seen as casual forms of light entertainment for many. The question sought to determine how many respondents are accessing OSNs for professional purposes as the key use.

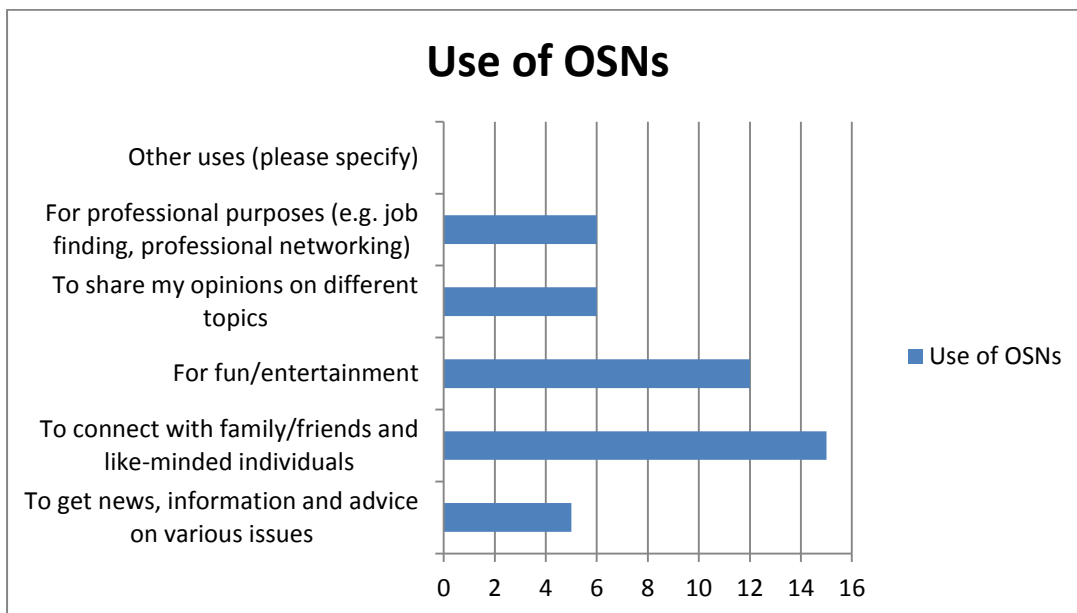


Figure 8

Utilising OSNs to connect with others, especially family and friends is the most popular reason for using these platforms. It appears that businesswomen in Kampala are yet to view these sites as avenues for real professional development. Social media were developed

precisely for the purpose of enhancing social interactions in the online environment (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012). Therefore, even though they are now being utilised for much more than social interactions, people still see them as casual avenues of entertainment and interaction. This may explain why most respondents still indicate that they primarily utilise social media for keeping up with friends and family as well as for fun/entertainment, which was also the case in the interviews (see 4.2.1). Respondents reported primarily using social media for connecting with family and friends, with the second most popular activity being for fun/entertainment. It is important to understand, nonetheless, that just because these are mentioned as the primary reasons for accessing these sites, it does not mean that the respondents are not receiving any benefits related to a professional context. If on average businesswomen utilise social media for casual social networking about 80% of the time and receive or share information of a work-related manner 20% of the time, this could still have a significant impact on their professional development.

Question 9 - Do you think using social networks has improved your computer skills in any way?

With increased OSN usage, it is highly likely that users might inadvertently become increasingly comfortable with using different computer technologies (see 2.10). Empowerment of businesswomen through OSNs can come through various ways including improving their technological skills. As technology is seen as a key driver of businesses in various sectors, having more people who are comfortable with it could significantly reduce learning curves for new technologies whilst increasing their effectiveness and efficiency in the completion of tasks.

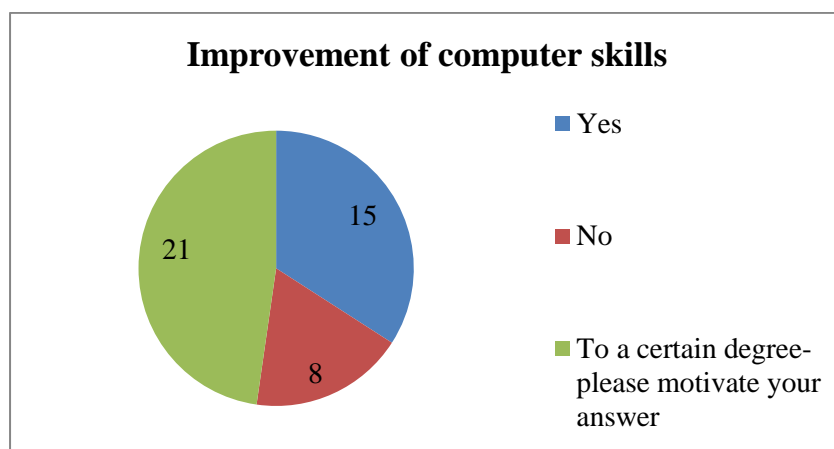


Figure 9

The vast majority agree that using OSNs has improved their technological skills, whether strongly or only to a certain degree. The most common reason given is that the different features on OSN sites allows users to learn how to better navigate sites and feel more comfortable in these environments. It was also mentioned that OSNs often change or upgrade their features and this forces members to adapt and learn. It was noted that the majority of those who did not feel their computer skills had improved also fall within the 45-55 year age category. This could be a result of this category also reporting that they spend the least amount of time on OSNs (see figure 3). It is easy to see the link between increased social media usage and improved IT skills. Social media sites regularly change and add features and functions. This forces users to constantly update their navigation skills and causes them to become more comfortable in online environments, even beyond social media.

Improving one's IT skills is crucial because in today's global business environment this is a prerequisite for effective participation. Learning how to navigate technology and online environments can set businesswomen in developing countries on track to becoming more successful at their tasks and making them more competitive on a global scale. This can be achieved with little educational investment on the part of their organisations. These sites are offering businesswomen the opportunity to be a part of the information age by encouraging them to become active participants in the online environment where infinite amounts of information and knowledge are circulated around the globe daily. The level of improvement in IT skills through social media use might be difficult to measure but is nevertheless a recognised benefit.

4.3.3 Online Social Networks and the workplace

Question 10 - Does your workplace allow the use of online social networks during work hours?

Workplaces that allow OSN usage during work hours might encourage increased use.

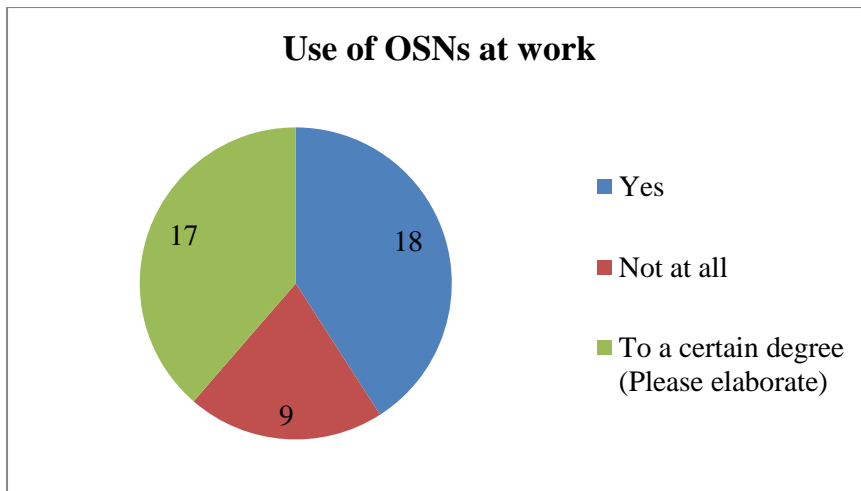


Figure 10

Many respondents elaborated that their workplaces allow OSN usage during work hours as long as it is within reason, hence their selection of ‘to a certain degree’. The majority indicated that using OSNs during official break times such as lunch hours was generally acceptable. Using social media during work hours may increase the likelihood that these sites become part of the work process.

Question 11 - How often have you found information via online social networks that you thought might be useful in your work (e.g. status updates, links to articles, news stories)?

Finding information often that can be used for work purposes will indicate the increasing value of OSNs for people in work environments.

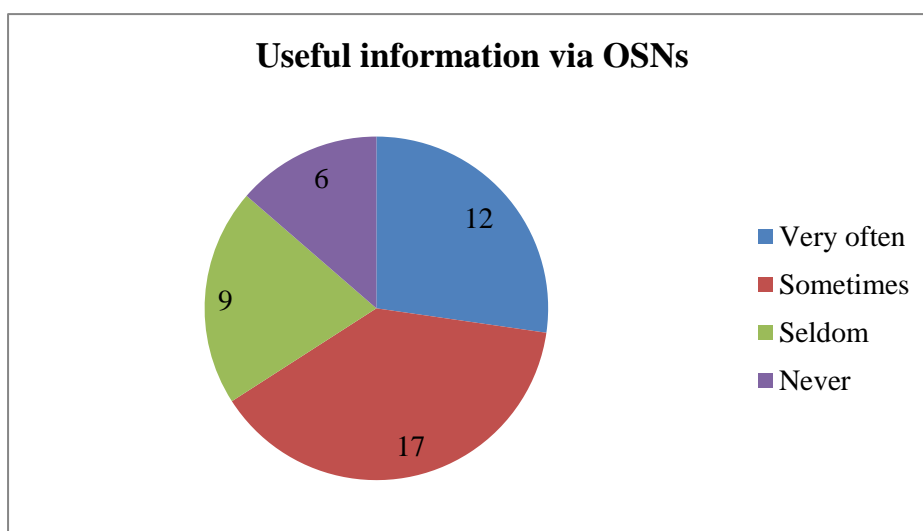


Figure 11

Most respondents report that they have at one time or another received information that was useful. Similar to data collected during the in-depth interviews, LinkedIn was especially highlighted as an OSN that publishes and provides links to relevant stories or articles depending on the sector the member is in. This was also mentioned in the interview schedules (see 4.2.2). As most respondents have reported at one point receiving or sharing information that could be beneficial in a professional context via social media, it goes to show that these platforms can be used for professional development even if it is currently on a small scale. The fact that some respondents (6) do report using social media for professional purposes is noteworthy. This means that these platforms are viable avenues for professional development and with additional resources geared towards understanding them, social media could become primary sources for work-related information.

Question 12 - When you find information online that is useful for yourself or others, how often do you share it via an online social network?

Information accessed online has the unique characteristic of allowing multiple end-users simultaneously. If respondents are not just on the receiving end but are also actively sharing information, it could potentially empower large networks of businesswomen.

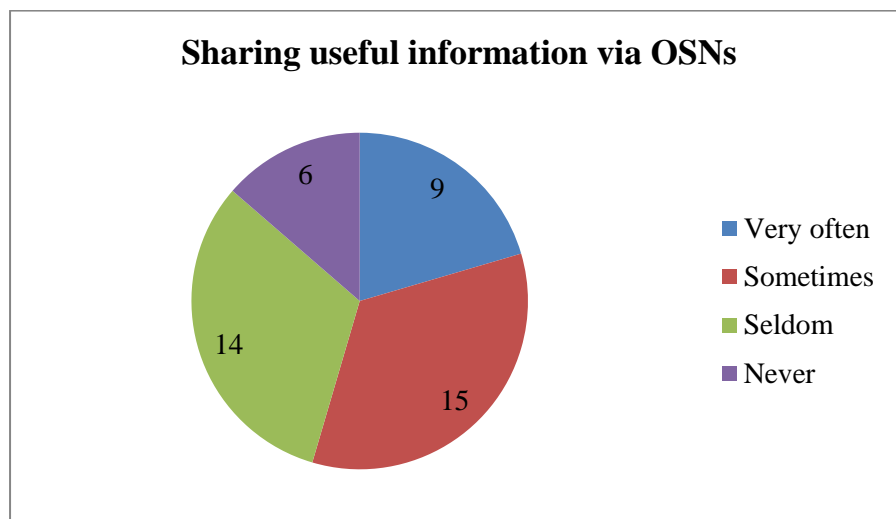


Figure 12

Many respondents do not share information often but most have at least shared information at one point. Some respondents indicated during the interviews that they share information more often now given the ease provided by convenient ‘share’ features/icons on many websites. More importantly for this study, the majority of respondents indicated that they had shared information that they thought might be useful in a work environment. This sharing of

information via social media is a fairly new element that allows members to very quickly and easily share information that they find on social media pages and also other websites that they access. It is difficult to speculate what the impact of being able to share information at the click of a button with so many people via social networks is. We can, however, assume that if even a small percentage of the over one billion people on social media are sharing information from various sources, then there is a lot more information in circulation that is reaching very many people on a daily basis. Further research into the actual real life implications of this information sharing would provide more insight into the effects of social media in various spheres.

Question 13 - Have you ever shared or received information about an employment opportunity through an online social network?

This question helps in understanding how OSNs can be used to share valuable information on employment opportunities outside of conventional sources.

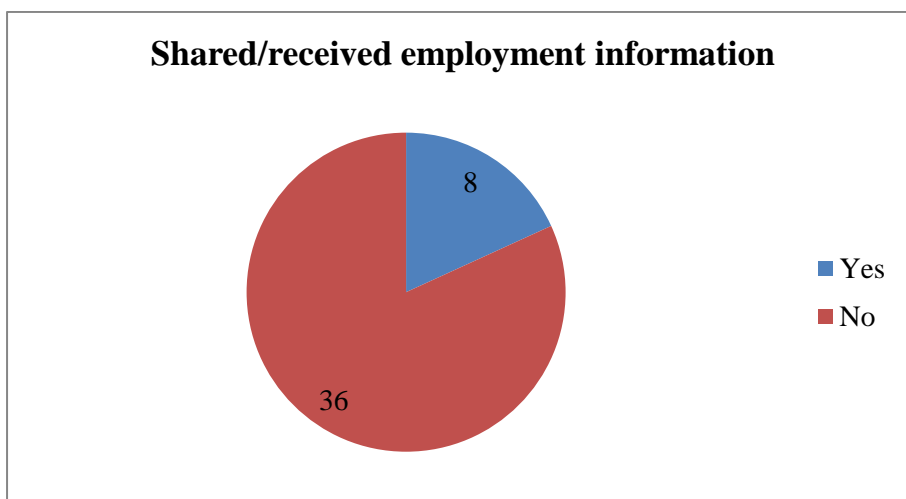


Figure 13

Most respondents have never shared/received information on an employment opportunity via an Online Social Network. A few have, however, shared/received information on an employment opportunity via social media. These responses are very important as they show that social media is a platform and avenue where important work-related information is being shared, albeit on a small scale in some instances. This is an area that can be emphasized in a social media education programme.

Question 14 - Are you a member of any group/or do you follow any organisation on these social networks that is beneficial in your workplace.

Organisation and professional type groups are very common on OSNs. They can provide information and networking opportunities that can potentially cause members to grow and develop in their work environments.

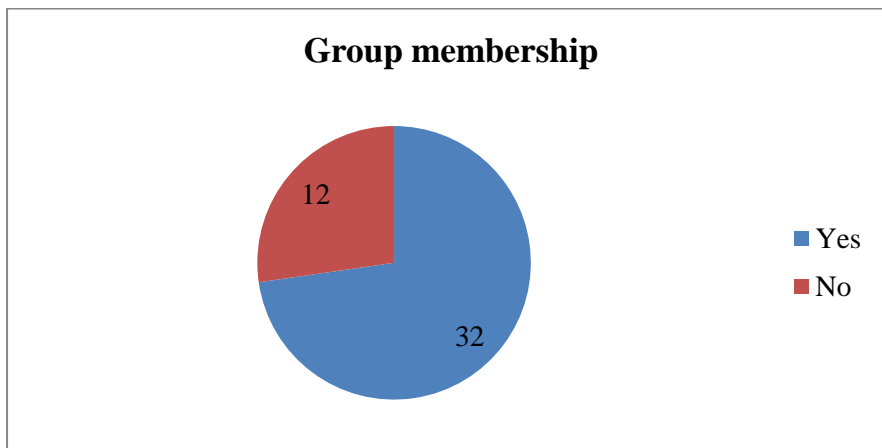


Figure 14

It is interesting that most respondents have identified and are members of some sort of organisation that could help them in their workplace. Professional groups or organisations in an offline setting can provide significant networking and mentorship opportunities. It would be interesting to compare how many individuals are, however, more willing to join such groups in an online environment for reasons of ease or convenience and how their interactions differ in online and offline settings. Although most respondents mentioned that subsequent to joining or following these groups or organisations there appears to be little activity, several did mention that they do participate in some dialogue or debate with other members or followers on occasion. Participation is also in the way of sharing advice or opinions and also there are many work-related articles shared within these groups. Respondents during the interviews in particular mentioned LinkedIn as a source of many valuable articles that are often relevant to their work (See 4.2.2).

Question 15 - How often do you use social networks to communicate with members of similar groups/organisations?

Increased communication with others within these groups can open one up to opportunities and information one may not have otherwise had access to.

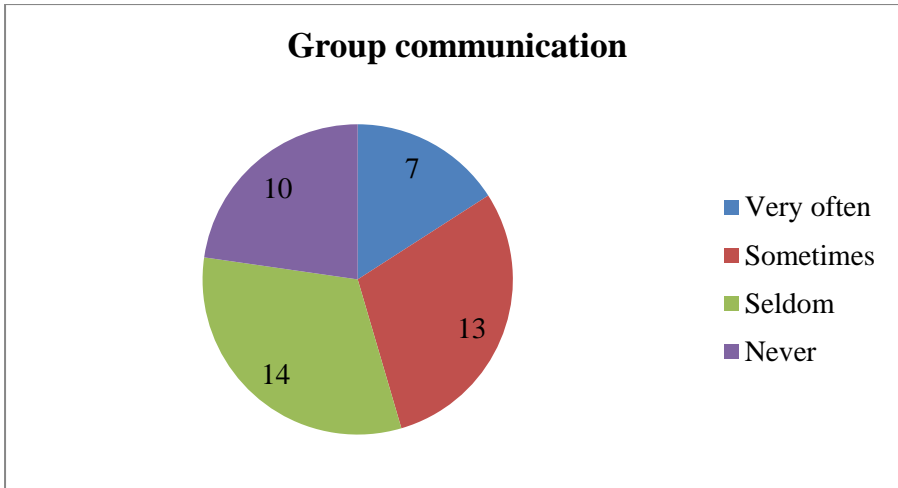


Figure 15

Some respondents indicated the reason for seldom communicating within these groups is that after joining these groups on OSNs, they did not see much communication coming from others members, which was also highlighted by respondents during the interviews (See 4.2.2). This could be because respondents use these sites to communicate primarily with friends and family, who might not be part of these groups.

Question 16 - What is the nature of the communication you have with members of these groups/organisations?

Respondents were asked to tick all options concerning the type of communication they had with members of groups/organisations which they are part of or follow via OSNs. The nature of communication might determine what kind of information they are receiving and sharing which has implications regarding the benefits they could derive from these groups.

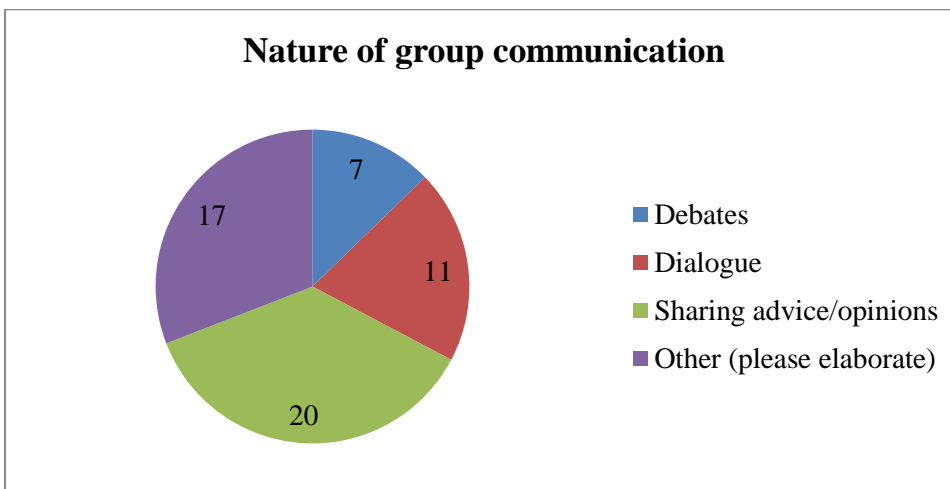


Figure 16

Many respondents who selected the ‘other’ option indicated that members in these groups often post links to articles, news stories, videos, etc. The information shared in different formats and the local, regional and global networks that are formed via Online Social Networks cannot be underestimated. When individuals join these groups that span countries, the magnitude of the information and ideas spread can be significant. It is entirely possible that these connections can be made online and then further fostered in the real life environment (see 2.8). These can lead to strong business connections that can result in the establishment of joint ventures or employment opportunities. Membership or following these groups may also allow businesswomen the opportunity to sell themselves in these settings, leading to opportunities in the offline environment.

Question 17 - Have you ever made a new connection with someone via online social networks for professional reasons? (For an employment opportunity, to network etc.)

This question is delving into the use of OSNs for purely online professional networking. Networking opportunities are an important key driving professional growth and development and using OSNs for this purpose can indicate a new avenue for interactions of this kind.

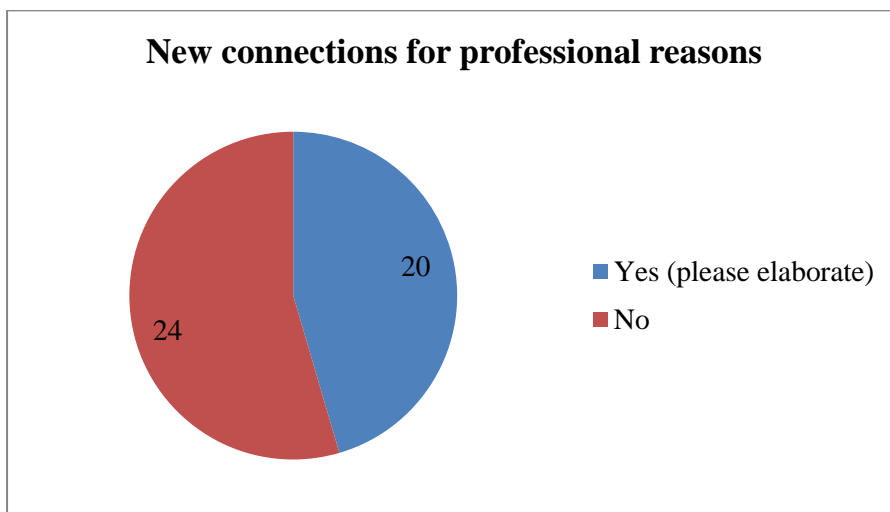


Figure 17

Some respondents elaborated that they especially see LinkedIn as a platform where they feel free to establish online connections, even with those they might not know, for professional purposes. Given that the main reason selected for using OSNs given by respondents is for keeping up to date with friends and family, it is not surprising that the majority have not used these platforms for establishing professional connections. Social media is nonetheless bringing people together who would never otherwise have met. Networking is vital to success

in a professional setting, and social media can improve networking opportunities for businesswomen who have traditionally been disadvantaged in the work environment.

Question 18 - Do you follow/are you “friends” with high-profile businesswomen in any industry on social network sites?

This looks at the use of OSNs for networking, as well as mentoring opportunities.

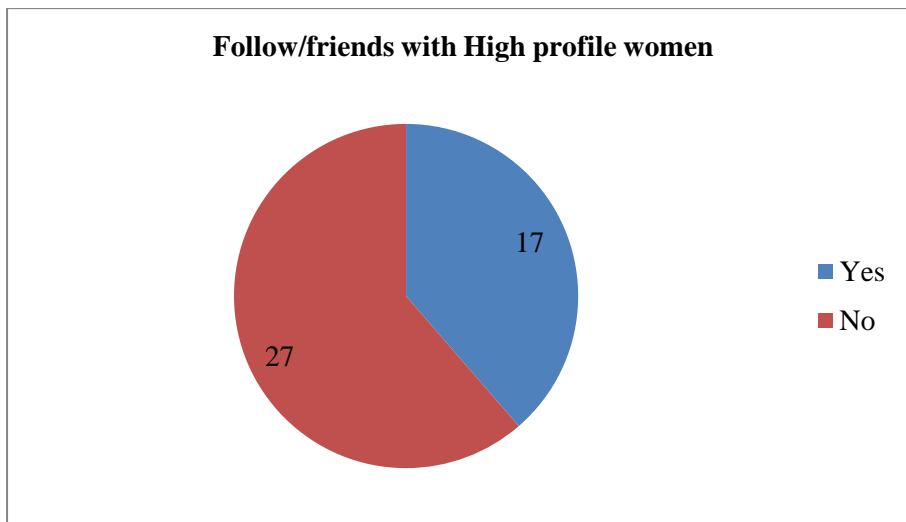


Figure 18

In correlation with the interviews (see 4.2.2), young respondents were more likely to report following or being “friends” with high profile businesswomen on these sites. This might be due to their greater numbers on these sites as well as the increased frequency of their access. These connections might play an important mentorship role for young businesswomen.

4.3.4 Online Social Networks and empowerment

Question 19 - Has information on social networks ever sparked a creative idea in your work or inspired an entrepreneurial idea?

With the large amounts of information shared via these platforms daily, this question sought to learn if respondents are discovering new information that they can use to perform their jobs better, or even come up with ideas that can be economically viable.

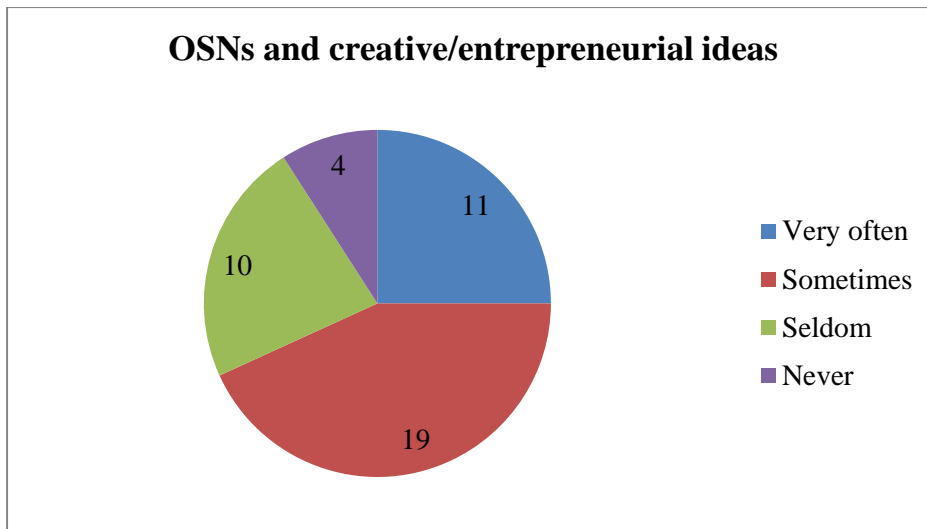


Figure 20

Most respondents have at one time or other come up with an entrepreneurial idea as a result of information received via OSNs. Whether businesswomen go on to implement the ideas or not could form the basis for future research into the economic effects of social media. The fact that ideas have been sparked is interesting as this is a very crucial element in the development of any venture.

Question 21 (See Appendix A)

This question sought to establish whether businesswomen in Kampala (as Ugandan women more generally) believe in the empowerment potential of social media.

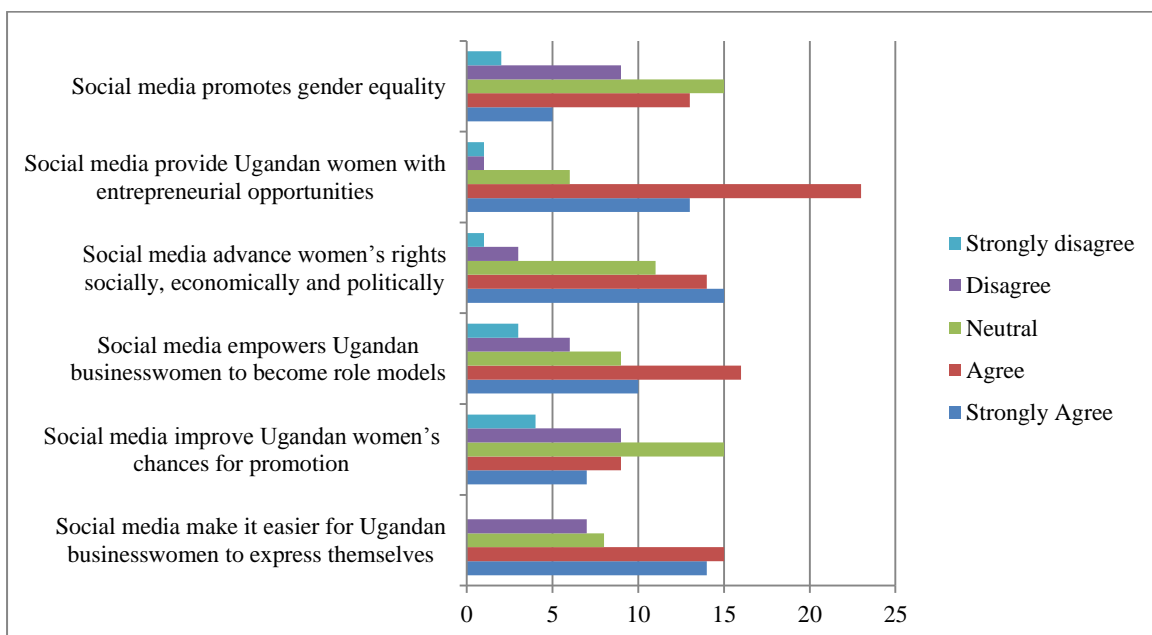


Figure 21

The data from figure 21 will be simplified to focus attention on the options selected by the majority of the respondents for each statement:

- Social media promotes gender equality - **Neutral**
Given the small percentage of internet users (18%) in Uganda as compared to the overall population (see 2.13), this response could mean that it is difficult for respondents to judge how social media could affect an issue as significant as gender inequality.
- Social media provide Ugandan women with entrepreneurial opportunities - **Agree**
This statement may have drawn many positive responses because the majority of respondents have already reported that social media often or sometimes spark creative and entrepreneurial ideas (see 4.2.2 and figure 20).
- Advancing women's rights socially, politically and economically - **Strongly agree**
It can be seen how this connects with the last statement below where most respondents agree that social media makes it easier for them to express themselves. The reasoning might be that being in position to air their views paves the way for increased recognition of their rights in different spheres.
- Social media empowers Ugandan businesswomen to become role models - **Agree**
As young businesswomen made up the majority of respondents, and they are also the category that reported following high-profile women more often on these sites (figure 18), it is highly likely that this opinion emanates primarily from them.
- Social media improve Ugandan women's chances for promotion - **Neutral**
It may be difficult for most businesswomen to see a direct correlation between social media use and job promotion, especially considering that their main use of these sites is for interacting with family and friends (see figure 8).
- Social media make it easier for Ugandan businesswomen to express themselves - **Agree**
Expectedly, most respondents agree with this statement as social media by their very nature encourage communication and formation of networks within which they can create, share, view and disseminate information (see 2.6).

Most respondents seem to agree that social media can empower businesswomen socially, politically and economically while providing opportunities for role models to come to the fore. Social media also allows them greater expression. All this information is very important

as it means that businesswomen might be open to initiatives and education that would teach them how to utilise social media effectively for their empowerment. If they believe in its value, they will open to such opportunities. It must be emphasised that although most businesswomen are not in disagreement with some of the statements above, their selection of the ‘neutral’ option for job promotion and gender equality means that they are not fully convinced of the power of social media for these two key issues. This raises the challenges and opportunities for women empowerment organisations such as UWEAL and WOUGNET (see 2.13.1.1 and 2.13.1.2) to include as empowerment imperatives in a social media education program those aspects that strongly promote the ability for social media to fulfil such objectives.

4.4 Conclusion

Although the social media penetration rate in Uganda is still low, it is nonetheless the fastest growing online activity (see 2.13). This is especially true among people in urban and peri-urban areas. The data presented and analysed in this chapter communicates without a doubt that social media is having a growing and positive impact on businesswomen in Kampala. This is evident from the respondents who agree, and in many cases strongly agree, that social media can have a positive impact on advancing women’s rights and providing opportunities for development. The data in this chapter has shed light on the views of Ugandan businesswomen in Kampala concerning social media. The overall impact of social media appears positive in the sense that many respondents are fairly active users of social media, and are utilising these platforms to share information and collaborate with other businesswomen.

5. CHAPTER FIVE – Guidelines for a social media education program

5.1 Preamble

The continued uptake in the use of social media is a reality among employees in organisations globally. Businesses in developing countries must begin to examine the use of social media by their employees in order to ensure that the benefits of such memberships are magnified (see 2.1 and 2.7.1). This study emphasizes the fact that women are often disadvantaged economically. Even businesswomen in urban settings feel disempowered in the workplace (Ellis, Manuel & Blackden, 2006). With an understanding of the challenges they face, organisations can use whatever tools and platforms are available to enable women in the workplace to contribute to their professional development. This will have major implications also for the business as whole, and it is in any business's best interests to do so. Businesses must begin to gain an in-depth understanding of social media and determine how to use these avenues to empower their employees, especially their female employees, in a variety of ways. The literature has revealed the tremendous benefits of social media for businesses (see 2.7.1). It is therefore not enough for management in organisations to sit back and hope that the manner in which their employees use social media will ultimately benefit them in some way or another. Solid plans and clear guidelines must be developed that will ensure that the benefits of social media for businesses come to fruition.

Often, businesses take an outsider view to social media. They view social media in terms of how these platforms can improve relations with clients or consumers. The literature reviewed in chapter 2 specifies the benefits of social media for businesses and individuals, but there was a gap concerning the ways in which businesses choose to support the development of their employees through these platforms (see 2.7 and 2.11). As a result, they fail to recognise the tremendous potential that social media provides in terms of empowering employees. It is vital that they begin to take an insider view to social media and start to develop strategies that will enable employees to;

- Engage more with management;
- Foster the desired corporate culture;
- Enhance employee collaboration; and

- Foster links within and between current and past employees for knowledge and idea sharing.

With social media, management can witness a virtual water cooler effect and view how conversations amongst employees take form and grow. They would see how networking and mentoring might take place in the online environment, and in some instances might be able to positively manipulate such interactions for the benefit of employees. Nearly half of the respondents in the study revealed that they have ever made a new connection via social media for professional purposes (see figure 17), and the majority belong to a group on one of these sites that they feel is beneficial in the workplace (see fig. 14). With an understanding based on the literature that women are more apt and more likely than males to utilise OSNs to connect and maintain relationships with potential and existing clients (Sripiya, 2013; Maurice, 2013; Ravi, 2014), the business strategies developed should seek particularly to target women. Many of the collaborative, socialisation, networking, contributive and mentorship workplace experiences sought by women, as identified in section 2.13.1, can be facilitated via social media.

Against this background, a set of guidelines will be proposed as a point of departure for businesses or women's organisations seeking to develop a social media education program for women. In order to implement a program that will empower women via social media, such organisations must first acknowledge that this demographic faces unique challenges. Ellis, Manuel and Blackden (2006) in section 2.13.1 identify some of the major challenges faced by Ugandan women, which typically arise from a lack of information needed to achieve business and work success. These challenges include:

- Lack of information on formalisation and registration of their businesses;
- Limited information concerning their legal rights in the work place;
- Being less educated and having fewer formal business skills than men;
- Inadequate information on capital and financing opportunities; and
- The unavailability of sufficient mentoring and support networks.

Many women in Kampala do not understand where to begin when it comes to utilizing social media to address the challenges above. Organisations already in existence for the very purpose of empowering women are in the best position to provide an appropriate educational

program. The Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association Limited (UWEAL) and the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), discussed in chapter 2, are therefore in a prime position to offer appropriate education that aims at utilising social media to empower businesswomen in Kampala. In this way they will strengthen and reinforce the main goals of their organisations. UWEAL, for example, aims to provide business development services and to create environments that meet the specific needs of Ugandan women. The organisation also supports business networking and mentorship forums for businesswomen. WOUGNET's main goal is to enhance capacities for exchange, collaboration and information sharing particularly through ICTs (see 2.13.1.1 and 2.13.1.2). Both organisations carry out regular seminars to provide education to women on a variety of subjects. Appropriate social media education should become a key focus area that these organisations address, and they can invite suitable participants from different sectors to participate in these programs. The organisations must ensure that the empowerment of businesswomen is at the forefront of this program.

A vital aspect discussed in chapter 2 was the issue of empowerment, and in particular concretely defining what empowerment entails (see 2.12.1). This is important as the researcher does not want to fall into the trap of creating an ambiguous idea of empowerment in this area. The main idea behind empowerment is that it must give 'power to' others. Empowerment will not be achieved if businesswomen in the education program are not able to actively and positively reap the benefits in their professional lives. Empowerment must therefore be dissected so as to understand precisely what must be addressed in order to achieve the goal of empowered participants. Chapman and Cattaneo (2010) help to dissect the concept by identifying five critical attributes of empowerment which include:

- Self-efficacy;
- Knowledge;
- Competence;
- Action and
- Impact.

Each of these attributes will be defined and applied to critically discuss how a social media education program can achieve its main goal of empowering businesswomen by promoting professional development (see 1.6 and 2.12.1).

A set of guidelines will be proposed in the following section that can assist organisations like UWEAL and WOUGNET in setting up social media education programs for businesswomen.

5.2 Guidelines

The sections below will discuss exactly how the education program can empower businesswomen through social media based on the five attributes of empowerment mentioned in the section above. They will be discussed in the guidelines, namely:

- Research - recognising the importance of **self-efficacy** and **knowledge**;
- Developing the program - establishing **competence** and encouraging **action**;
- Evaluation - measuring the **impact**; and
- Marketing the program.

5.2.1 Research - recognising the importance of Self-efficacy and Knowledge

In planning for social media education, it is vital that the organisations implementing such a program understand all the different factors that could have an implication on its success. It is therefore important that due diligence is done in the form of in-depth research to understand how social media is already being utilised amongst businesswomen. Research into the self-efficacy and knowledge of participants is therefore vital. Section 2.12.1 defines self-efficacy and knowledge as follows:

- Knowledge - understanding the relevant social context, power dynamics at play, possible routes to goal attainment, resources needed and the ways to attain them.
- Self-efficacy - an individual's beliefs about his or her abilities.

5.2.1.1 Knowledge

The knowledge attribute of empowerment is included under the research component as it is through an understanding of the social media-related characteristics of the participants that an effective program can be developed. This initial research can be as simple as requiring all potential participants to fill out forms that capture data such as their age, roles and responsibilities in their places of employment, etc. The organisations must designate this duty to competent individuals who can ask the right questions, and thereafter produce a meaningful report that can be used to make relevant decisions concerning a social media education program. This is important as this kind of data will influence how the organisation develops educational material and what resources will be required. The most popular social

media sites should also be identified and their unique features and functionalities should be matched to specific objectives that the program aims to achieve.

The literature shows that Facebook and Twitter are the most popular sites globally (see 2.5.2). This is corroborated in this study in which the most visited social media sites reported by Kampala businesswomen are indeed Facebook and Twitter (see figure 5). Popular social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn have features that can serve different objectives. LinkedIn as a professional social network would better serve the objective of sharing employment opportunities available within an organisation. Another point that arose during the study was that mobile phones are the most common devices used when accessing social media (see figure 7). The education would have to address how the use of different devices can maximise the features and functions of common social media sites.

5.2.1.2 Self-efficacy

In line with self-efficacy and the beliefs that participants have concerning their skill levels, the education program should be divided into different levels, such as: beginner, intermediate and advanced. Figure 4 showed that the respondents' access to social media varies greatly. Younger respondents (between the ages of 25-34) are accessing social media several times daily while many respondents over the age of 40 access these sites 1-4 times per month. Insights from data like this means the organisations offering the program should develop separate programs for women who are already active social media users and those who are not active users, or who have never even signed up on a social media site before. There would have to be additional resources set aside for the latter such as in terms of the number of trainers. The education offered to women who consider themselves to be at the beginner level in terms of their computer and social media skills should incorporate basic information e.g. what is social media and which are the most popular sites. It should also include common terminologies that are now commonplace amongst regular users e.g. what do 'sharing' and 'liking' mean in these environments. Education for advanced users can skip directly to improving and maximising one's social media identity. Initial research is therefore critical as it will enable the educational organisation to articulate the skills that allow potential participants to determine what skill levels they actually fit into.

5.2.2 Developing the program - establishing Competence and encouraging Action

This guideline addresses the competence and action attributes of empowerment when establishing a social media education program. Competence and action are defined in section 2.12.1 as follows:

- Competence - an individual's level of actual skill relevant to a task;
- Action - in order to achieve goals an individual must take action.

Following in-depth research into the social media usage patterns of businesswomen in the target area, the educational organisations must develop a comprehensive program that takes into consideration the unique characteristics and challenges of businesswomen in Kampala. Social media experts must be identified who can offer the educational program, with the eventual goal that the organisations should have their own in-house experts. Educational programs and schedules should be drawn up in collaboration with the experts, while sharing with them the data gathered via research. This is so that the education can be tailored specifically for the participants.

5.2.2.1 Establishing Competence

Taking into consideration the competence of the participants, practical hands-on exercises must be incorporated to ascertain that the participants' levels of skills are suitable. It is likely that a participant's self-efficacy (individual's beliefs) and competence (actual skills) differ, hence the need to determine their capabilities from the outset of the program. Practical exercises should be consistent throughout the program that tests the abilities of participants to put the skills into practice based on their reported skill level. Throughout the program, participants should be expected to put into practice the different tips and techniques that are taught. Organisers of the program must therefore ensure that participants have computers at hand so that the education goes beyond a theoretical lesson, and allows the presenters to understand the actual competence levels of participants.

5.2.2.2 Encouraging Action

Cattaneo & Chapman (2010) state that in order to achieve goals, an individual must take action. It is important that the goals are identified and listed before a program is drawn up to determine what actions participants must take to fulfil them. The goals should include determining how social media education will empower businesswomen to:

- Establish mentorship and networking opportunities;

- Encourage collaboration;
- Show businesswomen how search for information;
- Facilitate virtual brainstorming; and
- Provide information on employment and professional growth/advancement opportunities etc.

The goals must be as specific as possible and attempt to address as many of the challenges these women report facing as possible. Few respondents (6 out of 44) in the study mention using social media primarily for networking (see figure 7), and yet one of the main challenges Ugandan businesswomen mention is a lack of networking and support opportunities (see 2.13.1). The goals must state how social media can begin to address such challenges. For example, it is not enough to state that social media should facilitate networking amongst businesswomen. The goal must state precisely how this networking might happen. Examples will be given below to show how action can be taken by participants to meet the goals of the program:

- Networking - participants should identify relevant groups via social media, analyse and evaluate their activities and decide which to become members of. Evaluating and analysing group activities is important as it was mentioned in the study that members often join groups but find that there is little activity subsequent to joining (see figure 15 and 4.1.1). Businesswomen must be guided through the process of selecting and following groups that will be beneficial for them;
- Mentorship- participants should make a list of high-profile individuals that they think might influence them in the way of mentoring. They should perform a search for these individuals on social media, with the intention of making connections through friending or following them. Younger respondents in the study especially reported finding these types of connections useful (see 4.1.1); and
- Collaboration and information sharing - participants can learn how to create online groups. This can be done through creating the mentioned groups and inviting other participants in the educational program to join. It should then be specified that all participants must share some form of relevant information in these group settings over the course of the program, e.g. links to interesting articles, videos, employment

opportunities, etc. This will encourage businesswomen to become proactive participants in such settings that could help do away with the inactivity they mention the experienced in the online groups they join.

The program must be very practical and hands on so that at the end, participants are able to continue to take action in their daily lives. The program should establish what targets participants should accomplish at the end of the education such as:

- Having a full-fledged LinkedIn profile that advertises their professional skills and qualifications;
- Membership to, or following of, several active online groups for professional purposes on Facebook and Twitter; and
- Proven ability to share relevant professional information in a variety of formats.

Businesswomen in such a program must be made to understand the remarkable benefits that come from joint efforts. They must understand how taking action in the social media environment can enable them to create powerful networks that can benefit large groups of women. It is therefore also important that participants in the programs commit themselves to taking action when it comes to continuous learning of new and evolving technologies in light of the tremendous impact they can have if leveraged appropriately.

5.2.3 Evaluation - measuring the Impact

Impact as an attribute of empowerment is defined as an assessment of what happens after an individual takes action. There must be measurement indicators to establish whether the objectives of the social media education program are being met. These indicators must be simple and easy to measure and a timeline should also be proposed. This can be in the form of follow-up surveys to determine what influence improved social media knowledge has had on the lives of the businesswomen who take part. This feedback can enable the organisations to adapt and improve the program as necessary. Hill (2012: online; see 2.13) specifically refers to Uganda when he states that “...the country also needs a way to collect data on Internet users to begin to better understand Internet, mobile and consumer behavior via business analytics”. There is a poor culture of data collection in the country, particularly when it comes to online activities. This culture must be addressed so that any investment into an education program is justifiable based on the proven benefits it can bring. It is only from

an understanding of how these technologies affect the users that greater involvement will be seen.

Follow-up studies with participants can include measurement indicators that track how their social media behaviour has changed in terms of:

- How often they are accessing social media;
- How often they are sharing work-related information with others;
- How much information and knowledge participants are receiving that is relevant in their work environment;
- How many employment opportunities they are sharing and/or are exposed to;
- What creative and entrepreneurial ideas are being inspired through information on these sites; and
- Their general thoughts on the influence social media have had in their work settings.

Measuring the results of an educational program will allow the organisation to determine how to improve the program and provide more benefits for future participants.

5.2.4 Marketing the program

It is important that these organisations market the availability of the educational programs using a variety of platforms including print and digital mediums. This is so that as many women as possible can participate. The organisations can furthermore approach businesses directly to market the program and inform them of the benefits their female employees stand to gain from such an education. Given that it might not be feasible for businesses to run educational programs like these internally that are specifically geared towards female employees, they might be more willing to delegate the task to an external party. It has been noted that UWEAL and WOUGNET both currently market upcoming events via their respective websites, their Facebook and Twitter pages, and through newsletters. They can combine these with traditional media such as newspapers, television and radio advertisements, as well as direct marketing using email lists. Marketing messages must include information on the program dates, benefits of social media education, who is eligible and the costs, if any. These organisations will increase the likelihood of the success of these programs if they partner with others to pool resources and expertise.

5.3 Conclusion

It is undeniable that social media can provide powerful benefits for businesswomen in Kampala. If this potential is recognised early enough by organisations like UWEAL and WOUGNET, they will empower businesswomen in Kampala and elsewhere in Uganda in the short and long run. It is difficult for businesswomen and organisations to know where or how to leverage appropriate tools and platforms, but with clear and well-established guidelines based on solid evidence of how businesswomen actually use social media, they have a point of departure. These guidelines should be used not only to take advantage of existing technologies, but can also give businesswomen the confidence they need to use new and evolving technologies for professional development.

6. CHAPTER SIX – Findings, recommendations, and conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The findings revealed a generally unsurprising message, namely that social media as a form of new media can and are empowering businesswomen. The literature reviewed in chapter 2 brought to light the fact that new media, although bearing characteristics similar to traditional media, offer new opportunities because the rate of their uptake has been much faster (see 2.4). Traditional media have long been recognised for their roles in social, political, and economic empowerment, and now new media are taking up the mantle.

In order to maximise their advantages it is simply not enough to hope that they will be utilised effectively and efficiently. Concrete plans are necessary to deliver the benefits of new media. The guidelines in chapter five for a social media education program provide a departure point for organisations to implement plans that will empower businesswomen.

This chapter presents the findings of the study, recommendations, and a general conclusion.

6.2 Findings

The findings for the research questions draw on the literature review, as well as the interview and questionnaire responses, and are presented in the order of the sub-questions, followed by the main research question.

Sub-question 1 - How are social media changing the way African businesswomen work today?

- Social media are enabling African women and African businesses to author their own content and share it locally and globally. African women are no longer passive receivers of information but can place their own relevant content online, and as female employees the sharing of information and networking are prominent features of their use of social media (See 2.2 and 2.11).
- African and Arab businesswomen face similar challenges, and social media have made it possible for them to market their small business ventures more effectively. This has allowed them to achieve a measure of financial independence in predominantly patriarchal societies. Like their Arab counterparts, African businesswomen can now sustain themselves financially to afford some of the things they want and still remain stay-home mothers and home makers (see 2.11.1)

- African businesswomen are more likely than their male colleagues to connect and maintain relationships with potential and existing clients, and social media allows them to nurture and expand these business activities even further and more intensively. In doing so, African businesswomen are positioning their organisations to improve their competitiveness and to survive economic downturns (see 2.11.1).
- Social media has enabled African businesswomen to address gender and workplace inequality issues by penetrating traditionally male professions such as medicine, engineering, and information technology. In Uganda and Nigeria, for example, the ICT sector is one of vigorous growth that offers employment and income opportunities for skilled and qualified women. Social media are extending their reach dramatically and improving their opportunities to challenge traditional gender roles in careers and professions (see 2.12).
- Social media are enabling African businesswomen to express themselves, and are giving them a stronger voice (see 2.12.2). They are using social media to establish dialogues on issues that affect women more generally in society, such as gender-based violence, polygamy, religion, and homosexuality. They are therefore leading the way in addressing wider social issues by creating dialogue on these platforms, and encouraging other women to speak out more freely, and connecting them across borders as they network and collaborate.

Sub-question 2 - How are businesswomen in Kampala using these social media (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) for professional purposes?

- Businesswomen in Kampala are reporting an improvement in their computer skills as they make regular use of these sites, which often add new features and functions (see figure 9).
- There is a sharing of employment opportunities and work-related information as businesswomen report that they are discovering relevant information, and occasionally share this information with others on these sites (see figure 11 and figure 12).
- Kampala businesswomen are joining professional groups online and engaging in debates, dialogue while sharing opinions and advice with others in these groups (see figure 14 and figure 16).

- Businesswomen in Kampala are connecting with/learning about high-profile local and international businesswomen on these sites, and are receiving valuable networking and mentorship opportunities as a result (see figure 18).
- Information that these businesswomen are coming across via social media is sparking creative and entrepreneurial ideas (see figure 19).
- Many businesswomen have made new connections via social media for work-related purposes e.g. networking, sharing/receiving information on employment opportunities etc. (see figure 17).
- Most businesswomen in Kampala are unconvinced/neutral that social media improves their chances of promotion, but agree that it allows them to become role models (see figure 21). For the statements that most respondents felt neutral about, this raises the challenge for organisations offering a social media education program to reinforce the capability of social media to promote businesswomen and to advance gender equality.
- These women are also generally positive about social media effects on women's social, economic and political rights while promoting gender equality (see figure 21).

Sub-question 3 - What guidelines for social media education will contribute to the professional development of businesswomen in Kampala?

Chapter five proposed a set of guidelines that apply the five attributes of empowerment (Chapman & Cattaneo, 2010) in a social media education program that will contribute to the professional development of businesswomen in Kampala. The attributes include: self-efficacy, knowledge, competence, action, and impact. The guidelines are summarised below:

- **Research** - recognising the importance of self-efficacy and knowledge (see 5.2.1).
It is important to have an in-depth understanding of the potential participants before establishing a social media education program. Their social media habits and their level of expertise in the use of these technologies will enable the organisations undertaking the education to develop an appropriate program suitable for the participants' level of skills while taking their different contexts into account.
- **Developing the program** - establishing competence and encouraging action (see 5.2.2).
During the education program, exercises must be incorporated that enable the presenters to gauge the participants' true skill levels in relation to social media. At the end of the program, participants must have achieved certain targets and should be able

to use social media effectively to improve opportunities for networking, mentorship, collaboration, etc.

- **Evaluation - measuring the impact** (see 5.2.3)

There must be measurement indicators agreed upon before the education program which the presenters will use to determine whether the program has been successful. Follow up with the participants must be done after a certain predefined period to determine the influence the social media education has had in their professional lives.

- **Marketing the program** (see 5.2.4)

A social media education program can only ultimately be successful if the right people are aware of it and sign up to take part. The organisations offering this education must therefore use all platforms available to them to promote, market, and advertise the program to businesswomen.

Main research question - How can social media (Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) contribute to the professional development of businesswomen in Kampala, Uganda?

- Social media are having a tremendous impact on African businesses by enabling them to connect and network greatly. These media are also allowing African businesses and individuals to receive valuable information that is giving them a competitive edge while simultaneously facilitating their marketing and promotion. African businesswomen are finding that social media are empowering them in their personal and professional lives as they are able to express themselves more effectively via these platforms to advance their rights. Businesswomen are also able to weather economic downturns better as a result of the relationships that they can nurture through social media.
- Social media are enabling women in Kampala to form new connections and to network with others on a professional basis. They are being exposed to mentorship opportunities and are using these sites to create dialogue and take part in discussions with others. These women are sharing/receiving valuable information on employment opportunities while improving their computer skills as they navigate these online environments. Entrepreneurial and creative ideas are also being inspired by information shared on these sites. Very importantly, women in Kampala believe in the value of social media for self-expression, giving them opportunities to become role models, and advancing their social, political, and economic rights.

- Through the establishment of educational programs, businesswomen in Kampala can be taught how to utilise the features and functions of social media to empower themselves. These educational programs can be offered by organisations such as UWEAL and WOUGNET that are already involved in business-related activities that empower women. The organisations must ensure that, as they construct these educational programs, the concept of empowerment is clearly understood as professional development so that the attributes of self-efficacy, knowledge, competence, action, and impact are implemented.

6.3 Recommendations

Recommendations will be proposed in the paragraphs below that can help businesswomen to take advantage of social media for their professional development.

Social media have provided platforms for individuals to advertise themselves and their knowledge and skills. Businesswomen have reported that they have shared/received information on employment opportunities via social media (see 4.2.2 and figure 13). Through sites like LinkedIn, members can demonstrate their professional talents and experience. They can use the knowledge gained through a social media education program such as the one proposed in chapter 5. This will enable women to agree with the idea that social media can provide opportunities for promotion (figure 21). It is therefore crucial that women should take the business of managing their online identities very seriously. For example, including business-appropriate pictures and sharing/posting as much information that can highlight their professional achievements as possible. These can include accolades, articles, links to blogs, etc.

Social media empowers businesswomen to engage, network, and collaborate (see 2.12.2, 4.2.2 and figure 17). This is an important function that serves to drive business innovation and that organisations need to appreciate. Businesswomen should be encouraged to engage and collaborate through sites like LinkedIn and Facebook where they can be directed to join groups that allow them to contribute their ideas and insights while also answering questions. The guidelines proposed in chapter five can be a starting point for organisations to establish such groups. This dialogue will help in the sharing of ideas that when implemented can benefit the organisation. A further benefit would be that the company's visibility increases as businesswomen communicate and collaborate on these sites.

In order to increase the networking potential provided on these sites, businesswomen can join groups related to their work, especially if these are implemented by their organisations. Women stated that subsequent to joining groups on social media sites, they saw very little activity (see 4.2.2 and figure 14). It is important to go beyond simply joining these groups however, and actually beginning to dialogue with other members. Through asking/answering questions in these forums and participating in discussions, businesswomen can increase their visibility online and get themselves known in certain professional circles, which can lead to promotion, opportunities for collaboration or new employment. It is important to recognise that many valid job postings are shared via these forums and women should ensure that they actively pursue any that seems of interest to them. Furthermore, in these group settings women can use the chance to share their professional successes while identifying and follow any individuals or companies for whom that they would like to work.

Businesswomen must be proactive and not hesitate to extend online connections into offline interactions. It is a common misconception that online social networking rarely leads to face-to-face meetings. Many social media groups are taking their interactions into real-life settings and using the opportunities to interact extensively, and create strong connections with like-minded individuals (See 2.8).

Young females entering the workforce should have the knowledge and skills instilled in them that can assist them in becoming successful businesswomen. WOUGNET and UWEAL both aim to empower young females through a variety of initiatives (see 2.13.1.1 and 2.13.1.2), and social media should be one of the channels they utilise. Younger businesswomen already state that they are using these sites to follow high-profile businesswomen (see 4.2.2 and figure 20). These organisations should facilitate networking and mentoring using social media to target females before and after their entry into the workforce.

With the understanding that women tend to utilise social media more for collaborative and networking purposes than men (see 2.12.2), educational organisations should encourage businesswomen to go beyond simply utilising social media for personal reasons, and encourage them to form connections and networks that can be of benefit in the workplace and in business processes.

6.4 Conclusion

The history of social media is still young and it is difficult to foretell what the future will bring. However, the global and local implications of social media are very real and very

powerful. It is essential that we understand the benefits they can offer to developing countries like Uganda, and try to maximise them. This is particularly necessary for disempowered groups like women. It is only through a deeper understanding of how and what social media can be used for that we can develop plans to take full advantage of them, now and in the future.

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Appendix A: In-depth interview schedule

General questions regarding social networks

1. Age, name, profession. Brief background to job description, company and daily duties.
2. Are you a member of any social networking sites? If so, which social networks are you a member of?
3. How regularly do you access social network sites?
4. Where do you access social networks from the most (cell phone, laptop/PC).
5. Are you allowed to access social networks at work?
6. Are you encouraged to use social networks at your workplace? Is your workplace policy negative, positive or neutral in this regard?
7. Do you find that many of your friends or colleagues are members of online social networks?
8. Which network(s) do you visit the most?
9. What about the social network that you visit most often appeals to you?
10. What would you say you spend the most time on when it comes to social networking?
Communicating with others, viewing status updates, pictures, posting status updates, pictures and sharing/following links to stories or articles?
11. Do you think using online social networks has had any impact on your computer skills? Are you more comfortable with technology as a result?

Social networks and Professional development

1. Do you ever happen on information via social networks that you think might be beneficial in your work e.g. inspiring new ideas, ways to make your job more efficient or effective? Give examples of any specific instances, if any, that you felt made a difference.
2. When you find information that could be useful for a professional on different sites, are you ever motivated to share this information on social networking sites? E.g. by sharing the link directly or posting an update about it.
3. Are you a member of any group/ do you follow any organisation on these social networks that you feel is beneficial in your work context e.g. professional bodies such as marketers in Uganda, teachers, entrepreneur groups, international professional bodies such as Harvard business review, CPA etc.
4. Do you ever directly interact with other people who are members in the groups? E.g. through debates, dialogue, advice, opinions, networking, information retrieval, idea generation etc.)
5. Have you ever made a new connection with someone via online social networks for professional reasons?
6. Have you ever shared or received information on an employment opportunity through an online social network?
7. Does being able to view other people's lives and information that they share through online social networks ever inspire you to want to want to improve your life professionally?
8. Do you follow/are you "friends" with any high profile professional women on social network sites? If so, has this enabled you to receive information that is of relevance to you?
9. Has information on social networks ever sparked a creative idea in your work or inspired an entrepreneurial idea, whether you went on to implement it or not?
10. Do you feel that membership on social networks has been detrimental/disadvantageous to you in your professional work setting? If yes, how so?

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research project is to investigate if and how Online Social Networks such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn can be used as a tool for empowering business women in Uganda. You are invited to participate in this research study because as a woman in the business environment in Uganda your views will be invaluable in gaining understanding into the topic at hand.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time.

The procedure involves filling in an online survey that will take approximately 10-20 minutes. Your responses will be confidential and no identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address; will be collected. The survey questions will be about your usage and views/opinions concerning Online Social Networks particularly in the work place.

To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only and may be shared with University of Pretoria representatives.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Anita Acon (email-acon.anita@up.ac.za).

This research has been reviewed according to University of Pretoria procedures for research ethics.

A. General Information

1. Industry/Field of work
 - Banking
 - Marketing/Advertising
 - Education

2. Age bracket
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-55

B. General online social network usage

3. How often do you use social networks?
 - Daily
 - 4-5 days a week
 - 2-3 days a week
 - 1 day a week
 - Between 1-4 times a month

4. Where do you access social networks from the most?
 - Workplace
 - Home
 - Internet café
 - Other (Please specify)_____

5. Which social networks are you a member of? (Check all that apply)
- Facebook
 - Twitter
 - LinkedIn
 - Other (Please specify)_____
6. Which social network do you visit the most?
- Facebook
 - LinkedIn
 - Twitter
 - Other (Please specify)_____
7. Which device do you use the most to access social networks?
- Mobile phone
 - Laptop
 - Personal computer
 - Tablet
 - Other device (Please specify)_____
8. What would you say you use online social networks for the most?
- To get news, information and advice on various issues
 - To connect with family/friends and like-minded individuals
 - For fun/entertainment
 - To share my opinions on different topics
 - For professional purposes (e.g. job finding, professional networking)
 - Other uses (please specify)_____
9. Do you think using social networks has improved your computer skills in any way?
- Yes
 - No
 - To a certain degree
- Please motivate your answer below
-

C. Online Social Networks and the workplace

10. Does your workplace allow the use of online social networks during work hours?

- Yes
- Not at all
- To a certain degree (Please elaborate)

11. How often have you found information via online social networks that you thought might be useful in your work (e.g. status updates, links to articles, news stories)?

- Very often
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

If you have, can you specify what type of information it was and why you thought it was useful?

12. When you find information online that is useful for yourself or others, how often do you share it via an online social network?

- Very often

- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

Please motivate your answer below:

13. Have you ever shared or received information on an employment opportunity through an online social network?

- Yes
- No

14. Are you a member of any group/ or do you follow any organisation on these social networks that is beneficial in your work place (if no, skip to question 18).

- Yes
- No

15. How often do you use social networks to communicate with members of similar groups/organisations?

- Very often
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

If never, please motivate your answer below:

16. What is the nature of the communication you have with members of these groups/organisations? Tick all that apply.

- Debates
- Dialogue
- Sharing advice/opinions
- Other (Please elaborate)_____

17. Have you ever made a new connection with someone via online social networks for professional reasons? (For an employment opportunity, to network etc.)

- Yes (Please specify below)

- No

18. Do you follow/are you “friends” with high-profile business women in any industry on social network sites?

- Yes
- No

D. Online Social Networks and empowerment

19. Has information on social networks ever sparked a creative idea in your work, or inspired an entrepreneurial idea?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please elaborate

20. How often have other businesspeople using social networks inspired an entrepreneurial idea in you?

- Very often
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never

21. Please tick the appropriate box for the following.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Social media make it easier for Ugandan businesswomen to express themselves					
Social media improve Ugandan women's chances for promotion					
Social media empower Ugandan businesswomen to become role models					
Social media advance women's rights socially, economically and politically					
Social media provide Ugandan women with entrepreneurial opportunities					
Social media promote gender equality					

Thank you for your participation in this study.





Appendix C: Ethics approval letter



Reference number: EBIT/87/2014

03 December 2014

Ms A Acon
202 Hillcrest Boulevard 2
190 Lunnon Road
Hillcrest
Pretoria
0083

Dear Ms Acon,

FACULTY COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

Your recent application to the EBIT Ethics Committee refers.

- 1 I hereby wish to inform you that the research project titled "Online Social Networking and Empowerment of business Woman in Uganda" has been approved by the Committee.

This approval does not imply that the researcher, student or lecturer is relieved of any accountability in terms of the Codes of Research Ethics of the University of Pretoria, if action is taken beyond the approved proposal.

- 2 According to the regulations, any relevant problem arising from the study or research methodology as well as any amendments or changes, must be brought to the attention of any member of the Faculty Committee who will deal with the matter.
- 3 The Committee must be notified on completion of the project.

The Committee wishes you every success with the research project.


Prof JJ Hanekom

Chair: Faculty Committee for Research Ethics and Integrity
FACULTY OF ENGINEERING, BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY