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**Media Choice and Public Participation in the Budget Making Process for  
Nyeri County**

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** The aim of the study was to determine the effect of Media Choice on Public Participation in the Budget Making Process in Nyeri County.

**Methodology:** The study population constituted all the residents operating and living in Nyeri County, Nyeri County Government officials and leaders from both the County Executive and County Assembly. The study applied a descriptive study design and used both primary and secondary data that was obtained from public participation reports, publications, and interviews with county government officials, budget committee members and questionnaires to the MCAs, residents, staff of the County Assembly. Stratified random sampling was used to select and identify respondents from Nyeri County residents' attendees in public participation fora and a further random sampling to obtain respondents from the Wards. Strata and purposive sampling was used to get key informants from the County Executive and County Assembly. A sample size of 72 general respondents and 12 key informants was used. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected using a study questionnaire and interview guides respectively. Qualitative data was represented using study themes or goals and was discussed in narrative. The quantitative data was sorted and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. The findings were presented using tables and graphs

**Findings:** A regression correlation analysis of the data showed that the independent variables (social media =0.044, for print media = 0.047) were significant with p values of less than 0.05 - the predetermined significance level – to imply that the results were statistically significant. The p value for radio station was 0.326, greater than 0.05, thus not significant in its effect on public participation in the budget making process in the County Government of Nyeri. From the data collected, great importance was placed on vernacular and community radio stations which are potential channels for communicating pertinent information on the budget making process. The research found out other factors that determine effectiveness of public participation to include public's awareness of its rights, individual understanding of the processes, and level of education and prevailing support infrastructure.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** The Medium Theory and Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation Model informed the study variables and approach. Further research is recommended to explore other variables. The study findings will help planners and implementers at the County level when setting out to engage the public for their participation in the County's development agenda.

**Keywords:** *Public Participation, Media, Budget Making Process.*

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## INTRODUCTION

According to the Lexicon Communication, mass media is a way of transmitting messages such as radio, television, and newspapers that are specifically linked with the wider community. Media, meaning middle or intermediate, is the plural form of a medium. The idea of mass media is thus an intermediary or instrument used by the masses in relation to each other with mass, meaning party or community (McCombs, 2014). A medium in the study of mass communication is a means of transmitting some form of text electronic media, such as TV and radio, for instance, carry certain texts, such as news, commercials, songs, events, and shows. Online social media such as the internet, social networks, blogs, forums and news groups hold messages such as critics, ads, releases, reviews, news, games and complaints, print media such as newspapers, magazines, bear messages such as articles, news, publicity releases, commercials, and critics (McCombs, 2014)

In order to increase the likelihood that a citizen will participate, successful democratic participation includes certain tools, which can be information on political problems, awareness of communication networks and the rules of public participation, and the ability to exploit these channels. According to McQuail (2005), the media is seen as "a mirror of events in society and the world," a "filter or gatekeeper." In this context and generally speaking, the media offers government information to people and also sets the tone for political discussions. In the modern political process, the mass media plays an important role, because even in elite models of democracy, the policy needs some mediated contact with the public to obtain consent (Keane, 2013). Freedom of expression has long been seen as necessary in order to preserve the rights of the person from political tyranny: a democracy legitimized through consensus depends on a free press. According to Gerometta, Häussermann & Longo (2005), government institutions need to do more to facilitate open dialogue and deliberation on topics relevant to civil society. In order to reach more people and make it possible to engage in participatory processes, policy makers must respect the traditions, beliefs, informal knowledge networks, and language of different communities (Albrechts, 2000).

Because of the modern hectic lives that have been cited as explanations for the general lack of involvement in planning events, it may often be difficult to attract attention from the general public (Jonsson, 2005). The mass media plays an important role in enlightening the public about political processes, enhancing their political consciousness and subsequently their participation. In ensuring freedom of speech, continuous discussion, national criticism and self-criticism, the media is essential to achieving efficient, realistic, superior and humane modes of organisation, improved working practices, mass mobilization and social change (James, 2014).

However, it is necessary to recall that not all media are created equal. While some modes of mass media are more suitable for entertainment, others make more sense as a venue for information dissemination. Any form of mass medium implies the creation of an environmental institutional order, mediation is not impartial because its activities shape and transform the subjects engaged in it (McLuhan, 2002). Even language, as a universal mediation, establishes, limits, creates and recreates the subject, as the most complex of all mediations institutions do based on their experiences, mass media function differently in different contexts and can be used in combination to establish a systematic approach to knowledge exchange and input from members of the public (Sodré, 2002).



In a healthy society, a vibrant and robust media is an important element. It keeps the public updated and encourages individuals to participate in vibrant conversation. Citizens rely on the media for facts, a tool with which they can engage in informed debate and keep responsible political leaders, (Capstone Report, 2011). The media offers a "marketplace for ideas" that "examines arguments and forces ideas in common forums to confront each other," and is definitely a pillar of a functioning representative democratic system (Snyder & Ballentine, 2006).

Public participation is an interaction whereby people, networks, and partner gatherings can trade data, articulate interests, and can possibly influence decisions or the result issues (Putu, 2006). It involves voluntary cooperative arrangements between actors from the public, business and civil society that display minimal degree of institutionalization, have common nonhierarchical decision-making structures and address public policy issues (Bryson *et al.*, 2012). While citizen participation means the possibility for all affected and interested citizens to represent their interests and concerns in public projects (Bryson *et al.*, 2012).

According to Moseti (2010), in both governance and service delivery, public participation advances shared awareness, openness and accountability. Some governments use participatory budgeting to welcome people to team up and engage them in deliberation and decision-making to allow citizens to define, debate and focus public expenditure initiatives and to make real decisions on how money is spent (Schugurensky & Myers, 2003).

The research by Gitegi and Iravo (2016) found out that majority of the respondents were obtaining information from the Uasin Gishu County Government website and social media platforms. Respondents also indicated obtaining information from radio, public announcements, television and newspapers. However, the researchers established low awareness levels on public participation among respondents. Majority of study participants reported not being aware of constitutional provisions and other laws passed to facilitate public participation (Gitegi & Iravo 2016).

According to McQuail (2005), the media was seen as 'a reflection of social and world affairs', 'a filter or gatekeeper'. In this view, and generally speaking, the media offers government data to people and collectively sets the political discussion agenda. Through the lens of the media, people get to understand their government. Typically, the media is divided into print and electronic media. Newspapers, magazines or books refer to the print media, electronic media applies to radio, television and the internet (Heywood, 2002). In a research on the content of programs for vernacular radio stations and public engagement in Nyeri County's Devolved Governance, Kenya by Mwangi *et al.*, (2018) vernacular radio stations played an important role in educating the general public about devolved governance processes and in creating public participation platforms. They further stated that a wide range of vernacular radio stations that use local languages to transmit information are given very little coverage by convectional commercial media, they are also accessible in regions in rural areas which lead to making certain that diversity and pluralism of different views and opinions are heard (Mwangi *et al.*, 2018).

The AfriMAP (2011) survey on radio stations revealed that Kenya has a large number of vernacular radio stations that use local languages to disseminate information and that they are given little attention by convectional commercial media despite being available in all regions.

In addition, a study of variables affecting media behavior found out that Kenya's media users consume radio mostly, followed mainly by television and newspapers. It found that the media users exposed themselves to more than one channel a day, and most preferred English and Kiswahili to vernacular language media (Oriare *et al.*, 2010).

A research by Wanaberi Centre (2014 cited in Mwangi *et al.*, 2018) analyzed media coverage on devolution in order to look at its content on the basis of balanced and insightful coverage. The study report revealed several gaps that showed the need to concentrate on public engagement in devolved governments if the delivery of services by counties was to be achieved. Study recommended that media play a major role in the exchange of information, education and advocacy.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite Kenya having strong legislative instruments and policy mechanisms to promote public involvement in the county-level budgetary process, implementation has not been significantly achieved, (Transparency International, 2014). The policies enacted are broad with little specifics on which mass media tools can be used to conduct public participation for specific audiences thus resulting to varying levels of success at the various county governments.

In a study conducted by the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA-Kenya) in 2015 on comprehensiveness of County Budget Estimates by the public, Nyeri County scored 31.82% as an indicator of performance in matters public consultations and inclusivity. The study further found out that 9 out of the 10 counties provide scanty budget information to the public with an average score of 16.2% in County Budget Open Index (IEA, 2015). Another study by Transparency International (TI) in 2016, discovered that 83% of Kenyans do not know the resources allocated to their county (Katiambo & Ooko, 2017).

In various cultural contexts, public participation evokes different perceptions and understandings; the features of each mass medium need to be taken into consideration and also how they differ discretely considering that Nyeri County has diverse demographics and thus in use of mass media; political, social and economic factors have to be looked at (Marshall, 2004). TI Kenya (2014) determined that the media adopted by counties in Kenya for information dissemination were not very effective. Despite these information dissemination efforts, majority of Kenyans were found to have low information levels pertaining to public participation, development, county functions and statutory documents (CRECO, 2014). Hence, the importance of county communicators' identification and sharing of information that is required by the public for their meaningful participation.

By understanding the effects of the three mass mediums that is radio, print and social media on public participation, this study sought to ascertain the distinction between principle and practice in examining the effect of media choice on public participation in the budget making process of the County Government of Nyeri, Kenya.

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation Model**

In developing this model, Arnstein (1969) cited the value of redistribution of power in order to promote deliberative involvement of people in a political and economic process. Arnstein developed a typology of citizen participation arranged as rungs on a ladder, with every rung

corresponding to the amount of citizen control within the process of determining a program or policy. She distinguishes three main classes (citizen power, tokenism, non-participation) and places them in eight levels.

The first rung of the ladder, deception, involves influencing the public and getting help through the use of propaganda. According to Arnstein, people are put on rubberstamp advisory committees or advisory boards with the goal of informing them or engineering their help at this stage. It is assumed that the public cannot decide and people in control subject citizens to paternalistic schooling or therapeutic group counseling practices as a means of enlightenment under the second rung of the ladder, which is therapy (Brooks & Harris, 2008).

The second stage starts with the ladder's third rung where data flows from elected officials to people with no input mechanism and no bargaining power (Arnstein, 1969). According to Arnstein, the common methods used in the knowledge process for involvement and communication include news media, pamphlets, posters, inquiry answers, and meetings that discourage questioning and include simplistic and irrelevant information. Consultation is the fourth rung on the ladder that facilitates a two-way exchange of data through meetings, hearings, and surveys. However, the public input obtained during this period is rarely taken into consideration (Arnstein, 1969). The final level of tokenism is placement, where people start to gain power through boards or committees, but they can still be outnumbered or overruled, particularly when their views are unfavorable (Brooks & Harris, 2008).

In critiquing the model, Collins & Ison (2006), cites various constraints on Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation with its emphasis on authority, which they say is inadequate to make sense of participation at a conceptual or functional level. They further note that the idea of involvement at a conceptual level by Arnstein is both devoid of meaning and, importantly, has no way of making sense of the context in which the ladder is used. Second, in situations where the nature of the issue is highly contested or indefinable, the ladder of Arnstein provides little insight into how participation could be advanced as a collective process between all involved stakeholders. As the divisions used suggest, civic power is not distributed as neatly (Collins & Ison, 2006). Arnstein recognizes some weakness in her model and notes that some critical road blocks are missed and that the real world of individuals and services which require as many as 150 instead of eight rungs to cover the spectrum of real levels of citizen participation. It is also seen by the use of a ladder that more power is often better than less control, increased power, however, might not always be wanted by the community.



Figure 1: Arnstein's Ladder of Public Participation

Source: Arnstein 1969

The study used Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation to find out whether information sharing is necessary for an effective and inclusive public participation exercise in policy making (Glover, 2015). It also sought to find out how the roles of mass media outlined in the citizen participation rungs by Arnstein (1969) influence public participation effectiveness. Some of the roles that mass media plays cited in the rungs by Arnstein include to for example the influence of the public and gaining of support through propaganda. The study sought to assess how informing through the tools highlighted in Arnstein's model which include news media, pamphlets impact public participation. The study also sought to ascertain whether there is need for numerous rungs more than the ones listed by Arnstein that might be required to cover the range of actual citizen involvement levels and how the mass media affects them or is affected by them.

### **Medium Theory**

The Medium theory refers to the works of Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, Walter Ong, Jack Goody, Joshua Meyrowitz, and others. Medium theory concerns the study of one type of media and its distinctive effects on people and culture (Meyrowitz, 2008). Medium theorists discuss variables such as the senses required to attend to a medium, whether communication is bi-directional or uni-directional, how easy it is to disseminate messages, whether encoding and decoding in the medium is easy or difficult to understand, how many people can simultaneously attend the same message, and so on. Medium theorists claim that such factors affect the use and social and psychological effects of the medium (McLuhan, 2003). McLuhan argues in his book *Understanding Media* (1965), "The medium is the message," that the medium is more important than the text (message). The message is not as critical to McLuhan as to the media themselves. Content is, according to him, of secondary significance. Medium theorists show us that media is a kind of translator and that media often offers access to a broad spectrum of social expertise (Durham & Kellner, 2020).

According to Sodr  (2002) in order to make contact possible, mediation is related to a technological means, something that is put between human beings and the environment. Any type of mediation means the development of an institutional order that is the world, because its activities shape and transform the subjects it involves, mediation is not impartial. Even language establishes, limits, creates and recreates the subject as a universal mediation (Sodr , 2002). McLuhan makes it clear that to understand a medium one needs to approach it as an environment by stating that any understanding of social and cultural change is not possible without knowledge of the way media works as environments (McLuhan, 2002).

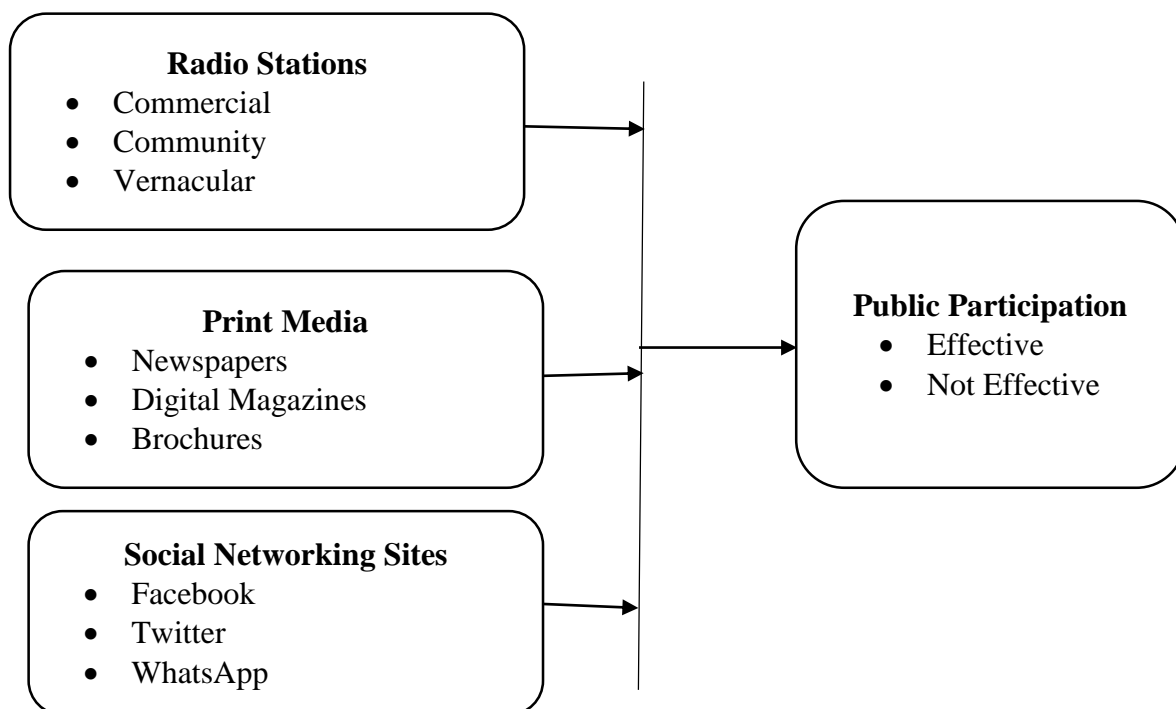
Medium theorist critics state that the theory suggests that culture is nothing but a medium reverberation, and that there are either non-existent or subordinate social structures and interactions. According to Marshall (2004), one factor in influencing culture and thereby missing political and economic powers is of disproportionate importance to media theorists. But his idea of a Global Village, his foreshadowing of the Internet and the Web, his suggestion of the power of crowd sourcing and much more are among McLuhan's predictions that have come to pass (Coupland, 2016).

The study focused on the ideas of Medium theorists within the setting of mass medium use effect on public participation as the theoretical framework. It also sought to assess the extent to which particular characteristics of a medium make it physically, psychologically, and socially

different from alternative media in spite of the particular messages that are communicated through it (Meyrowitz, 2008). The research also sought to find out how new technologies have been used, at least by large minorities, to organize resistance to dominant corporate and government power, providing examples of McLuhan's concepts of electronic media that encourage participation, decentralization, and hierarchical flattening.

**Conceptual Framework**

A conceptual framework refers to theoretical constructs of theories, values and rules that tie together the concepts that form a broad subject. A conceptual framework is a concise description of the phenomenon under study which is then presented graphically showing the variables of the stud (Mugenda, 2011).



**Independent Variables**

**Dependent Variable**

*Figure 2: Conceptual Framework*

**Research Gaps**

Studies conducted by various scholars have provided insights into mass media effect on public participation and these studies have to some extent, shown the relationship between mass medium choice effects on public participation. However, none of these has looked at the influence of these three variables that is Radio, Print Media and Social Media on Public participation. Also, the time span between the studies that exist even on the individual variables studied is between five to ten years providing a knowledge gap especially because of the changes that have occurred in this time periods hence a research gap. Besides focus on public participation none has focused on the scope of the study and the budget process.



## METHODOLOGY

The study applied a descriptive study design and used both primary and secondary data that was obtained from public participation reports, publications, and interviews with county government officials, budget committee members and questionnaires to the MCAs, residents, staff of the County Assembly. The Medium Theory and Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation Model informed the study variables and approach. Stratified random sampling was used to select and identify respondents from Nyeri County residents' attendees in public participation fora and a further random sampling to obtain respondents from the Wards. Strata and purposive sampling was used to get key informants from the County Executive and County Assembly. A sample size of 72 general respondents and 12 key informants was used. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected using a study questionnaire and interview guides respectively. Qualitative data was represented using study themes or goals and was discussed in narrative. The quantitative data was sorted and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. The findings were presented using tables and graphs

## FINDINGS

### **Using Radio Stations in Enhancing Public Participation in the Budget Making Process of the County Government of Nyeri**

The study sought to establish the respondent's views on the radio stations airing programs in Nyeri County. They were specifically asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the effectiveness of commercial, community and vernacular radio programmes, if any in targeting public participation in the budget making process of the County Government. Using a 5-point likert scale of agreement where 5 = Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 3=Disagree and 1=Strongly Disagree, as shown in Table 4.4, majority of the responses, at 66% and a mean rate of 2.20 show that Inoro FM, a vernacular radio station is highly rated for its programmes that encourage public participation in the budget making process. Kameme FM, another vernacular station came second at a mean rate of 2.37 with 62% responses in the affirmative.

Inoro FM, a vernacular radio station had the highest backing at a mean rate of 2.20 as a station with effective programs. The standard deviation for majority of the stations ranged between 1 and 1.6 which showed little variance in the views. With a mean rate of 4.14 and 46% response, Spice FM radio programs were least considered to be relevant or playing a role in mobilizing the public in the County for their participation in the budget making programs. The data showed on overall that community and vernacular radio programs were considered to be more effective, compared to the commercial radio stations in targeting public's participation in the budget making process in the County Government of Nyeri.

The population's affiliation to the vernacular and community radio stations, as confirmed by these findings corroborate Wanyande (2004) assertion that their popularity is hinged on their service as an outlet used by the locals to air views and address common problems. Furthermore, as reflected in the Medium theory, Kikuyu language as an aspect of the medium establishes its subjects as a universal mediation (Sodré, 2002 cited in Barichello & Carvalho, 2013).

**Table 1: Respondents View on Radio Stations' Programmes on Public Participation in County Government of Nyeri's Budget Making Processes**

Radio Station	%	Mean	Std. Deviation	Radio Station	%	Mean	Std. Deviation
Inooro FM	66	2.20	1.604	Radio Maisha	39	3.38	1.583
Kameme FM	62	2.37	1.584	Iganjo FM	38	2.74	1.630
Kiss 100 FM	51	3.74	1.437	Milele FM	38	3.87	1.180
Gukena FM	49	2.47	1.525	Radio Taifa	36	3.77	2.202
Rware FM	49	3.17	1.683	EATN Radio	34	3.76	1.338
Capital FM	48	3.72	1.437	Kigooco FM	34	3.29	1.419
Spice FM	46	4.14	1.113	Mwangaza WaNeno FM	34	3.90	1.044
Coro FM	44	2.70	1.613	Radio Jambo	34	3.52	1.401
Hot 96	43	3.58	1.528	Upendo FM	34	3.95	1.203
Radio Maria Nyeri	43	3.19	1.625	Venus FM	34	4.05	1.024
Classic FM	41	3.64	1.578	KBC English	33	2.65	1.631
X FM	41	3.92	1.187	Q FM	33	3.95	1.234
Njata FM	41	3.24	1.589	Other	31	4.16	1.015
Radio Citizen	41	2.92	1.656	Anguo FM	30	4.00	.907
Nation FM	39	3.71	1.398	Musyi FM	28	3.88	1.317
Radio 316	39	3.54	1.414	560 Smooth Jazz	26	4.06	.998

One of the key informants reiterated the role of radios by stating that radios 'use vernacular languages for locals to understand and digest'. Over 50% of the key informants admitted that local radio stations were reliable for improving public participation in the County's budget making process.

Almost all of the key informants, at 90% opined of the radio stations' role in improving public participation in the County's budget making process. 10% of the respondents felt that there was no mention of public participation or the budget process itself in the radio programmes (Table 1).

#### **Nyeri County Government Staff and Officials' Responses on How They Perceive the Effect of Radio Programmes on Public Participation in the Budget Making Processes**

The respondents revealed that radio has a wide reach, less formal and uses friendly language that the listeners can understand. The respondents also indicated that vernacular radio stations are most appropriate in disseminating public participation messages to the local community adding that the language makes it easier for the local to comprehend discussions on public participation.

The respondents also said that radio is able to reach larger audience/listeners and that local language used is easily understood by intended recipients. They also noted that radio has wide coverage is affordable compared to print media. The respondents also added that radio helps a lot in popularizing the fora and airing the various issues to be addressed especially in local dialect. Adding that radio is informative and interactive with a strong public engagement and the stations encourage use of community's own language.

An aspect of the public's input and participation in the budget making processes through the radio station is seen through two-way communication in the form of call-ins and other public participatory opportunities. This is a form of consultation which resonates with Arnstein's fourth rung on the ladder (Arnstein, 1969). Her arguments are however outdated in light of the current expansion of democratic spaces. The power of the uncensored input from the public has meant that the voice of the individual stands a greater chance of being heard and addressed. This then disrupts the flow and number of rungs in Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation.

The respondents were further asked to respond to statements reflecting their views on the role of community, vernacular and commercial radio stations in the budget making process at the government level in Nyeri County (Table 4.6). Based on a 5 point likert scale of agreement where 5 = Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 3=Disagree and 1=Strongly Disagree, 77% of respondents indicated that vernacular radio stations at a mean rate of 2.51 and standard deviation of 1.46 was easiest for listeners to participate in the budget making process. This could be attributed to the language used which seem to be highly favoured. Majority of respondents at 90% where they were either neutral or disagreeing (mean rate – 3.31 and standard deviation – 1.32) that listeners of commercial radios in Nyeri County participate in issues affecting budget making process with a lot of ease.

On whether the content of the radio programs being relevant and appropriate for public to participate in budget making process, community radio stations with a response rate of 79%, mean rate of 2.6 and standard deviation of 1.43 had the highest affirmation. 90% of the respondents felt that the content of the vernacular radio stations (mean – 3.20, standard deviation – 1.38) was relevant and appropriate. These finding is in line with Mbeke (2010) and Okinda (2016) whose studies showed that vernacular radio played an integral role in highlighting local issues in the rural areas in Kenya where it was considered an important source of information, compared to other mass media.

On the timeliness of the radio stations, commercial radio stations received most favorable rating at a mean rate of 2.48, followed by both the community and vernacular radios at mean rate of 3.07. These was an indication of neutrality which could mean that the respondents refrained due to their lack of information on the same or inability to gauge.

90% of respondents disagreed that commercial radio programs attracted a huge audience in the County (mean – 3.25, standard deviation – 1.27). Vernacular radio stations received highest rating from 77% of responses with a mean rate of 2.53, followed by Community radios at 2.94 mean.

**Table 2: Opinions on Radio's Impact on the County Government's Budget Making Process**

Statements	Commercial Radio			Community Radio			Vernacular Radio		
	N (%)	Mean	Std. Dev	N (%)	Mean	Std. Dev	N (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
Listeners of these stations participate in issues affecting budget making process with a lot of ease.	90	3.31	1.32	75	3.11	1.42	77	2.51	1.46
The content of the radio stations in programs is relevant and appropriate for public to participate in budget making process.	75	3.07	1.36	79	2.60	1.43	90	3.20	1.38
The radio bulletins ensure that information about the budget making process is communicated on time.	79	2.48	1.38	89	3.07	1.32	72	3.07	1.50
The relevant radio programs attract a huge audience in the County	90	3.25	1.27	77	2.94	1.47	77	2.53	1.56

The respondents were further asked to express the extent of their agreement with four statements indicative of the level of effectiveness of the over 30 radio stations in enhancing public participation in the budget making process of the County Government of Nyeri. Table 2 illustrates a positive view of the radio stations' role in the process. On a 5 pointlikert scale of agreement where 5 = Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 3=Disagree and 1=Strongly Disagree, majority strongly agreed or agreed with the fact that radio stations: improve their audience understanding (mean – 2.54, standard deviation – 1.42), actively engage their audience (mean – 2.95, standard deviation – 1.35) and increase their listeners' sense of personal power and community power (mean – 2.69, standard deviation – 1.24) in the budget making process. They were also of the strong opinion at a mean rate of 2.63 and standard deviation of 1.34, that the topics discussed in the programmes influenced the public to participate in the process.

### Using Print Media in Enhancing Public Participation in the Budget Making Process of the County Government of Nyeri, Kenya

Residents of Nyeri County, including those working in the County government have access to several print media which include the national newspapers and locally published magazines and brochures that are available in print and, or online formats. The study respondents were hence asked to state their opinion on the effectiveness of the various print media in influencing their reader's in the budget making process of the County government. The chronological arrangement of the mean rates in Table 3 reveal that the local digital magazines, namely Nyeri County Weekly review and the Nyotaya Nyeri are perceived by most (93% and 95% respectively), at mean rates of 2.07 and 2.28, as most influential in their reader's action towards the budget making process in the County Government. The rating was on a 5 point likert scale of agreement where 5 = Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree and 1=Strongly Disagree.



The Star Newspaper is neither influential nor not influential according to the 93% whose response at a mean rate of 2.96 (standard deviation – 1.068), oscillated towards neutrality. Though another 31% of respondents (mean rate of 2.96) were either neutral or disagreed that other print media were influential, the higher standard deviation of 1.545 shows disparity that is further compounded by the low response rate.

**Table 3: Respondents’ Opinion on the Effectiveness of Print Media in Shaping Readers’ Influence and Opinions About the Budget Making Process in the County Government of Nyeri**

Print Media	Frequency	N(%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Nyeri County Weekly review-County Executive	57	93	2.07	0.863
Nyota ya Nyeri –County Assembly of Nyeri	58	95	2.28	1.105
The Daily Nation	58	95	2.40	1.242
The Standard	58	95	2.50	1.232
Brochures	56	92	2.66	1.149
Other(s) specify:	19	31	2.95	1.545
The Star Newspaper	57	93	2.96	1.068

Dissemination of information from the authorities, in this case the County government of Nyeri, resonates with Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation’s second stage that starts with the third rung of the ladder where data flow is one-way i.e. from the officials to the public, without their input (Arnstein, 1969). That explains the key informants’ negative review of print media compared to radio and social media sites (Table 4.8). They felt that newspapers are not as accessible due to their costs and have a limited audience due to the nature of contents. One shared that the newspapers only serve their legal obligation of advertising and making announcements requiring public attention.

### **Respondents Views on the Use of Print Media for Public's Participation**

According to respondents the use of newspapers for public participation is not reliable because not many people access newspapers adding that it only focuses on the elite group. They further added that innovative ways like use of posters distributed in churches and other public places are effective since they are easily accessible.

The respondents noted that print media performs fairly because the adverts calling for public participation only reach a select few that can afford newspapers. From the responses newspapers are came out as quite formal only targeting the literates because they are expensive and cover only selective audience. The respondents further said that newspapers adhere to the provisions/requirement of the law such that whenever there has been a forum, it always appears in the print media therefore making it easier in communicating to the citizens.

On whether the print media available in the County are used by the residents to access issues on the budget making process, a mean rate of 3.14, 3.00 and 3.60 shows that respondents were either neutral or did not agree with the statement (Table 4). Out of the three forms, the responses showed that digital magazines had more positive rating indicative of their higher usage compared to the other two forms of print media.

For the print medium used to mobilise residents to participate in the budget making process, 93% of the respondents discounted the use of brochures (mean rate of 4.54). However, the high

standard deviation of 6.92 decries inconsistency in the responses. Newspapers with 80% responses and mean rate of 2.98 were perceived as most useful of the three forms of print media. The medium that was found to be most accessible to at least 65% of the Nyeri County residents was the newspaper (mean rate – 3.24), followed by brochures (mean – 3.27) and finally the digital magazines (mean – 3.49). The high response rate on the question at 80%, 80% and 93% respectively combined with the high mean rates is indicative of the respondents' general neutrality in the matter. This could mean therefore that they were not certain of their feedback and so chose to remain neutral, without disagreeing with the statement. 92% of the respondents, at a mean rate of 2.84 agreed that Newspapers provide avenue for public feedback. Digital magazines and brochures (mean rates – 3.59 & 3.81) were however not perceived as providing channels for feedback.

**Table 4: Respondents' View of Role of Newspapers, Digital Magazines and Brochures in Public Participation in the Budget Making Process in the County Government of Nyeri**

Statements	Newspapers			Digital magazines			Brochures		
	N (%)	Mean	Std. Dev	N (%)	Mean	Std. Dev	N (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
Used to access issues on the budget making process.	93	3.14	1.34	80	3.00	1.37	77	3.60	1.31
Used to mobilise residents to participate in the budget making process.	80	2.98	1.38	79	3.48	1.13	93	4.54	6.92
Accessible to at least 65% of residents.	80	3.24	1.30	93	3.49	1.38	80	3.27	1.50
Provides avenue for public feedback	92	2.84	1.41	75	3.59	1.29	79	3.81	1.14

### Using Social Media Sites in Enhancing Public Participation in the Budget Making Process of the County Government of Nyeri, Kenya

In the interview sessions with the key informants, views collected on the use of social media for mobilizing participation of the County residents in the budget making process were fairly positive. Majority felt that social media was effective, easy to use and acceptable in the society especially when it is targeting the youthful generation.

They felt that it is an effective platform that reaches the targeted audience and can be used to mobilize participation in the budget making process. The respondents added that social media is fast/ efficient and able to reach large audience through helping to clear some burning issues by giving the right answers by those who have facts. The respondents also stated that a majority of the population are able to follow it on social media”

The respondents' sentiments correspond with Stark, Hylland Behrens (2009) contention that social media's effectiveness is attributable to the fact that it is fast and cheap compared to other communication channels. The responses give credence to the Medium theory whose focus is on the physical, psychological and social characteristics of media in spite of the message (Meyrowitz, 2008). The respondents' reasons for their choice of social media validates the theory in regards to the convenience and affordability is concerned.

Respondents of the study were asked to state which of the social media platforms was widely used to engage residents in the budget making process at the County Government of Nyeri. On

a 5-pointlikert scale on the level of agreement, Facebook was found to be most favored of the three with 37.7% and 34.4% of respondents strongly agreeing and agreeing that it was highly used by the residents. This was followed by WhatsApp with an agreement rate of 24.6% (strongly agree) and 11.5% (agree). Twitter was considered least at a strong disagree and disagree responses at 24.6% and 23% respectively and a mean rate – 3.66, standard deviation – 1.26.

Of the three social media sites, Twitter (mean rate of 2.27, standard deviation of 1.22) was selected by most as the platform used to mobilise residents for their participation in the budget making process in the County Government. Facebook came in closely in the second place with a mean rate of 2.57, leaning towards the neutral viewpoint which might mean that there were respondents who were unfamiliar with the matter (Table 5).

On the social media platform that provide an intimate and controlled environment that allows residents to easily discuss the budget making process, Whatsapp was rated highest at a mean rate of 2.33, followed by Twitter at 2.58. A mean rate of 3.51 showed that the respondents did not feel that Facebook provided a reliable platform to easily air views for discussions on the budget making process. WhatsApp high rating is equally cited in the study conducted by Gil de Zúñiga, Ardèvol & Casero (2019) who established that this medium was favorable to its users who could gather and exchange news and debate politics in a more intimate and regulated atmosphere.

Of the three platforms, Facebook, at a mean rate of 2.05 and standard deviation of 1.08, was rated highest at hosting social media groups that were vibrant to allow residents of the County influence the budget making process at the County Government. Twitter (mean rate – 3.50) was the least rated, with most respondents holding views that it did not allow for the formation of vibrant public participation groups.

**Table 5: Respondent’s Viewpoint of Social Media Usage for Enhancing Public Participation in the County Government of Nyeri’s Budget Making Process**

Statements	Facebook		WhatsApp		Twitter	
	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev	Mean	Std. Dev
The platform is widely used to engage residents in the budget making process.	1.91	1.00	2.71	1.43	3.66	1.26
Residents are mobilized using this platform for their participation in the budget making process.	2.57	1.32	3.58	1.27	2.27	1.22
Provides an intimate and controlled environment that allows residents to easily discuss the budget making process.	3.51	1.41	2.33	1.28	2.58	1.40
The social media groups formed are vibrant to allow residents influence the budget making process.	2.05	1.08	2.67	1.29	3.50	1.31

### Public Participation

Public participation in the budget making process in Nyeri County Government, according to the key informants is ensured through fora that are held thrice in the year. These are during the deliberation of: the Nyeri County Fiscal Strategy paper, Annual budget estimates and the

Annual Development Plan. The key informants were asked about the major focus of mass media messaging in the budget making process during public participation in Nyeri County. From the responses, the study concluded that it entailed sharing details of the County expenditures, making calls for memorandum on the issues regarding the budget, inviting views on priority items to be included in the budget and providing details of venues, dates and agenda of upcoming meetings.

From the responses collected from the residents and county government official of Nyeri County, it was established that 48% (16% ‘strongly agree’ and 34% ‘agree’) felt that public participation in the budget making process was effective in the County. Despite the positive, almost majority’s opinion, an even larger number at 94% (43% ‘strongly agree’ and 51% ‘agree’) stated that the public participation in the budget making process needed to be reviewed (6). 5% of the respondents did not provide any feedback on the matter. 21% disagreed with the fact that public participation in the budget making process was effective, while 10% strongly disagreed.

This response showed some dissatisfaction with the status quo in regards to involvement of the public in the County Government’s budget process.

**Table 6: Response on Public Participation in the Budget Making Process is Effective Vs Call for Review of Public Participation in the Budget Making Process in County Government of Nyeri**

Public participation in the budget making process is effective in Nyeri County (%)	Public participation in the budget making process should be reviewed in Nyeri County (%)				Total (%)
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	No response	
Strongly Agree	3	11	2		16
Agree	8	26	0		34
Neutral	7	7	0		13
Disagree	20	2	0		21
Strongly Disagree	5	5	0		10
No response					5
<b>Total (%)</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

When respondents’ opinion were sought on whether the County Government involved all members of the public and stakeholders in the budget making process, 42% (12% ‘strongly agree’ and 30% ‘agree’) agreed that members of the public and all stakeholders were involved in the budget making process. 12% were unable to share their accurate assessment and decided to remain ‘neutral’. 46% (23% ‘disagree’, 23% ‘strongly disagree’) of the respondents indicated that the public and all stakeholders were not involved in the process and that it was not inclusive. This level of dissatisfaction explains the high percentage of responses calling for a review of the process to include more and better public participation.

The views collected give credence to Arnstein (1969) typology of citizen participation arranged as rungs that correspond to the amount of citizen control within the processes requiring their participation.

From the one-on-one interviews, when asked to state which public participation tool they considered most effective in the budget making process at Nyeri county, majority of the key informants, at 40% thought that in-person interactions made the most impact. 10% pointed out



radio shows and social media, respectively as the most effective. Their feedback was based on their actual experience, during the stakeholder engagement exercises.

### **Nyeri County Government Officials' Views on the Public Participation Tool They Consider Most Effective in the Budget Making Process**

According to the respondents who churn out messages on the budget process they said that they use in-person i.e face to face interaction, meeting, workshops at certain levels of engagements with stakeholders terming them effective in getting key feedback. Another platform that they said is effective is use of open forums where the exercises are done in the respective wards or sub-counties' we use face to face meeting for immediate response.

They added that Public foras are also utilized as they do not limit feedback between the County and the public adding that radio shows (vernacular) are also very effective tools for public participation mobilization. They added that they use social media and calls for memoranda to get information from the members of the public.

### **Respondents Views for Improved Public Participation**

Respondents were welcomed to share their suggestions for improvements for enhanced public participation in the budget making process. They felt that more needed to be done to improve civic involvement in the process. Some of their suggestions included: the need for more research to be carried on the residents and their preferred media of communication; incorporation of civic education during the public participation process to enable the County residents get informed on their role in the public participation exercise; partnering with partners such as media houses and community based organizations to ensure that the notices of meetings are well circulated; boosting of posts in the social media platforms to increase the audience reach; allocate more funds for wider coverage and sensitization the residents; engage vernacular and community radio stations in getting information to the target population, and; holding regular meetings.

These sentiments are substantiated by Deci and Ryan (2006) who assert that an individual that is well informed and motivated is crucial in ensuring their proactive involvement with the formal structures. Therefore, necessary resources and effort need to be assigned to activities that demonstrate the value of their participation. As equally contributed by Esonu and Kavanamur (2011), the concerned County offices should clearly show the link between the benefits of budgetary processes and public participation.

The confidence that the respondents have with the physical meetings contrasts Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation which despite recognizing the important role of meetings as medium permitting two-way exchange of information, implies that input from the masses during the meetings is not always factored in the final decisions (Arnstein, 1969). Nyeri County residents' preference for the meetings defies the theory's logic.

### **Inferential Statistics**

#### **Correlation Analysis**

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, which is a measure of the linear correlation between two variables X and Y, was used to measure the degree of association between the independent variables and dependent variable. It has a value between -1 and +1;

where 1 is positive linear correlation implying that Y increases as X increases, 0 is no linear correlation, and -1 is total negative correlation implying that Y decreases as X increases. The closer the correlation coefficient, denoted by r, is to +1 or -1, the more closely the two variables are related (Creative Research Systems, 2016).

The findings shown in Table 7 below present Pearson correlations for the relationship between public participation in the budget making process and radio stations use, print media use and social media use in the County Government of Nyeri.

There was a strong positive correlation of an r-value of 0.044 and 0.045 respectively between public participation and social media sites' and radio stations' effectiveness. This was statistically significant since  $p=0.000$  which is less than the conventional  $p<0.05$  that is cut off for statistical significance. That of radio stations usage was not statistically significant since  $p>0.05$ , at 0.090. The results imply that there is stronger relationship between the dependent variable and use of social and print media for enhancing public participation in County Government of Nyeri.

**Table 7: Correlation Analysis of Public Participation in Nyeri County**

		Public participation in the budget making process is effective in Nyeri County
Radio Stations	Pearson Correlation	.090
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.507
Print Media	Pearson Correlation	.045
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.684
Social Media Sites	Pearson Correlation	.044
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.743

This result indicate that even though there is good listenership of the radio stations in Nyeri County, the contents of the programmes may not be relevant or effective in matters related to the budget making process. Inooro FM, a commercial radio station in the area that is popular and highly rated, according to the findings might not have content that sufficiently mobilizes the masses in the County's budget making process. This is confirmed by AFFRI (2008) that states that these stations depend on different financial sources who advertise their products and services. Their programming styles are primarily entertainment.

### Multiple Regression Analysis of Variables

#### Regression Model for Influence of the Three Independent Variables on Enhancing Public Participation in the Budget Making Process at the County Government of Nyeri

A regression model to predict the overall influence of independent variables (radio stations, print media and social media use ) on the dependent variable (enhancing public participation in budget making process) when taken together was obtained as shown in Table 8.

**Table 8: Model for Influence of Three Mass Media Determinants on Enhanced Public Participation**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.429 <sup>a</sup>	.184	.138	.480

These findings are supported by a coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of 0.184, inferring that 18.4% of any positive change in public participation in budget making processes at the County

Government of Nyeri can be attributed to the use of mass media. However, this percentage is on the lower side and so there are several other factors, not related to mass media that contribute to the participation of the members of the public in the County Government of Nyeri’s budget making process.

**ANOVA for Role of Three Mass Media Determinants on Enhanced Public Participation**

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was done to determine the contribution of the four independent variables in enhancing public participation in the budget making process in Nyeri County government. Subsequently the F-test was used to test the significance of the overall analysis of variance model at a 95 percent confidence level. The p-value of  $p < 0.05$  for the F-statistic was applied in determining the robustness of the model.

The three predictors, were found to statistically and significantly predict improved public participation using  $p < 0.05$  significant level. As shown in Table 9,  $F_{crit}(53,3) = 3.980$  and actual  $p\text{-value} = 0.012$ .  $F_{cal}$  is greater than  $F_{crit}(53,3)$  thus implying goodness of fit of the model.

**Table 9: ANOVA for Role of Four PM Determinants on Successful Project Implementation**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.755	3	.918	3.980	.012
	Residual	12.228	53	.231		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14.982</b>	<b>56</b>			

**Beta Coefficients**

The unstandardized coefficients indicated how improved public participation in the budget making process varied with each independent variable when other independent variables were held constant (Table 10). The coefficients helped generate the regression optimal model of the role of mass media elements on the success of public participation as:

$$Y = 1.854 + 0.056X_1 - 0.127X_2 - 0.114X_3 + 0.200$$

Where Y is public participation in the budget making process;  $\beta_0$  the constant or intercept of the regression line (1.854);  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$  and  $\beta_3$  are the regression coefficients of independent variables (-0.056, -0.127 and -0.114).  $X_1$ ,  $X_2$  and  $X_3$  represent the independent variables - Radio Stations, Print Media and Social Media Sites respectively, and 0.200 is the error term or standard error.

This implies that increase in radio stations’ use by one unit increases public participation by 0.056. The improvement in print media use by a unit upgrades public participation by -0.127 while an upgrade in use of social media use by one unit would result in a -0.114 increase in the improved public participation in the budget making process in the County Government of Nyeri.

Two of the independent variables were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) as stated by Kumar (2005) who says that p values of less than 0.05 (predetermined significance level) imply that the results are statistically significant where, p value for social media = 0.044, for print media = 0.047. The p value for radio station was 0.326, greater than 0.05, thus not significant in its effect on public participation in the budget making process in the County Government of Nyeri.

**Table 10: Role of Three Mass Media on Enhanced Public Participation in the Budget Making Process**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.854	.200		9.254	.000
1 Radio Stations	.056	.056	.133	.992	.326
Print Media	-.127	.062	-.283	-2.034	.047
Social Media Sites	-.114	.055	-.268	-2.068	.044

These findings substantiate statements by Gerometta, Häussermann & Longo (2005) who reiterate the need for government institutions to do more to facilitate open dialogue and deliberation on the relevant development topics. To have the tool is one thing, to use it for a certain purpose is another.

When considered singularly, the findings reveal a positive trend in the use of the three types of mass media by the population at the County level. These have been used for information, education and entertainment purposes that may not be intertwined with the budgetary processes at the County. Their potential for mobilizing of the masses to participate in the budget making is evident. This corroborates Yang's (2008) contention that for public participation to be effective, mechanisms should be worked out, commensurate to the local social–ecological context to which the citizens belongs.

Though the question was not posed on the reason for the respondents' preference of the medium they used over the others, medium theorists' reasoning is applicable. The senses required to attend to a medium, how easy it is to disseminate messages and how many people can simultaneously attend the same message play a role in the choices made. The findings are an illustration of Medium theory that associate these factors to the social and psychological effects of the medium (McLuhan, 2003).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

From the study, all types of mass media play a key role in the communication cycle, in all activities involving a few or all members of a community. Regardless of one's choice of medium, they all influence how he or she participates as an individual or group in the budget making process. Social media sites not only inform, but provide avenues for providing instant feedback and live engagements on topical issues. The radio stations' content engage other senses of the human being and may be most favorable for masses that are on the go or those that are unable to use other media due to physical or mental limitations. Print media is considered as public participation law requirement when notifying the publics on public participation fora and can be verified if need be thus a key medium in the communication of public participation.

As much as most governmental agencies are, at a minimum, using social media to communicate events, warnings, and deadlines, this dissemination of information is important but cannot always be considered to be a conclusive engagement. In Facebook for example you can post, comment, share and rate others 'posts by liking or by the use of various other emoji to express how an individual feels about a post. Each of these is a response elicited by a post made by the



agency. Communication with the public is happening, but the question remains: What constitutes engagement or effective communication?

In order to maximize on mass media choice and usage, it is important to not only create secure and safe environments for expressing opinions, but to empower the mass with the skills, knowledge and resources to be able to utilize all the functionalities of the three types of media. For example, to get input from all the age groups in the County, for an inclusive County budget, the content creators, agenda setters and opinion mobilisers must ensure that the language and formats adapted for information sharing are appropriate.

## **Recommendations**

### **Radio Stations**

To involve the Vernacular and community radio stations in mobilizing the public to participate in the budget making process, the County Government will need to engage the stations to educate and enlighten the listeners about the process and the role that they are expected to play. The masses, through the radio programmes, should be informed of their rights and power as stakeholders in the budget making processes. The radio stations should be seen to be independent and open to the divergent views of the public. A diverse and independent media sector is an effective way to increase the County government's accountability and to benefit the masses by enhancing their participation and dialogue.

### **Print Media**

As much more people, including the elderly in urban and rural areas are beginning to use internet as their source of information, the use of physical papers is still strong. To serve the interest and preferences of the public that read the newspaper, magazine and brochure the County Government should ensure that the access points are sufficient and that the locally produced print media is affordable and presented in appropriate format and language.

### **Social Media Sites**

The use of Facebook and other social media sites to engage stakeholders may not be as easy as setting up a Facebook page and starting to post information. There are several issues that should be addressed by the persons assigned to manage this engagement, to ensure that the use of social media will lead to transparency, policy development and trust. In order to truly have engagement, there has to be some type of response from stakeholders and then a further reply by County Government. The mere posting of information is not enough to qualify for community engagement.

### **Proposed Areas for Future Research**

Further research should be conducted on other community development spheres in and out of the County government setting to determine the extent of other variables affecting the use of mass media for public mobilization and participation. This will help elicit a concretized result for effective communication amongst residents, for their more proactive involvement.

A demarcation of the various geographical areas in the County should be done in future studies for narrowing down the variables, to be as specific as possible in relation to the predefined intrinsic or acquired characteristics. For example, the usage of mass media in an urban setting

might be different from the rural setting due to differences in infrastructure and exposure to other norms, lifestyles and cultures.

A wider coverage of study area and population, using the same variables will help establish trends and solutions that may be applied in other parts of the country.

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