

AN EXPLORATION OF NAIROBI CITY WATER AND SEWERAGE COMPANY  
FACEBOOK REVIEWS

by

SANDRA ATEMOKETCH

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Communication, Cinematics and  
Creative Arts in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Communication Studies

UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY–AFRICA

Summer 2018

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## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other college, institution or university other than the United States International University in Nairobi for academic credit.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Sandra Atemo Oketch (ID No. 634534)

**Approval page**

In accordance with United States International University – Africa policies, this thesis is accepted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Communication Studies

Sign

Date



---

Miss Robi Koki

Supervisor

---

Kioko Ileri, Ph.D

Chair Department of Journalism and Corporate Communication

---

Valerie P. Adema, Ph.D

Dean, School of Communication, Cinematics and Creative Arts

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By

Sandra Atemo Oketch

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

NCWSC : Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company  
OLX : Online Exchange

## ABSTRACT

With increased internet use, organizations have shifted to new media to reach more audiences, to build mutual relationships with them, and to create a positive corporate image and reputation. Over the years, organizations have focused on analysing quantitative factors on online reviews to identify the degree of satisfied and dissatisfied customers, and have failed to understand the emotional aspects behind customer complaints. This study sought to examine online reviews by Facebook reviewers of the Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC) to identify the nature and content of online reviews by NCWSC's Facebook reviewers, the sentimentality score of NCWSC online reviews, and NCWSC online responsiveness. This case study implemented critical content analysis research design in analysing and interpreting the attributes and trends of recorded online reviews on the Facebook platform through NVIVO 11 software. Findings indicated that wrongful billing, poor water distribution and delivery, water shortage, poor scheduling on water supply in Nairobi, water vendors, and water disconnection, were the main emerging issues on NCWSC's Facebook page from their Facebook reviewers. Findings also highlighted that there were more negative sentiments on NCWSC online reviews (24.09%) than positive online reviews (8.62%). Themes of online reviews revealed NCWSC's incompetence towards performing according to their customers' expectations. Findings also revealed that negative sentiments reflected the dissonance of NCWSC Facebook reviewers, in which negative sentiments—being more than positive sentiments—showed that they were more dissatisfied in NCWSC. Findings also revealed NCWSC's poor online responsiveness towards online reviews on their Facebook page, which created a poor corporate image and reputation. This study also highlights the recommended policies and practices that NCWSC should implement towards ensuring improved customer responsiveness and engagement, as well as complaint management procedures. It was recommended that NCWSC implements social media strategies to effectively deal with the types and content of online reviews on NCWSC's Facebook pages. It was also recommended that NCWSC should implement in-call centres to identify, monitor and evaluate sentiments of their customers. It was also recommended that NCWSC should implement chatbots and instant chat boxes to improve online responsiveness towards their Facebook reviewers. This study concluded by explaining that unresolved customer

complaints not only destroyed the relationship that NCWSC had with its Facebook reviewers, but also created a poor image and reputation for the company. It would be prudent for NCWSC to implement effective online engagement and complaint handling management mechanisms to improve communication, maintain a mutual relationship with its online audiences, and build a positive corporate image and reputation.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Internet is a great channel for audiences to seek important information about organizations, engage with companies, and give online feedback on their experiences with brands. According to Ghimire (2012), every individual has experienced satisfaction and dissatisfaction towards an organization at one point in their lives. These feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction are mechanisms that organization stakeholders often use to either positively or negatively react to their stakeholder experiences with organizations.

With increased use and access to the internet, audiences have shifted from legacy media to new media to source information; in the process, they come across information about brands. This platform has enabled audiences to be more vocal and bold in expressing their expectations, views and complaints towards corporate brands online (Donoghue & Klerk 2008, Felix, 2015). As a result, organizations' reputation is often put at risk.

According to Nasir (2004), the frequency of audience dissatisfaction is on the rise and more common than offline stakeholder complaints. These complaints are often fuelled by companies' failure to respond to online queries and complaints, and poor interaction with stakeholders. In addition, the increased use of new media is greatly contributing to the increasing number of online stakeholder positive, negative, and neutral online reviews (Muralidhan *et al.*, 2017). This study sought to explore the nature of online expressions about their experiences with the Nairobi Water and Sewerage Company on their Facebook page.

This study examined what value audiences place on their online reviews of organizational services towards NCWSC. It further examined the influence of these online

reviews on audience perceptions of services they consume from the organization, and how this puts at risk the organization's brand reputation and corporate image (Muralidhan *et al.*, 2017).

According to Gupta (2012), poor online engagement between the organization and the online audiences of their social media platforms is the main reason for dissatisfaction with organizational products and services. The researcher affirms that stakeholders' satisfaction is often based on a direct engagement by brands to stakeholders with the aim of developing a long-lasting relationship with them. Without this constant communication, stakeholders feel that their interests are not considered and valued, thus leaving them feeling dissatisfied. This has seen corporate brands shifting to online platforms to interact more with their stakeholders, to understand their interests, to retain stakeholder loyalty, and to positively shape stakeholders' image and perception of the organization.

According to Donoghue and Klerk (2008), not all stakeholder dissatisfaction complaints should be viewed negatively. Because of increased competition between organizations, these are now taking stakeholder online reviews as opportunities to strengthen mutual relationships between them and stakeholders. In addition, for organizations to remain highly competitive in their respective industries, they must track their level of stakeholder satisfaction (Mubiri, 2016). This is where technology comes in. Organizations are greatly embracing technology to understand the tones behind stakeholder online reviews and get an overview of stakeholders' opinions behind the organizations' actions (Mubiri (2016).

## 1.1 Background

The study of the Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC) Facebook page is hinged on the organization's priority to improve service users' satisfaction, improve technical effectiveness, increase water provision, and effectively manage their resources (NCWSC, 2017). The water utility firm implemented its online social media communication management system in August 2011 with the aim of engaging audiences about their services as well as providing announcements and feedback concerning water supply (NCWSC, 2017). According to Mwanja (2015), despite the fact that NCWSC is a monopoly, it exists as a corporate entity within the County of Nairobi and therefore needs to implement measures that assure their services meet and surpass the stakeholders' expectations. According to a report by Salim *et al.* (2013), poor communication between NCWSC and service users is a challenge because of inadequate access to up-to-date information on issues dealing with water and complaint management.

According to Nyambura (2014), with the increase of water tariffs in 2016, it was expected that there would thereafter be an uninterrupted water supply in Nairobi. Instead, since then, there has been infrequent and inadequate supply of water, escalating complaints and backlash on service delivery both online and offline.

Otieno (2018) asserts that despite efforts by NCWSC to moderate water shortages, the water crisis became so severe in 2016 that there was failure to complete a Ksh200 million project on borehole drilling in Nairobi by NCWSC. Factors that have contributed to this include the disruption of water supply by cartels of water vendors, and water leakages due to old pipes installed in 1982 that do not meet the needs of the rapidly growing population in Nairobi.

According to Moseti (2017), and Agutu (2017), stakeholders of NCWSC have fallen victim to unfairness by the firm, since they have to pay water bills despite inadequate supply. Moseti (2017) highlights former Chief Justice Willy Mutunga's social media exposé of a water bill of a Ksh35,000 for a period when he never received any water supply. This triggered an avalanche of online complaints by many NCWSC Facebook reviewers (Agutu, 2017).

This was an expression of dissatisfaction by audiences who use NCWSC services, despite efforts by the organization through major investments and reforms in the past few years to improve services and meet the needs and interests of their users (Ruhiu *et al.*, 2009). Sentiments of dissatisfaction are still highly visible on the organization's social media platforms—with expressions of frustrations, opinions, and views to the company.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Due to a shift from legacy media to new media, organization stakeholders have become enormously bold and vocal in expressing both positive and negative opinions towards their experiences with brands, through online reviews on desired online platforms (Felix, 2015).

Over the years, organizations have focused on analysing quantitative factors on online reviews to identify the degree of satisfied and dissatisfied stakeholders. The focus on the use to quantify online reviews of products and services to identify audience dissatisfaction and satisfaction does not sufficiently guide how this information can inform the building of corporate image and reputation, and the building of mutual relationships with various stakeholders through customer engagement. (Agnihorti & Bhattachanya, 2016). This indicates that organizations today have failed to analyse online reviews from

their online audiences and to understand the sentiments that lie behind these customer online reviews and complaints—especially regarding the expectations of these audiences in terms of service delivery and customer engagement, and how this affects the organization’s image and reputation.

According to Rudansky-Kloppers (2014), studies covering stakeholder behaviour and complaint behaviour mostly cover American and European contexts, with very few conducted in Africa. Constatinides (2004) mentions that in 2005, more than 120 academic papers were published in the West on the topic of understanding online stakeholder behaviour. That was an indication of the large number of studies on stakeholder behaviour and satisfaction covered in the West annually. In addition, Singh *et al.* (2016) state that very few studies have been conducted on stakeholder behaviour based on what motivates them to write and express their reviews towards organizations. Folse *et al.* (2016) assert that research on stakeholder online reviews to understand stakeholder behaviour is still at its infancy and is yet to be fully explored.

Moreover, Nimako (2013) also adds that in the past two decades, studies conducted on stakeholder complaints, behaviour and satisfaction have focused on American, European and Asian boundaries, with scant studies of that nature covering the African context. This shows that there is a gap in local literature that fails to address the aspect of online stakeholder dissatisfaction in the African context.

Organizations have failed to concentrate on emotional aspects on why stakeholders write their reviews the way they do and how these reviews on the stakeholders’ satisfaction and dissatisfaction could have an impact on perception by other current and potential stakeholders towards the brand. This study seeks to examine the nature, types and context

of online review on NCWSC services to inform their communication strategy on quick response to audiences that address their queries and needs.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The sole purpose of this study was to examine online reviews by audiences of the Facebook page of NCWSC, examine the types and context of online reviews, and offer an advisory on effective handling of online communication and complaint handling at NCWSC's online platform.

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

This study strives to achieve the following objectives:

- 1.** Explore the themes of context of online reviews vocalized on the NCWSC Facebook page on water supply in Nairobi.
- 2.** To examine the overall level of dissonance of online reviews on the NCWSC Facebook page by examining the sentimentality expressed in audience expectations on supply of water in Nairobi.
- 3.** To explore NSWSC online responsiveness in meeting the needs and expectations of online reviews of their Facebook page audiences on water supply services in Nairobi.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

**RQ1.** What are the themes in the content of online reviews vocalized on the NCWSC Facebook page on water supply?

**RQ2.** What are the sentimentality scores of online reviews on NCWSC Facebook page?

**RQ3.** What are the themes that mediate responsiveness to online reviews by NCWSC?

## **1.6 Significance of the study**

This study will be of significance as it bridges a literature gap locally on studies based on the nature of stakeholder behaviour, stakeholder dissatisfaction, and stakeholder complaints. It will explore how the above brings about dissonance between service delivery and the expectations of NCWSC Facebook reviewers, in a bid to offer an advisory on how to manage these expectations online.

This study will also be of significance by contributing to current literature on corporate reputation and branding, as it builds on our understanding of the influence of online audience engagement with organizations involved in services and their experience in meeting audience needs. Nguyen & Gizaw (2014) asserts that modern companies are interested in understanding opinions, views and sentiments about their products, services and ideas through online reviews and messaging, in a bid to examine what influences the way they express themselves online. In addition, Sultan & Uddin (2011), argue that over the past decade, communication researchers and practitioners have been studying stakeholder behaviour and attitudes on online purchasing, thus leaving a gap in our understanding of the tones behind stakeholder attitudes and online reviews towards the organization.

With focus on the importance of the views of their service delivery online, organizations are keen on audience satisfaction and behaviour to enhance corporate reputation (Nimako, 2012). There are a number of studies conducted by organizations and scholars in the quest to understand these issues. Folse *et al.* (2016) asserts that research on stakeholder online reviews to understand stakeholder behaviour is still at its infancy and is yet to be fully explored.

Lastly, according to O'keefe (2002), Griffin (2006), and Kowol (2008), cognitive dissonance theory has been verified and proved effective in explaining and predicting human behaviour. This study is a contribution to the theory by seeking to explain online stakeholder behaviour, specifically stakeholder dissatisfaction and online stakeholder complaints in both personal and organizational online platforms.

### **1.7 Scope of the study**

This study focuses on online stakeholders of NCWSC, particularly those who are Facebook users, with the aim of gaining an understanding on the tones and attitudes behind the opinions, views and complaints that they express on the company's Facebook platform. In addition, this study focuses on Facebook as the preferred population because it is NCWSC's most active online platform, which came into existence in August 2011 with the aim of engaging its audiences about their services, as well as providing announcements and feedback concerning water supply. In addition, Facebook was chosen as the preferred platform, out of all other social media sites, because it is the highest downloaded application in Kenya second only to WhatsApp, according to the Bloggers Association of Kenya (2017). Moreover, Barasa (2014) also highlights that Facebook is the most popular platform for engagement in Kenya as it was the first platform that Kenyans adopted to.

The geographical scope for the study is limited to Nairobi, mainly because the NCWSC operates in Nairobi County and provides water services to Nairobi residents. The study will analyse NCWSC's online content between the years 2016 to 2018 because during this period, NCWSC's water crisis became severe as a result of water cartels disrupting the water supply, a rapid population growth in Nairobi, decreasing levels of

water in major dams, and water leakages due to old and damaged pipes. This resulted in stakeholder frustration and an online backlash against the company (Otieno, 2018).

## **1.8 Definition of Terms**

### **Cognition**

This is the mental state that human beings possess in their process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through experiences, views and senses (Jones, 2000).

### **Cyberspace**

According to Bryant (2001), Cyberspace is an electronic medium of communication used for the following purposes: Electronic communication, interaction, and online reading. This new medium is replacing legacy methods of communication.

### **Dissonance**

This is the mental discomfort that human beings experience after taking actions that are in conflict with their personal beliefs and attitudes (Jones, 2000).

### **Legacy Media**

This is mass media that is considered “old”, such as television, radio, and newspapers, whereby receivers do not contribute and interact with the content and therefore become passive (Lister *et al.*, 2009).

### **New media**

These are practices of communication that have developed as a result of the internet, multimedia and digital networked technologies in which communication takes place at fast speeds (Lister, *et al.*, 2009).

### **Stakeholder behaviour**

These are positive or negative behavioural responses of stakeholders on their experiences with organizations' products or services. These responses are often displayed publicly or privately by the stakeholders (Nasir, 2004).

### **Stakeholder dissatisfaction**

A stakeholder's emotional response—often anger, disappointment, or fury—when a product or service they have purchased does not match up to their expectation or satisfy their needs (Souca, 2014).

### **Stakeholder engagement**

Stakeholder engagement is the interaction and commitment of stakeholders with each other, and stakeholders with organizations (Gupta, 2012).

### **Stakeholder expectations**

These are beliefs that stakeholders possess about a product or service before purchase and before consumption (Almsalam, 2014).

### **Stakeholder fragmentation**

Stakeholder fragmentation is when stakeholders have different unique needs, wants and preferences towards products and services in the market (Hamouda, 2012).

### **Stakeholder fulfilment**

This is a judgment response that stakeholders make on a product or service that provides a gratifying feeling after consuming the purchased product or service (Nguyen *et al.*, 2016).

### **Speedy communication**

Speedy communication is the transmission and exchange of information and ideas among two or more parties through fast channels of communication such as computer systems and online social networks (Baruah, 2012).

### **Social media**

Social media are online communication platforms—such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram—aimed at increasing interaction and sharing of online content among online users (Burke, 2017).

### **1.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided background information of the study, the problem statement, the rationale of the study, scope of study, and the definition of terms.

This chapter commenced by highlighting the background information of Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company and the challenge it faces of stakeholder dissatisfaction that is expressed on their online platforms. The study also gives an explanation on the problem statement that the study aims at investigating. This chapter also highlights the contributions that this study will have: Literature significance, industry significance, and theoretical significance. In addition, the scope of study is explained, whereby the population used will be the online platforms of the company in which data will be derived from. The study period of the Facebook online reviews by stakeholders as done over a period of two years—2016 to March 2018. Lastly, this chapter highlights the definition of terms to unusual words and phrases used in the study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter two explains the cognitive dissonance theory that serves as a basis for this study. The chapter also reviews the emerging trends in online engagement and complaint management between organizations and their online audiences through highlighting literature review from global, regional and local perspectives on this trend.

#### **2.2 Theoretical Literature Review: Cognitive Dissonance Theory**

Cognitive dissonance theory was formulated by Leon Festinger in 1957 (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance is a scenario where individuals possess two cognitions; the attitudes and behaviour that arise when these two elements are in conflict with each other cause a mental discomfort (Vraga, 2009). In addition, Tormala (2010) defines cognitive dissonance as a negative energy state that arises from psychological irregularities influenced by conflicting choices, whereby a favourable option must be rejected or a bad alternative accepted. Tormala (2010) adds that the magnitude of dissonance experienced has a direct effect on attitude and behaviour change.

Leon Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory was first initiated by his research on housing satisfaction in the Massachusetts Institute Technology University in Minnesota in 1951, among student housing projects, with the aim of measuring social relationships within the housing projects (Schachter, 1994). The study established that students who were socially close had similar attitudes towards the projects, while those that were socially isolated developed different attitudes towards the housing projects. These findings were

the basis of social psychology where social variables such as social cohesion, group structure and communication had an impact on individuals' preferences.

Festinger's (1954) continued research on understanding social psychology established that beliefs, attitudes and communication on individuals that were socially centred had an influence on their actions. In 1957, Festinger's quest to determine whether social determinants had an impact on an individual's beliefs, birthed the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957). Cognitive dissonance theory was an effort to determine the origin of pressures, whereby it was established that when two or more factors are incompatible with our ideas, opinions and beliefs, pressures arise as a result (Schachter, 1994). Festinger proposed that cognitive dissonance exists when our cognitive beliefs, opinions, and ideas are challenged, thus giving a need to reduce this discomfort (Festinger 1957). The scholar also established that when an individual's ideas, opinions and beliefs are incompetent with external beliefs, pressure that drives us to reduce this dissonance arises in three ways: Adding consonant cognitions that would mean agreeing with the challenging ideas or opinions, subtracting dissonant cognitions and increasing the importance of constant cognition, or decreasing the importance of the dissonant cognition.

The above propositions were tested through the following approaches: Free choice, induced compliance, and effort justification (Festinger, 1957). Free choice paradigm established that after making decisions, individuals' cognitions favour the chosen decision or item. The researcher highlights that when we make decisions that may be threatened by external cognitions, we tend to view our decisions as attractive as and greater than the other alternative decisions or items. The closer the decisions or items are in similarity, the higher the dissonance experienced. Despite the close similarity between decisions, however,

participants chose their first decisions and developed a negative attitude towards the rejected alternative (Jones & Jones, 2007). Induced compliance approach experimented with participants who were given rewards of \$1 and \$20 to convince other participants that the tedious task they were given was interesting. It was established that the higher the reward offered to convince other participants, the less the dissonance as the larger amount was enough compensation for them to change their attitude. Similarly, the lesser the reward, the higher the dissonance as they were required to change their attitude to convince others, yet the amount was not enough compensation for their attitude and behaviour change. Lastly, the theory was tested in 1959 by Aronson and Mills on the basis of effort justification, which established that dissonance is aroused when individuals engage themselves in negative activities that are against their beliefs and opinions, in order to obtain a desirable outcome (Jones & Jones, 2007). The above findings establish that social factors and pressures have an influence on our attitude and behaviour change.

Findings from current research have supported Festinger's findings on cognitive dissonance theory. According to Margolis (2016), cognitive dissonance ascends when an individual's worldview is challenged by external events. Wong (2009) explains that when individuals behave in a particular way publicly but have conflicting feelings privately as a result of being judged, this creates dissonance which they would later try to reduce. In addition, the extent of dissonance aroused with regard to a certain cognition is as a result of the importance of those perceptions as well as the amount of cognitions that are both dissonant and constant to that cognition. This means that dissonance rises based on the increase in the number of conflicts and the relevance of those conflicts to those thoughts that are consonant (Jones, 2000). Sweeney, Hausknecht, and Soutar (2000), add that

dissonance consists of two elements—cognitive and emotional components. Dissonance is recognized as a cognitive component which is often influenced by important decision making. It is also recognized as an emotional component based on satisfaction derived from purchases made on products, whereby performance is compared to expectations.

Between the 1950s and the 1970s, cognitive dissonance theory was popular and dominated research based on psychology (Harmone Jones, 2012). During this period, the theory revolved around how rewards influence attitude and behaviour, and how behaviour and motivation influence perception and cognition. In the 1990s, the theory was revived by researchers and scholars as it gained popularity. Harmone Jones (2012), also adds that today, the theory has continued to gain interest on issues on social behaviour, and psychological variables like rewards and motivation influencing attitude, perception and cognition.

Lee (2015) states that cognitive dissonance theory is greatly used as a basis to explain dissatisfaction, anxiety, and uncertainty among stakeholders of organizations. It is argued that stakeholders experience dissonance when their perception of an organization and its performance are challenged by external or other stakeholders' information and attitude towards the organization. As a result, stakeholders choose to reduce dissonance by seeking positive information on the organization to support their positive or negative decision or standpoint on the organization. In addition, Kim (2011), explains that since Festinger (1957), introduced cognitive dissonance, many researchers have used the theory to explain behaviour among organizational stakeholders.

According to a study by Milliman & Decker (1990), communication messages from organizations to their target audiences had an impact on the change in attitudes, beliefs and

behaviour of their audiences. The researchers affirm that communication and feedback towards customers gave them assurance on their decisions and choices invested in the organization. This way, they did not develop any uncertainty and discontent towards organizations. Moreover, a study by Milliman & Decker (1990) on ways in which dissatisfied stakeholders reduce their dissonance confirmed that stakeholders reduced or rather expressed their dissatisfaction towards the organization by expressing negative attitudes towards the company in form of backlash and complaints.

O'Neil & Palmer (2004), Kim (2011), Bawa & Kansal (2008), Oliver (1997), explain that cognitive dissonance does not only take place after their experiences with organizations, but even before and during their experiences with these companies. The scholars explain that often, stakeholders develop uncertainty—and perceptions about the organization based on information that they are exposed to—with regard to the brand.

Despite the cognitive responses executed by individuals in dissonance reduction, human beings also reduce dissonance through emotional responses (Sweeney, Hausknecht, & Soutar, 2000). It is argued that satisfaction is a mechanism that is also used as response to cognitive judgment, often between stakeholders and their perception of a brand. According to Mooradian & Olver (1997), when stakeholders' expectations on their perception on the brand are not met, this creates feelings of discontent to which stakeholders respond to in different ways such as regret, stakeholder complaints, and dissatisfaction.

As a result of changing behaviour, attitude, and opinion to reduce dissonance, post-decision dissonance is often experienced after important decision making (Milliman & Decker, 1990). When individuals make important decisions from different alternatives,

each with its merits and demerits, they develop dissonance on whether the choices they made were the right ones. Milliman and Decker (1990) explain that the greater the dissonance after post-decision making, the higher the chances of the individual not repeating the same decisions or actions. The researchers note that this rising function on cognitive dissonance framework is now widely used from a communication standpoint to understand stakeholder behaviour.

Leon Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory has been analysed and tested by a number of other scholars, including Krause (1972), and Cooper and Fazio (1984), with the aim of gaining a clear understanding of the concept and guiding future research work. Krause (1972) argued that cognitive dissonance theory does not focus on individuals' cognitions, but is interested in the attitude and behaviour changes that people undergo when these cognitions are troubled. Festinger's 1957 explanation on the theory did not visibly highlight whether dissonance is a cognitive or emotional element (Sweeney *et al.*, 2000). Festinger describes dissonance as a person being in a state of mental conflict with his inconsistent feelings, knowledge of self, desires and behaviour. Festinger (1957) later explains dissonance to be a tremendously painful and unbearable feeling. Cooper and Fazio (1984) state that dissonance has less to do with irregularities within cognitions as stated by Leon Festinger, but somewhat with anticipations of undesirable results that may cause regret and anxiety within stakeholders.

From the above theoretical framework, it is apparent that the cognitive dissonance theory grounded its key propositions on three constructs—namely, belief, dissonance, and action. Leon Festinger believed that an individual holds cognitions—often beliefs, opinions, and attitudes—that are inconsistent with each other and affect one's behaviour.

Studies by Powers and Jack (2013), Bae Bosco (2016), and Margolis (2016), suggest that inconsistency in individuals' beliefs motivate them to seek and develop strategies to alleviate their distress. This study recognizes the construct of belief by NCWSC Facebook reviewers developing different cognitions as a result of NCWSC actions not meeting their expectations on water supply in Nairobi, which is evident on the thematic issues arising among their online reviews on NCWSC's Facebook page.

Cognitive dissonance theory is also based on the construct of dissonance. Festinger (1957) explained that dissonance is the mental discomfort caused as a result of inconsistent beliefs. This construct has been greatly supported by researchers. Kim (2011), Harmon Jones (2012), and Lee (2015), through experimental research highlighted that dissonance was a pressure drawn to individuals whose cognitions conflicted each other and the only way to reduce these pressure was to change their cognitions. Sweeney, Hausknecht, and Soutar (2000) explain that dissonance is often reduced through emotional responses such as complaints and regret towards other individuals or organizations. This study captures the concept of dissonance based on the negative sentimentality of online reviews on the NCWSC Facebook page.

Moreover, the theory is strongly based on the concept of action, whereby Festinger (1957) explained that actions are influenced by communication among centrally centred individuals. Researchers Jones & Jones (2007), Harmon Jones (2012), and Bawa and Kansal (2008), explain that actions taken by individuals to reduce dissonance are often as a result of the information they are exposed to. This construct is supported by this study, as the researcher highlights that because of NCWSC Facebook reviewers communicating with each other by replying to each other's comments and queries owing to poor

responsiveness from the organization, as well as supporting and identifying with each other's complaints, their actions, perceptions and attitudes towards NCWSC are greatly influenced by their mutual interaction and the information they are exposed to within the NCWSC Facebook platform.

## **2.3 Empirical Literature Review**

### **2.3.1 Online engagement**

A highly engaged online audience is the most important asset that an organization could have (Gupta, 2012). It is argued that the best way that a brand can set itself apart from its competitors is by creating direct engagement with its customers, as these will help to grow and sustain the brand. Gupta (2012) defines online customer engagement as the interaction and commitment of online audiences with each other, and customers with organizations. Fernandes and Esteves (2016) established online engagement as a valuable mechanism that is often used by both online audiences and brands to improve relationships between the two parties. Customer engagement is highlighted in different forms: Online word of mouth, online interactions, and blogging (Brodie *et al.*, 2011). The author also adds that online engagement focuses on relationships among brands and their customers, that is, it constitutes cognitive and emotional elements too. Jakkola and Alexander (2014) define customer engagement as activities and online patterns that influence brands to create a relationship with their target audiences. Either the online reviewers or the company can initiate engagement (Gupta, 2012).

As a result of online customers having unlimited access to brand information, they have developed high expectations of brands. In addition, customers are now less sensitive to legacy media, and harder to please and retain in a highly competitive market (Gupta,

2012). Organizations have therefore resorted to engaging these online audiences—so as to increase levels of interaction, to get feedback and relevant information from their customers, and to create loyalty by initiating a long-lasting relationship.

The increased number of online platforms such as social media pages, blogs and websites has enabled online customers to engage with other online audiences about companies, (Jakkola & Alexander, 2014). The author adds that through online engagement, the possibilities of brands acquiring new online customers and losing a great amount of customers are high. Jakkola and Alexander (2014), explain that because of online customer-to-customer engagement, organizations have been motivated to reach these engaged audiences to improve brand-client relationships by meeting their different needs.

There are various factors that influence and inhibit online stakeholder engagement (Fernandes & Esteves, 2016). The authors explain that the intensity of online interaction is influenced by the attributes of corporate brands. An example is given to explain that the better the organizational performance, the higher the customer involvement with the brand, and the more and easier the online engagement. With poor organizational performance, customers do not find the need to engage with brands or with each other about the brand; this makes it challenging for such brands to reach out to their clients due to a poor brand image and reputation.

Today, organizations are highly interested in online engagement (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Pearo, 2004). According to Dholakia *et al.* (2004), the shift from legacy to online media has created a virtual community of online audiences. It is stated that the virtual community comprises online audiences who converge through online platforms to discuss about brands and their experiences with organizations. As a result, online

stakeholders have become more knowledgeable, with changing perceptions of brands putting brand reputations and images at risk. This has made it tough for brands to understand their stakeholders (Alon *et al.*, 2004).

Moreover, according to Dholakia *et al.* (2004), customers decide to be highly engaged through stakeholder online platforms so as to conveniently acquire information that is of high value, as it involves gaining opinions and ideas from other customers.

The above studies are in addition to Festinger's assumptions on social behaviour, which formed a basis for the cognitive dissonance theory. Festinger (1957) said that when individuals are socially centred, with constant communication and closeness, they tend to develop similar preferences and attitudes towards decision making as compared to those who are not socially centred. The studies highlighted above are a confirmation that through online engagement, customers develop similar preferences and attitudes towards brands through the information that they share among themselves online.

This study set to emphasize the importance of online engagement between NCWSC and its Facebook reviewers in attaining mutual relationship and positive corporate image and reputation. The above studies support this study's claims, as they highlighted the power of virtual communities in maintaining brand reputation and customer satisfaction through online engagement.

### **2.3.2 Customer Dissatisfaction**

At one point in life, every customer has experienced a form of satisfaction or discontent towards a brand. Customer dissatisfaction has been an issue that researchers and scholars have had to understand over the years (Lee, 2015). According to Ndubisi and Ling

(2007), dissatisfaction is an emotional sensation experienced by customers as a result of the brand failing to meet their perception and expectation of the brand. Another definition of customer dissatisfaction is the emotional feeling within customers following a poor experience and relations with the brand (Donoghue & Klerk, 2006).

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction are mechanisms that customers use to positively and negatively react to experiences with organizations (Donoghue & Klerk, 2006). The scholars add that today, it is believed that customers respond to dissatisfaction by expressing their complaints through online reviews in online platforms of their choice.

However, customer complaints should not be entirely viewed as negative outcomes by organizations; rather, it is an opportunity for organizations to pay attention to their customers and directly interact with them to understand the expectations, attitudes, and perceptions that they hold towards the organization. This is with the aim of improving the mutual relationship between the two parties as well as improving organizational image and reputation. In addition, a study conducted by Donoghue and Klerk (2006) showed that a majority of discontented customers do not air their complaints directly to manufacturing and retailing companies. Instead, these customers choose other mechanisms to express their sentiments through their personal online platforms and official websites of the organizations. It is vital that manufacturing and retailing companies give attention to customers regarding their complaints and find effective media to provide opportunities for discussion between the two parties on customer future needs, as well as increasing market proficiency (Donoghue & Klerk, 2006).

According to Krawczyk (2008), customer dissatisfaction can have a tremendous impact on their perception and attitude of a brand that they once trusted. Krawczyk (2008)

gives an example whereby a customer may have a disappointing experience with a brand but the brand may not be bothered to understand their cause of frustration towards them or take great account of the customer backlash. Because of this bad experience, the customer may choose to air their frustrations on the company's website, or other customer-based websites, thus putting the brand's image and reputation at risk.

The popularity and increased use of the Internet by online customers has given rise to numerous complaints by these customers (Krawczyk, 2008). It is argued that because of the Internet and its high level of interactivity among customer reviews, the number of customer complaints due to dissatisfaction has risen over the years, to the extent of online customers creating online forums to discuss about their negative outcomes of past purchases made. Krawczyk (2008) also mentions that based on previous research, online customers air their reviews online more than offline customers. This is because online customers have become more bold and vocal as a result of the internet customer forums, and also due to the magnitude of interaction in the online setting.

Customer sentiments towards organizations are always changing. Felix (2015) states that it is important for organizations to know the behaviour and trends of their customers. Because of the constant change in customer sentiments towards organizations—becoming more vocal and bold, corporate brands are finding it challenging to maintain strong relationships with their customers. This has contributed to an increase in negative brand reviews by customers. The researcher states that despite challenges in learning customer behaviour and preference, vocal and bold customers present a complex process for organizations and it is important for the latter to understand their sentiments.

It is argued that it is important for customers to be vocal about their dissatisfaction as this is beneficial for both the organization and the customer (Nimako & Mensah, 2013). When organizations focus on customer complaints through online reviews, they are able to ascertain the causes of customer dissatisfaction through online interaction with customers, as well as implement complaint management and service retrieval mechanisms. Overall, the magnitude of customer dissatisfaction has challenged organizations to understand and respond to customer complaints through implementation of technological mechanisms (Nimako & Mensah, 2013).

The above studies confirm Festinger's theory advancements on post-purchase dissonance, which reveal that when individuals' expectations towards a decision are not met, they develop dissonance which is translated into emotional aspects of dissatisfaction. These constructs confirm this study's declarations that NCWSC Facebook reviewers' dissatisfaction is greatly fuelled by NCWSC's failure in meeting their customers' expectations on quality service delivery through effective communication and complaint management systems. Sweeney, Hausknecht, and Soutar (2000), and Mooradian and Oliver (1997) back up this notion by arguing that satisfaction is a mechanism that is also used as response to cognitive judgment, often between online audiences and their perception of a brand. When customers' expectations on their perception on the brand are not met, this creates feelings of discontent in which customers respond to in different ways such as regret, stakeholder complaints, and dissatisfaction.

### **2.3.3 Organizational Responsiveness and Need for Speedy Communication**

With the shift from legacy media to new media, customers have shifted their behavioural patterns and their media consumption patterns to the Internet, where they seek

information on organizations (Batra & Keller, 2016). Customers are now refraining from seeking information from legacy media, but are seeking information from the websites of corporate brands, search engines, mobile browsers, blogs and online stakeholder platforms.

The world wide web internet technology has altered how people communicate and get information (Narwal & Sachdeva, 2013). This occurrence has sprouted new online audiences: The online customers. Narwal and Sachdeva (2013) mention that these new online audiences are more knowledgeable than before, which has made them bold, vocal, and knowledgeable about their value as customers. In addition, these customers are characterized as highly interactive and active as a result of access to vast information and increased interaction platforms. They have drastically changed based on their decision making and the nature of relationships among themselves, and between them and organizations. This has motivated corporate brands to reach out to their target online audiences to build mutual relationships with them.

Moreover, Aineah (2016) states that the rapid growth of new media has had a tremendous impact on how organizations communicate with their online audiences. In addition, we are now in an era where these new customers, the online customers, are both empowered and confused, thus influencing them to easily switch to other brands with or without any logical reason, as well as to voice out their dissatisfaction. Aineah (2016) explains that because of this, corporate brands have been forced to create and maintain online interactions with their stakeholders and to reach out to their target audiences. However, these organizations are finding it a challenge to maintain a stable online customer base because of their boldness.

Just like interpersonal relationships, not all relations between brands and online audiences are pleasing and smooth (Bolkan *et al.*, 2014). Brands develop problems with their online customers. However, it is important that organizations handle these customer problems to maintain effective relationships and stakeholder loyalty. Bolkan *et al.* (2014) adds that customers prefer to work with brands that make them feel engaged, and that their needs are being attended to. If corporate brands fail to meet these needs, customers may react by exiting the relationship and moving to other brands, as well as using online platforms to communicate their discontent with other customers, putting the offending brand's reputation at risk. Because of the nature of this relationship between brands and their online audiences, brands have shifted to online media, through online stakeholder services, to reach their online customers.

Moreover, organizations which previously reached their target audiences through mass media to accomplish their communication objectives and make them aware of the organization and what it has to offer have today shifted to online platforms, such as websites and social media platforms, to reach their customers. (Batra & Keller, 2016). In addition, Lee & Choi (2006) say that numerous brands have argued that brands have implemented online media because the Internet is a great tool for brand building based on the magnitude of interactivity and speed in communicating information to a widely-engaged and vocal audience.

Online word of mouth has rapidly grown because of the popularity of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, not just globally but also in Kenya (Wanjala, 2017). Because of the rise in online audiences, corporate brands have strived to become key players in the new media in order to reach their customers. In addition,

Wanjala (2017) mentions that according to the Communications Authority of Kenya, stakeholders who rely on the Internet for brand information and engagement make up online audiences of up to 26.1 million people. According to Leyiaro (2015), there has been remarkable growth in new media, making Kenya the fourth country with the highest internet penetration in Africa following Nigeria, Egypt and South Africa, as well as ranking position 33 globally. Moreover, according to Aineah (2016), figures from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics show that the rate of online users in Kenya population is increasing at a rapid rate of 300 people per month, annually. This is an indication of just how online audiences can grow—as well as becoming bolder, engaged, and empowered. Aineah (2016) states that this has motivated corporate brands to shift to new media reach to their target stakeholders and increase stakeholder loyalty, as well as build corporate image and reputation.

Internationally, in regions such as China and the United States, the shift from legacy media to new media has grown at a rapid rate (Aineah, 2016). In addition, the rate at which technology is changing, together with stakeholders, has presented a challenge for corporate brands to effectively reach their stakeholders. This has resulted in a need for brands to have speedy communication to interact with their stakeholders in a highly competitive environment.

It is argued that because of the wide use of the Internet by both online stakeholders and corporate brands, the latter can benefit in the following ways: Reaching their target audiences directly compared to legacy media; easily interacting with their target customers, and interacting with other players in the new media. As a result, online brands have sprouted as they saw the need for speedy communication with their online niche customers

to attain their corporate objectives and goals. Leyiario (2015) also explains that in Kenya, service delivery organizations have benefited from new media through dependable, quicker and affordable communication to online audiences.

The shift to new media has not only transformed organizational communication in the manner they reach their target stakeholders, but also in how they communicate to their stakeholders (Lekhanya, 2014). Because of the Internet, organizations communicate to their stakeholders differently from the past, which was through legacy media. In addition, internet interactivity has resulted in stakeholders gaining the chance to voice their opinions about corporate brands, what they like and what they don't like (Lekhanya, 2014).

Based on a study carried out by Shanthi & Kannaiah (2015), it was found that most youngsters between the age of 20 and 30 years depend on the Internet for brand information because of the ease of use of technology, convenience, easy navigation, and increased customer interaction. In addition, it was found that the age gap in online audiences searching for brand information is growing, as well as the online customers' niche, because of lifestyle changes. Shanthi & Kannaiah (2015), explain that as a result, brands have launched online platforms where they can reach previous and new customers who have shifted to the new media.

A growing number of companies have found it beneficial to join the bandwagon of new media with the aim of directly interacting with their customers (Kau, Tang, & Ghose, 2003). It is argued that brands are beginning to learn customer behaviour; customer sentiments, why customers are shifting to online media, and factors that influence their perception towards brands. This has made corporate brands shift to new media, having found an emergence in the paradigm shift in a highly competitive market.

Festinger's research on social behaviour, which was a forerunner for the cognitive dissonance theory, established that communication among individuals who were socially centred greatly influenced their attitudes and preferences towards their decisions (Festinger, 1957). This is in line with this study's constructs that NCWSC Facebook reviewers, who are socially centred through the new media, tend to develop similar attitudes, opinions and preferences towards the company, which is greatly portrayed by their online reviews towards NCWSC.

Similarly, the above research studies are in agreement with this study's constructs on the importance and effect of online responsiveness by brands towards their target audiences. The above studies highlight that constant and effective online response to audiences' complaints, as well as constant online communication, creates a mutual relationship between brands and online customers, improving the corporate image and reputation. This study's constructs confirm those of previous studies, showing that NCWSC's poor image and reputation is as a result of poor responsiveness, communication, and online complaint management towards Facebook reviewers on the company's Facebook page.

#### **2.3.4 Complaint behaviour**

According to Doga (2013), when customers' experiences and perceptions of organizations do not match up to their expectations, this creates dissatisfaction, which often leads to customer complaints. Tripp and Gregoire (2011) outline customer behaviour as dissatisfied customers using online platforms to make complaints, both publicly and privately. Online customer complaints are on the rise as a result of numerous online communication channels and an increase in online customer engagement (Doga, 2013).

It is argued that as much as online customer behaviour has its limitations, it is important for both customers and organizations (Doga, 2013). Ward and Ostrom (2006) add that just as offline customer complaints are important to brands, so are online customer complaints. The cyberspace allows customers to present their views and complaints easily and conveniently from whatever location they are situated without having to directly confront the organization. Online customer complaints also reduce emotional costs that may create confrontations between the customer and the brand, as customers now have a platform to air their complaints (Lee & Hong, 2005). Because of the reduction of emotional costs, online customer complaints are amplified.

However, Doga (2013), states that as much as customer complaints can be of significance to customers, these can sometimes be undesirable for organizations. Customers can make complaints through third-party websites and through their personal online platforms in which other customers can be reached. This has made it difficult for companies to control the magnitude of negative online reviews. In addition, according to Ward & Ostrom (2006), customers today are not limited by customer care service units. Because of the Internet and brands having their own electronic business platforms which are available publicly, customers are presented with the opportunity to engage with other customers online about their purchase experiences. This results in an increase in online customer complaints.

Nasir (2004), categorizes problems that influence online customer behaviour: Poor online customer engagement, poor pricing, product and service related issues, website related issues such as content, and poor service delivery. Based on a study conducted by Nasir (2004), it was found that poor service delivery, poor online customer engagement,

and service dissatisfaction contributed to high numbers of online customer complaints. Based on a study conducted by Dekey (2014), it was found that a majority of negative posts were made via Facebook, in which most victims filed complaints about poor service delivery and poor dispute resolution from the organization. Customers prefer responses specifically tailored for every complaint raised online (Doga, 2013).

Doga (2013) mentions specific elements that steer online customer complaint behaviour: Personal, organizational, technological, and situational features (Doga, 2013). Based on organizational factors, the organization's responsiveness contributes to online customer complaints. When customers have a poor perception towards a brand's responsiveness and online engagement, they develop a higher tendency of online complaints. It is also argued that when customers anticipate compensation, they are less likely to complain. They may complain offline, rather than online, as the brand has assured them a form of compensation for their dissatisfaction (Andreassen & Streukens, 2013).

According to Pontevia & Balague (2008), online customer complaints are also influenced by situational factors; this refers to customers' perceptions on justice when they realise that the organization has violated the relationship between it and its customers. Pontevia and Balague (2008) argue that these factors can influence both offline and online customer complaints, especially with the Internet today.

Based on a study conducted by Doga (2013), it was found that customers make online complaints through the following channels: Company websites, feedback sections in company websites, internet discussion forums among customers of similar interests, online review sites, blogs, social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn, and

anti-brand hate sites—which are sites created by customers dissatisfied by the same organization with the aim of protesting against the company.

The above claims from previous studies confirm Leon Festinger’s assumption that individuals not only experience cognitive dissonance, but also experience emotional dissonance, which yields regret or anxiety. Post-dissonance behaviour is now used as a basis to explain customer uncertainty and dissatisfaction, which are constructs from advances on the cognitive dissonance theory, highlighting that the emotional dissonance experienced motivates individuals to reduce the dissonance by expressing their attitudes in form of complaints.

Moreover, the above research studies state that customer complaints are as a result of organizations’ violation of the relationship with their customers through poor service delivery, poor communication, and poor complaint management. These concepts are in line with this study’s concept that complaints by NCWSC Facebook reviewers are as a result of the company’s poor service delivery, poor responsiveness, and poor complaint management—which damages the company’s image and reputation.

### **2.3.5 Facebook Reviews and NCWSC Facebook Data Online Reviews**

In Kenya, a report by the Communications Authority of Kenya revealed that there are 41 million mobile subscribers, of which 30.8 million are internet subscribers, having Facebook among the top most downloaded applications (Bloggers Association of Kenya, 2018). The Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) also established that in 2017, Facebook came second to WhatsApp as the most used platform with 7.1 million users monthly, whereby the platform was used for purposes of blogging; education; social media campaigns through hashtags; interaction; and online business (BAKE, 2018).

According to Barasa (2014), Facebook is the most popular social media platform as it was the first to be introduced and used in the country. This explains why NCWSC's Facebook page was used as the basis for this research, having been the company's most popular and most active online platform. The research also shows that in Kenya, Facebook is widely used to build brand image and improve communication with its target audiences. Through Facebook, online audiences can make remarks on brands—both individual and corporate brands—through text, videos, and images to communicate their messages.

According to Keyhole (2018), NCWSC has a total of 11,491 page likes and scores an average of 0.31% online reviews, eight average shares, 12 average comments, and 16 average likes daily. The table below highlights NCWSC's online engagement between October 2017 and July 2018 as a demonstration of the changes in online engagement with the organization, whereby NCWSC's online engagement may escalate or drop below the stated average score of 0.31%.

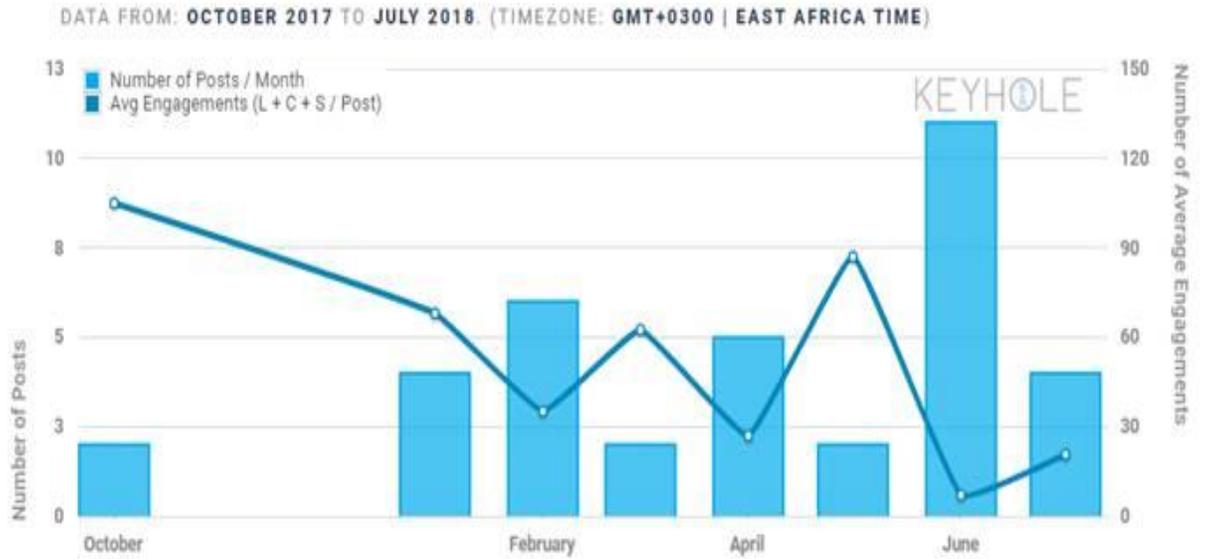


Figure 2. 1: *NCWSC Average Online Engagement*

## 2.4 Conceptual Framework

This study’s conceptual framework was guided by the cognitive dissonance theory and the research objectives: To explore the themes of context of online reviews vocalized on the NCWSC Facebook page on water supply in Nairobi; to examine the overall level of dissonance of online reviews on the NCWSC Facebook page by examining the sentimentality expressed on audience expectations on the supply of water in Nairobi; and to explore NSWSC online responsiveness in meeting the needs and expectations of online reviews of their Facebook page audiences on water supply services in Nairobi.

The conceptual framework covers both dependent and independent variables. The framework’s dependent variable is NCWSC online reviews, whose indicators are emerging themes and sentimentality from the online reviews. The independent variables cover content, whose indicators are themes; sentiment, whose indicators are sentimentality scores; and responsiveness, whose indicators are themes. The framework highlights a

positive correlation because the more the dependent variables, the more the independent variables.

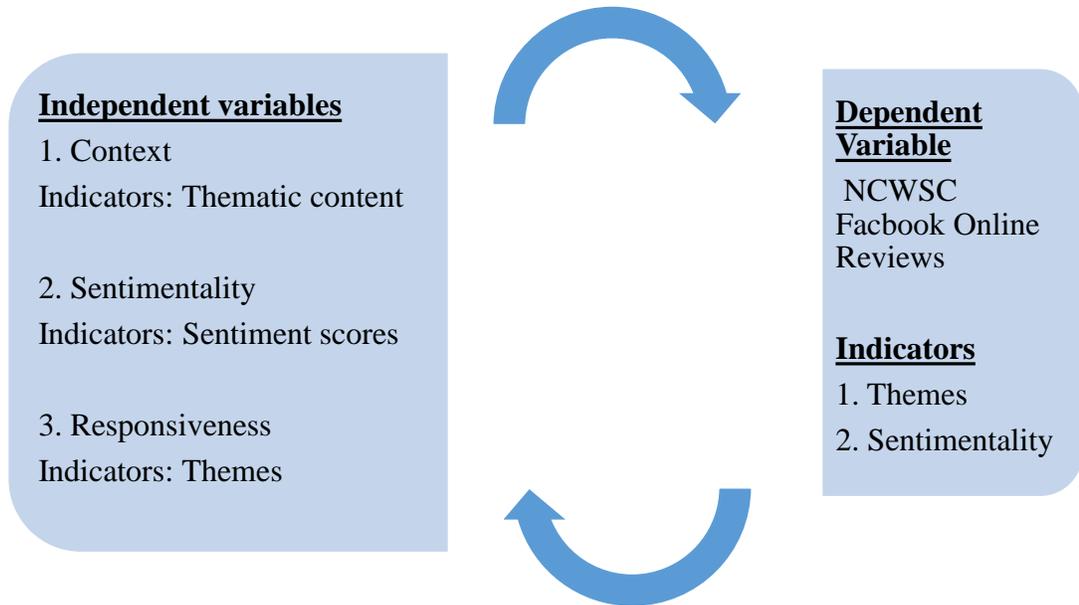


Figure 2. 2: *Conceptual Framework*

## **2.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has examined published literature by scholars in the field of communication. The first section of this chapter is the literature review, which explored the factors that contribute to stakeholders and online stakeholder dissatisfaction. The section also highlighted factors that have influenced brands to shift from legacy media to online media so as to reach stakeholders online, and the factors that influence negative online reviews among stakeholders. The second section of this chapter presented the theoretical framework, highlighting the different theoretical perspectives of different researchers over the years.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter of the study highlights the research design, research approach, sampling design, and data collection methods that were used to gather data and analyse it with the aim of understanding the tones behind stakeholder reviews that may imply their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with NCWSC.

#### 3.2 Research Design

This study implemented critical content analysis research design. Critical content analysis is a research design that is aimed at analysing and interpreting recorded data (Harste *et al.*, 2009). The Internet is a platform that consists of enormous information of different nature that affects its users directly and indirectly. During research, this information can be quite difficult and complex to collect manually. As a result of seeking to understand the tone behind online sentiments expressed by stakeholders of NCWSC, recorded data was analysed from the company's main social media platform, Facebook.

Critical content analysis was most suitable for this study as this technique involves the analysis of recorded data both online and offline, with the purpose of making inferences from texts to contexts through processes of coding and identification of themes and pattern (Harste *et al.*, 2009). The latter is in alignment with this study's research objectives of identifying the patterns and context of online stakeholder reviews to understand the sentiments behind online reviews by NCWSC Facebook reviewers, and the impact of these reviews on NCWSC image and reputation.

### **3.3 Research Approach**

This study employed the qualitative research approach. Qualitative data analysis seeks to analyse, understand and bring order and structure to masses of collected data (Mubir, 2016). The qualitative research approach was considered the most appropriate approach to collect data because of the nature of this study, being an explanatory case study. According to Kohlbacher (2006), case studies are widely used to study organizations and management processes to explain phenomena within the chosen context to provide an analysis that will illuminate the study's theoretical issues as well as make a theoretical contribution.

This study, therefore, implemented the qualitative research approach to explain phenomena it aimed to understand: The sentiments of NCWSC Facebook reviewers that influenced their online reviews. In addition, this approach was most suitable for the study as findings would not be generalizable to the whole population, but rather to NCWSC.

### **3.4 Population and Sampling Design**

The population for this study was Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company's social media platforms—namely Facebook, which was created in August 2011, with a total number of 11,441 followers as of March 2017. According to Cooper & Schindler (2003), a sample frame is a list of all the elements in the population where the sample will be drawn from. This study's sample frame consisted of online reviews by NCWSC Facebook reviewers with a sample size of 3,574 online comments from NCWSC online reviewers. This study employed non-probability sampling technique as the findings were not generalizable to the whole population, but only represented the chosen sample, NCWSC. The unit of analysis of this study was the Facebook online reviews by stakeholders of

NCWSC between the years 2016 and March 2018, selected through purposive sampling. This is because the samples were chosen based on a certain specified criterion, which is the company's social media platforms.

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods and Instruments**

This study implemented NVIVO 11—a computer software that is used to gather and analyse social media content—as the data collection instrument for analysing the Facebook reviews from stakeholders of NCWSC.

The researcher was required to download the N-Capture browser extension through a Chrome browser, in which the software gathered all the wall posts or reviews between January 1, 2016 and March 31, 2018. This time period was chosen as NCWSC greatly experienced a water crisis from 2016, whereby in March 2018 the water crisis subsided due to record high rainfall experienced in Kenya. This is supported by stakeholder reviews, which saw NCWSC reviewers question the company on poor water supply despite the large amounts of rainfall experienced in March.

The captured data was imported into NVIVO as a pdf dataset which was sorted, filtered, and coded by NVIVO software. The second step involved the creation of nodes based on this study's research objectives. Nodes are themes or topics from the researcher's source of data (NVIVO, 2015). Nodes were created through a word frequency search to help the researcher identify words or themes that mostly occur. The third step was to organize the case nodes. The researcher determined the relationship types with the data to allow comparisons and generate themes based on the nodes. According to NVIVO (2015), coding is the process of gathering similar data into respective descriptive topics, also known as nodes. Due to the magnitude of data that was collected from the Facebook

reviews, auto-coding was implemented after creation of nodes, either manually or automatically.

The next step involved visualizing findings. This process involved making queries, whereby these are ways of bringing together and exploring the subsets of the captured data (NVIVO, 2015). The researcher found words from data in the nodes and chose those that recurred the most. This was to enable the researcher to find a patterns, trends or consistencies among the gathered data. Results were displayed in visual form—namely charts, maps, and diagrams. The fifth step involved exporting the findings from the software to a Word document.

Results can also be exported to other nodes in one's projects, with the aim of storing the results. The researcher would then make annotations on the selected nodes to enable the reading of any comments, observations and reminders when revisiting the data. Annotations are scribbled notes that appear beside nodes, since researchers usually write down any important observations and notes that would assist them in data analysis (NVIVO, 2015). The researcher then created reports using Report wizard to view and summarize findings from the project. The reports were then printed—with information on nodes and visuals, charts, maps, and reports.

### **3.6 Research Procedures**

Research procedures are guidelines used by researchers when conducting a study (Creswell, 2009). To ensure that this research is completed within the stipulated time frame, the researcher undertook planning, development, and testing of the data collection instrument used in this study.

Planning involved identification of the data collection instrument that was most suitable in meeting this study's objectives of analysing NCWSC Facebook reviews. NVIVO 11 software was deemed the most suitable for the following reasons: It includes tools and features that analyses text, video and images on social network content; tools that discover emerging themes and sentiments; and the use of query features that answer complex questions and identify meaning in the captured data. In addition, through workshops, the researcher also obtained thorough knowledge and skills in the practice of NVIVO 11 software.

NVIVO 11 software was tested through sample projects, whereby the researcher explored and experimented the software's analysis tools. The purpose of the software testing was to familiarize the researcher with the usability of the software and data mining process. These steps involved creating the project, working with sample data files that were imported into the software, creating the nodes, data coding, and analysis of the output. To ensure validation of the efficiency of the software, the researcher undertook two pilot tests using the same data sources to ensure consistency in results obtained.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Method**

Data analysis is the process of coding and classifying collected data, identifying patterns and relationships within the collected data, and developing a summary of the findings based on the study's research objectives (Barasa, 2014). With regard to this study, data was analysed by use of qualitative analysis using the NVIVO 11 software. Data analysis process involved data mining, in which NVIVO detected patterns and trends in the collected data, which translated to the emerging themes and context of online reviews by NCWSC Facebook reviewers.

Through NVIVO, this study undertook a sentiment analysis, in which two major sentiments were identified—positive and negative. These explained the factors that contributed to NCWSC Facebook reviewers’ attitudes and feelings towards their satisfaction and dissatisfaction towards the company. Negative sentiments were highlighted by negative adjectives and key words—namely, suffering, complain, inconvenience, refuse, “shame on you”, fraud, destroy, agony, frustrate, illegal, negligence, disconnection, sewage, issue, disappointment, rationing, failure, ignore, sad, outbreak, errors, impatient, incompetence, robbery, unfortunate, water contamination, without, “no pressure”, ‘no water”, tired, unaccountability, mistake, interruption, lie, inefficient, suffering, “water shortage”, “pipe leakages”, report, irritating, “poor service”, and corrupt. Similarly, positive sentiments were analysed based on some key words—namely, “thank you”, “working on,” and “apologize”.

Data was then presented visually into charts and tables, and exported from NVIVO to Word document for interpretation in text form, guided by this study’s research objectives.

### **3.8 Ethics Approval**

This study involved analysis of data posted by online stakeholders of NCWSC on the company’s Facebook Page. It is on this basis that the researcher sought and obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board to ensure privacy and confidentiality of the subjects.

### **3.9 Chapter Summary**

This chapter gave a detailed explanation on the research design, research approach, sampling design, and data analysis techniques that were found to be most suitable towards achieving the purpose of this study.

The research design implemented in this study was critical content analysis, which is a qualitative approach to research. Data was collected using the NVIVO 11 software, which aims at identifying trends and attributes of the captured data. The population was selected based on purposive sampling. In addition, the data collected was analysed through the NVIVO software, in which the end results were presented in charts. Thereafter, a sentimental analysis of the collected data was conducted to understand the positive, negative, and neutral tones that were behind stakeholders' reviews on the NCWSC Facebook platform.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 4.1 Introduction

The chapter highlights the findings of this study based on each research objective. This chapter starts with identifying the thematic issues behind complaints by NCWSC online reviewers, the overall impression of online reviews by NCWSC Facebook reviewers on their level of dissonance between service delivery and their expectations of NCWSC, and the online responsiveness of NCWSC in meeting the needs and expectations of service delivery by NCWSC Facebook reviewers.

#### 4.2 Thematic Content of Online Reviews

Based on this study's first research question, "What are the themes in the content of online reviews vocalized on the NCWSC Facebook page on water supply?", the following themes were identified as indicated in Figure 4.1.

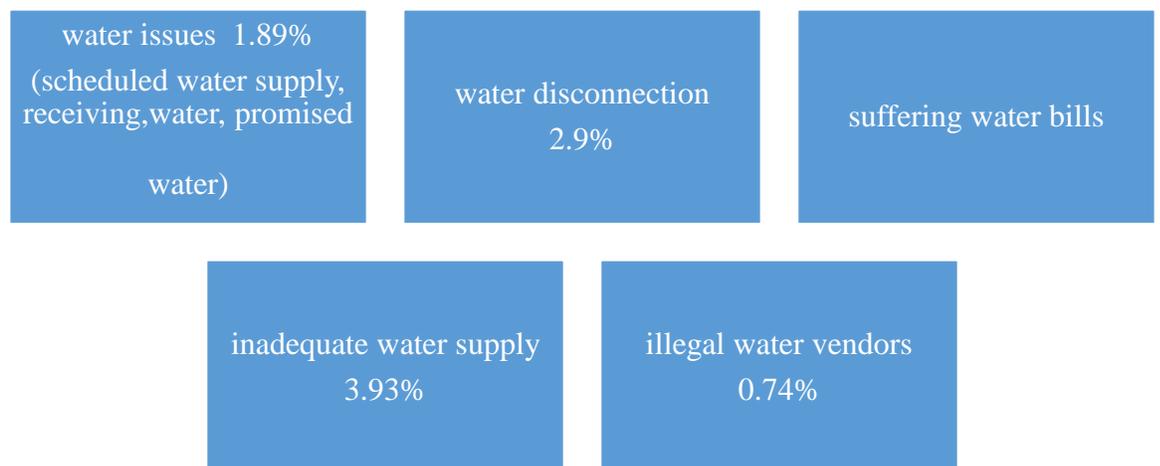


Figure 4. 1: *Context of NCWSC Facebook Online Reviews*

#### **4.2.1 Scheduled Supply of Water in Nairobi**

Online reviews from NCWSC Facebook reviewers revealed the audiences' frustrations (water issues, water disconnection, disputed water bills, water shortage, and illegal water vendors) towards the organization; despite them receiving water in their households on their scheduled days of water supply, there was barely any pressure to enable water tanks to be filled, leading to low water storage for future use. It was established that despite NCWSC Facebook reviewers' scheduled days on water supply, they had been getting water only once a week. During other times, they faced an extreme shortage of water supply, receiving water only once a week for a whole year.

NCWSC Facebook reviews also established that the poor water supply and delivery resulted in part from the incompetence of NCWSC officials. The latter have been accused of collecting signatures from residents promising to deliver water, only drive off with the intention of selling the water to other people for additional money. This has caused frustration among Facebook reviewers of NCWSC.

#### **4.2.2 Water Disconnection**

NCWSC Facebook reviewers' have openly expressed their complaints on water disconnection. However, different NCWSC Facebook reviewers expressed different concerns on this matter. With reference to the conditions on water disconnection, NCWSC Facebook reviewers have expressed their interest in knowing the grounds upon which their water could be disconnected. This is as a result of previous complaints where stakeholders have complained about their water being disconnected even after bills had been paid and they were legally connected to enjoy water supply. However, the company did not issue any response to such inquiries.

In addition, NCWSC Facebook reviewers say that company staff on the ground are partly responsible for water disconnection due to negligence. NCWSC is accused of disrupting water connection with tractors during road repairs. However, this statement stirs up controversy, because it is not in NCWSC's mandate to repair roads, but only to provide affordable clean water to the residents of Nairobi. This shows that because of the constant blame on the company on issues dealing with water, NCWSC Facebook reviewers still point fingers at the company on un-relatable issues.

Based on previous complaints of water shortage, the company's fraudulent behaviour was brought to light, whereby water was being disconnected for selfish and unjust reasons. It is also ironical that the company fails to provide notices for water disconnection yet their aim for shifting to digital platforms was to improve customer engagement. Stakeholders also call out the company for failing to comply with the law, which requires them to issue public notices both through legacy and online media regarding disruptions to water distribution. NCWSC's constant water disconnection has created room for suspicion and speculation among stakeholders, who accuse the company of incompetence in dealing with water connections.

NCWSC stakeholders blame the company for their agony on water issues, which were particularly frequent after disconnection. Stakeholders have openly expressed their sentiments on the company's failure, explaining that the reason the company is not doing enough, especially on water connection, is because it is a monopoly. This has resulted in NCWSC Facebook reviewers living in agony over lack of water. The company is therefore continually challenged to do better despite being a monopoly and not to take advantage of their situation.

### 4.2.3 Disputed bills on water supply in Nairobi County

Disputed water bills raised great concern by NCWSC Facebook reviewers on the company's Facebook page, as indicated in Figure 4.2. The nature of online reviews established that NCWSC was responsible for issuing out wrong bills that did not reflect their reviewers' water consumption, whereby bills reflected water consumption even on days when no water was supplied to these reviewers. Online reviews also indicated that NCWSC Facebook reviewers were issued with wrong bill statements, some of which were not theirs or were the result of poor meter reading and water tampering.

In addition, NCWSC Facebook reviewers complained of receiving outstanding bills that reflected double and triple the amounts they were to be charged in relation to their monthly water consumption.

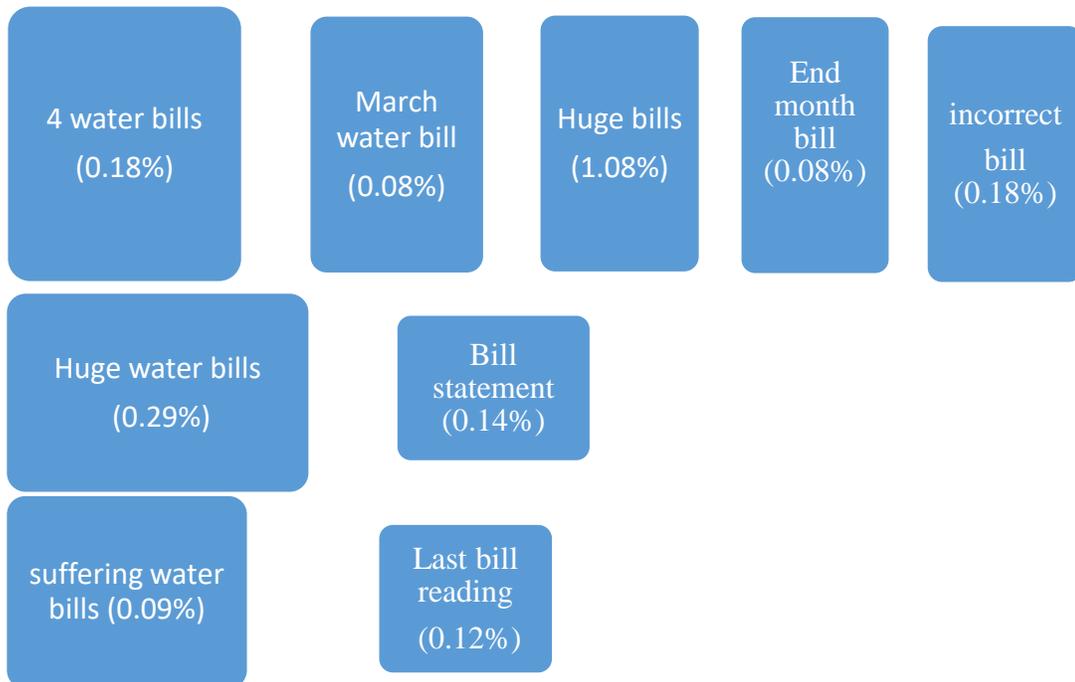


Figure 4. 2: *Emerging Issues Regarding Bills*

#### 4.2.4 Inadequate Water Supply in Nairobi

Based on the online reviews on the NCWSC Facebook page, inadequate water supply and clean drinking water were established as an emerging issue among Facebook reviewers of NCWSC. The latter explained having gone for a period of two months without clean water in their households. With the company having explained the causes of poor water supply as pipe breakages and poor rainfall, NCWSC Facebook reviewers were still agonized by the situation, which resulted in rising complaints on the same issue.

It was found that NCWSC Facebook reviewers sought alternative sources of water supply, particularly boreholes, as a mechanism to reduce their agony on these constant water issues. NCWSC Facebook reviews found that water shortages continue to affect NCWSC Facebook reviewers during all seasons, including when there was high rainfall.

Moreover, NCWSC Facebook online reviews found that the areas greatly faced with poor water supply are Embakasi, Umoja, Madaraka, Zimmerman, Mirema, Kariobangi, Kayole, Dandora, Huruma, BuruBuru, Komarock, Pangani, Kasarani, Ruaraka, Kawangware, and Highrise. This demonstrates that most of NCWSC stakeholders affected by poor or non-existent water supply reside in the Eastlands area of Nairobi and slum areas, recording a total of 670 complaints from the mentioned areas. Conversely, findings established that only three areas within the more affluent suburbs of Nairobi complained about water shortage—namely, Kilimani, Riara, and Karen—having 52 complaints from the stated areas. These findings established that wealthier residential areas are less affected by water shortages.

#### **4.2.5 Water vendors/water sellers**

Online reviews from NCWSC Facebook reviewers established that water vendors make a great contribution to the water issues experienced by Nairobi residents. Residents in the areas of Kibera as well as Olympic and Woodley estates have expressed their concerns and irony on the unusual circumstances whereby water vendors are fully and constantly supplied with clean water, yet residents barely receive water even on the days they ought to be supplied with it.

Based on the Facebook reviews, it was found that water vendors, in conjunction with NCWSC officials, are disconnecting water from residential areas and connecting water to water vendors. As a result, though connected, residents connected to NCWSC water supply do not get water, leaving them with no option but to buy from vendors.

#### **4.3 Sentimental Analysis of NSWSC Performance as a Water Supplier**

This was based on this study's second research question, "What are the sentimentality scores of online reviews on the NCWSC Facebook page?" Figure 4.3 gives the results based on Facebook reviewers' sentiments.

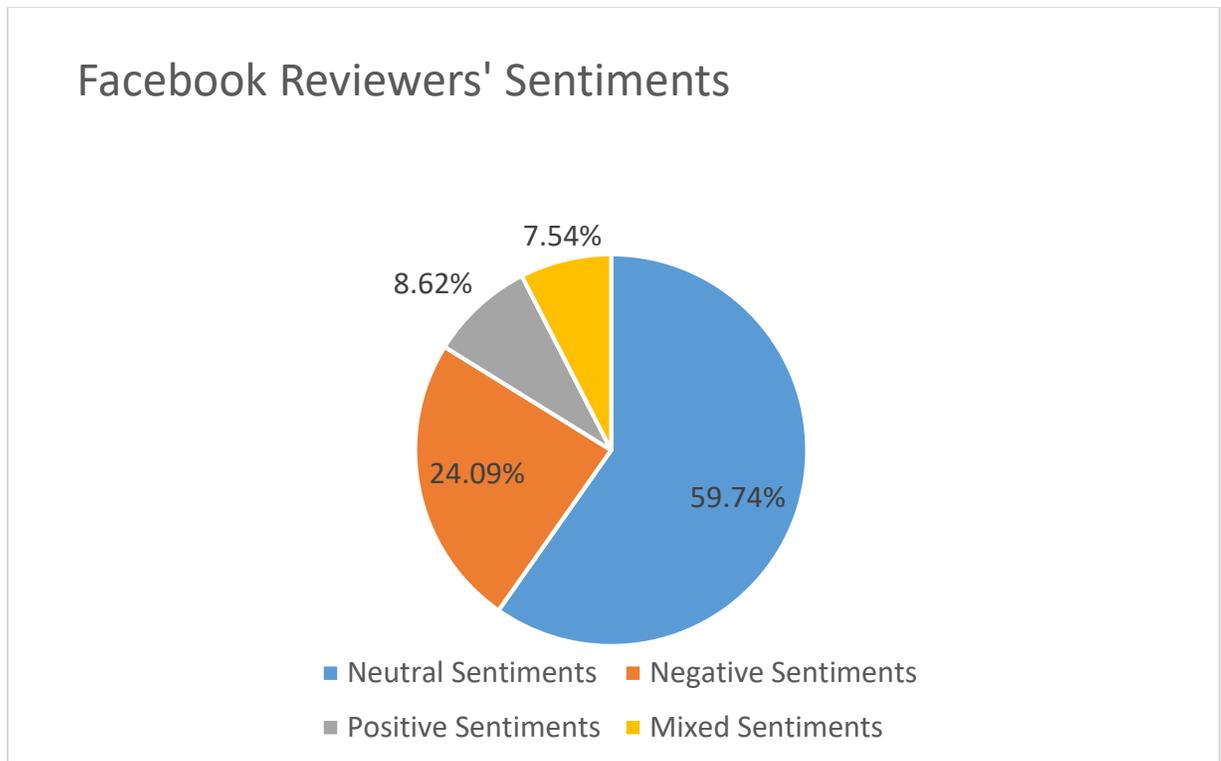


Figure 4. 3: *Sentiments of NCWSC Facebook Reviewers*

Using a social media monitoring tool, NVIVO 11 Plus software, this study analyses the positive and negative sentiments expressed by NCWSC Facebook reviewers in order to understand the tones behind the attitudes, emotions, and opinions that stakeholders expressed towards NCWSC performance as a water supplier in Nairobi. As shown in Figure 4.4, up to 8.62% of the coded information covers positive sentiments, 24.09% covers negative sentiments, 59.74% covers neutral sentiments, and 7.54% covers mixed sentiments. This indicates that there are more negative sentiments than positive sentiments by 16.67% (553 references) Negative sentiments range from very negative for 405 comments to moderately negative for 393 comments. Likewise, positive sentiments range from very positive for 156 comments to moderately positive.

Through the software, negative sentiments were identified through the following adjectives and statements: Suffering, complain, inconvenience, refuse, “shame on you”, fraud, destroy, agony, frustrate, illegal, negligence, disconnection, sewage, issue, disappointment, rationing, failure, ignore, sad, outbreak, errors, impatient, incompetence, robbery, unfortunate, water contamination, without, “no pressure”, “no water”, tired, unaccountability, mistake, interruption, lie, inefficient, suffering, “water shortage”, “pipe leakages”, report, irritating, “poor service”, and corrupt.

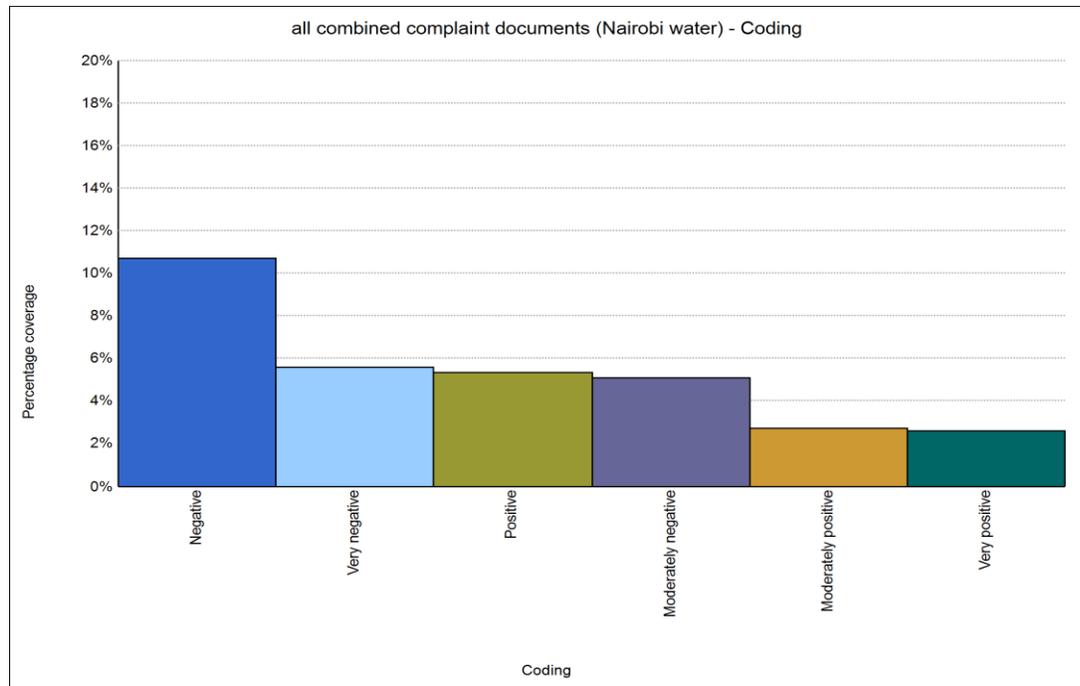


Figure 4. 4: *Comparison of the negative and positive sentiments chart*

This study narrowed down to negative and positive sentiments to identify the degree of sentiments contributing towards NCWSC Facebook reviewers’ satisfaction and dissatisfaction towards the company. Figure 4.4 shows that negative sentiments (21.44%) outweigh positive sentiments (10.76%), which shows that NCWSC Facebook reviewers experience dissatisfaction based on their expectations towards NCWSC service delivery

on communication and complaint management.

#### **4.4 Poor Online Responsiveness**

This is with reference to this study's third research question, "What are the themes that mediate responsiveness to online reviews by NCWSC?" Findings established how ironical it was that the company was so quick to communicate about money and collect funds, but poor in responding to NCWSC Facebook reviewers' queries and complaints about problems on water supply. NCWSC customer care officials and managers were accused of not offering any help and guidance when the Facebook reviewers called to air their concerns. This shows how poorly engaged the company is starting, from the management to the subordinates, which creates a bad image and reputation for the company.

In response to NCWSC Facebook reviewers' complaints online, the company responded by providing hotline numbers that NCWSC Facebook reviewers can call to issue out complaints to the technical coordinators. However, an online reviewer stated that the hotlines provided were not functional. This portrayed a poor sense of responsibility on stakeholder engagement and response.

In addition, NCWSC was ridiculed for its poor customer care services. Statements from NCWSC Facebook reviewers mocked the company by asking whether their social media customer care service team had arrived at work as a result of no response to their queries and complaints. Based on customer care service responses on the company's Facebook page, the company posts often revolve around communication of the company's announcements and its achievements.

However, based on NCWSC Facebook reviewers' complaints, responses given to the Facebook reviewers' complaints were often from other NCWSC Facebook reviewers, who were also expressing similar sentiments or complaints—with no responses from NCWSC. Such instances made NCWSC Facebook reviewers come to the conclusion that because their complaints through email and appearances at the office were not attended, the company had no intention of solving their problems; this forced NCWSC Facebook reviewers to find other channels to air their grievances, that is, going to the public office.

These findings therefore indicated that NCWSC has a poor online engagement with its Facebook reviewers due to assertions of the company failing to issue put information and necessary feedback to arising issues. Similarly, these findings establish that the company has a poor complaint management mechanism which was evident from the constant rise in complaints of the same nature.

#### **4.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter gives a detailed explanation of the findings that were mined from Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC) Facebook page through NVIVO 11. It was established that there are six thematic issues that strongly highlight the nature of complaints and concerns that NCWSC's Facebook reviewers hold towards the organization: Wrongful billing and pricing of water; water service distribution and delivery; inadequacy of water supply in Nairobi; scheduled water supply; poor online customer service; and a poor corporate reputation. These were the major concerns affecting NCWSC Facebook reviewers. Through an analysis of the NCWSC Facebook reviewers' sentiments towards the performance of the organization, it was established that negative

sentiments outweighed positive sentiments by 67.67%, which was a great threat to the company's image and reputation.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **5.0 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter highlights discussion, conclusion and recommendations of this study's findings in accordance with the research questions. This chapter will also highlight the research limitations that arose.

The core objective of this study was to examine online reviews by audiences of the NCWSC Facebook page by examining the nature, types and context of online reviews, and to offer an advisory on effective handling of online communication and complaints at NCWSC's online platform. This study sought to understand how NCWSC Facebook reviewers' complaints illuminate dissonance in service delivery and customer expectations. This was made possible through data mining using NVIVO 11 software.

The first research question of this study was, "What are the themes in the content of online reviews vocalized on the NCWSC Facebook page on water supply?" Based on this, the key areas of customer concern were as follows: Wrongful billing and pricing of water, whereby NCWSC Facebook reviewers believed that the company operated on lack of accountability and integrity; corruption, by embezzling funds from NCWSC Facebook reviewers through overcharging; and poor water service distribution and delivery, as NCWSC Facebook reviewers felt that the organization was not doing enough to ensure quality service delivery. This is because NCWSC Facebook reviewers continued to face more water challenges even after presenting their grievances to the organization. Other concerns include: Inadequacy of water supply in Nairobi, whereby NCWSC Facebook reviewers accused the company of conspiring with water vendors to make illegal water

connections, thus reducing water supply among NCWSC Facebook reviewers; and failure to adhere to scheduled water supply times, as NCWSC Facebook reviewers did not get water supply on scheduled days due to illegal water disconnections.

The second research question was, “What are the sentimentality scores of online reviews on the NCWSC Facebook page?” This question sought to examine the overall effect of online reviews on the NCWSC Facebook page on the level of dissonance on audience expectation of the supply of water in Nairobi. It was found that there were more negative sentiments (83.83%) than positive sentiments (16.16%), which explained the reasons behind NCWSC Facebook reviewers’ negative approaches towards the company. Negative sentiments were identified through undesirable adjectives such as “fraud”, “negligence”, “disconnection”, “sewage”, “issue”, and “disappointment”, among others. These reactions were precipitated by poor water supply due to water rationing and poor water distribution on the part of NCWSC. Similarly, positive sentiments were expressed through the following adjectives: “Thank you”, “working on”, “apologize”, “pleased to”, “convenient”, “let us know”, “kindly”, “wonderful”, “joke”, “appreciate”, and “improve”—which were responses from the company to its stakeholders online, and from stakeholders commending the company on an improvement. A higher number of negative than positive comments were an indication of the company’s incompetence, poor service delivery, and a lack of customer care responsiveness—which all had an impact on the company’s corporate image and reputation.

The third research question was, “What are the themes that mediate responsiveness to online reviews by NCWSC?” This question sought to explore NSWSC online responsiveness in meeting the needs and expectations of their Facebook page audiences on

water supply services in Nairobi. It was established that NCWSC has a poor online customer service, whereby there were no responses at all; in situations where there was a response, the feedback was slow and poor, thus leaving NCWSC Facebook reviewers' complaints disregarded. This meant that there were steady customer complaints of the same nature. Leaving NCWSC Facebook reviewers uninformed created room for speculation and accusations from NCWSC Facebook reviewers towards the company's actions. NCWSC Facebook reviewers speculated that corruption brewed within the organization, and that the organization has no intention of helping its stakeholders on issues of water supply.

## **5.2 Discussion**

### **5.2.1 Thematic Content of Online Reviews**

This study's first question was, "What are the themes in the content of online reviews vocalized on the NCWSC Facebook page on water supply?" With reference to outstanding bills, pricing and costing, stakeholders of NCWSC complain that the water bills sent to them are suspiciously high and therefore incorrect. NCWSC Facebook reviewers explain that their water bills do not reflect their water consumption. As stated by NCWSC Facebook reviewers, as a result of poor water supply and water rationing, water users often consume less water than usual. However, NCWSC is accused of issuing faulty water bills to its NCWSC Facebook reviewers that reflect time periods where there was no water supply.

In addition to sending wrong and inaccurate bills, NCWSC Facebook reviewers blame NCWSC for not sending bills and are therefore not aware of the precise charges they ought to pay. Their agony with the company is heightened by intimidation from NCWSC

employees, who demand to read water meters and then disconnect water supply, claiming bills were not paid even when these had not been sent out to the NCWSC Facebook reviewers. The company's response to these allegations were somewhat partial, as they addressed the issue by stating that they no longer send out printed bills and people should register for their e-bill service, leaving out their advisory statement on how they could assist stakeholders faced by this problem.

Having presented evidence of bills showing inaccuracies and overcharging of NCWSC Facebook reviewers' bills, and with the company not doing much to resolve their grievances, NCWSC Facebook reviewers felt that the organization is not doing enough to resolve this issue. Moreover, NCWSC Facebook reviewers have pleaded with the organization to revisit their water meter readings and issue corrected bills. Despite NCWSC Facebook reviewers airing their grievances and making pleas to the company for system updates, their efforts have remained futile. In addition, they have continued to receive wrongful billings. The lack of integrity and competence by NCWSC is confirmed by their responses, stating that the firm's Facebook reviewers should go ahead to pay their bills as indicated. NCWSC Facebook reviewers' complaints about inaccurate bills are therefore rendered pointless.

This study established that the lack and poor distribution of water to households in Nairobi has caused a surge by water vendors around the city. This sudden rise of water vendors in residential areas and slums caused speculation among NCWSC Facebook reviewers. Residents in some areas—namely Kibera and the Olympic and Woodley estates, expressed their concerns on the unusual circumstances whereby water vendors are fully and constantly supplied with clean water while residents barely received any water even

on the days they ought to be supplied with it. In addition, NCWSC Facebook reviewers found it ironical that water vendors' water pressure is so high that it rivalled those of fire trucks.

NCWSC Facebook reviewers were suspicious as to why water vendors are strategically placed within residential areas, with the aim of selling water. NCWSC Facebook reviewers claim that despite being connected to the water supply, they hardly received any water. During times of water scarcity, water vendors suddenly appeared to sell water. This gave residents reason to believe that these water vendors were intentionally interfering with the flow of water so that NCWSC Facebook reviewers would have no option but to buy water from them.

As a result of the frustration of constant water interruptions, NCWSC Facebook reviewers demanded that the company investigates possible water interferences, especially on the days when they were scheduled to have access to water supply. In addition, NCWSC Facebook reviewers also pleaded for the company to offer them different solutions of getting access to water during water interferences by water vendors, because purchasing water was expensive for them. Some had been buying water close to a whole year, which incurred unforeseen costs that they had to deal with. In addition, NCWSC Facebook reviewers have also proceeded to enlighten other NCWSC Facebook reviewers on their water rights that NCWSC is depriving them; they have done this by highlighting information that the United Nations General Assembly has explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation, and acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realization of all human rights.

Moreover, complaints from residents who are NCWSC Facebook reviewers

surfaced, accusing employees belonging to NCWSC of theft and trickery on receiving water. The company is depicted as malicious for getting signatures from residents implying that they have received water. NCWSC employees are accused of collecting signatures before supplying water to residents, and driving off without filling the residents' reservoirs. This caused speculation about the organization's employees on this malicious act, causing NCWSC Facebook reviewers to believe that these employees were selling water that NCWSC Facebook reviewers were to receive to other people, as they would have collected signatures from the NCWSC Facebook reviewers claiming that they received the water that was allocated to them.

Based on the online reviews by NCWSC Facebook reviewers on the company's Facebook page, the NCWSC Facebook reviewers express their frustration on inadequate water supply. NCWSC Facebook reviewers have openly made their complaints regarding poor and illegal water connections. However, different NCWSC Facebook reviewers express varying concerns on water connections. According to customer complaints expressed on the NCWSC's Facebook page, customer complaints on poor water supply are partly attributed to illegal water connections by external sources. NCWSC Facebook reviewers' complaints filed on poor and illegal water connections highlight that despite being connected, there are days—particularly during weekends—when the water supplied is of low pressure and therefore not enough to meet their needs.

Comments from NCWSC Facebook reviewers also show that despite their meetings with the regional Nairobi dam manager on ensuring water connection and supply, especially during weekends, residents still faced problems regarding poor water supply due to water pressure. According to residents, poor pressure—especially on weekends—is an

indication that their water connection is being disrupted. Others have developed the notion that it is the company that is denying them their right to water supply.

With illegal water connection a growing problem in residential areas, NCWSC Facebook reviewers have continued to highlight and bring to light the corruption that goes on with regard to poor water connection. NCWSC Facebook reviewers, despite fear for their safety, informed the company through Facebook that they were aware of the illegal water connection activities. They have gone ahead to state that they know the people involved, including NCWSC workers—disclosing that they have their official names, contacts, and employee staff numbers. It is however ironical that despite the company being accused of fraud, it says it strongly believes in transparency and accountability, therefore going against their organizational core values.

With reference to the conditions on water disconnection, NCWSC Facebook reviewers have expressed their interest in knowing on what grounds their water should be disconnected. This is as a result of previous complaints where stakeholders have complained of their water being disconnected even after they have been legally connected. However, the company did not issue any response to such inquiries. This reveals the organization's poor response management towards customer complaints, thus leaving NCWSC Facebook reviewers unsatisfied and having with a poor image of NCWSC.

The water utility firm has received criticism for unnecessary water rationing. NCWSC users have expressed their sentiments, claiming that despite the large quantity of clean water wasted through burst pipes, and despite record rainfall, the company still fails to improve the situation on water rationing. In addition, NCWSC Facebook reviewers have also expressed their disappointment towards the company because, in today's age and era,

the country ought to be experiencing more water supply and service rather than moving backward and not having adequate water supply and access to clean water, as can be seen from the water rationing. These events highlight the company's lack of preventive strategies and measures against water shortages, especially during seasons of high rainfall. This not only portrays a poor image of the company, but also illuminates NCWSC's lack of seriousness and disaster preparation.

NCWSC stakeholders blame the company for their agony on water issues, particularly frequent water disconnection. Stakeholders have openly expressed their sentiments on the company's failure, explaining that the reason the company is not doing enough especially, on water connection, is because it is a monopoly. This has resulted in NCWSC Facebook reviewers living in agony over the lack of water. In addition, NCWSC Facebook reviewers have resorted to other sources of water supply, like boreholes, in addition to buying water. NCWSC Facebook reviewers have gone ahead to express their sentiments about the company doing better to improve water supply, therefore advising NCWSC to find innovative ways to improve water supply in the country, and not to take advantage of their status of a monopoly.

In response to such remarks, NCWSC discloses that they are in meetings with the management of residential areas—especially those that hold large capacities of residents and have established agreeable programmes—to improve water supply. However, it is not clear whether the organization carries out these programmes with residential areas that have the influence to make such negotiations with the company, as these programmes are not mentioned among other customer complaints or comments, other than the organization stating its regular water schedule to its NCWSC Facebook reviewers. The company states

that they have an agreeable programme on water supply with Nyayo Estate, which is in the Eastlands section of Nairobi. Conversely, there are more complaints on poor water supply from NCWSC Facebook reviewers residing in Eastlands areas—namely Umoja, Embakasi, Zimmerman, and Kariobangi. This leaves speculation as to why the Eastlands areas are affected most with poor water supply, even when connected, more than other suburban areas of Nairobi.

NCWSC Facebook reviewers' complaints to the company of not receiving water are not being properly addressed. The Facebook reviewers have voiced their grievances to the company online, claiming that they are not receiving water as they should be. Despite these complaints, the company is accused of giving false hope to these NCWSC Facebook reviewers. This has caused frustration among NCWSC Facebook reviewers, who only desire communication and transparency from the organization.

Complaints from residents who are NCWSC Facebook reviewers have surfaced, accusing NCWSC employees of theft and trickery. The company is depicted as malicious for getting signatures from residents, implying that they have received water when it is not supplied. NCWSC employees are accused of collecting signatures before supplying water to residents, and then driving off without filling the residents' reservoirs.

This causes speculation that the organization's employees are malicious, with NCWSC Facebook reviewers tending to believe that these employees are selling water that was meant for other people.

The above claims confirm literature by Donughue and Klerk (2006), Ling (2007), Lee (2015), Krawczyk (2008), Nimako and Mensal (2013), and Felix (2015), which

explains that customer dissatisfaction is greatly influenced by an organization's failure in meeting customer expectations on quality service delivery. NCWSC Facebook reviewers expressed their disappointment on their expectations of service delivery, and that there was no effective communication and feedback.

In addition, the above claims also confirm concepts by Doga (2013), Tripp & Gregoire (2011), and Ostrom (2006), who explain that complaint behaviour by customers is fuelled by their expectations not being met by organizations. These claims also support concepts of post-dissonance theory, which highlights that customers issue complaints when their expectations are not met as a mechanism to reduce the dissonance; anxiety, and regret towards the company. NCWSC Facebook reviews confirm this through their online reviews on the company's page, which highlights the issues that NCWSC needs to address to serve them better.

### **5.2.2 Sentimental analysis of NSWSC performance as a water supplier in Nairobi**

This study's second research question was, "What are the sentimentality scores of online reviews on the NCWSC Facebook page?" With reference to this question, online stakeholder reviews from NCWSC stakeholders deem the company as the most disappointing company in Kenya. NCWSC Facebook reviewers call out the company for being incompetent and not performing according to their expectations.

Online complaints from residents who are NCWSC Facebook reviewers have surfaced accusing employees belonging to NCWSC of theft and trickery in supplying water. This has not only painted a poor reputation for NCWSC, but has also caused speculation among the organization's employees on this malicious act. NCWSC Facebook reviewers, as a result, believed that these employees are selling the water that NCWSC

Facebook reviewers are meant to receive to other people, with the aim of making additional money. These accusations bring out NCWSC's incompetence and lack of accountability on their mandate towards quality service delivery to its stakeholders.

This study analysed the positive and negative sentiments expressed by NCWSC Facebook reviewers so as to understand the tones behind the attitudes, emotions and opinions that stakeholders expressed towards the firm's performance as a water supplier in Nairobi. Up to 8.62% of the coded information covers positive sentiments, 24.09% covers negative sentiments, 59.74% covers neutral sentiments, and 7.54% covers mixed sentiments. With regard to only negative and positive sentiments, negative sentiments range from very negative for 405 comments to moderately negative for 393 comments (83.83%). Likewise, positive sentiments range from very positive for 156 comments to moderately positive (16.16%). This indicates that there are more negative sentiments than positive sentiments by 67.67%.

The negative sentiments were precipitated by actions undertaken by NCWSC such as poor or no water supply due to water rationing, poor water distribution, and pipe leakages. NCWSC Facebook reviewers' agony on water supply was also hastened by the fact that they did not receive any water supply even when the country recorded high amounts of rainfall during rainy seasons. These negative sentiments were also heavily influenced by the company's actions to do with inaccuracy in water billing, where NCWSC Facebook reviewers were forced to pay inflated bills that were not in tandem with their monthly water consumption patterns. Moreover, NCWSC Facebook reviewers' negative sentiments were driven by the company's poor customer service. The company was

accused of showing no intention of solving problems brought to its attention, due to their slow response, or the lack of it, towards grievances brought forward.

Corruption and fraud that thrived in the organization was also a contribution to the negative sentiments against the company. NCWSC Facebook reviewers expressed their disappointment in NCWSC employees—who were involved in water meter tampering, accepting bribes from illegal water connectors, and trickery in collecting signatures and leaving without filling NCWSC Facebook reviewers' water tanks. All these factors greatly exposed the company's incompetence and failure to abide to its mandate of providing reliable, quality water and sewerage services in an environmentally friendly manner within Nairobi County. In addition, these actions performed by NCWSC go against its core values of accountability, professionalism, and customer focus (NCWSC, 2018).

Nevertheless, positive sentiments were expressed through the following adjectives: “Thank you”, “working on”, “apologize”, “pleased to”, “convenient”, “let us know”, “kindly”, “wonderful”, “joke”, “appreciate”, and “improve”. These sentiments—“apologize”, “working on”, and “pleased to”—were used in reference to the company's actions in responding to NCWSC Facebook reviewers' inquiries and complaints. The adjectives “Thank you”, “wonderful”, and “improve” were NCWSC Facebook reviewers' sentiments in response to the company's action on their queries and their appreciation when the company did fix a problem. However, adjectives identified as positive by the software, “kindly”, “joke”, and “let us know”, were not from positive statements; rather, they were words used to negatively express customer's complaints towards the company's services.

The above claims confirm Festinger's claims that dissonance is not only a cognitive element, but also an emotional one. The cognitive dissonance theory recognizes that when

ideas and preferences are challenged externally, they develop emotional elements of regret, guilt, and anxiety. These concepts are confirmed by the sentiments that NCWSC Facebook reviewers express through their online complaints through the NCWSC Facebook page. Their positive and negative sentiments, expressed through complaints, are as a result of the reviewers reducing the emotional dissonance through customer complaints, which also impact the company's image and reputation negatively.

### **5.2.3 Poor Online Responsiveness**

The third research question was, “What are the themes that mediate responsiveness to online reviews by NCWSC?” With reference to this question, findings revealed the company's poor efforts to engage NCWSC Facebook reviewers about water issues, announcements and feedback—a claim supported by stakeholders' statements on poor customer service by the organization. Based on the complaints highlighted on the NCWSC Facebook page, 13.06% of NCWSC Facebook reviewers' complaints reflect poor responsiveness and online engagement.

NCWSC Facebook reviewers find it ironical that the company is so quick to communicate about collecting money from them but poor in responding to their queries and complaints about problems of water supply. NCWSC customer care officials and managers have been accused of not offering any help and guidance when NCWSC Facebook reviewers call to air their concerns. These accusations are strongly backed up by the lack of responses towards complaints on the NCWSC Facebook page.

NCWSC stakeholders express online that despite the organization's legal obligation to issue notices or alerts to its Facebook reviewers on any anticipated water issues, the company fails to comply with this, thus leaving them unaware of any

information regarding water issues. In response to NCWSC Facebook reviewers' complaints online, the company responds by providing hotline numbers that the Facebook reviewers can call to air their complaints to technical coordinators. However, a customer states that the hotlines provided do not work.

Moreover, NCWSC stakeholders ridicule the company for its poor customer care services. Statements from NCWSC Facebook reviewers' online mock the company by asking whether their social media customer care service team has arrived at work, as a result of no response to their queries and complaints. Based on customer care service responses on the company's Facebook page, the company posts often revolve around announcements and the company's achievements. However, looking at the customer complaints, responses are often from other NCWSC Facebook reviewers who also express similar sentiments or complaints, with no company responses being given.

As a result of the constant water complaints by NCWSC Facebook reviewers, and poor organizational response to these stakeholders, the latter have devolved a notion that NCWSC has no intention or is not doing enough to resolve their water problems.

The above claims confirm Festinger's concept on individuals possessing the same preferences and attitudes as a result of being socially centred. Festinger claims that when individuals are socially centred, due to the communication and closeness among themselves, they develop similar attitudes and opinions towards decisions made as well as items. This confirms this study's concept, whereby NCWSC Facebook reviewers are socially centred through the company's Facebook page. Findings reveal that reviewers' comments revolve around the major issues of water disconnection, poor billing, water shortage, poor complaint management, and poor responsiveness. Online reviews also

indicate that NCWSC Facebook reviewers advise each other on their water rights and alternative water sources through communication on the NCWSC Facebook page. Similarly, reviews highlight how these reviewers support each other's on the company for not meeting their expectations. This is in accord with Festinger's claim that communication among closely associated groups influences attitudes and preferences among themselves.

Moreover, these claims are in line with literature on online engagement, which highlights the importance of online engagement between organizations and their customers in maintaining a mutual relationship between the organization and its online target audiences. This study highlights that as a result of poor online responsiveness to NCWSC Facebook reviewers' online comments by the organization, the reviewers developed the notion that NCWSC did not value them as customers. They also went ahead to accuse the company of purposely refusing to communicate with them. This brought a gap between the company and its customers, which would have been tackled through honest and constant online communication.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

This study established a strong correlation between quality service delivery and customer satisfaction. The findings of this study can be used by corporate bodies who seek to pursue a positive corporate image and reputation through customer satisfaction. Through this study, it was found that without corporate bodies practising integrity, customer focus, quality service delivery and customer care responsiveness and engagement, NCWSC Facebook reviewers would develop a poor image of the organization.

### **5.3.1 The Thematic Content of Online Reviews**

With reference to this study's first research question, "What are the themes in the content of online reviews vocalized on the NCWSC Facebook page on water supply?" this study established that online reviews of NCWSC stakeholders were fuelled by wrongful water billing, poor distribution and delivery of water, inadequate water supply, poor scheduled water supply in Nairobi, water vendors, water disconnection, and poor organizational responsiveness to stakeholder grievances. NCWSC's failure to adhere to its mandate to provide quality water and sewerage delivery services in a manner that is acceptable to its consumers fuelled frustration and disappointment among NCWSC stakeholders.

### **5.3.2 Sentimental analysis of NSWSC performance as a water supplier**

With reference to this study's second research question, "What are the sentimentality scores of online reviews on the NCWSC Facebook page?" the firm faced a lot of backlash for lack of integrity and unprofessionalism, which brought conflict between the two parties. Stakeholders' expressions and efforts to reduce dissonance caused by NCWSC not meeting their expectations explained the tones and attitudes behind their reviews, which were an indication of their dissatisfaction and displeasure with the company.

### **5.3.3 Poor Online Responsiveness**

With reference to the third research objective, "What are the themes that mediate responsiveness to online reviews by NCWSC?" this study established that unresolved customer complaints on poor online responsiveness not only caused frustration among NCWSC Facebook reviews, but also left room for speculation among these online

audiences of the company's intentions in its online engagement and poor responsiveness. NCWSC Facebook reviewers speculated there was corruption in the organization, as their complaints on NCWSC officials receiving bribes from illegal water connectors remained futile. They believed that the organization had no interest in resolving their issues regarding poor service delivery due to personal benefits from illegal connections. However, these reports are not what the organization was accused of.

These conclusions are expected to drive the organization to take responsibility for their actions and performance, while remaining reliable in practising competency, transparency, customer focus, commitment and integrity in service delivery. NCWSC and other organizations should demonstrate great responsiveness and engagement in online customer complaints and comments.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on this study's findings, it is imperative to provide recommendations that NCWSC can implement based on the nature of their online complaints, the negative sentimentality scores of Facebook online reviews, and poor responsiveness to online reviews.

### **5.4.1 Thematic Content of Online Reviews**

With reference to this study's first research question, "What are the themes in the content of online reviews vocalized on the NCWSC Facebook page on water supply?"—in which findings indicated poor scheduled water supply, water disconnection, poor water billing, inadequate water supply, and illegal water vendors—the researcher recommends the implementation of social media strategies. The purpose of NCWSC implementation and practice of social media strategies would be to ensure that it handles the grievances of

its online audiences through thorough online engagement in complaint resolution, so as to be effective in a changing environment.

It is recommended that NCWSC should practise policies on posting guidelines, such as: Protection of confidential information on the organization while disclosing only what needs to be addressed to NCWSC Facebook reviewers; being responsible and ethical while responding to NCWSC Facebook online complaints; double checking on feedback and clarifications to ensure transparency and honesty; appropriately handling harsh comments and complaints; employees getting permission from relevant managers before posting sensitive information or feedback; and seeking advice on sensitive online complaints from appropriate managers. Other social media strategy guidelines include ensuring complaints are well addressed and messages tailored according to NCWSC Facebook reviewers' needs.

#### **5.4.2 Sentimental analysis of NSWSC performance as a water supplier**

With reference to this study's second research question, "What are the sentimentality scores of online reviews on the NCWSC Facebook page?"—in which findings indicated that there were more negative sentiments (24.09%) than positive ones (8.62%), it is recommended that NCWSC implements measures that would help it recognize their customers' underlying feelings and attitudes about the firm. The purpose of this would be to interpret, monitor, and measure the tones behind the online complaints of NCWSC Facebook reviewers, and changes in their levels of stress indicated by their tone in online complaints.

It is therefore recommended that NCWSC implements a call centre. This centre will enable the customer care personnel of NCWSC to respond to customer grievances through

computer and telephone-based technologies. The personnel would be required to make and receive calls from NCWSC Facebook reviewers, listen to their complaints, record the complaints, monitor the complaints based on their changing tones and attitudes, and offer appropriate solutions.

In addition, it is recommended that NCWSC implements complaint management frameworks and policies that are highly essential for organizational guidance to ensure that staff adhere to complaint-handling procedures and processes, thus ensuring customer complaints are effectively dealt with.

It is recommended that NCWSC launches customer complaint policies whose main focus would be a commitment to developing an organizational culture of valuing customer complaints. In addition, NCWSC customer complaint policies should also focus on resourcing, where NCWSC representatives are adequately trained and empowered to manage customer complaints, and learning whereby the organization focuses on customer complaint analysis to improve grievance management tactics. This can be achieved through keeping records of customer complaints, monitoring trends on customer complaints, analysis of the complaints and responses given, outcome of the complaints and responses, as well as analysis of corrective measures taken.

### **5.4.3 Poor Online Responsiveness**

With reference to the third research question, “What are the themes that mediate responsiveness to online reviews by NCWSC?”—in which findings highlighted poor online responsiveness towards NCWSC Facebook reviewers by NCWSC—it is recommended that NCWSC implements the use of chatbots built for company websites and Facebook platforms so as to improve online engagement and responsiveness. The chatbot would

deliver NCWSC's online responsiveness by learning and analysing patterns of information and questions that are frequently asked on an organization's website or Facebook platform, and respond to online users using text or statements used to respond to similar questions previously.

It is recommended that NCWSC explains to its online audiences how to get started using the chatbots, explain to them the purpose of the chatbots, advice users to keep brief interaction with the bots to make response faster and specific, and to ensure that the bots have a list of the the kind of questions NCWSC Facebook reviewers are likely to ask for faster and effective feedback (Chatbotics, 2016).

Instant chat boxes are also recommended to NCWSC in ensuring an effective response to NCWSC Facebook online reviews. Based on this study's findings, it was evident that firm officials failed to respond to online complaints. However, when the company actually responded to customer complaints, these responses were greatly delayed. In addition, NCWSC Facebook reviewers expressed frustration at the responses being rather superficial, meaning they do not include assuring and accurate information, thus leaving NCWSC Facebook reviewers feeling misled and unenlightened. Instant chat boxes would enable NCWSC representatives to directly chat with NCWSC Facebook reviewers online through a pop-up box that appears on the screen once NCWSC Facebook reviewers log into the company's website.

This technique would be convenient in assisting NCWSC to gather and respond to customer complaints than through other means such as telephone calls. This is because, through online chat boxes, NCWSC Facebook reviewers can issue their grievances from any location at no cost and get an immediate response. Moreover, through online chatting

boxes, logs of conversations between NCWSC staff and NCWSC Facebook reviewers would be recorded, giving room for staff and management to follow up on complaints, evaluate complaints and the success of responses, monitor response rates, and identify specific staff who were in charge of handling specific customer grievances.

### **5.5 Study Limitations**

While conducting this study, there was limited information based on topics of the nature of online reviews, especially in the African and Kenyan context. This limited the number of current studies used as guides for this study.

### **5.6 Areas for further research**

In the future, similar research studies on analysing organizations' stakeholder online reviews could be carried out. During this study, data of this nature was limited, especially with regard to Africa and Kenya. This is an indication that such studies are in their infancy stages and are yet to be fully explored. It would be interesting and useful to compare findings on different organizations locally and regionally on poor customer complaint management and stakeholder engagement, which is an issue that most organizations continue to face.

In addition, since this study is limited to Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company's poor stakeholder engagement and complaint management, it is recommended that future research would consider looking into developing a model on online corporate communication that local organizations can use in practising and improving stakeholder engagement and complaint management, as organizations are greatly becoming aware of the importance and influence of stakeholder reviews and perceptions towards an organization's image and reputation.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1- Approvals



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

20<sup>th</sup> August, 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

**REF: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH – SANDRA ATEMO OKETCH**  
**STUDENT ID. NO. 634534**

The bearer of this letter is a student of United States International University (USIU) -Africa pursuing a Masters in Communications.

As part of the program, the student is required to undertake a dissertation on “**An Exploration of Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company Facebook Reviews**” which requires her to collect data.

Please note that information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will only be used for academic purposes.

Kindly assist the student get the appropriate data and should you have any queries contact the undersigned.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. Njuguna", is written over a faint circular stamp.

**Prof. Amos Njuguna,**  
Dean – School of Graduate Studies, Research and Extension  
**Tel:** 730 116 442  
**Email:** [amnjuguna@usiu.ac.ke](mailto:amnjuguna@usiu.ac.ke)

## **Appendix 2 - Code Book**

### **Code System Guide Topics**

1. Themes
2. Sentiments
3. Responses

### **Coding Guide Topics**

#### **Themes**

This code is used when Facebook reviewers of Nairobi Water express their issues that they are dissatisfied about with Nairobi City water and Sewerage Company (NCWSC), on water supply in Nairobi. It covers the attention to the major issues that NCWSC Facebook reviewers experience and which NCWSC ought to resolve.

#### **Sentiments**

This code is used when Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company Facebook reviewers explicitly talk about their feelings and emotions concerning their issues with NCWSC that they express on the NCWSC Facebook page.

#### **Responses**

This code is used in reference to Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company's responses towards online reviews expressed on the organization's Facebook page by Facebook reviewers of NCWSC.

## Appendix 3 - NVIVO Sample Output

The screenshot displays the NVivo 12 Plus software interface. The main window shows the results of an auto-code sentiment analysis for the file "all combined complaint documents (Nairobi water)". The results are displayed in a list of references, each with a coverage percentage. The text of the references is visible in the main pane.

Reference	Coverage
Reference 1	0.02%
Reference 2	0.01%
Reference 3	0.01%
Reference 4	0.02%

The text for Reference 1 is: "We need water today S-ta Kassam my thoughts exactly when has 24 hrs turned to 48, plus it is so rude of them not to reply and assure us at least Lily Rose Ocharo I don't think they ever bother to 'follow' up on things, its sooo frustrating."

The text for Reference 2 is: "So frustrating"

The text for Reference 3 is: "I'm not an engineer but I can only guess that a few greedy individuals have damed the inlets thus rendering the dam useless..."

The text for Reference 4 is: ".in the same locality Listen Nairobi water when a customer complains on your page u need to at least show some courtesy and respond but ignoring your customers clearly shows your attitude towards your work for which u draw a salary monthly!"

The interface also shows a sidebar with navigation options like Quick Access, Data, Codes, Cases, Notes, Search, Maps, and Output. The bottom status bar indicates 0 items, 0 references, and 0 unfiltered items.

### Appendix 4 - Thematic Table on Water

water									
water issues	receiving water	water v...	water t...	water t...	water ...	water ...	water ...	water ...	water...
	promised water								
disconnecting water		water distri...	nor...	nairo...	nairo...	march ...	illegal...	harve...	elling...
	outside water sel...	water bill b...							
suffering water bills	nairobi water guys	smart water	correction ...						
		ration water	buying w...	water ...	wat...	use...	stor...	st...	sp...
experiencing water ...	huge water bills			water pls					seli...
		private wat...	borehole...		saw water	op...	mai...	ken...	ka...
clean drinking water	getting water			water p...	running...				
		prepaid wa...	amicable ...	water f...	remaini...	inte...	filli...	en...	
	clean water	online water...		water ...	receivin...	discon...			av...
water vendor truck			4 water bills	water c...	private...	constan...			
water problem	3 days water su...	nrb water		water ...	pls relea...	conect...		alter...	afforda...
			week wate...						

## Appendix 5 - Thematic Table on Bills

bill				
suffering water bills	water bill bearing	march water bill	huge bills	end month bill
query bill	correct bill	4 water bills	paper bills	last bill r...
outstanding bill	billing cycle	instead bills	crazy bill	billing sys
huge water bills	bill statement	incorrect bills		
		enormous bills	billing spike	

## Appendix 6 - Nairobi City Map

