

Dear All,

Kenya is one of the most digital countries. They were the first to adopt at scale mobile payments. 63% of the Kenyan economy runs via mobile activity. Mobile minutes are tradeable exchange currency in Kenya. So, it is not a surprise that Kenya is now pioneering (good or bad I don't know) politics social media influencers. This is different from a party and its workers posting on Social Media. How does this work?

1. Kenya has a presidential election coming up on August 9.
2. We know that in every election, candidates give money to voters and send in media to get people to vote for them.
3. In Kenya this year, presidential candidates are contacting micro influencers and pushing hashtag to support them
4. A micro influencer is one who has a following between 10,000 and 5000,000.
5. What does this achieve? It ensures that presidential candidates bypass traditional media and their opinion. It ensures that you don't have to use paid advertising in traditional media. It ensures that when influencers post then the credibility quotient of 200 influencers is better than any other engagement. So, newspapers and magazines who are already struggling will find political ads missing and lose even more and the profitability will be challenged.
6. So, politicians are paying influencers to spread political messages about rivals.
7. This has led to the spread of false narrative, and this is to be expected. One of the posts posted many times is 'Ruto, finish your term and go to jail'. This has been posted by one influencer 250 times and the no 5 influencer has posted it 200 times.
8. How do the influencers see it? They see it as an opportunity to make \$ 10 for a few hours of work and posts. They are happy to do this justifying this by saying, there is no violence there is negative words that will divide tribes.
9. All the posts are coming with pictures and some facts. These facts have given way to another digital industry in Kenya – the fact checking posts!
10. Politicians keep their distance from payments and things cannot be linked back to them, there are layers of middlemen with posters to be put out.
11. What about the election commission or any regulatory body? This is becoming difficult to control as it is difficult to prove at this point. I personally feel that regulation will step in sooner or later basis the Kenyan experience on this. The key is to prove that this is motivate and done for money alone.
12. The other danger is that an influencers account could be blocked by Twitter or Facebook, and that would mean drying up of income from all sources.

So, the Kenyan influencer who was endorsing soaps, restaurants etc. is now in a serious dilemma-spread false narrative with a risk of getting banned or do what.... Someone said choices are hard to make.

Enjoy

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