

CHAPTER 9

The effects of mass media on municipal governance: review of literature and a case study

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Introduction

The term “mass media” refers to a variety of communication channels that are accessible to a broad audience, including the internet, radio, television, and print media. On the opposite end of the spectrum, municipalities are local governmental organisations in charge of running and offering services to a certain geographic region, including cities or towns. Mass media has ushered in revolutionary shifts across society, establishing itself as a dominant mode of communication and revolutionising the way corporate and public sector organisations engage with individuals. Leveraging mass media for citizen communications, outreach, and participatory engagement strategies can yield numerous advantages for local governments (Molale, 2019; Santoso et al., 2020; Neely and Collins, 2018; Epstein, 2022).

Nevertheless, this poses significant questions for local governments concerning the establishment and execution of a mass media strategy or project that attains organisational goals and maximises value while mitigating risks and eliminating barriers to mass media utilisation.

Problem Statement

Arguably, mass media offers opportunities for local governments to address the challenges of increasing organisational transparency and improving citizen engagement. Mass media offers the potential to increase personal investment in government and to improve levels of engagement between citizens and government bodies. However, successful adoption of mass media by local government organisations requires the choice of the most effective media platform, understanding, and awareness of how to use the tools to improve transparency and fruitful citizen engagement.

Previous studies (Molale, 2019; Grawe, 2021; Babalola and Akman, 2022; Epstein, 2022; and Lee and Xenos, 2022) focused on participatory communication; the use of social media for employee communication; participation with social media in municipalities; incidental news exposure via social media; and political participation. This study focuses on the role of mass media in promoting good governance in a municipal context.

Mass media serves as a tool for increasing trust between municipalities and local communities (Epstein, 2022). However, the challenge of selecting the most effective platform to ensure widespread dissemination of intended information and awareness persists in many municipalities, resulting in limited access to some governmental services. Mass media and local governments have a complicated and nuanced connection (Stone et al., 2022; Guo and Lu, 2021). Informing the public about the operations of local government is one of the major functions of the media with respect to municipalities (Grawe, 2022). However, the relationship between the media and municipalities faces many challenges.

One of the issues municipalities face is prejudice or disinformation in news reporting, where personal biases or external influences can compromise the impartiality and accuracy of mass media information dissemination. As a result, facts may be misrepresented or distorted, which might

erode public confidence in news outlets and local institutions. A literature review revealed that municipalities lament that most social media outlets ignore good news and instead concentrate on bad news about them. This often tarnishes the municipality's reputation, posing challenges to attracting new investors and residents. At times, relationships with journalists become strained because municipal authorities view negative reporting as an assault on their reputation or management. In contrast, media outlets could encounter difficulties accessing municipal information, which could limit their capacity to offer thorough and truthful coverage and reporting.

In some local governments in the Eastern Cape, challenges persist on issues related to transparency and promoting community involvement. These challenges are particularly significant and pressing, leading to aversion and a lack of faith in government among citizens. Donald et al. (2020) emphasises the need for collaborative and participatory techniques to improve service delivery, strengthen the democratic process, and re-establish trust in government institutions. Curry and Stroud (2021) highlighted that government entities may regain public trust by improving the effectiveness of service delivery. Stuurman (2019) asserts that to improve trust between government and citizens at the grass-roots level, citizens should be enabled to participate and informed about such services from the planning phase through to execution.

Based on the information, this study will assess the effectiveness of the current media platforms used for the dissemination of information in municipalities and recommend the channels that will be more effective and will assist in addressing public problems. The literature is replete with examples of successful mass media platforms employed by local governments for communication; nonetheless, there has been insufficient exploration and documentation regarding the optimal media platform for information exchange at the municipal level. Moreover, inadequate attention has been given to elucidating the challenges

stemming from the ineffective utilisation of mass media platforms and their implications for governance.

Objectives And Significance

The central objectives of this study are to:

- Investigate the effects of mass media on governance at the local government level;
- Evaluate the experiences of mass media users at local government level; and
- Establish mass media platforms capable of promoting good governance at municipal level.

Mass media is redefining society, altering interactions between firms and individuals, and pioneering the creation of novel forms of value, which are rapidly emerging as crucial differentiators distinguishing corporate performance and success (Sohn, 2022). This study is imperative from both a practical and theoretical standpoint. It aims to provide evidence-based information for local government organisations to utilise in identifying and implementing best practices in mass media that can be used to promote transparency and community involvement at the grass-roots level of government. This has numerous potential benefits for local governments, including ensuring a more robust evidence base for planning and policy development, allowing for the development of trust-based relationships with local citizens, and increasing the overall efficiency and cost-effectiveness of public service delivery and resource utilisation.

Literature Review

Media has a major impact on people's lives, allowing them to quickly access essential messages, news, and information. This is one of the reasons why this era is referred to as the "information age" (Murphy et al., 2022). Media has a significant impact on people's lives, as it brings everyone up to speed on what is going on not only in their immediate societies

but around the globe at large. It enables people to quickly disseminate essential messages, news, or information.

Various mass media platforms are used as education and information platforms across the globe. Countries are not identical in terms of their choice of media platforms. Orth, Andipatin, and Van Wyk (2021) contend that in South Africa, Facebook is the most popular mass media network for organisations of all kinds, as opposed to other applications like WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. While many organisations are reaping the advantages of mass media, decision-makers in government agencies are still figuring out how to use the available social platforms to reach out to citizens. According to Epstein (2022), an average citizen of a municipality uses mass media, and this population is increasing daily. Platforms such as Twitter and Instagram have dramatically gained popularity among people of all ages over the last decade (Grawe, 2021). As a result, it is essential that government agencies begin to use social media platforms to improve engagement with people in a valued and relevant manner to make their intended policies efficient and effective. Thus, mass media platforms have transformed the way people communicate and acquire information from their service providers. In this regard, the role played by mass media in the swift distribution of information cannot be underestimated.

Most mass media platforms have become popular due to their ability to provide two-way communication (Kelley and Gillan, 2022). This is due to its ability to allow the sender to receive comments and track sentiments. While some government agencies are still considering whether to use social media, others have a significant presence on various social media platforms. Formerly, Departments of Local Government received public complaints from community members who were dissatisfied with the services they received through face-to-face engagement. Currently, social media platforms are used successfully for this type of communication.

Furthermore, municipal governments across South Africa adopt social media platforms to provide communities

with life-saving information, disseminate crucial information, and generally communicate with the residents (Maseko, 2022). Mass media can boost personal involvement in government and improve citizen-government engagement. Mass media platforms enable a paradigm shift in the citizen-government connection from a top-down, unidirectional approach to a more genuine two-way partnership that values citizen input (Criado and Villodre, 2021). Epstein (2022) alluded to the fact that the way humans use mass media has changed dramatically in recent years, and communicators now have a wonderful opportunity to interact with their audience. While Facebook was previously only intended to connect people and provide a means of communication, it has advanced into a platform for planning events and a tool for monitoring and evaluating government activities and projects. Most significantly, it has evolved into a means for individuals to connect directly with service providers and promote governmental relations (Chon and Kim, 2022). With so many social media venues to choose from, information may be disseminated quickly and without delay. In sum, Lee and Xenos (2022) advocate that the representation of community is the most significant aspect of any mass media presence, and it is a means for fostering community engagement.

Because of citizen expectations, the role of mass media in municipal government is growing. Social media is extensively utilised for more than just sharing information; it is also becoming essential to news providers as more people access information through mass media platforms. In other words, mass media platforms have great potential for improving local governments' connections with constituents by making information more accessible, increasing transparency, expediting communication, and improving service delivery (Babaoglu and Akman, 2022). It is critical to identify efficiencies and best practices so that local governments do not waste useful and limited resources in the pursuit of good governance. However, for local government organisations to successfully utilise mass media, they must first understand and be aware of how to use mass media tools and techniques

to promote transparency and constructive citizen interaction (Curry and Stroud, 2021).

Methodology And Sampling

For this study, the researchers used a mixed-methods approach, which combines the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. Sahin et al. (2019) alluded to the fact that a mixed approach may be used to collect data in one research project with the goal of comprehending the research subject from several perspectives. Sahin et al. (2019) further highlighted that when using a mixed approach, one set of data (qualitative) can be used to strengthen the other set of data (quantitative). The study opted for a mixed-methods approach, recognising it as the most suitable strategy for capturing comprehensive data representative of the population (Kim et al., 2021). Mixed techniques were required for this study because of the researchers' philosophical viewpoint that facts can only be presented by using various lenses (Brink and Clark, 2019). It should also be noted that all ethical issues were considered throughout the study.

Probability and non-probability sampling were used for the study. In non-probability sampling, each sampling unit has the same likelihood of being selected (Speagle, 2020). The total sample was selected from ten (10) wards, with five (5) people per ward, for a total of fifty (50) local citizens and ten (10) municipal authorities, including four (4) councillors, for a total of sixty (60), since there are 37 wards in the municipality. Furthermore, 10 participants were selected from the municipal authorities, and 70 respondents participated in the study. The data was analysed using Atlas Ti and R-studio.

The qualitative data collected was used to support the findings that emerged from the quantitative findings in line with research data analysed by suggested researchers (Creswell and Poth, 2016).

Results from the Quantitative Study

The statistical data below depicts the findings from the quantitative study, which focused on a survey of fifty (50) community members (residents) from the King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality (KSDLM) in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. The municipality includes the towns of Mthatha and Mqanduli. The findings are categorised according to:

- The awareness and knowledge residents have of mass media
- The use of mass media in promoting good governance
- The importance of mass media in promoting good governance
- Using mass media as an educational instrument
- Using mass media to share information from local governance

The Awareness and Knowledge that Residents in the KSDLM have of Mass Media

Table 9.1 summarizes the knowledge from the study.

Table 9.1: Mass media knowledge by the KSDLM

Response	Percentage
Agreement	96
Disagreement	4

According to research, 96% of people in King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality (KSDLM) were familiar with mass media, while only 4% were not. This shows that most people in the KSDLM are aware of the media.

Table 9.2 summarizes the observations from the study.

Table 9.2: Mass media awareness and knowledge categorised according to residency, education, and gender

Participant Group	Aware (%)	Unaware (%)
Females with Degrees	65	5
Males with Degrees	25	5
Males outside KSDLM with Degrees	60	0
Females outside KSDLM with Degrees	40	0
Females within KSDLM with Diploma	30	0
Males within KSDLM with Diploma	70	0
Females within KSDLM with Matric	50	0
Males within KSDLM with Matric	50	0
Females outside KSDLM with Matric	60	0
Males outside KSDLM with Matric	40	0
Females with Informal Education	90	0
Males with Informal Education	10	0
All Participants with Postgraduate	100	0

In this study, it was observed that among the participants, a higher percentage of females (65%) exhibited awareness of mass media compared to males (25%) with degrees. Interestingly, the proportion of individuals who were not aware of mass media was the same among females (5%) and males (5%). However, when considering participants outside of KSDLM, a larger percentage of males (60%) showed awareness of mass media compared to females (40%) with degrees, and all of them demonstrated awareness of mass media. Additionally, only females (30%) exhibited awareness of mass media from both within and outside KSDLM with a diploma, whereas no male with a diploma showed awareness of mass media among all participants.

Within the KSDLM region, all participants showed equal awareness of mass media, with both females (50%) and males (50%) demonstrating familiarity with it. However, outside of KSDLM, a higher percentage of females (60%) with matric demonstrated awareness of mass media compared to males (40%) with matric, and both genders exhibited equal awareness of mass media (50%). Furthermore, a higher percentage of males both within (60%) and outside (70%) of KSDLM demonstrated awareness of mass media compared to females both within (40%) and outside (30%), and all participants, including those with postgraduate degrees, exhibited awareness of mass media.

Notably, a significant proportion of females (90%) with informal education demonstrated awareness of mass media, while only a small percentage of males (10%) showed awareness of mass media. However, there were no responses recorded from individuals outside KSDLM with informal education or those who were employed.

Table 9.3 summarizes the information.

Table 9.3: Mass media awareness and knowledge categorised according to age group

Age Group	Knowledgeable (%)	Not Knowledgeable (%)
20-27	40%	2%
27-37	30%	8%
28+	20%	0%

Residents aged between 20 and 27 (40%) exhibit a higher level of familiarity with mass media compared to other age groups. However, within this age bracket, a small percentage (2%) are not aware of mass media or lack knowledge about it. Moving to the age group between 27 and 37, there is a slight decrease in the level of knowledge about mass media, with 30% fewer individuals being knowledgeable compared to the younger age group. Additionally, within this age range, there is a 10% of individuals who are not aware of mass media.

Conversely, all residents aged 28 and above, comprising 20% of the population, demonstrate awareness and knowledge of mass media. This data suggests that younger age groups tend to be more aware of mass media, while as age increases, there is a gradual decline in awareness.

Table 9.4 summarizes awareness and knowledge.

Table 9.4: Mass media awareness and knowledge categorised according to status

Participant Group	Awareness (%)	Unaware (%)
Students	60	0
Employed	25	0
Unemployed	7	3
Retired	3	0
Self-employed	2	0

Among the various groups surveyed, students (60%) emerge as the most knowledgeable and aware of mass media. Conversely, while residents who are employed (25%), retired (3%), and self-employed (2%) also possess some degree of knowledge about mass media, their awareness levels are comparatively lower. Interestingly, a notable proportion of unemployed individuals (7%) demonstrate awareness of mass media, surpassing the percentage of unemployed residents who lack such awareness (3%). This suggests that while students exhibit the highest level of awareness, a significant portion of unemployed individuals also recognise the importance of mass media.

Table 9.5 summarizes media awareness and knowledge with residence.

Table 9.5: Mass media awareness and knowledge categorised according to length of residence in KSDLM

Duration of Residence	Awareness in Governance (%)
More than 4 years	54
1-3 years	24
Less than 1 year	22

The majority of residents in KSDLM who have lived in the area for more than four years (54%) are highly aware of, recognise the importance of, and view mass media as educational tools in governance issues. Conversely, those who have resided for 1-3 years, comprising about 24% of the population, and those who have stayed less than a year, around 22%, demonstrate varying levels of familiarity with mass media in this context. This indicates that longer-term residents of KSDLM tend to possess a deeper understanding of mass media’s role in governance.

Table 9.6 summarizes the residents’ agreement on utilizing mass media as a source of information based on their duration of residence in KSDLM.

Table 9.6: The use of mass media categorised according to length of residence in KSDLM

Duration of Residence	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
More than 4 years	61	1
1-3 years	18	1
Less than 1 year	19	0

The majority of residents who have resided in KSDLM for more than 4 years (61%) agree that they utilise mass media as a source of information, with only a small percentage (1%) expressing disagreement. Among those who have lived in the area for 1 to 3 years (18%), a significant portion also acknowledge the utility of mass media in good governance,

while a similarly negligible proportion (1%) disagree. Additionally, all residents who have been in KSDLM for less than a year (19%) believe that mass media plays a role in facilitating good governance. These findings from the graph underscore that residents with longer tenures in KSDLM tend to rely more heavily on mass media for information.

The Importance of Mass Media

Table 9.7 summarizes the importance of mass media by gender.

Table 9.7: The importance of mass media categorised according to gender

Gender	Recognition (%)	Non-recognition (%)
Females	68	2
Males	30	0

The findings indicate that a majority of females (68%) recognise the significance of mass media in governance. However, a small minority of females (2%) do not perceive mass media as essential for good governance. On the other hand, males, as a whole, demonstrate a lower level of agreement (30%) regarding the importance of mass media in governance compared to females.

Table 9.8 summarizes the importance of mass media in good governance.

Table 9.8: Importance of mass media in good governance

Response	Percentage
Agreement	96
Disagreement	4

When participants were surveyed about the significance of mass media in promoting good governance, 96% of KSDLM residents acknowledged its importance, while only 4%

expressed disagreement. This overwhelming consensus among KSDML residents highlights a widespread recognition of the crucial role mass media plays in fostering good governance within the community.

Table 9.9 summarizes the importance of mass media on residency.

Table 9.9: The importance of mass media categorised according to residency distribution

Location	Acknowledged Significance (%)	Contrary View (%)
Within KSDML	70	10
Outside KSDML	20	0

When respondents were surveyed about the significance of mass media usage within and outside KSDML, a notable trend emerged: a substantial majority of those residing in KSDML (70%) acknowledged the importance of mass media in fostering good governance, while a minority (10%) held a contrary view. Conversely, all participants (20%) originating from outside KSDML recognised the relevance of mass media in promoting good governance. The graph underscores the prevailing sentiment among KSDML residents, illustrating their collective belief in the indispensable role of mass media in ensuring good governance.

Table 9.10 summarizes mass media on employment status.

Table 9.10: The importance of mass media categorised according to employment status

Participant Group	Acknowledged Significance (%)	Contrary View (%)
Students	60	2
Self-employed	10	0

Participant Group	Acknowledged Significance (%)	Contrary View (%)
Unemployed	10	0
Employed	10	0
Retirees	0	8

In this context, the data reveals a clear consensus among students, with a substantial majority (60%) affirming the importance of mass media in fostering good governance, while only a small minority (2%) expresses dissent. Conversely, among self-employed, unemployed, and employed residents, unanimity prevails, with (10%) recognising the significance of mass media in good governance. Notably, retirees stand out as the sole demographic (8%) in disagreement regarding the importance of mass media in good governance. This collective perspective underscores the prevailing positivity towards the role of mass media, as the majority overwhelmingly acknowledges its significance in promoting good governance.

Table 9.11 summarizes the importance of mass media on education level.

Table 9.11: The importance of mass media categorised according to educational level

Education Level	Acknowledged Significance (%)	Contrary View (%)
Degree Holders	45	2
Diploma Holders	28	0
Matriculation	12	0
Postgraduate	9	0
Informal Education	2	2

When examining the relationship between education levels and perceptions of mass media's role in good governance, a noteworthy pattern emerges. A majority (45%) of residents holding degrees acknowledge the importance of mass media in

governance, while only a small fraction (2%) express dissent. Moreover, across various educational backgrounds, including diploma holders (28%), individuals with matriculation qualifications (12%), and those with postgraduate degrees (9%) there is unanimous agreement on the significance of mass media in good governance. Interestingly, residents with informal education present a split perspective, with half (2%) acknowledging the importance of mass media, while the other half (2%) disagrees. This diversity in viewpoints underscores the complexity of attitudes towards the role of mass media in governance across different educational backgrounds.

Mass Media as a Catalyst and Educational Instrument to Support and Promote Good Governance

Table 9.12 summarizes the respondents' views on the role of mass media in promoting good governance within KSDLM.

Table 9.12: Mass media as a catalyst to support and promote good governance

Response	Percentage
Agreement	82
Disagreement	18

When respondents were questioned about the role of mass media in promoting good governance, the results revealed a clear trend. Approximately 82% of individuals within KSDLM perceive mass media as a supportive tool for enhancing good governance at the local municipality level. Conversely, 18% of residents hold a contrary view, expressing disagreement with the notion that mass media aids in fostering good local governance.

Table 9.13 summarizes the respondents' views on the potential of mass media as an educational tool in matters concerning the governance of local communities.

Table 9.13: Mass media as an educational instrument

Response	Percentage
Agreement	88
Disagreement	12

When considering the potential of mass media as an educational tool, a significant consensus emerges among residents. Approximately 88% of respondents hold the belief that mass media effectively educates people on matters concerning the governance of local communities. However, a minority (12%) express disagreement with this notion, suggesting that they do not perceive mass media as fulfilling an educational role in local governance issues. These findings underscore the prevailing sentiment among the majority of KSDLM residents, who view mass media as a valuable instrument for educating the community on matters of good governance.

Table 9.14 summarizing the perceptions regarding the role of mass media as an educational platform for understanding good governance based on educational backgrounds:

Table 9.14: Mass media as an educational instrument categorised according to educational level

Education Level	Agreement (%)	Disagreement (%)
Degrees	45	2
Diplomas	6	0
Self-employed	1	0
Informal Education	4	0
Matriculation	8	4
Postgraduate Degrees	16	5

In this context, a comprehensive analysis of residents' perspectives on the role of mass media in educating about good governance reveals nuanced trends. Among residents

with degrees, a substantial majority (54%) concur that mass media serves as an educational platform for understanding good governance, with only a minimal dissent (2%). Similarly, unanimity prevails among individuals with diplomas (6%), self-employed individuals (1%), and those with informal education backgrounds (4%), all of whom acknowledge the educational role of mass media in good governance.

Furthermore, among residents with matric qualifications, a majority (8%) agree with this perspective, while a smaller portion (4%) hold a contrary view. Notably, individuals with postgraduate degrees (16%) predominantly agree that mass media educates on good governance, though a minority (5%) express disagreement, with the highest dissent among those with matric qualifications (7%). Overall, the prevailing sentiment among the majority of KSDLM residents underscores the recognition of mass media as a vital educational tool for understanding good governance.

Mass Media as a Channel to Share Information

Table 9.15 summarizes mass media as a channel to share information.

Table 9.15: The role of mass media as a channel to share information

Response	Percentage
Agreement	86
Disagreement	14

The results concerning information sharing through mass media reveal a significant consensus among residents of KSDLM. Approximately 86% of respondents acknowledge the role of mass media in sharing information related to municipal issues, indicating a widespread recognition of its importance in this regard. Conversely, a minority of only 14% express disagreement with the notion that mass media serves as a platform for sharing such information. Overall, these findings

show that the majority of KSDLM residents are aware of the crucial role that the media plays in disseminating information about governance-related issues.

Table 9.16 summarizes the perceptions regarding the role of mass media in disseminating information about good governance based on respondent status.

Table 9.16: The role of mass media as a channel to share information categorised according to employment status

Respondent Status	Agreement (%)	Disagreement (%)
Students	60	8
Employed	8	2
Retired	2	0
Self-employed	2	0
Unemployed	9	9

Breaking down the findings by respondent status reveals notable trends. The majority of respondents which are students (60%) agree that mass media plays a crucial role in disseminating information about good governance, there is a slightly proportion of dissent (8%) which disagree. Interestingly, unanimity prevails among employed (8%) with (2%) who disagree, retired (2%), and self-employed (2%) residents, all of whom agree on the significant role of mass media in sharing information about governance issues. Even among the unemployed, a majority (9%) recognise this role, with the number (9%) expressing disagreement. These findings suggest that while students constitute the largest demographic acknowledging the role of mass media in information sharing, there is widespread recognition across various statuses of its importance in this regard.

Results From The Qualitative Study

From a qualitative perspective, the participants who answered “yes” to the question, asking whether they were using mass media, were given a follow-up option to specify the mass media type they preferred. Following the internet and television in that order, a word cloud analysis revealed that mass media is the most frequently used platform. Radio and magazines are the least used platforms. These findings imply that everyone is content with mass media as the communication alternative utilised by KSDLM. This is confirmed by the quantitative study, as Table 9.3 indicate that 96% of KSDLM are using mass media, and Table 9.10 show that 54% are youth who are using mass media, which makes mass media the most used platform.



Figure 9.1: Mass media as promoter of good governance

The majority of community members indicate that the King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality primarily uses local newspapers, mass media, and community radio to promote good governance and public awareness. These platforms reach the large population of the municipality. This further indicates that the majority of KSDLM is content with the mechanisms utilised by the municipality, especially local newspapers. On the other hand, a respondent mentioned, “*Mass media is a popular platform, especially Facebook, because it is user-friendly, and local newspapers such as Mthatha Express and Isolezwe.*”



Figure 9.2: Composition of preferred mass media platforms used by the community

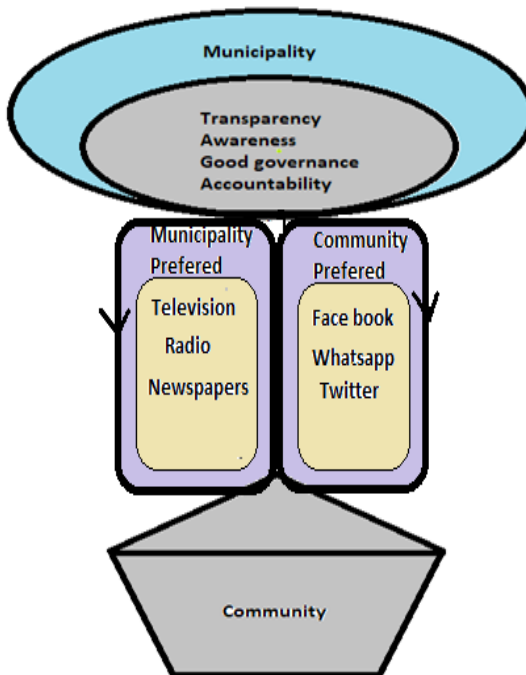


Figure 9.3: Conceptual framework developed by the authors based on the results

Based on the findings that emerged in this study and the literature reviewed, the researchers developed the diagram above (Figure 20) to depict the top-bottom and bottom-top transmission and dissemination of information between the municipality and the local community. Although municipal officials prefer to use local radio, magazines, and television to promote good governance and the sharing of information, most of the respondents indicated their preference for using social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, as indicated in Figures 15, and 16, respectively. The figure above depicts that good governance and information sharing can be promoted by municipalities, not only through magazines, radio, or TV. Contemporary mass media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp play a crucial role in promptly and efficiently disseminating information to the intended audience. These media platforms can be used to promote good governance in municipalities, given the level of acceptance and adoption they receive from the municipal populace.

The community believes that municipalities need to share information with the community and the public at large, with the purpose of ensuring transparency and good governance.

The respondents were asked were asked to name the types of mass medial platform they prefer, respondents have this to say: *“Local media, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, are more preferred than local magazines and radio stations and should be adopted by municipalities to promote good governance, transparency, and the sharing of information with the public”*. This shows that most of the community or public is positive and trusts the media to ensure good governance in KSDLM, as it can be used to promote good governance.

To the question, in your opinion, how does mass media coverage influence public engagement with local government issues? One respondent indicated that: *“In the context of municipalities, mass media provide conducive space for the masses to participate in governance issues and be used to enhance public*

consultation in matters related to the planning, formulation, implementation, analysis, and evaluation of public policies. This assist in holding public officials accountable for their actions and will also help strengthen good governance and education for the public through public engagements”.

Protection of human rights must be maintained by mass media when information is published with respect to human privacy, dignity, and equality.

Moreover, mass media needs to provide room for feedback from the public on their submissions or demands. The media must prioritise education over fostering instability and violence, emphasising enhancements in community development, national, provincial, and local security, as well as the promotion of democratic peace. The media employer needs to train employees to publish information or stories in accordance with the Constitution. Better remuneration to journalists and compensation will ensure that the rate of accepting bribes to publish false information decreases. The information must not be biased, and it should be presented in a manner that is in favour of the public interests with the aim of protecting democracy. Accurate information enhances the ethical conduct of media practitioners, while improved publication standards, marked by accuracy and honesty, further cultivate public trust in media outlets.

When respondents were asked, what can be done by municipalities to ensure that good governance is promoted? A respondent had this to say:

Great study, especially under 2020 and 2021, when the country is under lockdown restrictions, the government must consider mass media as an official platform to make public governors, account, and encourage public participation”. Another respondent requested that “the researcher must share the findings with KSDLM for implementation so they can do better in service delivery”.

The public’s perception of media depends on a few variables, including the kind of media a person uses, their degree of participation, and the environment in which the

local government operates. The experiences of individuals in mass media can greatly differ within local government contexts. News coverage is one of the main ways that local governments communicate with their communities. Information regarding local government decisions, policies, and activities is provided via local news channels, both traditional and digital. These news outlets frequently cover subjects including elections, public meetings, fiscal concerns, and neighbourhood activities. Users of mass media depend on these outlets to keep up with local government activity and comprehend how it could affect their lives. Users of the media frequently anticipate that local governments will operate with accountability and transparency.

Some of the respondents stated that: *“We rely on the media to expose potential corruption, waste, or unethical activity and make local governments responsible for their deeds. News coverage may shed light on issues that the public might otherwise overlook”*.

Citizens may use this information to assess the effectiveness of their representatives and hold them accountable during elections or other forms of civic engagement. The people can connect with and participate in local government concerns through the mass media. It gives people the opportunity to express thoughts, worries, and ideas about numerous problems influencing their communities. Mass media users may add to the public conversation and affect local government policy with letters to editors, opinion articles, and online comment sections.

When respondents were asked what mass media is used for? the respondent said that: *“Local governments frequently employ a variety of media outlets to notify the public about public meetings, town halls, and other types of community participation”*. Users of mass media can attend these occasions to interact with neighbours and directly voice their opinions to local government representatives. Although the media is essential for increasing communication between local authorities and individuals, there are obstacles and constraints to consider.

Respondents were asked what are some potential challenges or limitations associated with the portrayal of municipal governance in mass media? One of the interviewed respondents stated that:

“As audiences we are not given enough context when it comes to municipal governance in the media to fully comprehend the specifics of local politics and decision-making procedures. Viewers or readers could find it difficult to completely understand the significance of some events or policies without this context”.

Another responded added that: *“Media sources’ representations of municipal governance is influenced by their own objectives or biases. This led to selective reporting, which highlights some aspects of governance while downplaying others, creating an inaccurate or partial picture”.*

The possibility of prejudice and false information in news reporting are some of the challenges. To make sure they are getting accurate and impartial information regarding local government activities, users of the media must critically assess the sources they rely on.

Have you observed any differences in the effects of mass media on governance between urban and rural communities? The respond from the respondents were that: *“The mass media is extremely helpful in encouraging community involvement in matters of local governance. Media coverage can assist communities mobilize around important problems and hold elected officials accountable in urban areas where there may be more active civic participation and advocacy groups. While in rural areas there is less engagement due to poor network, lack of access to mass media and level of education”.*

The above statement was supported by another response from respondent who added that: “Urban and rural locations may differ in terms of internet connectivity and access to digital media outlets”.

Another challenge was that not every individual has the same level of access to media outlets. High-speed

internet and digital media are often easier to access in urban communities, which lead to more online conversation engagement and access to information. Socioeconomic factors like geography or income level can have an impact on the accessibility and affordability of media outlets. This digital gap may make it more difficult for certain people to follow local politics or engage in public debates. Depending on several variables, including the type of media ingested, the degree of communication with local government, and the general media environment in each area, the experiences of media users in local government can vary substantially.

Exploring reporting on issues pertaining to municipal government, such as budget allocations, policy choices, and possible corruption or wrongdoing, is a key task for journalists. Mass media outlets may ensure openness in government operations and hold municipal authorities responsible through their reporting. Additionally, the media provides a forum for towns to interact with their citizens. Local governments frequently employ a variety of media platforms to share crucial information on public programmes, activities, policies, and initiatives. Press releases, PSAs, official interviews, and updates on social media are all examples of this. Mass media serves as a conduit for information and promotes civic engagement between governments and their citizens.

How do you think the use of mass media platforms have changed the influence of community on municipal governance?

“Mass media has a big impact on public opinion and municipal decision-making processes. Media coverage and editorial positions may have an impact on public perceptions of a variety of topics, which may then affect the objectives and course of action of local governments”.

Election-related media coverage is also affecting voter behaviour since it informs the public about the agendas and accomplishments of candidates. Understanding how media consumption affects people's perceptions of and participation with their local government is one of the most important

additions to the body of research already available about the experiences of mass media users in municipalities. According to research, the media is an important factor in forming public opinion and influencing political action. For instance, research has shown that those who watch more news tend to be more politically aware and involved in local politics.

Furthermore, by holding municipal representatives accountable for their activities, the media may serve as a watchdog. Investigative media plays a vital role in exposing corruption, inefficient administration, and other issues within local government. Through investigative reporting, mass media readers gain insight into the workings of their local government, empowering them to make informed choices when electing representatives. From the community's standpoint, users of local government media encounter a diverse range of experiences. The public's access to information about, accountability for, and openness regarding the operations of their local government comes mostly from the media. It offers venues for public interaction and involvement, enabling people to express their thoughts and participate in the decision-making process. However, to guarantee that all residents may fully interact with their local governments, issues like bias in news coverage and uneven access to media sources must be addressed.

Conclusion

The central argument of this chapter is that mass media platforms are used as tools for information sharing in various organisations. Local government authorities should employ these methods to promote public participation and good governance. The selection of relevant and optimal mass media channels should be a priority to accommodate people from all categories since there is disparity between the platforms preferred by officials and the dominantly used platforms used by communities. Through mass media, the public may participate in discussions and dialogues about policies and governance-related issues to collaborate with

their service providers. The study found that the extent to which communities and local government authorities utilise, comprehend, appreciate, and endorse mass media influences the promotion of good governance. However, the selection of media outlets is crucial to ensuring citizens' optimal participation in governance. The study also unveiled the risk of essential information not reaching the intended population when the wrong platform is employed. Furthermore, there are significant benefits for various and multifaceted media platforms in promoting public awareness.

Municipalities may encourage transparency and accountability by disseminating information via various mass media platforms and can engage with the local populace by streaming council meetings and procedures to their residents on mass media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook with the aim of promoting transparency. In sum, municipalities and local communities should not fixate on certain media platforms to avoid being deprived of vital information. A vast majority of the local populace will actively participate in governance, provided two-way communication between municipalities and the local populace is promoted through various media outlets.

Disclaimer: Given that the focus of this study was on one local municipality (KSDLM) and the sample size was drawn from the findings that emerged in the study, it may not represent all municipalities and may not be generalised to other municipalities.

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Chapter 9

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