

**EFFICACY OF DIGITAL DIPLOMACY IN ADVANCING THE ECONOMIC AND
CULTURAL PILLARS OF KENYA'S FOREIGN POLICY**

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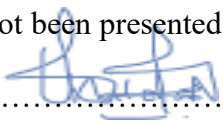
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DECLARATION AND CERTIFICATION

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This thesis is my original work prepared with no other than the indicated sources as supported and has not been presented elsewhere for a degree or any other award.

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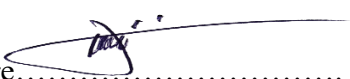
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the treasured memory of my beloved mother, Mrs. Jacinta G. Njiru, whose unwavering support and persistent encouragement to pursue knowledge through education shaped the person I am today and to my greatest cheerleaders my family.

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ABSTRACT

Globally, digital diplomacy has increasingly emerged as a critical instrument through which states pursue strategic, political, economic, and cultural objectives within the contemporary international system. Although the practice of digital diplomacy has existed for decades, the rapid advancement of information and communication technologies in the 21st Century has significantly transformed diplomatic engagement, attracting growing scholarly and policy attention. Among the state actors actively embracing this transformation is the Republic of Kenya, which since 2014 has made substantial investments in digital diplomatic tools, platforms, and communication strategies aimed at advancing its foreign policy objectives and enhancing its global diplomatic presence. Despite the growing body of literature on digital diplomacy, much of the existing scholarship remains largely generic and insufficiently contextualized within Kenya's Foreign Policy environment. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to interrogate the efficacy of digital diplomacy in advancing the economic and cultural pillars of Kenya's Foreign Policy. The specific objectives of the study were to: examine the efficacy of digital technologies; assess the efficacy of digital platforms; evaluate the influence of social media platforms; and to investigate the efficacy of digital communication, in advancing the economic and cultural pillars of Kenya's Foreign Policy. The study was anchored on Neorealism and Soft Power theories. The study adopted a mixed research approach, incorporating both the qualitative and quantitative aspects. The population for the study was the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs fraternity. Primary data was collected through 17 in-depth interviews with purposely selected, pro-rated and sampled informants across the 14 directorates of the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs as well as experts and scholars in international relations, to enrich the currency of the study and an analysis of specific digital diplomatic initiatives. The source of secondary data for this study was government speeches and reports, and other academic papers that refer to digital diplomacy. Data analysis was done in frequencies and themes and patterns for qualitative data drawn from respondent interviews. The study findings showed that while more than 50% mentioned training was inadequate, 70% and 65% respectively mentioned increased efficacy and stronger cybersecurity measures. There was a wide adoption of digital platforms (portals with 77%, global visibility with 76%, and virtual summits with 36%). The study also found social media as an appropriate tool with 94%, 83% and 88% respectively acknowledging its use in foreign policy, greater transparency, and use in crisis communication. A minority, 30%, mentioned the presence of social media SOPs. The third component, digital communication tools, was found to be effective with endorsement of real time messaging and improved translation at 95% and 70% support respectively. The challenges identified by the study and opportunity for recommendation include more training, capacity building, institutional support and coordination, and standardised protocols and operational frameworks.

Keywords: *E-Diplomacy, Political Environment, Virtual Diplomacy, Foreign Policy*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
AU	African Union
CoK	Constitution of Kenya 2010
DDoS	Distributed Denial of Service
EAC	East Africa Community
EEAS	The European External Action Service
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investments
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSA	Foreign Service Academy
IFI	International Financial Institutions
IR	International Relations
TFP	Training for Peace Programme
UK	United Kingdom
KICTANET	Kenya ICT Action Network

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OPERATIONALIZATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Advancing: This involves improving and achieving the set goals and objectives. Advancing in this study has been used to mean or be manifested by enhanced efficiency, greater involvement, improved visibility, quicker responses and better coordination.

Communication Technology for Diplomacy: Electronic communication and collaboration tools used to conduct diplomacy, including email, instant messages, and automatic translation technologies, operationalized in terms of effectiveness of the communication process.

Digital Diplomacy: Digital diplomacy according to this study entails the application of digital technology in carrying out diplomatic activities as measured by how frequently and widely these tools have been applied and their contribution to foreign policy processes, and how efficient they have been.

Diplomacy: This is the systematic approach used by a country to manage its relations, both internal and foreign, as exemplified in this study by formal activities like negotiation, communication and representation carried out by the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs.

Efficacy: In this study, efficacy refers to the evaluated contribution that digital diplomacy has made in the improvement of the foreign policy pillars. This is the ability to quantify the contribution made by digital diplomacy instruments in improving foreign policy performance as indicated by factors such as the use of social media, application of digital tools and technologies.

Kenya's Foreign Policy: Collection of strategies and foreign policy actions of the Government of Kenya operationalized via effectiveness indicators such as responsiveness, engagement, coordination, and diplomatic strategy execution.

Pillar of Cultural Diplomacy: in this study, the cultural pillar of foreign policy refers to aspects that a country undertakes to increase the visibility of a country from foreign policy tenets.

Pillar of Economic Diplomacy: In this study, the economic pillar of foreign policy is the aspects of trade and income generation that emerge from interaction of the country with others.

Platforms and Technologies for Digital Diplomacy: In this study, platforms and technologies refer to online tools and applications that are used in communication and collaborate with the MFA.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a background for the study, by introducing digital diplomacy and the pillars of Kenya's foreign policy that form a basis for this study. Subsequent to this background of the study, the chapter presents the problem statement, the study objectives and research questions, and then the justification, significance and scope of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Digital diplomacy is prevalent and has been adopted and promoted by countries all over the world. Digital diplomacy adopted by the State Department in its program named 21st Century Statecraft, was institutionalizing the use of social media, data driven international relations and cybersecurity in American foreign policy (Al-Rodhan, 2022). The U.S. embassies in various countries were ready to communicate with the foreign people through Facebook, Twitter and YouTube etc. and to reach out to the audience without going through the screens of providing media (Dominelli, 2021). Other than the agency of public diplomacy, U.S. has also designed sophisticated data systems and devices of artificial intelligence to monitor trends in the world, assist in crisis prediction and maintain the safety of diplomatic networks. Moreover, the matter of cyber security has come to be considered an essential component of the American diplomatic infrastructure in the wake of both instances of the electoral systems cyber-attacks and the diplomatic communications ones. The American experience shows that not only can digital technologies result in increased diplomatic capacity but also lead to the need of developing changed styles of institutional protection (Adesina, 2017; Dahham, 2023). The increasing popularity of the cultural concepts by means of movies and entertainment cannot be neglected as it favours the promotion of the economic and cultural aspect of the foreign policy

of the United States. Hollywood movies, Broadway performances and music through its far-reaching network between the United States and the global community promotes the foreign policy of the United States in to the rest of the world, culturally. The foreign policy of the United States of America is facilitated economically as American brands such as Apple, Google, Microsoft and Meta that are used globally are exported.

Not only the United States, but there are similar applications on the planet. Based on the above we can only conclude that there have been conscious and systematic efforts in the past few years by European states in the institutionalisation of the digital technologies within the foreign policy system. The European External Action Service (EEAS), the diplomatic wing of the European Union, is a good example of this, with the agency developing procedures that will cover the whole process of how to do business digitally. Individual states have also taken it a step further at the state level, some states using advanced digital technologies such as artificial intelligence powered tools, machine translators, and specialized cyber-diplomacy units, such as in Germany, France, and Estonia. As Renaud et al (2022) points out, these innovations have increased operational effectiveness and the transparency and responsiveness, especially in crisis situations. All is not well in Europe though, as in the U.S. There is still the question of the disinformation and digital sovereignty and the problem of regulatory fragmentation, and it accentuates the fact, stated by Anton and Lăcătuș (2021), that the process of change in the diplomacy of the more and more technological reality has to be based on coherent and properly formed institutional frameworks.

Asian countries such as Japan and China have flagship brands that are used to bear their countries' image and culture, as well as hold an economic value. Many of these, while appearing as individual or personal brands, they bear a country's image and its cultures across continents. Brands such as Toyota are identified as Japanese across the world in the United States, and to

an extent, identified as bearers or lean and agile technology. Zhu (2025) argues that social media platforms such as TikTok and WeChat are identifiable as Chinese and associated with qualities such as efficiency and technological advancement- aspects of Chinese culture. Additionally, these platforms and flagship brands provide the country with identifiable economic benefits which serve into the economic and cultural pillars of their respective countries. Another easily identifiable aspect of cultural and economic pillars of a country's foreign policy is presented by Jargalsaikhan et al (2024). In their study, they argue that the export of medical professional from India also bears a similar value by introducing aspects of India that are not well known to the international community while generating incomes for the country.

On the use of social media, different countries have prescribed uses and limitations. The United States, for instance, has been instrumental in delivering information and news through social media. The president and even government departments deliver the most important information and news through various social media platforms such as X and Truth Social. While acknowledging the advanced level of cybersecurity and screening of social media platforms in China, Dana and Aryan (2023) mention that India and China are some of the heaviest users of social media in political avenues.

This rampant use of technology is admirable although it introduces a myriad of challenges as well: vulnerability to misinformation increase and unauthorised surveillance and, as extensively discussed by Turianskyi and Wekesa (2025), varying and unmatching levels of digital literacy and bureaucracy. In furthering of the economic and cultural pillars of the India foreign policy, India as a medical and healthcare services destination is not a new concept. Rather, it is only matched by the Japanese cars (Toyota) presence across the world.

African countries, while applying various aspects of social media, present a more disjointed and unstructured approach. For instance, in Kenya, there is use of social media for

official communication and information sharing by government departments. However, there is a lack of differentiation between official communication, and communication from an official representative. Official communication is predetermined to be undertaken through official means by the constitution, which limits the value of social media as an official channel. However, besides Kenya, the World Bank (2024) identifies that there are actions to understand and identify social media as an official channel, especially by countries that are relatively more advanced such as Rwanda and South Africa.

In developing economies, Kenya included, the spreading of foreign policy pillars and tenets is limited to social media communication. Innovations around technologies are limited to many rather advanced countries such as Egypt, South Africa and Nigeria. Kenya has led the African countries in this respect through innovations such as M-Pesa. Development and consistent application of the government platform e-citizen, is another aspect of digital diplomacy that indicates ease of operation with citizens in the diaspora. Mwashighadi (2023) places such innovations into her realm of foreign policy development, sentiments which are shared by Akuche and Akindoyin (2024). All these actions, according to studies by these authors, have potential to spread information and potential investments by locals and international linkages, contributing to foreign policy tenets.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Over the past five decades, the evolution of diplomacy has increasingly been defined by the integration of digital technologies into foreign policy practice, giving rise to what is now widely conceptualized as digital diplomacy. It is important to understand that while many countries have attempted to undertake different levels of digital diplomacy, some appear to have advanced well beyond others as demonstrated by Adesina, (2017). For instance, countries have not only been able to employ the direct aspects of digital diplomacy through the tools and

equipment that are visible to replace in-person interactions, but they have also employed subtle means. The United States of America is one such country that, through partnerships and policy, has seen the development of a subtle digital diplomatic venture (Melissen & Caesar-Gordon, 2016). The proliferation of American models in the technological and hospitality industry are nothing short of such diplomacy. The number of American hotel and fast-food brands, and even vehicle brands that have a place in the global stage are all speaking towards the American brand and reputation. In technology, as explained by the article by Jazea and Khalaf (2021) the number and extent of American apps in social media, digital hubs and events and so on, all speak for the level of development that would be expected in the United States from the outside. this is the goal for a developing country that has a lot to offer to the global economy.

Kenya has a lot of opportunities to share its nature, culture and economic prospects with the world. The opportunities to share our culture of diversity, our investment opportunities as well as the abilities we have as a nation to influence local and regional decisions cannot be passed. The Magical Kenya campaign has been one of the main attempts at capturing the digital diplomacy concept. It was setup to attract the global community to Kenya (Mboya, 2021; Mwashighadi, 2023). This is the same for the participation of Kenyan athletes in world events, and in recent past, participation of Kenyans in other sports such as skating and darts in the world stage. The challenge is and has persisted to be the execution of these concepts. The existing events are, at best, sporadic. Another issue that may be prominent is that political changes and regime priorities also affect the application of policy goals. Therefore, this study sought to examine the efficacy of digital diplomacy in advancing the economic and cultural pillars of Kenya's foreign policy. Its specific focus is evaluating the impact, identifying existing challenges and proposing recommendations for more digital engagement.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study's general objective was to investigate the efficacy of digital diplomacy in advancing the economic and cultural pillars of Kenya's foreign policy.

The specific objectives of this study were to:

- i. Examine the efficacy of digital technologies in advancing the economic and cultural pillars of Kenya's foreign policy.
- ii. Assess the efficacy of digital platforms on the cultural and economic pillars of the Kenya's foreign policy.
- iii. Evaluate the influence of social media platforms on conduct on Kenya's foreign policy.
- iv. Investigate the efficacy of digital communication in advancing Kenya's foreign policy.

1.4 Research Questions

The study's research questions:

- i. What is the efficacy of digital technologies in advancing the economic and cultural pillars of Kenya's foreign policy?
- ii. To what extent do digital platforms impact cultural and economic pillars of the Kenya's foreign policy?
- iii. In what ways do social media platforms influence the conduct of Kenya's foreign policy?
- iv. How effective is digital communication in advancing Kenya's foreign policy?

1.5 Justification of the Study

The justification of the study is presented in two folds namely the academic and policy. These are presented in subsequent sections.

1.5.1 Academic Justification

The scholarly conversation on digital diplomacy has grown substantially over the past decade. Researchers such as Manor and Huang (2022), Bjola and Holmes (2015), and Westcott (2022) have produced important work on how digital media transforms diplomatic communication and enables states to engage global audiences more directly. This body of literature is valuable but it has a consistent limitation: it tends to operate at a general level, without examining how digital diplomacy affects specific foreign policy outcomes in specific national contexts.

There is minimal empirical work connecting digital diplomatic activity to concrete results in domains like trade promotion, cultural projection, and national image-building. And within that already-limited field, research specifically focused on Kenya is sparse. Studies that do exist tend either to describe the tools being used without assessing their impact, or to analyse one dimension of Kenya's digital diplomacy such as Twitter activity at State House without connecting it to broader foreign policy outcomes. This study aims to fill that gap in two ways: contribute to a growing body of literature that is not generic, but rather, specific to a developing nation, and provide empirical data specific to economic and cultural pillars of the Kenya foreign policy.

1.5.2 Policy Justification

In the Kenya policy context, this study is limited to and bound by various foreign policy documents, including the Kenya Foreign Policy 2024, and The Plan (or Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda) by the current administration. These, being the guiding documents to the country's foreign policy, indicate the importance and priority of digital presence by the government. Structural guidelines, political goodwill, measurable metrics and operational guidelines and procedures will be the main area of analysis and gap assessment.

This study therefore provides critical policy-relevant insights by systematically examining these gaps and aligning empirical findings with national policy aspirations. Specifically, it contributes to the operationalization of Kenya's digital and economic diplomacy agenda by offering evidence-based recommendations on how digital tools can be effectively integrated into foreign policy processes. In relation to the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda, which places emphasis on economic growth, market expansion, and global competitiveness, the study demonstrates how digital diplomacy can be leveraged to strengthen Kenya's economic positioning and cultural visibility on the global stage. By doing so, the study moves beyond abstract policy commitments and provides a practical framework for enhancing coherence, efficiency, and strategic impact in Kenya's digital diplomacy architecture.

1.6 Scope of the Study

In pursuant of this research, the author investigated the role, implementation and strategic influence of digital diplomacy under Kenyan foreign policy agenda. Geographically, it focused on Kenya and in particular on the mission of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs (MFA), and related websites and social media sites. Nevertheless, the research also included the digital interactions of Kenya with neighbouring and international associates, especially in the East African Community (EAC), the African Union (AU), and the larger United Nations systems to determine the various facets about its multilateral phase of digital foreign affairs.

The chosen period of analysis for this study is from 2014 to 2026 as it is rationalized by policy and technological factors. 2014 represents a crucial starting point since this is when the Kenya Foreign Policy (2014) was formulated, establishing the framework for Kenya's foreign policy initiatives and providing an opportunity to incorporate digital diplomacy instruments within the foreign policy structure. Moreover, during this period, there was a massive increase in the usage of mobile internet and social media platforms, revolutionizing the methods of

communication and interaction utilized within the realm of diplomacy. The actual study was conducted between September 2025 and January 2026 in a period covering five months.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This research is divided into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the study and its objectives. Chapter two presents the literature that has been used to support the study starting with the theories that have grounded the study. These are followed by a review of literature that have discussed the topic. The third chapter shows the methodology used and describes the sources of data and the sample. Chapter four presented the results and findings of the study, and lays ground for the final chapter, Chapter five, which presents a summary and tables recommendations for policy and future studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This second chapter provides an analysis of literature around the issue of digital diplomacy, and foreign policy. It looks through different literature and provides an understanding of what other scholars and authors have discussed around the study subject. It starts with a theoretical review of two theories that underpinned the study. It then provides an empirical literature review, a research gap and a summary of the chapter.

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Neorealism Theory by Kenneth Waltz *et al.*, (1979)

Among nations, where no single power dominates, countries are compelled to prioritize their own interests. Kenneth Waltz laid this idea bare in 1979 through a book titled *Theory of International Politics*, shaping what today is called neorealism or sometimes, structural realism. Because there is no higher authority dictating actions, each state must act independently to ensure its safety, relevance, and strength. What drives Kenya's steps in global affairs isn't shaped much by who lives inside it or what kind of government runs things at home. Instead, pressure comes from how the whole world setup works scattered, leaderless, tense. Digital tools play a role here: when Nairobi extends its reach beyond borders using online platforms, it does so not because technology feels new or exciting, but as part of established patterns that are now presented in a different way. Survival is the most important factor, followed by one's position among others. Kenya's online messaging strategy aligns with its subtle effort to maintain its position without attracting excessive attention.

When looking at digital diplomacy, neorealism shows how structure shapes choices. For Kenya, using digital tools fits into broader foreign policy goals because the world lacks central

authority. Power gaps between nations push smaller players to discover affordable ways to grow influence. Digital tech becomes one such path. A nation like Kenya sees these tools as practical means to stretch its presence globally (Carr, 2003). Reaching further diplomatically does not always demand large military budgets anymore. Economic competition now plays out online just as much offline. Platforms help promote trade, pull in investors, and draw attention. These moves make sense when survival depends on sharpening edges wherever possible. Progress is constantly measured against others' progress. That mindset fuels ambitions like becoming Africa's top digital marketplace. It isn't about cooperation first it's about staying ahead under pressure from larger forces shaping what any single country can do alone. Ambition here responds directly to limits built into global politics themselves (Bjola & Manor, 2021; Westcott 2022). The neorealism theory paints a vivid picture on the international arena. It also describes how major hard powers are employed in the attempt to control power and shift this necessary balance. However, notably, it fails to acknowledge soft power as a potential and extant power and a means to achieve a county's foreign policy goals. This shortcoming necessitated the study to consider the soft Power theory proposed by Joseph Nye in 1990.

2.1.2 Soft Power Theory (Joseph Nye 1990)

Joseph Nye introduced the concept of soft power theory in his 1990 book, "Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power," thereby providing a robust foundation for this research. Instead of force or money, countries can pull others toward them using cultural charm, shared beliefs, or appealing policies this is what Nye meant by "soft power." While tanks and trade deals show strength one way, winning hearts works differently but matters just as much. As global ties deepen, shaping how others think without pressure has become key. Influence built on trust and example runs parallel to older forms of control. Attraction quietly shapes choices, standing beside brute capability without replacing it.

What makes soft power theory fit so well here is how clearly it frames culture within Kenya's global outreach. Not just policies but songs, stories, and Swahili phrases shared online show up as tools of influence. Because digital spaces allow these elements to travel fast, they shape how others see the country. Instead of force or money, Kenya leans on appeal drawing interest through creativity and presence. When people abroad connect with Kenyan art or ideas, trust begins to form. That trust becomes useful later in trade talks or regional meetings. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, or podcasts let Nairobi speak directly to cities far away. Without such channels, spreading cultural impressions would take much longer. So viewing digital efforts through this theory reveals more than visibility it shows strategy. The faster a dance trend spreads, the wider the conversation grows. Reaching millions quickly does not guarantee impact, yet it creates openings. This framework helps spot where clicks turn into clout. Seeing likes as links in a larger chain change how success gets measured (Manor & Huang, 2022).

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

2.2.1 Digital Technologies

Digital technologies play a vital role in today's international interactions between states and are increasingly influencing the international communication, negotiation, and influence projection of states. Different authors or scholars identify digital technologies differently owing to the differences in exposure and level of development. Some of the identifiable aspects of digital technologies that are identified in research by Waithaka (2018) include various applications of mobile technologies, AI, and social media applications. Other countries include internet connectivity as a basic marker of digital technologies in a country. Digital technologies, if applied correctly and in structured means, provides an avenue for all countries to participate in international diplomacy equally. Traditional diplomacy limited countries without a wide reach to effectively have a voice in the international community. According to a

study done by Mutisya et al (2024), digital technologies have helped Kenya display its ecosystem, culture, and economic possibilities and opportunities. Kenya and Kenyans have used social media and digital technologies to display their activities and cultures to attract investment and interest. The paper by Njeri (2022) identifies investment opportunities, and opportunities in arts and culture that have been pushed through digital platforms. Her paper also identifies that there is evidence of cultural exchange and soft power use in the international arena mediated by digital platforms. The general picture, her recommendations argue, are guided by political agenda and goodwill in identifiable documents such as the Development and Information Communication and Media Policy of (DICM) 2014, as well as the Public Data for Public Good (PDPG) Policy of 2015.

The study by Mwashighadi (2023) further reported that the execution of the e-government programs in Kenya has had a direct impact on foreign policy since the government is now digitized; thus, Kenya being a more investor-friendly and transparent state has garnered a good image for the country and is attracting development finance and foreign investments, which is a positive impact on the goals of economic diplomacy. The digitization of customs, land registry, business registration, and tax administration, which reflect the standards of good governance that are also in line with bilateral and multilateral economic arrangements, have been exemplary in Kenya.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and missions in Kenya have significantly adopted digital technologies in their work. The digital transformation of the diplomatic corps in Kenya, a paper by Oloo (2024) as well as Mburu (2024), has now expanded the reach and scope of the country's diplomatic missions to ensure that the country's diplomatic services are promoted and its cultural and outreach public diplomacy is delivered to the host country population, a population that would be limited in resources by the traditional ways of the diplomatic corps. This institutional

digitization has helped build capacity and capacity building in Kenya's diplomatic missions to be more proactive and closer to CSOs, business networks, and diasporas in their countries of operation.

Kenya has been globalized and internationalized from a comparative and global point of view in the digital diplomacy space. Among them are African governments that are reimagining their economic diplomacy, with Kenya, for instance, being among the countries successful in using digital technology in their economic diplomacy efforts, with a particular focus on developing fintech and parts of the African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy (2022) in relation to digital governance. The report also highlighted that Kenya's engagement in digital governance fora has boosted the country's diplomacy profile and provided opportunities for the country's digital economic agenda (Kiplagat et al. 2025).

There is also some literature on the subject that indicates digital diplomacy does not come without danger. The report by the Kenya Computer Incident Response Team Coordination Centre (KE-CIRT/CC, 2022) shows that there is an emerging trend of cyber threats that target Kenya's digital assets, ranging from state-sponsored attacks to data breaches up to digital espionage, which puts Kenya's diplomatic communication systems, trade systems, and cultural data repositories at risk. The findings point to the importance of digital technology for improving Kenya's diplomatic capacities and emerging risks that could undermine the integrity and confidentiality of diplomatic communication, making training capacity in cybersecurity a prerequisite for effective digital diplomacy and not an add-on.

At the national level, Kenya's vision on the use of digital technology as a foreign policy tool the national policy is the best way to capture this. The goal of the Digital Masterplan (2022-2032), the bold vision for digital transformation in Kenya, explicitly links the development of the digital infrastructure and capacities to Kenya's international competitiveness and ambitions

as a leader in digital economies in Africa, while clearly setting the targets for the use of digital technologies in trade, investment promotion and cultural engagement with foreign partners. The elements of cross-border digital connectivity, data governance, and digital skills development in the Master Plan offer a template for Kenya's digital technological development to have long-term diplomatic and economic benefits in the international arena.

To conclude, the literature largely demonstrates the digital technologies as a transformative and essential tool of Kenya's foreign policy. The evidence suggests Kenya is taking a bold step towards using digital technology to promote its economic and cultural foreign policy agenda, from the founding principles highlighted in the study by Waithaka (2018) to the documentation of the expanding and growing role of digital technology in its foreign policy in the research by Mutisya *et al.*, (2024) to the comprehensive strategic framework provided in the policy document by the Digital Masterplan (2022–2032). In the meantime, the cybersecurity threats in the report by KE-CIRT/CC (2022) further reinforces the need to build digital resilience.

2.2.2 Digital Platforms

Waithaka's (2018) extensive study review discusses the initial stages of the introduction of ICT in the foreign affairs ministry of Kenya. His review finds that there is a very fragmented system of digital infrastructure which results in disparities between the departments with respect to technology. Some adopted digital information sharing dashboards and portals for internal communications and others use manual means for exchanging information. Despite the fact that the study carried out by Waithaka (2018) shows that there is need for a well-developed, centrally coordinated system of digital portals and a definite leadership approach by the management of MFA. Nevertheless, it can be seen that at the time of carrying out of this study, there was no intention to create such a centrally-coordinated system in Kenya.

On the basis of this idea, the research by Mutisya et al., (2024) examine how video conferencing apps like Microsoft Teams and Zoom that diplomats have relied on during the pandemic have affected them. This article is unique for its use of an interview technique. The authors not only describe the advantages of such communication systems (such as cost reductions in travel, time zone management, greater number of participants, etc.), they also pinpoint several problems and limits such as the lack of non-verbal communication and the inability to assure anonymity.

According to Chiimbiru (2022), the use of digital devices presents great opportunities in foreign affairs. The potentials of these innovations are clear, but their use in diplomacy still needs further exploration. In the current scenario, most innovations in this context have been used in simulations. Still, their capabilities make them able to aid many different kinds of diplomatic processes. Further developments will help in developing Digital Foreign Policy (DFP) and contribute to Kenya's national aims. Although Nyabuga and Ochieng (2013) recognize the logic in the design of the framework, it is true that it has paid little attention to its implementation. Such aspects as comparisons among vendors, costs associated with infrastructure, and capacity-building among the public are missing from this approach, making it look rather idealized.

There is a need for further analysis of the practical implications of virtual diplomacy. This research can be done using surveys and structured interviews conducted among diplomats participating in diplomatic processes. Njeri (2022) states that virtual technology can prove to be a much cheaper alternative to parts of the existing embassy system. This is especially related to consular diplomacy, policy formation, and negotiations between countries.

It is also worth noting that this kind of shift will demand a considerable investment in terms of money and effort. Not only does a diplomat need to know how to use technology but

also how to conduct negotiations online, what cybersecurity measures he should adhere to, and what professional conduct is expected from him online. All of this cannot be learned once; it takes continuous efforts and learning. Kenya is a perfect example for the rest of Africa in this regard. Kenya is a very telling example to Africa as a whole. The Brookings Institution (2022) article reported that the lack of a physical infrastructure, rather than the lack of knowledge of ICT in this context is what is impeding the use of digital diplomacy in Africa. In fact, the data gathered with the help of interviews with institutions and telecommunication firms shows that most of the continent's foreign ministers have to deal with constant power failures, poor data centres and shaky broadband connection. Recognizing the effects of these deficiencies on their diplomatic ties, the Brookings Institution suggests that they supplement these by public-private partnerships and financial aid from other countries. The problem, as identified in the study by Vial (2019), is that whereas the report manages to give a good overview of the problem, it fails completely to provide concrete recommendations to overcome the problem in Kenya. Because of this, the recommendations appear quite idealistic as they do not take into account some of the implementation issues.

Digital diplomacy is often associated with its suitability for neighbouring regions and countries. Onyango's study (2022) examines the digital diplomacy of the countries of the East African Community (EAC) using this framework and focusing on aspects of regional integration. The researcher emphasizes that, based on the information gathered from the interviews and questionnaires, the infrastructure of digital diplomacy has been greatly degraded as each of the countries had vastly different regulatory requirements, technical capacities and incompatibility of software. Such disintegration poses great challenges to successful regional diplomacy since it entails the inefficiency of communication and conflicting messages. To deal with this, the author suggests the implementation of policies for every diplomatic entry point and safe federated service for the exchange of safe data. This is not only a sign of the

significance of Kenya's digital transformation, but also the need to bring it together.

2.2.3 Social Media Platforms

Diplomatic processes globally have been transformed by social media. There is less dependence on expensive infrastructure. Social media provides countries with platforms to interact with an international audience without depending on any expensive infrastructure. This is important for Kenya since its foreign policies are guided by economic and cultural diplomacy. Through social media, there have been new avenues of diplomatic interactions created. These avenues are different from the typical state-to-state diplomatic interactions that have traditionally dominated Kenya's diplomacy.

The study by Mwashighadi (2023), revealed that Kenya's diplomatic representations have increasingly turned to the social media platforms as channels of communication on foreign policy issues, with Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its overseas offices, embracing forum platforms such as Twitter/X Facebook, LinkedIn, and YouTube to transmit the country's economic perspectives, engage with international developments as they occur, and remain present in foreign public debates. The study shows that, as described, this metamorphosis compresses the time between policymaking and the public reporting of policies to the point that Kenyan missions can today enter the picture promptly as international situations emerge, rather than later as part of a formalised diplomatic communication or a retrospective press release. This transformation in communication is an institutional adjustment with real policy consequences, since positioning in international public discourse is defined by the speed of this endeavour, which has become a competitive element in diplomacy.

The article by the Brookings Institution (2022) states that governments in Africa that have made social media engagement in diplomacy official have measurably stronger ties with international communities of investors, multilateral organisations, and the diaspora than those

that do not. Social media diplomacy offers a tool to maintain investor engagement in Kenya's economy and in other developing countries, emphasising the attraction of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), export market diversification, and regional economic leadership. In part, Nairobi's claim to be a "regional technology and finance hub" depends on perception management, and social media platforms are the most economical way to do this at scale and with sufficient frequency to meet international market perception needs.

The Mutisya et al., (2024) study estimates that Kenya's diaspora exceeds 3 million people, spread across North America, Europe, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The study notes that Kenya's diaspora is a structurally significant node in the country's economic diplomacy network. These social media networks allow the Kenyan government to be in constant touch with the Kenyan diaspora and its diplomatic missions, even outside the confines of official events and Kenyan mission visits. The study shows that in 2023, diaspora remittances to Kenya amounted to USD 4 billion and that diaspora relations with missions in Kenya are now beginning to be guided via digitally mediated platforms toward formal investment products targeting Kenya's national development priorities, such as agribusiness, real estate, and technology infrastructure. This shift of consumption spending toward productive investment is a foreign policy achievement that, in part, can be traced back to social media-enabled diaspora engagement.

The cultural aspect of social media diplomacy works is connected to the cultural aspect in another unique but reinforcing manner. The research conducted by Onyango (2022) indicates that in the era of modern social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube, diplomatic missions in Kenya have increasingly adopted this communication channel as a means of cultural projection, with this offering them access to audiences which they could not have reached before through costly cultural exchange programs that are hindered by logistical challenges. The

research outlines how Kenyan missions have harnessed these platforms to create culturally contextualized multimedia for tangible organic reach to key tourist markets and, consequently, tourism marketing outcomes, which have complemented official government-to-government cultural agreements. A trust in cultural value can be attained in algorithm-based platforms when cultural content is organically made available to the audience, instead of depending on the television selective attention filters of the audience. Oloo's (2024) study indicated that the use of social media in Kenya's diplomatic circles is not uniform: an asymmetric digital diplomacy that works in Kenya's favor, better relationships with technologically innovative partners, but weaker diplomatic engagement, where social media can't effectively deliver foreign policy.

Cariolle (2021) proposes that the quality of digital connectivity is a structural part of social media diplomacy's functions, and not a function of strategy or of the use of resources. Missions in poor Internet conditions are limited and may produce low-quality multimedia or fail to effectively contribute to real-time international events as they happen. This scenario is a limitation on Kenya's social media diplomacy agenda in its foreign policy plans in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, where there is a lack of development in roads, ports, and pipelines. Global trends in social media platforms seem to be moving towards shorter video formats and an algorithm-driven distribution system that focuses on engagement rather than viewership. Irungu and Kimaita (2024 [WKG8.1]) report this shift in platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat. If the content strategies deployed on these platforms don't change, Kenya's diplomatic mission could end up losing visibility on them due to successful disconnection by the social media platforms' algorithms.

2.2.4 Digital Communication Tools

The use of digital communication tools can also be observed as a central part of both digital diplomacy and the foreign policy of a country. Many authors have discussed the presence

of better and more advanced digital communication as an indication of a better foreign policy, or at least, the communication of one. The COVID-19 period was instrumental in the awakening of the minds and abilities of many countries in this period, with restricted movement and few in-person interactions, there was need to be creative with the types of communication that organizations and nations could carry out. This level of creativity was carried forward into diplomatic engagement reducing the investment and cost of in-person meetings.

Diplomatic communication tools, such as the internet and social media, have become a cornerstone of modern diplomacy, transforming the way states negotiate, relate to each other, reach out to foreign publics, and promote their foreign policy agenda on the international stage. The list of technologies that have become part of the daily lives of the Kenyan diplomatic corps is broad, ranging from secure government email systems, video conferencing platforms, applications for encrypted diplomatic messaging, through to virtual summit infrastructure. The study by Waithaka (2018) shows that the integration of digital communication into Kenya's governance and diplomatic architecture has helped the state actors communicate with their foreign counterparts faster, more efficiently, and cost-effectively, increasing agility and responsiveness of foreign policy unlike in traditional diplomatic systems.

Digital communication tools have more than transformed Kenya's diplomatic missions' interactions with the host countries and multilateral institutions; they have really revolutionized the way they interact. This transformation has had a significant impact on Kenya's economic diplomacy, particularly in the ability to communicate in real time with the market, engage in agile negotiations on trade terms, and continue to build and sustain relationships with international investors and development partners all without the limitations of geography or time zone.

The Kenyan government has actively strived to modernize its diplomatic communication infrastructure at the institutional level. The study by Mwashighadi (2023) shows that the e-government initiatives in Kenya have directly contributed to the digitalization of diplomatic communication channels, such as the use of secure digital communication systems by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which allows its embassies and high commissions to send policy directives, reporting cables, and trade intelligence in real time, thus enhancing the speed and security of Kenya's diplomatic communication channels. This institutional modernization has reduced reliance on traditional communication methods, which are slow and costly in Kenya, and has improved the coherence and effectiveness of implementing Kenya's foreign policy at missions abroad due to better coordination between Nairobi and these missions.

Digital communication tools' contribution to Kenya's cultural diplomacy has also been the subject of academic inquiry. In Kenya, digital communications have been instrumental in more regular and impactful engagement with Kenyans abroad, with virtual town halls, digital newsletters, group messaging apps, and e-consultation platforms aiding in strengthening cultural and political links with Kenyans overseas, creating an unofficial but effective diaspora as an instrument for cultural foreign policy (Ong'ong'a, 2023). The paper by Chiimbiru (2022) found that African countries with successful digital communication infrastructures have significantly improved diplomatic outcomes, with Kenya being among the more advanced (due to its relatively advanced ICT infrastructure and mobile penetration rates) in the continent's diplomatic dialogue, especially on intra-African trade negotiations as well as their interactions with multilateral institutions. The regional placement is also an important one because the advancement of digital communication in the region has solidified Kenya's position as a diplomatic hub and a favoured interlocutor among the international partners looking into the East African region.

Researchers have also recently studied the effects of digital communication tools on public diplomacy and nation branding. The research by Maina (2024) shows that the diplomatic missions and government agencies of Kenya have used digital communication platforms such as official government websites, digital press releases, e-newsletters, and virtual media briefings to influence global messages on Kenya, combat negative perceptions, highlight the country's economic successes, and create a positive image for foreign investors, tourists, and development partners. On various platforms, there have been discussions on the role of digital technologies in government circles. The report by the Brookings Institution (2022) presents this. It argues that there is more equality due to increased digital presence.

There are also some intriguing insights in the domestic context of the adoption of digital communication tools in Kenya. A research by Onyango (2022) found that, while the state has been building a digital diplomacy ecosystem, the benefits of digital diplomatic communication are not equally felt, with marginalized communities and rural areas largely outside the digital diplomacy system. Studies by Mwashighadi (2023) and Ong'ong'a (2023) found that digital communication tools enhance cultural diplomacy by allowing Kenya to present its cultural identity, heritage and values to the world. Further, the literature suggests that digital communication technologies enhance the efficiency, accessibility, and engagement with international actors of diplomacy. Article by Brookings Institution (2022) and a paper by Mohammed (2025) are amongst the reports that have pointed out the increasing significance of digital diplomacy in enhancing international cooperation and national soft power. Despite these developments, a number of obstacles still need to be cleared to achieve the goals of digital diplomacy, such as misinformation, cyber security, digital infrastructure, and technological skills, as mentioned by Chiimbiru (2022) and Onyango (2022). The literature shows that the use of the digital communication tools is a significant contributor to the modernization and effectiveness of Kenya's foreign policy, especially in enhancing cultural visibility and

promoting economic engagement in the global arena.

2.3 Summary of Literature Gaps

The increasing amount of research on the topic of the digital diplomacy in Kenya provides critical background knowledge, but there still exist several substantive gaps that constrict much further theoretical work and help to form better policies. One of the most prevailing restrictions is a descriptive nature of a significant number of the research, which frequently simply lists the digital tools, starting with social media researches by (Mwashighadi, 2023; Mutisya et al., 2024) and continuing with data systems and conferencing solutions by (Chiimbiru, 2022; Waithaka, 2018;), without exploring their potential to exert a distinguished strategic effect on the process of foreign policy formulations, collective decision-making, or its definable results.

The paper by Njeri (2022) warns about security risks in the cyber space. There is no extant review that examines and evaluates the impact of these two and more technologies on institutional coherence and policy nimbleness. On the same note, the application of communication technology such as encrypted message, AI translation, or secure emailing services studies by (Chiimbiru, 2022; Ong'ong'a, 2023) has not been sufficiently articulated at a higher level that fits within the localized digital diplomatic setup in Kenya. Most of the existing literature uses a siloed institutional perspective; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Waithaka, 2018), the Presidency (Mwashighadi, 2023), or foreign embassies instead of a comprehensive assessment.

The researches providing some roots of effectiveness like the research by Irungu and Kimaita (2024) or that by Brookings Institution (2022) point out the fact of low power of existing digital outreach strategies yet they do not manage to measure its foreign policy impact. Besides, the degree of digital literacy among Kenyan diplomats, the scale of preparedness on an

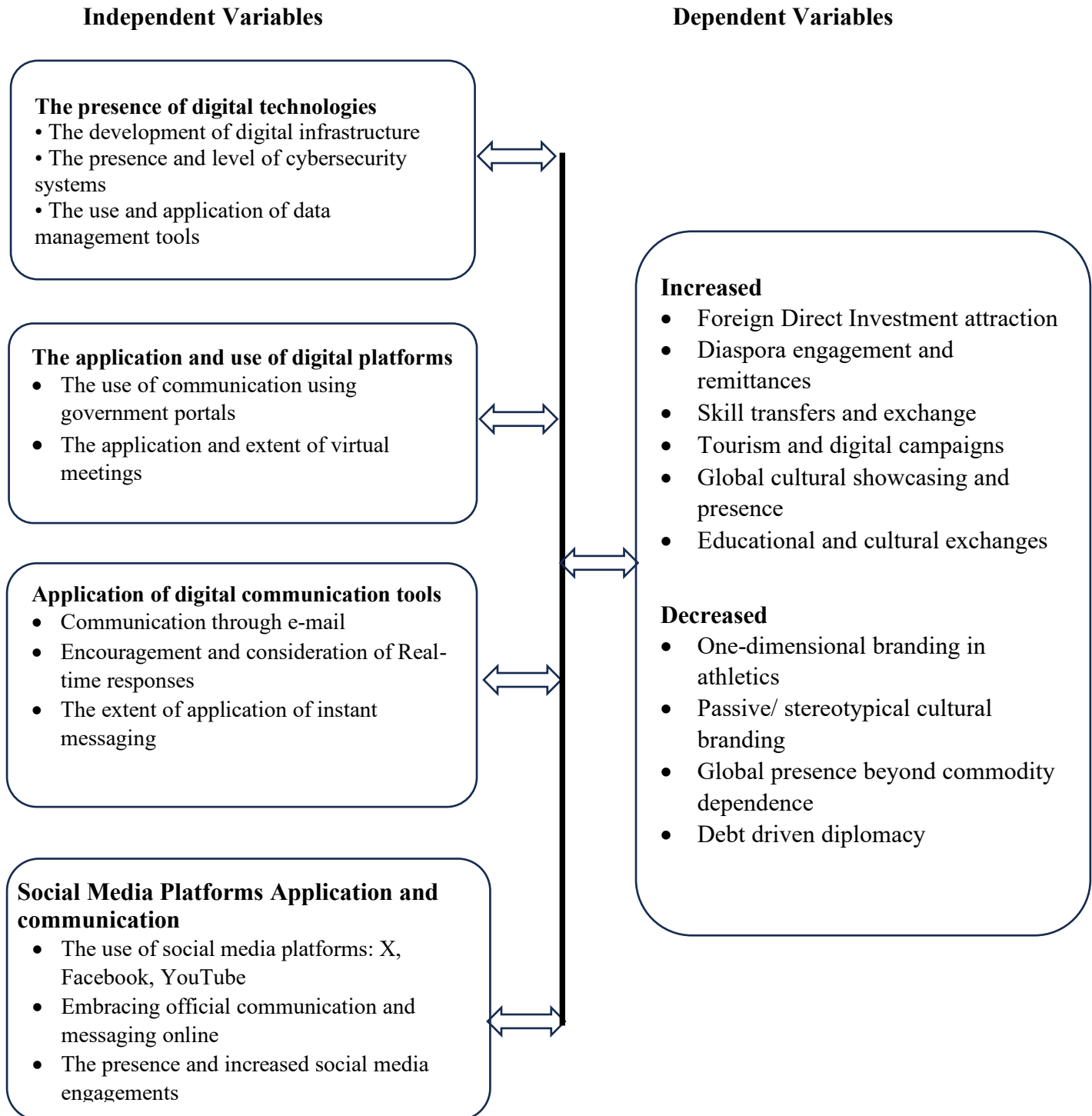
institutional level, and the ability to reach the crisis-response through the digital channels have not been properly investigated locally. The above gaps highlight how there is a need to study the gap on how Kenya is practicing digital diplomacy in greater depth and interdisciplinary fashion rather than cataloguing the digital tools used. This kind of investigation need not only trace the technical terrain, but also assess preparations on the institutional front, the agenda accord with it, and the long-terms of diplomatic effectiveness, thus being apt to add to academic tidings as well as formal politics.

2.4 Conceptual Framework Model

The conceptual framework of this study is anchored on the relationship between digital diplomacy systems and the performance of foreign policy, with particular emphasis on how institutional, communicative, and platform-based digital tools interact to shape economic and cultural diplomatic outcomes. At the core of the framework, foreign policy is conceptualized as the dependent variable, whose effectiveness, responsiveness, and strategic reach are influenced by a set of interrelated independent variables embedded within Kenya's digital diplomacy ecosystem. These independent variables are structured into four interlinked dimensions, namely digital technologies, digital platforms, social media platforms, and digital communication tools. Overall, the framework advances a structured understanding of how digital transformation mediates foreign policy effectiveness focusing on the cultural and economic pillars, situating Kenya's digital diplomacy within a broader system of technological inputs, institutional capacities, and strategic outputs.

Figure 2.1

Conceptual Framework



Source: Field Data, (2026)

2.5 Chapter Summary

While reviewing the literature, the digital diplomacy is altering the diplomatic interactions by means of providing instantaneous communication, effective crisis management and increase the international participation. Kenya's efforts in digital diplomacy are seen in engagement in multilateral forums, participation in peace initiatives and forging partnerships with countries. Besides, cybersecurity threats, misinformation, and limitations in governance are still significant hurdles. In this respect, while constructivist theory can help explain the significance of digital diplomacy in crafting Kenya's international identity, and digital transformation theory may explain its influence on diplomatic processes, policy integration, cybersecurity and digital diplomacy in Kenya's regional and economic engagements still constitute an empirical void. Consequently, this study was to fill these gaps by offering an in-depth analysis of Kenya's digital diplomacy strategies, their performance, and how they correspond to Kenya's foreign policy priorities.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an elaborate understanding on the applied methodology in achieving the research or study objectives. It describes the study site and analysis units and then describes the study research design. The chapter then discusses the research approach used, and subsequently discusses the sample used and the sampling method. Other sections that are discussed under the chapter are the data collection instruments used, research instruments validity, data collection methodologies that were employed, and data analysis methods that were employed. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the ethical guidelines that the researcher adhered to in the course of the study.

3.1 Site of Study

The study site, or target organizations of the study was the MFA (Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs). This is divided into its fourteen directorates. These directorates include America's and Caribbean, Political and Diplomatic Affairs, AU, , Europe and Commonwealth, Asia and Pacific, EAC, Middle East, Multilateral, Foreign Service Academy, Foreign Service Administration and Management, Protocol, Africa, Economic and Commercial Diplomacy and Peace and Security.

3.2 Research Approach

The study employed the mixed methods research is ideal to understand where qualitative and quantitative methods are ideal. This is similar to the views of Dawadi *et al.*, (2021). Explanatory qualitative methods provided in-depth insights through interviews, and qualitative data received through a structured questionnaire administered from MFA officers.

3.3 Research Design

A research design refers to an overall guideline or blueprint for ensuring that a study is reliable and clear, achieving its main objectives. Takona (2023) explains that establishing a clear design is therefore essential for enhancing the credibility, validity, and reliability of the findings, as it sets out a transparent pathway from conceptualization to evidence generation. The research design was descriptive aiming towards analyzing Kenya's diplomatic engagements and online interactions with MFA officers. The use of the social media pages was informed by the fact that these are the main avenues for digital communication used by Kenya's diplomatic corps as well as internationally.

3.4 Target Population

The target population refers to the entire group of individuals, units, or elements that possess the characteristics relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. It defines the broader population from which the study's sample will be drawn. The target population of this study was the officers in the fourteen directorates of the MFA and experts in the IR sector. Each directory provided one respondent except Protocol and Africa, which had 3 and 2 respondents respectively, and 8 scholars in IR.

3.5 Study Sample and Sampling Procedures

The sample population represents the specific subset of the target population that will participate in the study and from whom the actual data will be collected. It is selected to reflect the essential characteristics of the wider population, thereby enabling meaningful inferences to be drawn from the findings. The sample was arrived at through the Nassiuma (2000) approach that guides on the use of a (low) coefficient of variation (c) of between 21% and 30%. It also mentions that an ideal standard error is (the lower of) between 2% and 5%.

The sample size formula representing Nassiuma's approach is as follows:

$$n = \frac{Nc^2}{c^2 + (N-1)e^2}$$

in this formula, n is the sample size and N is the population that is accessible to the researcher. The c represents the Coefficient of Variance, and finally, the e is the standard error

Applied,

N=Accessible population = 254

c = Variance Coefficient = 0.21

e = Std error = 5%

$$\text{Sample size} = \frac{254 \times (0.21^2)}{0.21^2 + (254 - 1) 0.05^2} = \frac{11.2014}{0.6766} = 16.556 \text{ or } 17$$

Therefore, the sample size is 17

The respondents were prorated across the directorates as shown in Table 3-1 below.

Table 3.1
Population and Sample Distribution

Directorate	Population	Sample frame	Sampling Technique	Sample Size	Tool
Political and Diplomatic Affairs	12	1	Purposive	8%	Questionnaires
Protocol	48	3	Purposive	6%	Questionnaires
Multilateral	17	1	Purposive	6%	Questionnaires
Africa	29	2	Purposive	7%	Questionnaires
AU	16	1	Purposive	6%	Questionnaires
America's and Caribbean	18	1	Purposive	6%	Questionnaires
Europe and Commonwealth	20	1	Purposive	5%	Questionnaires
Asia and Pacific	12	1	Purposive	8%	Questionnaires
EAC	10	1	Purposive	10%	Questionnaires
Middle East	12	1	Purposive	8%	Questionnaires
Economic and Commercial Diplomacy	22	1	Purposive	5%	Questionnaires
Foreign Service Academy	21	1	Purposive	5%	Questionnaires

Foreign Service Administration and Management	8	1	Purposive	13%	Questionnaires
Peace and Security	9	1	Purposive	11%	Questionnaires
Scholars In IR and Researchers	Unknown	8	Expert /snowball sampling		Interview
Total	254	25		10%	

Source: Field Data, (2026)

Primary data was collected through 17 in-depth interviews. The respondents to the interviews were purposively selected to be those in positions that deal with the diplomatic engagements and communications in their respective organizations.

Given the unknown size of the population of scholars and researchers in IR relevant to this study, the research adopted a purposive expert sampling strategy, complemented by snowball sampling. Initially participants were identified through referrals, and on the basis of scholarly work, verifiable expertise, and participation in IR events and academia experience. Data collection continued until thematic and theoretical saturation was reached that is, when interviews no longer generated new themes or analytical insights relevant to the study. Saturation was achieved after 8 expert interviews which agrees with research standards (Guest *et al.*, 2006; Creswell, 2015).

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaires and subsequent follow-up surveys were the main data collection instruments. Respondents would fill in the questionnaires and later the researcher would make follow up interviews with them for clarity and in-depth conversation. The researcher employed the use of a guided survey to collect data from the respondents. Guided surveys, as opposed to structured questionnaires, are data collection forms that comprises of a list of open-ended

questions that guide the researcher in in-depth interaction and questions with the respondents (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). These interviews were not limited to the MFA officers alone. Rather, there were interviews with scholars and experts in the international relations field as well. Experts encompassed those in academia, professional bodies, government and consultancies as well.

For secondary data and, the researcher utilized a range of sources including social media accounts, and policy documents. Other secondary sources of data included government reports, speeches and statement by diplomats and other officers in government and academic literature. These were examined to construct the theoretical and conceptual frameworks (Cooper & Schindler, 2003).

3.6.2 Validity of Research Instruments

The validity of the research instruments was done by face and content validity. The research supervisor was responsible to discuss with the researcher on how the data collection instrument meets the research objectives and collects the adequate information without any bias. With regard to qualitative research, prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, and triangulation of data sources further heighten validity in that findings truly represent the participants' perspectives.

Validation of respondent and transparent documentation achieved the reliability of the research instruments. Birt et al., (2016) explained how respondent validation refers to an interaction of the researcher and respondents towards the final analysis that ensures that the researcher captured the thought and the meanings of the respondents. Maintaining field notes, recording made in the field, audio recordings, transcription notes and coding sheets are the ways through which transparent documentation could be achieved to ensure reliability of research instruments as described by Nowell *et al.*, (2017).

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation

Thematic analysis of the collected data was adopted on an analytical approach to provide an understanding of the relevant issues from the case of Kenya's Digital diplomacy initiatives and whether the initiatives have effectively impacted its foreign policy. The steps employed by the researcher to undertake a thematic analysis were informed by the study by Braun and Clarke (2006) in which they advise for first, guided interviews, followed by verbatim transcription, review of transcripts and notes, and identification of patterns prior to coding and analysis. Data was then analysed using the NVivo software to identify themes and summarise the outcome. Data was presented in the form of tables, descriptions and narrations. Quantitative data was presented in percentages and frequencies, to enable the visualization of information.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

The study faced some limitations that including access to information, its verification and general interaction with officials within the MFA. Some glaring limitations include a reluctance to speak out and share information that was deemed confidential. Due to the timing, many officers of the MFA were unreachable and this limited the study to an extent. These limitations were minimised by meticulous planning and effective and advance communication with the target respondents. Where necessary, respondent names were withheld, enforcing anonymity or responses, but maintained the name of the department or agency represented by the respondents.

Another evident limitation was the focus on the MFA. While this narrowed focus limits the views to those in the ministry, introducing some bias, it provides a holistic view within the ministry, where the primary responsibility of diplomacy resides. The addition of experts to the respondent pool greatly minimised this bias and thus, this limitation.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

In undertaking this study, ethical standards were strictly applied. These standards including informed consent, protection of participants, and confidentiality, as explained by Creswell and Poth (2018), were reported and disclosed as was needed. Before the commencement of the study, the researcher obtained the approval of the institutional review board. All participants were required to provide informed consent prior to the study data collection. To inform their decision, the research participants were provided with the study objectives and procedures. Further, the researcher pseudonymized study data and any characteristics that may have led to identification of the participants in both recordings and transcripts as well. All research related digital files were encrypted and stored in a locked location which only the research could access. Research assistants were required to sign confidentiality agreements.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on the data collected from respondents within the MFA. The chapter integrates both quantitative and qualitative analysis in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of digital technologies in shaping Kenya's foreign policy. The quantitative analysis is drawn from survey responses measured on a five-point Likert scale, which enabled the study to capture the extent of agreement or disagreement with various statements aligned to the research objectives. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages are used to present the results in tabular and narrative form. In complement, qualitative data derived from open-ended responses and thematic coding are incorporated to provide depth and nuance to the statistical findings. Through illustrative quotations and emergent themes, the qualitative analysis highlights the lived experiences and professional perceptions of directors, deputy directors, and foreign service officers working across different departments of the Ministry. By triangulating both sets of data, this chapter not only quantifies prevailing attitudes toward digital diplomacy but also explores the underlying reasons, challenges, and implications, thereby ensuring a more holistic interpretation of the findings.

4.1. Validity of Research Instruments

The content validity was analysed, with the participation of academic experts and field experts. The questionnaire was reviewed by supervisors assigned at the university, who have knowledge in matters of foreign policy and operations, to whether all questions of the questionnaire meet the objectives and variables of the study well and adequately. Two practitioners in the field were also consulted to make sure that the items in the questionnaire are contextually supportive and relevant to reality in operations of the sector. The respondents were requested to provide the comments on the clarity, wording, and apparent relevance of the items.

Such feedback was used to rephrase questions, eradicate ambiguity and increase the involvement of the respondents in the tool.

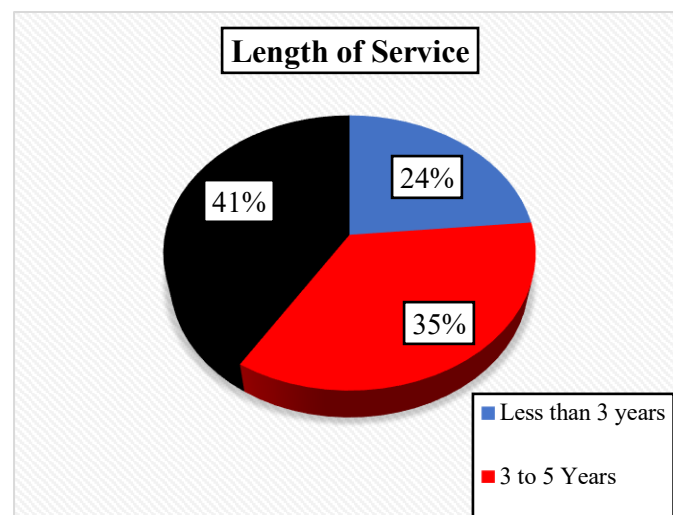
4.2. Research Findings

4.2.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographics presented below indicate conclusively the qualification of the different respondents to respond to the research questionnaire and confirm the representative nature of the respondents. Participants included Directors, Deputy Directors, and Foreign Service Officers, thereby capturing insights from both senior leadership and mid-level practitioners directly engaged in policy implementation. With regard to length of service, 24% of respondents had served for less than three years, 35% had between three and five years of experience, while the majority, 41%, had more than five years of service. This distribution suggests that the sample incorporated both relatively new officers and seasoned professionals, offering a balanced view.

Figure 4.1

Length of Service



Source: Field Data (2026)

4.2.2. Efficacy of Digital Technologies on the Economic and Cultural Pillars of Kenya's Foreign Policy

The first part of the survey was an analysis of digital technologies' role in Kenya's foreign

policy. The following findings demonstrate that digital technologies are central to enhancing the efficiency of the MFA policy implementation process and its operations. Table 4.1 displays the results of these findings.

Table 4.1:

Digital Technologies and the Economic and Cultural Pillars of Kenya's Foreign Policy.

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Digital tools have increased participation in Kenya's foreign policy processes	70	12	18
Cybersecurity infrastructure has improved the security of diplomatic communications	65	18	17
Data management tools are effectively used in diplomatic practice	65	29	6
There has been increased investment in digital infrastructure over the past five years	65	11	24
Data analytics enhances evidence-based foreign policy decision-making	65	20	15
There is sufficient training in digital tools within the MFA	18	53	29

Source: Field Data (2026)

The study found a majority (70%) mentioned digital tools had been used more in the country's foreign policies adopted. There were only 12% who were neutral. One of the other findings in the research is that the cybersecurity infrastructure structure has had a positive impact on the security of diplomatic communications. The majority (65%) of respondents (6% strongly agreed; 59% agreed) acquiesced in this position, and this evidence asserts the MFA's presence of frameworks. But only 12% strongly disagreed and 18% were undecided about the investment in increased infrastructure frameworks.

Data management was also mentioned as being properly involved in diplomacy. In the survey regarding their effectiveness, 29% of the responses were neutral, while the majority, 65%, expressed agreement. This statement distinguishes between the notion that being busy is beneficial and the reality that some practitioners have not received formal training to understand

the implementation of the concept as described. 65% of respondents affirmed investment in the digital infrastructure over the last half a decade. However, 24% of the sample was uncommitted, and there was some indication that such improvements may not be consistent across the directorates. More significance in the use of analytics in policymaking was also observed, with the majority (65%) of the respondents agreeing that analytics mean better policies. The discussion shows that Kenya has signs of adapting its foreign policy in the context of the manipulation of data and digital diplomacy in the international arena. However, significant concerns have arisen regarding how individuals acquire skills in digital tools. In this regard, the respondents' neutral position is 53%, compared to only 18% who agreed with the use of digital technologies, indicating low use of digital technologies.

The qualitative interviews undertaken suggest that transformation in the MFA are, in part, as a result of the digital technologies in the ministry. The participants agreed that efficiency, data integration and data security were the main issues or concern, and that the most critical of correspondence is achieved because of secure connections. This was echoed by an explorative article by Muthoni, (2022). The delay that would see a document take several days as opposed to a few hours correctly was one of the mentioned examples of the efficiency that is currently enjoyed.

Another theme that emerged was the shift towards increased analytical- and evidence - based decision makings. Respondents agree that the ministry and all participants in foreign policy affairs are now using and embracing more data-based decision making, negotiations and policy development. According to a key informant in the MFA,

“Like currently, kama the last miaka kumi, we are now able to sell a negotiating position. If things continue like this, it is easy to change and understand how our and other delegations buy arguments. The new approach sees several changes towards more evidence-based foreign policy, which is in line with world-wide trends. "The Ministry for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs has conducted an official

interview to discuss the issue on December 10, 2025, with its officers.

The respondents cautioned on the substitution of authority and expert judgement advocating for a complementary relationship instead, emphasizing analytical training. These have been accrued, but the issue of capacity has remained. The data highlighted inequalities in training, lack of access to advanced digital tools that are sophisticated, and overreliance on selected cadres, which according to the South African Institute of International Affairs (2021), are digitally skilled workers. According to one of the MFA officers, he made an open remark;

“Many officers typically learn from their peers, but the software is available.” Building skills in a structured way is a good opportunity to highlight how important it is to create training programs and ensure digital resources are available in all missions if we want to make the most of digital technologies. (Interview with officers of the Ministry for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs on 9th December 2025)

These findings align to scholarship such as the explorative study by Mutisya *et al.*, (2024) finds that digital tools are an essential ingredient in the advancing the pillars of the foreign policy agenda. Additionally, it finds that while this is the case, the foreign affairs community has increasingly relied and depended on these tools in daily life. However, there is notable lack of appropriate skills and laxity in infrastructure development. The same is presented in a descriptive study by Turianskyi and Wekesa (2025). It argues that on the one hand, countries in Africa need better training and capacity building to reap the benefits of digital integration. On the other hand, Africa is going through a period of increased transparency and better responsiveness.

Adoption of these technologies is acceptably low. This is more pronounced in areas such as analytics and cybersecurity, which are considered more advanced and niche-driven. Regardless of this, there is a lack of training, and in some instances, an absence of training on a large scale could result to differences and poor use of present prospects. From a different perspective, which is presented in the article by Minko (2024), there should be a match between an advanced

technology and technological development, human development and institutional structures. In an ideal situation, the commensurate development of these factors concurrently can eradicate any chances of diplomatic challenges, risks and failures. This study show that there is increase efficiency, and decisions are more evidence-based within the MFA. Any challenges that institutions face in trainings and infrastructure will minimize the benefits that adoption of technologies face.

4.2.3. Efficacy of Digital Platforms on the Economic and Cultural Pillars of Kenya's Foreign Policy

The second objective explored the gains of using digital platforms in the formation of foreign policy in Kenya. The specific findings are presented in the Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Digital Platforms and the Economic and Cultural Pillars of Kenya's Foreign Policy.

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Government portals and online platforms are regularly used in diplomatic practice	77	11	12
Digital platforms enhance Kenya's visibility in multilateral relations	76	12	12
Virtual meetings are an effective alternative to physical diplomacy	36	12	52
There are clear policy frameworks guiding the use of digital platforms in diplomacy	35	47	18
There is effective coordination across MFA directorates in using digital platforms	53	41	6
Digital platforms enable faster interaction with international stakeholders	94	3	3

Source: Field Data (2026)

The findings showed that digital platforms have been institutionalized in the diplomatic practice with majority (77%) of the respondents (18% strongly agree; 59% agree) affirming that they have used government portals and online platforms regularly in their diplomatic buses. Kenya was also identified to be growing in application of different digital platforms. Majority

(76%) of the respondents agreed that such sites were going to make Kenya more visible in multilateral relations. This highlights the importance of the digital platform in facilitating the engagement of Kenya in international conferences amid situations when there is restricted mobility. Nonetheless, the respondents did not express confidence in the effectiveness of virtual summits as an alternative. In the survey, 36% of the respondents were positive about the use of virtual meetings as an alternative, 41% were negative, and 12% of the respondents were unsure. This means that although the use of digital platforms facilitates continuity in diplomatic functions, the platforms are not seen to be superior to traditional forms of diplomacy, which rely heavily on personal relationships and negotiations.

It was also established that there are inadequacies in the policy framework concerning digital platforms. While 35% of the respondents were positive about the presence of distinctive policies regarding digital diplomacy, 47% had neutral feelings, and 18% were negative regarding the presence of distinctive policies concerning digital diplomacy. This shows the lack of sufficient policy frameworks aimed at ensuring standardized practices of digital diplomacy. Most participants (53%) responded affirmatively, or very affirmatively, on the existence of effective coordination. Others, 41%, had a neutral reaction while only 6% had a very negative reaction. These findings highlight the necessity for harmonization in organizational activities and good governance.

On the positive note, a great majority of participants (94%) were convinced that digital technology enhances swift communication among other business organizations around the globe. In fact, this is an important aspect because it acts as the driving force towards the efficiency and quickness of Kenyan diplomats. Generally speaking, online technologies are becoming easily accessible as the means for efficiency and visibility in Kenyan diplomacy. However, it is necessary to improve policy structures and inter-directorate coordination to

achieve uniformity and coherence. These findings were further confirmed by qualitative interviews, and three themes emerged. First, the replacement of distance through diplomacy, secondly, the co-existence of virtual diplomacy, and thirdly, gaps in governance. From these findings, one can deduce that the Kenyan diplomatic institutions have widened their horizons through the use of digital technology, including virtual summits and government websites. According to the respondents, a director in the Multilateral affairs directorate,

“Using online platforms, Kenya is able to participate in more international meetings as well as incurring less on the cost of travelling. This increases the possibilities of the country in the world decision making. One of the directors in the multilateral affairs described it as the ability to attend multiple virtual sessions in addition to the head-of- state summit maybe just making our priorities felt instead of attending any of them”. (Interview with a director in the Multilateral Affairs directorate of the Ministry for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs on December 10, 2025)

In some ways, the role of virtual platforms may be seen as that of force multipliers in enabling Kenya to make its mark in the international arena regardless of its limited resources (Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy, 2025). Nevertheless, there are clear constraints regarding virtual diplomacy highlighted by the respondents. Even though the use of virtual platforms increases participation, it does not provide results equivalent to the ones that could have been obtained from informal exchanges of ideas and building of relationships crucial for successful negotiations. Nonverbal language, conversations outside work, hall diplomacy, and other key elements of the process of diplomacy cannot be easily replicated through virtual means, making it harder to negotiate. While experienced diplomats might argue that the same wording could be used when negotiating on the internet, negotiations require specific chemistry that is impossible to achieve without face-to-face communication. In this way, face-to-face interactions cannot be substituted for virtual ones.

The third theme explored the problem of governance within virtual platforms. According to the respondents, no clear policy was put in place regarding the use of virtual platforms and

some differences existed between practices in various directorates. One of the communications officers noted, there is no common playbook of how to operate different units run their own page and platforms. It is because we contradict ourselves occasionally publicly.

This incoordination threatens to compromise with the diplomatic communications and cohesiveness of Kenya. The results hence indicate the necessity of having a centralized system of digital diplomacy, and a mechanism, to coordinate the roles of the MFA, as an entity that coordinates practices and motif of uniform messages.

The findings on these objectives agrees with the interpretation of the research by Ong'ong'a (2023) who explains that although Kenyan diplomats have adopted the use of digital platforms to create international publicity, its application in domestic policy and coordinating with other agencies is disjointed. Similarly, the study by Oloo (2024) emphasizes the fact that deficiency of trust, misinformation, and insufficient clarity of the policies are common challenges of digital diplomacy in Kenya.

4.2.4. Social Media Platforms on the Economic and Cultural Pillars of Kenya's Foreign Policy

The third objective assessed the efficacy of social media platforms on the foreign policy of Kenya. The findings show that social media has become an indispensable component of Kenyan folk diplomacy that has augmented its transparency, visibility, and responsiveness. The results are presented in the table 4.3.

Table 4.3*Social Media Platforms and the Economic and Cultural Pillars of Kenya's Foreign Policy.*

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Social media is regularly used to advance Kenya's foreign policy objectives	94	3	3
Social media platforms enhance transparency in diplomacy	83	9	8
Social media is effective for crisis communication and real-time response	88	6	6
There are clear SOPs guiding the use of social media in diplomacy	30	35	35
There are adequate mechanisms to monitor and counter misinformation	41	53	6
Social media significantly enhances Kenya's diplomatic exposure	83	9	8

Source: Field Data (2026)

Majority of the respondents (94%) affirmed that they regularly use social media to advance the Kenya foreign policy objectives, an indication that the media have taken root into common practices. Likewise, majority (83%) had seen the existence of platforms like X, Facebook, YouTube increased the transparency in diplomacy, which is correlative with the fact that social media leads to the development of trust and visibility among the population. Social media is also used as one of the important means of crisis communication. The overall rate of 88% of the interviewed confirmed its performance with the real-time communications, the opportunity to respond instantly to the crises and the provision of significant information.

Institutional obstacles however occurred in the area of governance and standardization. Only 30% of the respondents replied by saying that social media use has standard operating procedures (SOPs) whereas 35% replied in the negative and 35% continued by saying that they were also of the neutral point of view. Equally, the check of misinformation was also identified to be unsatisfactory: only 41% of the respondents thought that there is adequate monitoring mechanism opposed to most (53%) who were neutral and non-agreeing. These results make it

apparent that there are weak points in regulating the danger of disinformation and this can have detrimental effects on the image of Kenya in the international news. The respondents agreeing with the question on social media significantly enhancing the field of diplomatic exposure of Kenya were at 83%, which once again helps to reference the current democracy as the focal instrument of diplomacy as it is today. Institutional policy and platform monitoring are some of the main challenges that recur in the space of foreign policy and communication.

Another objective of this study was to examine the efficacy of social media on advancement of both cultural and economic pillars of foreign policy. Social media and its use or application in reaching out to the local and international communities was evident. Constant communication by the government, expresses transparency and promotion of specific interests. Per an informant in the MFA,

“A tweet may be our first point of diplomacy, which is visible right away to our partners and citizens. This finding corresponds to the quantitative results, which showed perfect congruency with respect to visibility offered by social media”.
(Interview with a senior officer in the MFA on December 10, 2025)

The second theme connects social media with crisis communication and rapid response. Per the findings, the MFA has been found to use social media platforms for dissemination of messages during emergencies such as evacuations. The most common social media platforms used in the country include X (formerly referred to as Twitter) and Facebook. Social media presents a double-edged sword for crisis management as it enhances effectiveness on one hand but exposes the organization to dangers on the other (Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, 2025). A key information from the expert pool, in reference to this mentioned:

“Like last year’s (2024) demonstrations and protests by the Gen Z created an image of Kenya, and fortunately or unfortunately, so did the response and lack thereof by the government. There were opinions and perceptions that different people formed with regards to the country which touched on the image and foreign policy of the country.” (Interview with a senior academic and consultant from the researcher expert pool on December 10, 2025)

The third topic was the deficit of institutionalization with the usage of social media. According to the respondents, the practices of social media were usually placed on an ad-hoc basis without standardized operating procedures, performance metrics, and certified staff (Muthoni, 2022). Another respondent, a communications analyst in the MFA observed that.

“We have markers celebrating the attainment of a follower, but we do not have measures of whether social media is shifting the policy outcome. This is where the popular culture and professionalization exist. The strategic potential of social media in foreign policy is not fully tapped without formal outline of SOPs, outcome focused metrics, and specially trained staff”. (Interview with a communication analyst in the Ministry for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs on December 17, 2025)

Such results align with that of the study by Banda (2025), which has shown that the role of social media has driven Kenya to act in ways that are associated with its foreign policy because it exaggerates the input of the domestic population, but has also flagged weaknesses associated with disinformation and insecurity threats. Comparatively, a study about the aspect of digital diplomacy of Kenya during COVID-19 discovered that MFA embraced the use of social media to promote its activities, yet its strategy was not complex and did not command any significant expansion in its networks or trust (Turianskyi & Wekesa, 2025).

4.2.5. Effectiveness of Digital Communication on the Economic and Cultural Pillars of Kenya’s Foreign Policy

The fourth objective investigated the utility of online expressions of communication. Some of the areas considered include aspects of communication, translation and trainings. The specific findings are presented in table 4.4. There was an ambivalence on their perception with respect to official email systems as majority (53%) responded they were adequate or strongly felt they were adequate, 29% replied they were only vigorous and 18% did not concur. Such is broad trust with certain reservations. The acceptance of real-time messaging services was virtually unanimous as majority (95%) of the respondents indicated that they worked well in improving their coordination to missions abroad. It is also on the same note that the translation

tools were also rated positively with majority (70%) of the respondents acknowledging it assists in removing the language barrier where people are exposed to foreign languages.

Table 4.4

Digital Communication on the Economic and Cultural Pillars of Kenya's Foreign Policy.

Statement	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Official email systems are adequate for diplomatic communication	53	29	18
Real-time messaging services improve coordination with missions abroad	95	3	2
Translation tools help overcome language barriers in diplomacy	70	15	15
There is adequate training on digital communication tools	18	41	41
Digital communication tools have become more dependable over time	83	9	8
There are inconsistencies in communication policies across departments	35	23	42

Source: Field Data, (2026)

With regards to whether there was adequate training, only 18% respondents indicated that there was adequate training, with 35% disagreed with the statement and 41% remained neutral. This is an indication that training programs in institutions are not adequate and might need intensive restructuring. Positively, digital communication tools have gained a lot of dependability with majority (83%) of the respondents indicating that their dependability has been enhanced with time. However, the problem of a standardized performance of communication protocols is not taken care of. 35% of respondents agree that there were inconsistencies between policies across departments, 42% disagreed, and 24% were undecided. Such findings are appealing indications on the increased usefulness of digital communication tools towards the assistance of the foreign policy in Kenya specifically in coordination and reliability. Nevertheless, the continued issues in training and the harmonization of protocols are causing their continued ineffectiveness.

The fourth objective examined how effective digital communications can be on the foreign policy of Kenya. The responses concerning this objective brought out two themes, namely operational efficiency and standardization of training/protocols. The results established that digital communication platforms have increased efficiency in its operations through real-time communication between missions and headquarters. Respondents noted that instantaneous communication has raised awareness of the situation and responsiveness to crisis cases. One of the respondents, a desk officer within the Protocol Directorate of the MFA, remarked,

“Once a development happens in our mission country we are updated and issuing directives within minutes, this responsiveness is a game changer. It is a sign that the country of Kenya has enhanced its potential to respond to international events in a timely fashion owing to computer-based communication”. (Interview with officers in the Protocol directorate of the Ministry for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs on January 9, 2026)

Simultaneously, training and standardization of protocols were observed to be problematic. Respondents stated that practices were not always the same depending on missions, and some initiatives were based on unofficial programs, such as WhatsApp, some even followed the usual email procedures. One respondent from the international relations expert pool said:

“It is official record in some embassies with WhatsApp; other places demand formal email - there should be a standard in place and that nothing slips through the cracks. These inconsistencies lead to the fact that there is a necessity of the harmonization of communication protocols as well as the systematic training in order to achieve efficacy and the adherence to the professional standards”. (Interview with an internal relations consultant for Diaspora Affairs on January 10, 2026)

This is consistent with the study by Turianskyi and Wekesa (2025) who explain that African diplomats are very dependent on online communication, and they find it a challenge to balance the implementation within organizations. In the study by Ong’ong’a (2023) quotes the argument where there is no discretion and disorganization when doing basic communication activities in Kenya are informal and uncoordinated, which attributes to the definition of digital diplomacy in Kenya.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a conclusion of the study, and recommendations that emerge from the study. In this section, conclusions are presented from the results and discussions that have been undertaken in the previous chapter. The chapter's conclusion is preceded by a summary of findings. The summary of findings is presented thematically. These conclusions are also used to inform the recommendations subsequently presented.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The research found out that digital technologies have positively impacted esteem of the foreign policy implementation in Kenya. Specifically, in the communication, social media, crisis management, and cybersecurity aspects. A majority of respondents (70%) identified that there was increased efficiency, and similarly, (65%) noted expressed confidence in the security level of using these tools.

One of the major aspects that came out in findings of the study was that the country employed various digital technologies but only to increase its visibility and not necessarily to enhance their diplomatic presence. Majority of respondents, from the study, had used either a virtual of online platform and deemed such platforms as necessary for an enhanced diplomatic presence and communication. On the effectiveness of virtual summits (as opposed to in-person summits), only a high population (41%) of the people interviewed felt that there was increased efficacy.

Dependence on conventional social media, which include X, YouTube and Facebook, emerges as a major outstanding aspect. The MFA was identified as a force that advances material for cultural and economic gain and value of the country in different platforms and for different audiences, within and outside the country. In a nearly unanimous response,

respondents noted the presence of increased activities that increase transparency and enhance crisis management. The respondents noted that the increased transparency, communication and reduced crises (or better crisis management), were a central aspect of the furtherance of the cultural and economic pillars of the country's foreign policy.

The other objective that the study investigated through the digital communication lens, was the email, real-time witnesses, and the translation tools. The findings have indicated that, whilst real-time messaging system was seen as highly helpful in case of enhancing coordination (95%), the choice of using formal email system and translation programs had a more mixed opinion. The other concerns that were mentioned by the respondents are related to adequacy in the training and nonenhancement in the uniformity in the communication processes among different directorates. The research therefore found out that despite the efficiency and accessibility of the foreign policy structure in Kenya which digital communication has created; it cannot fulfil its potentials, as there are no standard training and the stability of communication conventions. This is a shortcoming particularly when majority of diplomatic negotiations are made with such high stakes where even the smallest misplaced word can trigger a cataclysmic effect.

5.2 Conclusions

Arising from the findings of the study, this section presents conclusions based on the four specific objectives. This section also provides the overall conclusion that reflects the problem under study- that is, to investigate the efficacy of the digital diplomacy in advancing the economic and cultural pillars of the Kenya Foreign Policy. It also presents the specific conclusions.

5.2.1 Efficacy of Digital Technologies on Economic and Cultural Pillars of Kenya's Foreign Policy

The study concludes; digital technologies exhibit moderate to high efficacy in shaping Kenya's foreign policy performance, primarily through gains in operational efficiency, strengthened cybersecurity, and the gradual integration of data-driven decision-making. A majority of respondents indicate that digital tools have improved the speed, security, and reliability of diplomatic communication and internal processes within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition, the emerging use of data analytics and visualization tools signals a transition toward more evidence-based and strategically informed diplomacy. However, this efficacy is not uniform. It is moderated by capacity constraints, including uneven training, disparities in access to advanced digital infrastructure across directorates, and overreliance on a limited pool of digitally proficient personnel. Consequently, while digital technologies are substantively enhancing foreign policy processes, their overall efficacy remains moderate rather than optimal, constrained by institutional and human capital limitations.

5.2.2 Efficacy of Digital Platforms on Economic and Cultural Pillars of Kenya's Foreign Policy

The study establishes that digital platforms demonstrate high but context-dependent efficacy in advancing Kenya's foreign policy, particularly in enhancing international visibility, participation, and continuity of engagement. Their widespread adoption in government portals and virtual diplomatic forums reflects deep institutionalization, enabling Kenya to sustain multilateral presence and overcome logistical and financial constraints associated with physical diplomacy. However, this efficacy is bounded. Digital platforms are not perceived as substitutes for in-person diplomacy, especially in areas requiring trust-building, informal negotiation, and relational engagement. Furthermore, the pace of adoption has outstripped the development of coherent policy and governance frameworks, resulting in coordination gaps and fragmented

practices across directorates. As such, while digital platforms are highly efficacious in expanding reach and engagement, their strategic impact is moderated by governance deficiencies and the enduring primacy of face-to-face diplomacy.

5.2.3 Efficacy of Social Media Platforms on Economic and Cultural Pillars of Kenya's Foreign Policy

The study finds that social media platforms exhibit high efficacy as instruments of foreign policy communication, particularly in advancing transparency, public engagement, crisis communication, and international visibility. Platforms such as X, Facebook, and YouTube are now embedded within routine diplomatic practice, enabling real-time messaging and broad audience reach. This positions social media as a central tool in both economic and cultural diplomacy through narrative projection and stakeholder engagement. Nonetheless, the efficacy of these platforms is uneven at the institutional level. Weak standard operating procedures, limited mechanisms for monitoring and countering misinformation, and inconsistent practices across directorates constrain their strategic coherence. Therefore, while social media demonstrates strong functional efficacy, its full potential is only partially realized due to gaps in governance, standardization, and information control.

5.2.4 Efficacy of Digital Communication Tools in Advancing the Economic and Cultural Pillars of Kenya's Foreign Policy.

The study finds that the coordination and responsiveness of digital communication tools, aimed at strengthening the cultural and economic dimensions of Kenya's foreign policy, are efficient, which translates to operational efficiency. Moreover, these findings contribute to the further continuity of Kenya's foreign policy. Another major finding is the impact on real-time messaging, as the results showed the most significant changes. The technologies of translation were also mentioned as being a very advantageous tool in coordinating communication between headquarters and foreign missions, particularly given the language difficulties and barriers

encountered. Another emerging observation is that the communication and crisis/disaster management systems have effectively communicated with all relevant parties, thanks to the availability of these communication tools. It should be noted that there are institutional shortcomings and challenges that might hinder the efficacy of these tools, among them training and harmonization of protocols. Digital communication tools are therefore very effective at the functional level, but in terms of foreign policy effectiveness, the impact is limited because of a lack of standardization and capacity building.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Policy Recommendations

The findings for the first study objective concluded that digital technologies exhibit moderate to high efficacy in shaping Kenya's foreign policy performance, and additionally that their success is moderated by capacity constraints, including uneven training, disparities in access to advanced digital infrastructure across directorates, and overreliance on a limited pool of digitally proficient personnel. Following this conclusion, several recommendations can be offered to enhance the strength of digital technologies on the Kenyan foreign policy. In the first place, the advancements of holistic policy and standard operating procedures of digital diplomacy, which is of priority to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, must be made; It is the incorporation of clear organizations that is needed to regulate the use of social media, virtual courses, messaging services, and data analytics in providing uniformity in the directorates and missions.

The second aim revealed more effectiveness and strengthening the economic pillar of Kenya's foreign policy. Digital platforms have expanded the role of individuals in foreign policy, so there should be a system in place to support and develop the various platforms that enhance economic power and capabilities for individuals. The study recommends that the MFA,

along with their treasury and ICT counterparts, should conduct a comprehensive audit of the needs of the various directorates and, by leveraging the skillsets available both domestically and internationally, develop platforms that enhance engagement and participation. In the longer term, aspects that would fall within the purview of the cultural pillar of the foreign policy, such as electioneering and taxation, should have seamless platforms that encourage and motivate interaction between the country and its citizens.

The third goal of the study was that social media plays a vital role in boosting the efficiency of the country and its realization of foreign policy. As several respondents noted, citizens are communicating with each other and the administration about major events in the country. This dual nature of engagement with social media brings in a dynamic that gives rise to the third recommendation. This suggestion is to establish a regulated social media communication system that facilitates inter-directorate collaboration. The MFA, in conjunction with the communication department of the ICT ministry, should be able to set up a centralized communication center, increasing visibility and expressing the desired cultural image.

The fourth objective of the research was that digital communication tools can help raise awareness and drive continuous development. But, as in the case of social media use and application, standards to govern and guide the use of different communication tools are lax. The suggestion resulting from this analysis is for the MFA to carry out an in-depth audit of the range of tools available for the digital team. This audit will feed into a forthcoming partnership and collaboration with the Ministry of ICT and Treasury to allocate the funds and resources required to support the digital communications.

5.3.2 Suggestion for Further Studies

During the research process, other areas of interest arose that were highly interrelated with the topic of digital diplomacy but not part of the research goals. One such area was the connection between cybersecurity governance and diplomatic effectiveness. The study explored the digital tools' use in Kenya's diplomacy, and more questions were raised about cybersecurity vulnerabilities, data protection norms, and digital sovereignty. These could be used as a foundation for a future study.

Focusing on the efficacy question necessitates a comparative study on the challenges of achieving foreign policy goals for specific questions. The comparative study can either focus on different time periods or different countries with comparative characteristics. This would be particularly helpful to draw a larger picture in terms of digital diplomacy's impact and enablers on foreign policy pillars in various regions.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXTURE A: NACOSTI LETTER



Ref: RU/IRD/05/02/25/06

February 5, 2025

To:
National Commission for Science and Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI)
Off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete
P.O.BOX 30623, 00100
Nairobi, Kenya

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: INTRODUCTION OF MS. HILDA WANJA NJIRU (ADMISSION NO. 24ZAD109353) AS A BONAFIDE POST-GRADUATE STUDENT OF RIARA UNIVERSITY SEEKING RESEARCH AUTHORISATION

The above mentioned is a bonafide post-graduate student of Riara University due for field research and dissertation writing as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the school of International Relations and Diplomacy.

Ms. Hilda Wanja Njiru (Admission No. 24ZAD109353) will be conducting study entitled, "*The Effects of E-Diplomacy on Kenya's Foreign Policy*". Attached to this letter, kindly see the interview schedules/questionnaires/formulated to assist her in accomplishing the task.

Your assistance to enable her to obtain research authorization to conduct the study will be greatly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely,

Prof. Francis Onditi
Head of Department,
School of International Relations and Diplomacy



ANNEXTURE B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE.

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
Ref No: 721291	Date of Issue: 03/June/2025
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
This is to Certify that Ms., HILDA NJIRU of Riara University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nairobi on the topic: THE EFFECTS OF E DIPLOMACY ON KENYA'S FOREIGN POLICY for the period ending : 03/June/2026.	
License No: NACOSTI/P/25/4174000	
721291	
Applicant Identification Number	Deputy Director NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
	Verification QR Code
	
NOTE: This is a computer generated License. To verify the authenticity of this document, Scan the QR Code using QR scanner application.	
See overleaf for conditions	

THE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION ACT, 2013 (Rev. 2014)
Legal Notice No. 108: The Science, Technology and Innovation (Research Licensing) Regulations, 2014

The National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, hereafter referred to as the Commission, was established under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act 2013 (Revised 2014) herein after referred to as the Act. The objective of the Commission shall be to regulate and assure quality in the science, technology and innovation sector and advise the Government in matters related thereto.

CONDITIONS OF THE RESEARCH LICENSE

1. The License is granted subject to provisions of the Constitution of Kenya, the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, and other relevant laws, policies and regulations. Accordingly, the licensee shall adhere to such procedures, standards, code of ethics and guidelines as may be prescribed by regulations made under the Act, or prescribed by provisions of International treaties of which Kenya is a signatory to.
2. The research and its related activities as well as outcomes shall be beneficial to the country and shall not in any way;
 - i. Endanger national security
 - ii. Adversely affect the lives of Kenyans
 - iii. Be in contravention of Kenya's international obligations including Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN).
 - iv. Result in exploitation of intellectual property rights of communities in Kenya
 - v. Adversely affect the environment
 - vi. Adversely affect the rights of communities
 - vii. Endanger public safety and national cohesion
 - viii. Plagiarize someone else's work
3. The License is valid for the proposed research, location and specified period.
4. Neither the license nor any rights thereunder are transferable.
5. The Commission reserves the right to cancel the research at any time during the research period if in the opinion of the Commission the research is not implemented in conformity with the provisions of the Act or any other written law.
6. The Licensee shall inform the relevant County Director of Education, County Commissioner and County Governor before commencement of the research.
7. Excavation, filming, movement, and collection of specimens are subject to further necessary clearance from relevant Government Agencies.
8. The License does not give authority to transfer research materials.
9. The Commission may monitor and evaluate the licensed research project for the purpose of assessing and evaluating compliance with the conditions of the License.
10. The Licensee shall submit one hard copy, and upload a soft copy of their final report (thesis) onto a platform designated by the Commission within one year of completion of the research.
11. The Commission reserves the right to modify the conditions of the License including cancellation without prior notice.
12. Research, findings and information regarding research systems shall be stored or disseminated, utilized or applied in such a manner as may be prescribed by the Commission from time to time.
13. The Licensee shall disclose to the Commission, the relevant Institutional Scientific and Ethical Review Committee, and the relevant national agencies any inventions and discoveries that are of National strategic importance.
14. The Commission shall have powers to acquire from any person the right in, or to, any scientific innovation, invention or patent of strategic importance to the country.
15. Relevant Institutional Scientific and Ethical Review Committee shall monitor and evaluate the research periodically, and make a report of its findings to the Commission for necessary action.

National Commission for Science, Technology and
Innovation(NACOSTI),
Off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete,
P. O. Box 30623 - 00100 Nairobi, KENYA
Telephone: 020 4007000, 0713788787, 0735404245
E-mail: dg@nacosti.go.ke
Website: www.nacosti.go.ke

ANNEXURE C: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

Student name and surname: Hilda Njiru

Student Number:24ZAD109353

Degree: MA International Relations and Diplomacy

Research Title: The Effects of E-Diplomacy on Kenya's Foreign Policy.

Introduction: Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. This research seeks to understand the role of e-diplomacy in Kenya's diplomatic engagements, its effects, and its prospects in achieving Kenya's foreign policy objectives. Your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes.

Section A: General Information

1. Your role in the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs:

2. Years of service in foreign affairs/diplomacy: _____

3. Have you received formal training in e-diplomacy tools? (Yes/No)

4. Department/Directorate: _____

5. How often do you use digital technologies in your daily diplomatic work?

(1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always)

Section B: Digital Technologies and Foreign Policy

6. Digital technologies have improved the efficiency of foreign policy execution.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

7. Cybersecurity infrastructure within MFA supports secure diplomatic communication.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

8. Data management tools are effectively integrated into diplomatic operations.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

9. Investment in digital infrastructure has increased over the last 5 years.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

10. The use of analytics enhances policy decision-making in your department.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

11. There is sufficient training and capacity-building for digital tool usage.

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Section C: Digital Platforms and Foreign Policy

12. Government portals and virtual platforms are routinely used in diplomatic engagements.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
13. Digital platforms enhance Kenya's visibility in multilateral diplomacy.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
14. Virtual summits are an effective replacement for in-person diplomatic meetings.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
15. There is a clear policy guiding the use of digital platforms in the MFA.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
16. Coordination among directorates using digital platforms is effective.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
17. Digital platforms facilitate faster communication with international partners.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Section D: Social Media and Foreign Policy

18. Social media platforms are regularly used to promote Kenya's foreign policy goals.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
19. Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have increased diplomatic transparency.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
20. Social media helps in real-time crisis communication and public diplomacy.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
21. MFA has standard operating procedures for social media use.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
22. There is sufficient monitoring of misinformation on official diplomatic pages.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
23. The impact of social media on diplomatic visibility is measurable and significant.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Section E: Digital Communication Tools and Foreign Policy

24. Official email systems are adequate for secure diplomatic communication.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
25. Real-time messaging platforms improve coordination with foreign missions.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
26. Translation tools aid in breaking language barriers in foreign engagements.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
27. MFA provides adequate training on the use of communication tools.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)
28. The reliability of digital communication tools has improved over time.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

29. Communication protocols are standardized across departments and missions.
(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Section F: General Comments

30. What specific improvements would you recommend for strengthening Kenya's e-diplomacy framework?
31. Please provide any additional comments or suggestions:

**Thank you for your time and valuable insights.
Your responses will contribute significantly to understanding and shaping the
future of digital diplomacy in Kenya.**