Introduction

This project proposes investigation on the hot topics disinformation spreading on social media. While most Kenyans use social media to stay in touch with others, the main reason most Kenyans are active on social media is for news, politics and entertainment. Social media has become a key aspect in Kenyan public discourse, facilitating online discussions while at the same time being a key subject of scholarly, sociocultural, economic and political debates. Data released by the Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK) indicate that by December 2018, the total Internet subscription in Kenya stood at 45.7 million (CAK, 2019). The vast majority of them accessed the Internet via mobile phones. These young people do not necessarily tune into prime time news on television, for instance, as they operate in a real-time news dissemination system, in which they tune in and out, and select what to consume and when, as they deem fit. It is, therefore, not surprising that Kenyan social media was filled with misinformation and disinformation.

Aims

i. To investigate the most propagated topics tagged as disinformation spreading on social media.
ii. To discover and monitor accounts that are responsible for the generation of false content and which accounts or sites spread the news.

data sources

Twitter
Online news sites

Tools

Twitter web scrapping – python library Tweepy
Online news sites – python library beautifulsoup
Social Network analysis visualization – Gephi, Graphviz

The Approach

i. First, outline a series of accounts/sites that are suspected to or proven to be disseminating false news. This data is gotten from fact checkers and investigative journalists.

ii. The second step is to monitor these accounts. The aim is closely monitoring in order to detect any kind of disinformation operations; This model of account-based monitoring over semantic monitoring was developed by researchers at the EU DisinfoLab. Monitoring involves using the twitter API, real time web-scraping python script. Whenever the system detects the similar content being shared at least 3-5 times within the flagged accounts, a fact checker can be able to analyze the truthfulness of the news.

iii. A monitoring process is never static, it has to change and be adapted to the findings and the potential new leads for the research. This explains why the scope of monitoring needs to be refined in order to reduce potential noise, such as unrelated accounts/sites and tweets.