Scientific Research Publishing

The Digital Transformations of Public Communication: Breakdown, Continuity or Improvement of the Communication Potential of Cameroonian Administrations

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Abstract

Public communication has undergone major transformations since the early stages of the digitalisation of services. Indeed, public communication has been practically shaken up and transformed, while it thought itself to be safe from any risk of competition. For a long time, it has remained confined to classic patterns in its practice. In a context of digitalisation, can outdated methods of public communication continue to be applied in an environment that has become digital? Such is the question to which we shall endeavour to answer by analysing the digital transformation of public communication in Cameroonian institutions, from the observation and then the analysis of the practice of public communication in administrations. The aim of this research is to show how the development of digital means of communication contributes to bringing institutions closer to citizens. Faced with the hypothesis according to which the institutions studied have been ambushed by this digital turn, we argue that though it is possible to detect a desire to catch up, the major difficulties lie in the professionalization of practices and the institutional adequacy between the goals of public communication and the decongestion of functions. To verify this hypothesis, we used qualitative techniques to study the use of digital tools in the communication of several Cameroonian public administrations. In the end, we found that the digital transformation appears to enhance the potential of communication, which nevertheless requires rigour, professionalism and adaptation to the web environment in its practice.

Keywords

Digital Transformation, Public Communication, Digital, Digital Public

Communication

1. Introduction

We are currently living in an era marked by the influences of information and communication technologies and their innovations in all sectors of social life, leading to significant changes in the management of public services, with the aim of providing satisfying answers to the concerns of citizens who increasingly use real-time digital tools and services. Nowadays, digital transformation affects almost all sectors and activities. It is a challenge both in terms of innovation and in terms of competitiveness for organisations, irrespective of their nature. Whether in the public or private sector, all organisations going through the digital shift when the latter does not impose itself on them. Public services are not exempt from the changes brought about by digital technologies. The latter must be considered as an opportunity to strengthen the efficiency of the administration and public services, through a dual dynamic of innovation. First of all, a process innovation, which, by adopting new working and production methods works for better productivity, provides for simplification of operation, better management of skills and better quality. Then, a product innovation, which allows the creation of new services. It is the entire field of public services that can thus be reviewed here, from the perspective of the platform state. For some, digital transformation is the impact produced on companies and organisations and the fact that people and objects are permanently interconnected, in all places and for all uses. In this case, it would therefore correspond to maximum use of new technologies. Public communication is not spared by this digital influence. Having become a vital element of governance, its objective is to serve the general interest, citizen and democracy, with the aim of providing citizens with the information they need to be able to make use of public services and participate in democratic life. In addition, public communication reports on the public policies implemented by explaining their meaning and their consequences in public life. In Cameroon, institutions are either adapting to or are affected by this wind of digitalisation in terms of communication. These upheavals result in a deployment of new methods, an alignment of the desired goals and the digital tools used by citizens, create new service frameworks and new rational forms, while putting transparency requirements on the agenda. Therefore, how does public communication manage these transformations? In other words, how can public communication stand out from this myriad of elements of digital methods and tools?

Our study takes place in a context where public communication in Cameroon appears today as an emerging and innovative form of expression of public administrations. If the question of its professionalisation still arises, it must be noted that the development of information and communication technologies has given another dimension to the communication practices of administrations.

Thus, the Internet and its tools have put the concerns of citizens on the agenda, as they can now obtain information on digital platforms. In addition to the government's calls for the intensification of communication actions in order to publicise what is being done, it is noted that the use of digital tools is not systematic in all administrations. We have reviewed several studies on public communication and the one by Louis Roger Kemayou, entitled "Public communication between myth and reality in Cameroon: a governance of mistrust towards citizens-users?" (Kemayou, 2012). Although the author does not focus particularly on digital technology, he establishes a relationship between new public management and public communication in Cameroon. He studies the particular case of the Douala Urban Community. In logic of governance of the public administration through the new public management, the public authorities wanting to respond to the expectations of citizens-users try to communicate without worrying about the quality of public services. If public communication through mass media (written press, posters, radio, television, cinema) promotes territorial public information, the social scope of this communication requires that it does not have the sole aim of transmitting information.

This reflection aims to assess the situation of the digital transformation of public communication in Cameroonian institutions by providing a reading of the field digital transformation of public communication. We analyze the public communication of public administrations, their relationship with the digital tool and how public communication is improved and transformed as a result of digital.

2. General Information on Public Communication

2.1. Definition of Public Communication

Public communication is defined as: "the formal communication which tends to exchange and share information of public interest, as well as to maintain social ties and for which the responsibility lies with public institutions or organisations with missions of collective interest" (Zemor, 1995). By communication of organisations, we mean:

"*On the one hand, in the intersubjective sense, the symbolic circulation and exchange through which private or public institutions, by expressing their identity and their personality, try to circumvent their different audiences. On the other hand, in the mediatised sense, like the one that stages them in the public space for the purpose of federating or winning the support of singular subjects of sociality*" (Kemayou, 2005).

2.2. Purpose of Public Communication

Public communication is activated by institutional actors and includes a very wide field of application encompassing internal communication and two aspects of external communication. Internal communication based on the flow of information is implemented within each department and between departments.

Communication is dual: on the one hand, it is addressed to citizens and shares information of public utility by making the public aware of issues of social importance and by making them aware of their rights; on the other, it addresses the media to let them know how the administrations work and what results they can achieve. The goal here is to set up a process of promotion of the external image of the institution in question. Public communication is part of public service information missions and respects both ethical and legal rules in force. It must be exercised without any propaganda or falsification of facts and with respect to the necessary transparency of the available information, for both decision-makers and users. It designates a set of public speeches made by government officials, generally given out through exposure to the media and intended for citizens. According to Griffon, public communication is a communication exercise specific to the public sphere, institutions, administrations, public establishments. He asserts that public communication, like any object of study, must be defined and above all permanently discussed because a single definition could not suffice to identify a postulate, which would enlighten a body of reflection on the subject. Indeed, public communication as an institutional activity can involve several crosscutting disciplines: history, sociology, political science, law, etc. (Griffon, 2012). Public communication stands out in the field of communication because it serves a specific purpose: the general interest. The general interest would be what is "for the public good". For Zemor: "The general interest characterises the nature of public communication, a complex notion that would result from a compromise of interests between individuals and groups in society that consent to the social contract within the framework of which laws, regulations, jurisprudence and habits" (Zemor, 2007). Public communication is therefore taken in this context as an instrument of public action put to the test of interactions between those in power and citizens.

With regard to Local and regional authorities, public communication is a complex and interactive process, initiated by these structures, which seeks to create a collective positive representation of the institution, its territory and its actors. Its objectives are to promote the exchange and sharing of information of public interest and to ensure the maintenance of social ties in a given territory. Zemor identifies three main missions (Zemor, 2003): informing the public and explaining the actions carried out; promoting and enhancing institutional action and facilitating the debate of ideas. To achieve this, communicators must be able to reach out to others, transmit information to them, dialogue with citizens with differing opinions and mobilise support by explaining the action. Communication therefore is a mediation tool between the various stakeholders that make up the territory, which supposes a capacity to produce and organise a speech and a willingness to listen to the actors in order to allow for the collective appropriation of change. It should also be noted that the public domain, the public sphere, the public space, constitute the field of exercise of public communication.

2.3. Public Communication in Cameroon

Choosing to report on the praxis of public communication in Cameroon, in an environment where digital transformations affects all areas, we plan to show the way Cameroonian public institutions build their public communication actions by confronting and transforming them to adapt to the new environment. Communication for the purpose of our work refers to negotiation and the production of meaning in social action (Atenga & Madiba, 2012). An approach that stems from a dynamic, constructivist and dialogic understanding of communication. On the specific dynamic aspect of public communication, we argue that it now constitutes a federating element of good relations between public institutions and citizens and generates a kind of consensus. This form of social consensus around proximity issues is one of the factors in the development of public communication, which pushes institutions to consider themselves as brands and to display their attractiveness. Communication is then responsible for making the institutions "shine" by mobilising its players around its potential. The latter can be presented as an enhancement effort and induces that citizen-users will become both added value and target of public communication.

In the specific case of digitalisation, we see that social networks such as Facebook or Twitter allow for the emergence of virtual communities, formed around digital practices. The presence of public institutions on these networks is therefore the second step in their appropriation of the web. It is now a matter of utilising the logic of interaction induced by social networks to showcase the institution and its proximity to citizens and to leverage on the multiplicity of publication possibilities to give an overall logic to the messages, driven by the dynamics of interactions (shares, likes). With social networks, public communication which believed itself to be safe from any risk of competition is thus transformed and even shaken up. Information comes from connected citizens, weary with waiting for news from ministries and institutions. In this context, can public communication continue to apply the methods of yesteryear in a world that has become digital?

3. Theoretical Positioning: Understanding Digitalisation through the Prism of the Theory of the Diffusion of Innovation and Organisational Change

To understand the purpose of this study, we have chosen to call on the theory of the diffusion of innovation and its concepts in the sense that it allows us to appreciate the contribution of the said works to the understanding of the transformations of public communication on the one hand and the theory of organisational change on the other hand.

3.1. The Theory of the Diffusion of Innovations

Several researchers developed the theory of the diffusion of innovations in the 1960s, including Everett Mitchell Rogers, who has declined his work in many

versions. Rogers' diffusion of innovations theory first analysed the individual factors behind the adoption of innovations before integrating those of an organisational nature (Rogers, 2002). Deciphering this theory seems relevant to us because of the concepts, which result from it. Rogers' methodological approach, combining action research and quantitative studies, as well as the spirit of its many inspirers have led him to deal with the sociological aspects of the diffusion of innovation, even if these have largely echoed in management. Indeed, according to Rogers, communication, organisational change and the specific characteristics of actors are core factors in the successful adoption of an innovation. By integrating cognitive aspects such as learning and decision-making, Rogers' work therefore places the human being at the centre of analyses: diffusion is then the process by which: 1) innovation 2) will be progressively communicated, 3) through certain channels, 4) over time, to members of the social system while emphasizing that an innovation is defined as a practice or a perceived idea as news by an individual or group that adopts it (Rogers, 1962). Rogers then distinguishes five characteristics of an innovation, which are comparative advantage, compatibility, complexity, observability and testability. According to the author, this definition, and the five characteristics listed above, determine the level of adoption of the innovation by individuals or organisations. The competitive advantage of an innovation lies in the fact that it is perceived to be better compared to what it replaced; compatibility is a measure of the level of adequacy between an innovation and the needs of adopters; complexity refers to the level of difficulty in using or understanding an innovation; testability is the level at which a new adopter would be able to test and evaluate an innovation; visibility corresponds to the level of visibility offered by an innovation (Rogers, 1962).

3.2. The Organisational Change

As for organisational change, Guilhon defines (Guilhon, 1998) it as "a process of radical or marginal transformation of structures and skills which punctuates the process of organisational evolution". As such, change is always experienced as a source of conflicts, opposing the more or less antagonistic interests of a plurality of actors within the organisation. For Ehrard Friedberg and Michel Crozier, we can identify three levels of change. The first level deals with the simplest changes to make, but it is sometimes the first step in making big changes (Crozier & Ehrard, 1977). It deals with the tools, the activities, and the ways of doing things. The second level of change relates to skills while the third level is linked to values and attitudes. It implies a sometimes profound change in the culture of the company. These are the most difficult changes to operate, because we have much less control over the representations that individuals have of their activities and therefore the behaviours that result from them.

Associating the theories of the diffusion of innovation and organisational change in a theoretical framework and precisely for our object of study, simply amounts to analysing how innovative digital public communication is and identifying the obstacles to the changes that result from it.

3.3. Methodological Guidelines

Our methodology is based on the observation and analysis of the public communication practices of thirty-three Cameroonian ministries, in particular: The ministries of Social Affairs; Agriculture and Rural Development; Arts and Culture; Trade; Decentralization and Local Development; Communication; State Property, Survey and Land Tenure; the Economy, Planning and regional Development; Basic education; Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries; Employment and vocational training; Energy and Water Resources; Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development; Secondary education; Finance; Public Works; Public Service and Administrative Reform; Forestry and Wildlife; Housing and Urban Development; Youth and Civic Education; Mines, Industry and Technological Development; Small and medium-sized enterprises, Social economy and Handicrafts; Posts and Telecommunications; Women's Empowerment and the Family; Scientific research and Innovation; Public health; Labour and Social Security; Tourism and Leisure; Higher Education.

Our analysis was based on the qualitative method (interview with the managers of the communication structures or their collaborators). Observation was also used in data collection in the field and on the various websites and other digital platforms of the ministries studied. Specifically, we used the semi-structured individual interview to collect data by interviewing public communication actors in several administrations face-to-face (or at a distance) using conversational techniques.

4. Situation of the Digital Transformation of Public Communication in the Administrations Studied

This section discusses the practice of digital public communication in the administrations we studied. It first and as a whole presents, the evolution of the relations between administrations and users, then dwells on the practice of public communication.

In the administrative field, communication is gaining increasing recognition. This is explained by an evolution in the behaviour of the State which seeks a certain quality of contact and which is led to use new communication methods (Miège, 1989). The objective is clear: it is indeed a question of influencing social representations in connection with actions, the applications of rules, procedures and public decision-making. The efficiency of relations of public institutions with citizens is of paramount importance and constitutes the fundamental objective of public communication. Indeed, public organisation, the understanding of policies, the quality of services offered to the public, the design of projects or the elaboration of decisions require a communication which allows for listening of the social demand and the diagnosis of criticized situations, which catalyses the necessary transformations and contributes to collective ownership of the change.

The status of the recipient of public communication messages has therefore

changed in a few years from "subject" to "user" then to "citizen-user". Indeed, we are far from the years of vertical and unidirectional communication where the citizen was only a passive subject where the State spoke and the citizens listened. Since the beginning of the 90s, particular emphasis has increasingly been placed on communication, which is already part of the State's duties as of right, and more as a strategic means. Public communication is therefore an instrument legitimately created to allow the State to get closer to citizens. It is also the means used by institutions and public administrations, whether national or local (Vanbremeersch, 2009) to build and/or consolidate the identity of their institution. In its practice, it requires transparency, participation, listening, efficiency and effectiveness. From "one-to-many" communication, we have therefore moved since the 90s to "many-to-many" communication given that public communication involves institutions, public enterprises and all branches of the State. It should also be noted that the expectations and behaviour of users have changed considerably. Users have progressively become consumers with different expectations of public services.

4.1. Public Communication in the Administrations Studied

With regard to public communication in the administrations studied, the structures in charge of communication (divisions and units) are placed under the hierarchical authority of the Secretary General in order to "protect" communication in the sphere of political communication. The attachment of a communication structure makes it possible to understand its degree of autonomy, its importance and the type of relationship (hierarchical and functional) it maintains with the entire ministry. Its attachment to the General Secretariat represents a factor of protection, longevity and stabilisation with regards to the short-term vision, which characterises ministerial cabinets. In addition, this attachment gives communication services a crosscutting character. This positioning of communication structures clearly shows the strategic will of the State to orient communication towards public and social action. Public governance is therefore focused on the desire to communicate both internally to facilitate the users orientation and externally, with the multiplication of communication actions. The administrations studied are thus publicized, although at various and different levels. It is also important to note that in the Cameroonian context, the culture of "secrecy" and administrative delays do little to favour the ideal of public communication.

In the majority of the ministries studied, the problem of resources is recurrent. Whether human, material (means of travel) and technical (computers, smart phones, cameras, voice recorders, digital devices) or financial (substantial budgets). The material and technical means are those, which are most lacking, and most of the communication actors all consider that they do not have sufficient means to work in an optimal way.

One of the major problems noted is the difficulty for communication services to collect primary data within the structures of the same ministry, whereas di-

gitisation should normally suppress this type of constraint. Therefore, if it is difficult to collect information within the same ministry, how can we ensure missions related to the circulation of information internally and externally; create and maintain relationships of trust with target audiences capable of seeking information from a smart phone or even informing citizens through the media?

4.2. The Use of Digital Tools in Public Communication

Public information is supposed to give meaning to public action, encourage the participation of citizen-users—convinced of their common objectives—in collective life. It constitutes the raw material of public communication. The graph below shows that traditional means of communication are supplanting digital tools. The results presented in this table are based on a study of the means of communication used in the administrations. We have listed all the tools and means of communication used by the administrations in order to highlight the most used. We note that out of the thirty-three administrations studied, only 2% use Twitter accounts and 8% Facebook. The ministries remain stuck on traditional means, namely the production of magazines, reports, press releases. These are usually broadcasted over the radio and very often through the WhatsApp network. Although the administrations stick to traditional means, the fact remains that the frequency of publication of certain media is subject to the availability of means or even human resources. For example, we have observed that out of the thirty-three ministries studied, none has established a stable publication frequency of magazines or newsletters. Graph 1, entitled "Use of communication means by administrations" presents use of communication tools.

The following Graph 2 shows some examples. Moreover, there is hardly any policy for the retention of the readers of these productions, let alone a stable distribution channel. There is also a paradox because where the means prove to be insufficient, instead of producing a digitized version of the magazine, a physical version is instead published.
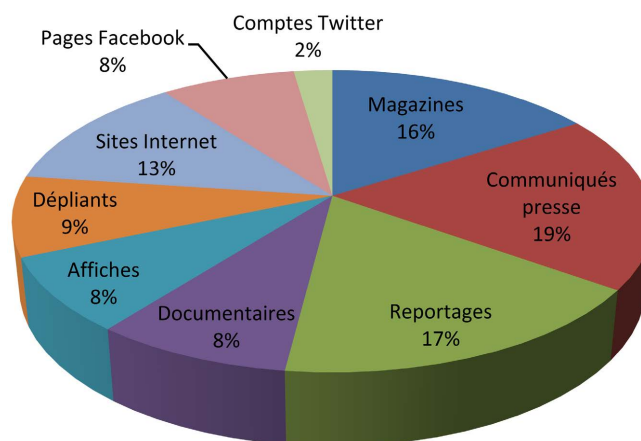
Graph 1. Use of communication means by administrations.
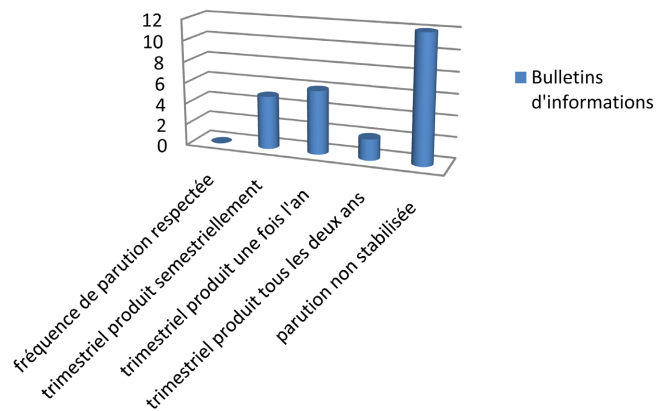
Graph 2. Frequency of publication of magazines and newsletters.

We also note that physical and digital media all constitute spaces for the publicisation of public information and consequently, means of public communication. The two formulas can therefore very well coexist insofar as they offer an opportunity to access information. Digital media have the advantage they can be consulted online, remotely, without however making the paper version obsolete, since mastering a subject in its entirety still requires consultation of the entire document. However, the technical uncertainties linked to the specificity of a file sharing system (access difficulties, Internet speed) confine the mechanism to experiments. The design of the websites is the subject of sustained attention from the administrations. We observe a process of theming content, its organisation into sections depending on the themes they address in order to allow citizens to find them easily on the site. The real challenge of this approach is to get citizens to initially take interest in the portal so that they can then access the specific content they need (or in which they would be likely to be interested). It is therefore a matter of anticipating the expectations of citizens then materialising them in the system. In addition, these websites are not exempt from criticism (graphics, documents that may be too long for consultation online or by a telephone).

Digital communication in public organisations is a complex and multifaceted activity. The plethora of new means resulting from the use of digital technologies is becoming a reality that calls for the renewal of the way of managing and communicating of public administrations. The administrations studied are then at a crossroads, straddling public communication based on traditional tools not fully mastered due to several constraints and the opportunities offered by digital public communication.

Though not all the administrations have a website, we note that most of them strive to be visible through Facebook pages, but only stick to the publishing of texts and images, without the possibility of interacting with the targets or followers. It can therefore be argued that this digitization of communication is more linked to a need not to respond to absent subscribers where citizens gather than to a real strategy developed in advance. Out of the thirty-three administrations,

only two have a developed digital communication plan or strategy; the others simply have digital resources and upload their content there, sometimes depending on the circumstances.

We have also noted that the addresses of digital platforms appear very little on physical media (brochure, magazines, press releases, press kit, etc.). Out of the two or three ministers present on social networks, on Twitter in this case, we note that this presence is more individual centred than institution-centred, sometimes with the risk of falling into the register of political communication. One of the appreciable elements in the presence of these ministers is the interaction that we observe between these officials and their followers.

4.3. Analysis of the Use of Digital Tools in the Organizations Studied

Although digital tools are used, the fact remains that the means of digital public communication are still little explored. In the context of the Coronavirus pandemic, several communication actions are still carried out on site, to the detriment of the use of exchange platforms such as Zoom, which offers the possibility of organizing press conferences and meetings with the press; guided field trips and even open days. It is therefore this innovative character of digital public communication that is still lacking the most, as well as its popularisation. We have also noticed that the documentation published on the websites studied is not subject to any publicity, despite the importance of documents published. The section of the site intended for this purpose simply becomes a place for archiving digitised content by following a logic in which the website is used as a means of distribution. There are in fact publications but the contents are not publicised, from the home page it is not clearly indicated that a specific document, on specific news can be found. This lack of visibility very often gets Internet users bored. Content does not circulate and neither benefits from the potential offered by the Internet in terms of exchanges and interaction.

With regard to what should be called the web of information, which help to provide Internet users with current and immediate information, we also note at this level that very few Administrations are responding to the call while the immediacy, visibility and accessibility of content constitute the main strengths of information on the Internet. There are now multiple sources of information. Thus, journalists and professional content editors must now compose alongside active followers who engage on the web in another posture than the one of spectators. The latter carry out their own crosschecks, vote, comment, link, pass to friends, make a correction, a comment, a complement.

Moreover, in the administrations studied, we did not identify personnel specialised in digital communication or even personnel whose role is focused on this aspect.

On a completely different level and precisely that of the presence of social networks on government sites, we note that websites do not provide maximum visibility to social networks. Table 1 specifies the links between website and so-

cial networks. On a completely different level, and specifically that of the presence of social networks on the administrations' websites, we note that the websites do not ensure maximum visibility on social networks. Table 1 shows the links between websites and social networks. It specifies the tools related to social networks that are used by the administrations, highlighting the possibilities of action on these tools.

5. Difficult Adaptation to the Digital Transformations of Public Communication

It is a fact, the development of digital and its new uses is fundamentally reforming the way of administrations communicates. Whether in terms of content, format, recipient or even medium, communication in general and public communication in particular is evolving in all its dimensions. It is a challenge for institutions to switch to these new practices. Then, what are the codes of this public communication that has become digital?

5.1. The Need to Adapt to the Context

In a changing media context, administrations must be more proactive than ever. Answers must be provided to the multiple questions of users in order to limit as much as possible the damage caused by fake news and disinformation, which are increasingly gaining ground. Television, radio and newspapers are no longer necessarily and solely the appropriate media for transmitting messages and information. Administrative intervention scenarios must consider this. After having noted the impacts of digital public communication, it seems important to dwell on the difficulties encountered by administrations and the constraints to the optimal use of the means and tools of digital public communication.

Though we recognise that social networks have become increasingly essential tools in everyday life, we must also admit that their uses can also be professional and serve public organisations. It can indeed be very interesting for them to aggregate around them groups of Internet users to whom they can communicate information, allow these communities of people to meet virtually, get to know each other, discuss and use these communities to listen to citizens, collect their comments, launch discussions in a space for debate, etc. However, we point out that if the animation of a social network can sometimes be considered as a risk

Table 1. Social networking tools used by administrations.

Social network	Number of websites offering this possibility
YouTube to view and comment	13
LinkedIn for professional network	8
Twitter to view and comment	14
Facebook to view and comment	20
Email to question and comment	13

taking by making public the citizen expression and giving voice to the citizens, these risks are accompanied by real opportunities in terms of legitimacy, image, responsiveness to the opinions issued. Today, choosing not to officially disseminate one's information offer on the dominant social media would not only have consequences in terms of visibility, attractiveness and representativeness but would also go against democratic interests. Thus, an information publisher must very regularly update its presence policy on new media.

This is the place to note that the current development of numerous virtual networks makes it essential to develop the repository for public communication professions, in particular through community management. The emergence of new professions has several consequences, not only with regard to budget allocations, because "those allocated to traditional communication tend to decrease, while those dedicated to digital communication are increasing" (Cordina & Fayon, 2013), but also resistance to change sometimes observed in certain leaders. In addition, for community management, and for the use of social media by the public administration to be successful, all structures should be involved, depending on the specificities of the institution and the strategy adopted. Digital culture therefore gives rise to new standards: a new relationship to time has taken hold, which translates into a requirement for immediacy. A new relationship to space also appears. The increasing digitisation of activities requires you to be connected everywhere. The implementation of a digital public communication policy therefore goes with several constraints, the main ones being the professionalization at the origin of the practice of public communication; the adaptation to the web environment; the mastery of tools and means of digital communication; the compliance with transparency and immediacy requirements with regard to information, among other things.

The digitisation of public communication is hampered by several institutional, budgetary, structural and technological constraints. First, the institutional obstacles are linked almost or totally to the pyramidal management model of public administrations, which therefore makes the decision-making process long and rigid and creates significant gaps in the availability of information. In addition to this, resistance to change on the part of staff in communication structures is also an obstacle to this digital transformation. This resistance can be explained by individual factors pushing these personnel to refuse any change that could harm their stability and their traditional and comfortable habits. Digital public communication, for example, when it comes to the publication of magazines, requires digital versions that can be easily shared within a day, whereas the physical version of the magazine involves more time in distribution, more resources and therefore more opportunities for communication managers to deploy. As for budget constraints, the latter is also an obstacle to the digital transformation of public communication. It should be mentioned that digital transformation is highly costly. A cost that is justified by the acquisition of cutting-edge equipment and high-performance bandwidth. In addition, there is the failure and obsolescence of certain technological tools traditionally used in communication

services in administrations; thus constituting a technological and structural obstacle thereby increasing resistance to change and to the challenges of digital transformation.

Regarding the adaptation to the web environment and the mastery of the tools and means of digital communication, it should be noted that the digital turn involves certain requirements; for instance, the capacity building of communication structures staff, the renewal of IT equipment; the mastery of digital communication means and tools. Professionalization of communication is therefore one of the minimum requirements, in a context where many of these staff are only trained in journalism and not in organisational or public communication. It is not only a matter of producing content and making it available, the challenge is to build an image around the public administration in line with overall government policy, with the aim of satisfying the user-Internet surfer. Taking the specific example of government websites, with a view to capturing the attention of Internet users constantly solicited by visual content, the design of the site and the use of graphic content directly understandable by visitors is essential. In this context, the volume and position of multimedia content offered (photos, videos) play an important role. They should not overload the home page so as not to distract the reader while enhancing the attractiveness of the articles. Likewise, the formatting of the text itself plays a key role. Indeed, if the formatting of the proposed content is inappropriate for online reading, the visitor may use other channels to serve the purpose of his request. It is therefore important to stick to the digital style. Moreover, the use of digital means revolves around a few tools. The systems put in place for this purpose vary in terms media used; we can see that the two most exploited social networks are Facebook and Twitter. Other tools meeting additional needs such as the publication of videos, photos or other functionalities then supplement their presence.

5.2. Challenges Related to the Digitization of Public Communication

Adapting to the pace of digital public communication is no exception. If traditional communication was intended for a passive target, incapable of reacting or otherwise in a marginal way, digital public communication has broken the barrier which separated the State from the citizen. This broken barrier established an almost personal relationship between the two entities. The receiver is now "free" to address the sender, to react to the content offered to him (likes, comments) and to relay information (shares). Digital communication is also revolutionising the way information is shared thanks to the unprecedented speed of propagation it allows for. In just a few clicks, few seconds, a piece of news can now go around the world. This type of communication, which first allows for sharing of great volumes, must be able to satisfy the infobesity of the cyber-citizen. Information has become so accessible that it is in fact consumed abundantly and quickly. In this context, it is important for the administration to keep pace and to live up to the insatiable appetite of its audience by regularly providing them

with new information. However, this appetite should be rationalised through a strategy developed beforehand and that meets the needs of the public and is consistent with the missions of the administration.

Compliance with transparency requirements is also another challenge for the administration in their deployment through digital public communication. Faced with the crisis of confidence in ministerial institutions and the loss of credit for public speaking, public communication has never had the need for transparency (Confino & Teitgen, 2017), authenticity and citizen participation as much as it does today. Digital public communication is therefore in line with democratic principles associated with transparency. Transparency has thus become an ideal of reality, a utopia. This utopia, which naturally found itself in information and communication technologies and in particular on the Internet. The Internet has gradually established itself as a model of universal knowledge, without borders or obstacles to communication and relationships. According to Jeanneret Yves the digital utopia of transparency was on the one hand built through the technicist ideal of progress with an effect of social transparency, and on the other hand, the normative ideology of the public space, of the free flow of information and the "justification of public authorities" (Jeanneret, 2005), and finally the obligation of media transparency to all actors (direct exchanges, immediacy). The information exchanged, circulating, abundant, conveys the idea of direct democracy through technique and participation (Aïm, 2006). Technical imagination promotes active transparency of actors by making "communicational participation" (Libaert, 2003) a maxim of transparency. It is advisable for an administration to be clear in the information it shares. The time for opacity, the concealment of information is therefore passed and the administration is almost exposed by the new means of communication and instantaneous sharing of information. This exposure allows the administration to display its qualities but cannot in return conceal its eventual faults.

6. Conclusion

After having reviewed the practices of digital public communication, we can affirm that the use of information and communication technologies can help Cameroonian administrations to carry out their mission in a more efficient and direct way. In a context of globalisation and rapid technological development, administrations must ensure that they can meet the constantly evolving expectations and needs of their citizens. The digital transformation of communication therefore offers several possibilities. The most visible consequence of this digital transformation is undoubtedly the improvement in the efficiency of the communication of administrations. Digital has a positive and statistically significant effect on public communication, at least through the proximity between the administration and the citizens. In addition, improving access to information is an important component insofar as it gives rise to open and more transparent administrations. The digital transformation therefore appears in the end as an en-

hancement of the potential of communication, which, however, requires rigour, professionalization and adaptation to the web environment in its practice. Our proposal is based more on the fact that it is possible to understand the possibilities of appropriation of digital public communication by the public administration without entering into a kind of "technologism" or technical ideology (Mucchielli, 1996), which postulates that technique is the main cause of all changes at various levels or that it alone constitutes the project. It is therefore above all a matter of carrying out a rigorous assessment of the practice of public communication and revisiting it with the aim of aligning strategies, practices, tools and the digital environment, while taking into account the habits of citizens. Such an approach implies a primary definition, at the government level, of the interest of organising the use of digital tools in the service of public policy, and not the other way round. In addition, it must be recognised that engaging on the web requires specific skills and therefore a fully-fledged budget and the standardization of all these elements makes the entire public communication of administrations more credible.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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