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COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS AND HUMANITIES

SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Digital Marketing Public Relations in Ethio-Telecom: A Case Study

BY

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Digital Marketing Public Relations in Ethio-Telecom: A Case Study

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DECLARATION

I Misganaw Asnake Meselle, solemnly declare that this MA thesis entitled: Digital Marketing Public Relations in Ethio-Telecom: A Case Study is my original work. All resources and references have been accurately acknowledged, and to best of my knowledge and beliefs reflect my independent research efforts throughout my study. I affirm that no part of this study has been submitted previously for any academic qualification; I will take full responsibility for truth and accuracy of information discussed.

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Misganaw Asnake Meselle, entitled: Digital Marketing Public Relations in Ethio-Telecom: A Case Study, and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communications, complies with the regulations of the university.

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Table of Contents

Page

Table of Contents i
List of Tables iv
List of Figures v
ACRONYMS vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vii
ABSTRACT viii
CHAPTER ONE 1
1. Introduction 1
1.1 Background of the Study 1
1.2 Statement of the Problem 3
1.3 Research Questions 5
1.4 Objective of the Study 5
1.4.1 Specific Objectives of the Study 5
1.5 Significant of the Study 5
1.6 Limitation of the Study 6
1.7 Scope of the Study 6
1.8 Organization of the Study 7
1.9 Definitions of key terms 7
CHAPTER TWO 8
Review of Related Literature 8
2.1. Historical Development of telecom companies 8
2.2 Digital Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) for Telecom 9
2.3 Digital Marketing and PR in Telecom Company 9
2.4 The dynamic Evolution of Public Relations in Digital Age 10
2.5 The Changing Public Relations 11
2.6 Digital Public Relations 11
2.6.1Digital Marketing and Technology as an Opportunity and Threat 12
2.6.2. The Role of Public Relations in the company 12
2.7 Models of Public Relations 13
2.7.1 Social media platforms 14
2.8 Digital Media Utilization: Current Trends 14
2.8.1Digital media in Telecom services: opportunities and challenges 16

2.9 Utilization of Digital Marketing in Telecom Systems 16
2.10 Digital Media in Telecom Services 17
2.11 The importance of digital media and Telecom marketing 17
2.12 Customer engagement in telecom sectors 18
2.13 Digital Marketing Strategies 19
2.14 Conceptual Framework of the Study 20
CHAPTER THREE 24
3. Research Methodology 24
3.1 Research Approach 24
3.2 Research Method 24
3.3 Data Collection Methods 25
3.4Data Collection instruments 26
3.4.1 In-Depth Interview 26
3.4.2 Questionnaire 26
3.5 Sampling Method 27
3.6 Sampling Size 28
3.7 Data Analysis Method 29
3.8 Ethical consideration 30
3.9 Validity and reliability of the study 30
CHAPTER FOUR 33
4.Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation 33
4.1Demographic Background of the Respondents 34
4.2Customers' engagement with Ethio-Telecom's digital media, marketing strategies 36
4.2.1Discussion of Customers Preferred Digital media Platforms Engage with Ethio-Telecom 36
4.2.2 Customers' overall satisfaction with information provided by Ethio-Telecom through its digital media channels 38
4.2.3Customers clicking habit on Ethio-Telecom digital advertisements 38
4.2.4 Customers rating on Ethio-Telecom services and products availability and accessibility 39
4.2.5 Customers' habits of noticing of Ethio-Telecom digital media platforms and advertising activities 40
4.2.6 Customers Exposure on Ethio-Telecom Advertising, Online messages 41
4.2.7 How customers describe or level online advertisings 41
4.2.8 Customers view on Ethio-Telecom building brand efforts and trust 42
4.2.9 Customers' ratings of Ethio-Telecom's responsiveness and activities 43
4.2.10The level of customer satisfaction on Ethio-Telecom's online service and support 44
4.2.11Customers' suggestion on overall Ethio-Telecom's digital marketing strategies 44

4.2.12 Comprehensive analysis of customers' perception towards Ethio-Telecom's current digital media practices 45
4.3 Digital media platforms employs for integrating digital marketing and PR efforts 50
4.4 Key Challenges Ethio-Telecom faces while implementing digital media, marketing strategies 53
4.5Significance and utilization of digital media and marketing on Ethio-Telecom's overall operation 55
CHAPTER FIVE 60
5.Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations 60
5.1Summary 60
5.2Conclusion 62
5.3 Recommendations 62
5.4Research Implications 64
REFERENCES 65
APPENDIX 70
APPENDIX– 1 Survey Questionnaires 70
APPENDIX – 2 Interview Questions 72

List of Tables

Page

Table 3.1. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test 39
Table 4.1. Demographic information of the respondents 42
Table 4.2 Distribution of Respondents' Age Group 42
Table 4.3 Educational Attainment Levels of Respondents 43
Table 4.4. Satisfaction levels of Ethio-Telecom customers.....46
Table 4.5. Customer interaction, clicking with online advertising.....46
Table 4.6. Customer ratings of company's products and services.....47
Table 4.7. Customers' digital media platform visiting habits.....48
Table 4.8. Customers' exposure to online message, advertisement 49
Table 4.9. Customers' perception on Ethio-telecom's online advertising.....49
Table 4.10 Customers perception on Ethio-Telecom's building brand awareness, trust.....50
Table 4.11 Customers rating of Ethio-Telecom's responsiveness on digital media channels.....51
Table 4.12. Customers satisfaction on Ethio-Telecom's online customer service and support 52
Table 4.13 Customers suggestion on Ethio-Telecom's digital marketing strategies 52
Table 4.14. Customers perception towards Ethio-Telecom's current digital media practices 53

List of Figures

Page

Figure 2.1 The guiding conceptual framework 31

Figure 4.1 Duration of Ethio-Telecom service usages among customers 43

Figure 4.2 Customers preferences for Digital media platforms at Ethio-Telecom.....44

ACRONYMS

ETC	Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation
PR	Public Relations
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
ECA	Ethiopian Communications Authority
GTP II	Growth and Transformation Plan II
X	Twitter
UGT	Uses and Gratification Theory
IMC	Integrated Marketing Communication Theory
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SMM	Social media marketing (SMM)

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ABSTRACT

The study is conducted mainly to assess effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in Ethio-Telecom's public relations effort to enhance customer engagement through platforms such as Twitter, Telegram, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and the company website. The study employed a mixed methods approach, qualitative data were gathered through interviews with three managers at Ethio-Telecom headquarters directly involved in digital marketing, PR and digital media platforms while quantitative data were collected via a survey of 364 customers using Google Forms and analyzed with SPSS.

Findings revealed that Ethio-Telecom actively leverages multiple digital marketing and PR channels to promote its services, products and strengthen communication with existing and potential customers, as well as to connect with the external market environment. Despite the benefits of digital media, challenges such as fraud, technological barriers, misinformation, trust issues, cyber-attacks, and increased competition present risks to the company's operations.

The study recommends that Ethio-Telecom implement a robust digital security framework supported by skilled cyber security professionals to manage digital risks effectively. This approach will help safeguard the company's digital presence while maximizing the advantages of digital marketing.

Key words: *Digital marketing, Digital Media, Public Relations, Telecom Sector*

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

In this chapter the study describes background of the study, statement of the problem, significance and limitation of the study, general objective of the study and scope of the study provide brief each of them shortly to explain what the research paper about.

1.1 Background of the Study

Development of the internet and advances in information communication technology has completely changed company operations and way of communication in general. In the today's rapidly changing digital landscape and technologies, public relations practices have increasingly integrated digital marketing strategies to engage with customers effectively and enhance their performance.

Digital marketing has permeated many facets of Ethiopian social and organizational life Ethio-Telecom. Thus, as Ethiopia's leading telecommunications provider employs various digital marketing platforms to enhance its public relations efforts. Understanding this integration is critical to grasp how digital marketing shapes communication and customer engagement in the telecom sector. As to Barone (2019), digital marketing leverages digital channels such as computers, mobile devices, websites, social media, search engines, and other online platforms to execute marketing processes which includes understanding customer behaviors and needs, advertising, selling, delivering products or services, and communicating via the internet. Furthermore, the emergence and advancement of digital technologies have not only transformed individual experiences but also revolutionized business practices. Traditional marketing methods have been replaced by digital strategies, leveraging online platforms such as social media for outreach and advertising (Smith, 2022).

Wirtz (2020) highlights that "due to digitalization, it is difficult to control the access to information because is not physical and easy to share the product." At the same time, Trittin-Ulbrich, Scherer, Munro, and Whelan (2021) further note digitalization not only enables the betterment of established organizational structures, however it can result the traditional business may be being replaced by emerging companies that able to adapt innovative business models.

Jantunen, Tarkiainen, Chari, and Oghazi (2018) state that "digitalization forces the companies in rapidly changing market constantly respond to the shifting circumstances to meet the audience

demand. Technological advancement, switch in customer needs moves the shape of business settings challenging competitiveness on status quo of firms." Thus, on this environ, the firms needs to balance the constant demand and ensure sustainable success by adapting new competitive position.

Simultaneously, digitalization has pressured on companies to evaluate their strategy to identify new chances to transform their business process at long run (Rachinger, Rauter, Müller, Vorraber, and Schirgi, 2018).

Historical Development of Ethio-Telecom

Emperor Menelik II introduced telecommunication services in Ethiopia in 1894 by commencing the construction of a telephone line from Harar to Addis Ababa. This marks a 130- year history for the nation and establishes Ethio-Telecom as Africa's pioneer telecom provider (Ethio-Telecom, 2020).

In the early years, the company helped the integration of Ethiopian society and bridged the gap between Addis Ababa and all the important administrative cities of the country.

Muhan (2013) states that during the war against Italy in World War II, the telecommunication network was destroyed however later Ethiopia rearranged the telephone, postal and telegraph services in the year 1941. The division of ministry of post; telephone and telegraph together established the new Ethiopian telecommunication corporation (ETC) as the Imperial Board of Telecommunication of Ethiopia (IBTE) by proclamation No.131/52 in 1952. However, after the rise of the Derg regime, IBTE was reestablished as Ethiopian Telecommunication Service (ETS) in October 1975 and later reorganized as Ethiopian Telecommunication Authority in 1981. On November 1996, ETA became Ethiopian telecommunication corporation (ETC) by the council of ministers regulation No.10/1996. But also the subsequent proclamation 49/1996 expanded ETC's duties and responsibility (Ethio-Telecom, 2020). Throughout various regimes in Ethiopia, Ethio-Telecom has undergone several renaming and restructuring process different from 1890-2010 (Ethio-Telecom, 2020).

Ethio-Telecom has got its current name since November 29, 2010 as part of Ethiopia's 2005/6-2009/10 five year Growth and Transformation Plan GTP II (Ethio-Telecom, 2020).

Ethio-Telecom known by other various names throughout its history, a comprehensive telecommunications service provider in Ethiopia, offering mobile voice communication, internet

access, mobile money (telebirr), telephone services, microloans and among others (Zinabu, 2023).

Ethio-Telecom Semi-Annual Business Performance Report (2024/2025) indicated that the company ranks first among operators in Africa out of 195 and 17th in the world among 778 operators.

Metages (2020) emphasizes that to reach at this stage, the company has passed different challenges such as kinds of services and products that provide for the customer, customer handling. To achieve its mission, the company must prioritize strategies adapt to the changing demands of global market communication. Therefore, studying digital marketing public relations in Ethio-Telecom a case study is important to outline a way forward, recommend improved digital marketing and PR strategies, and address customer demands efficiently.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Ethio-Telecom, as the dominant telecommunication service provider in Ethiopia, operates in a highly competitive and dynamic market where digital marketing and public relations have become critical channels for customer engagement and brand management.

Digital media can be accessed from anywhere in the world, provided there is an internet connection. This accessibility breaks down geographical barriers and allows for global communication.

Wirtz (2020) argues digitalization has fundamentally altered the structure and operations of the companies, resulting transformative shift of value creation, in organizational efficiency and reduction in workforce needs. Wirtz further states that the shift to digital media has compelled traditional media to compete for attention and financial resources alongside a diversity array of new digital PR platforms.

In pertinent to Ethio-Telecom's internet access, it is improving over years, along with emergence of digital media is vital for communication, marketing and daily public relations activities. Ethio-Telecom utilizes digital media platforms through X, Telegram, Facebook, websites and LinkedIn to engage with the customers, promote services and build its reputation (Selam, 2022).

Telecom sector in Ethiopia is undergoing rapid evolution, with digital marketing playing a crucial role in shaping public relations strategies. However, the company faces significant troubles like efficiently handling customers and managing its digital platforms and this factor

hinder the positive relationships with customers and effective communication with stakeholders. Thus, addressing such issues properly enhance customer engagement and ensure timely communication.

According to Dawit (2019), many government organizations leverage digital media platforms including Telegram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook and official website to communicate effectively with the public.

In the fast-changing telecommunications sector, companies such as Ethio-Telecom encounter difficulties in sustaining effective public relations due to rising competition and shifting consumer expectations. Traditional communication methods are inadequate for engaging customers and managing brand reputation in a digital marketing environment.

Thus, understanding those dynamics is crucial for Ethio-Telecom to improve its public relations strategies, and foster stronger relationship with its customer.

According to a study by Mulu Girmay (2023), Ethio-Telecom's interaction with the customers is one-way, resulting in less interaction with customers. The communication flows more from the organization to the customers and the public, with few responses from the customers. Furthermore, as Wesenu (2024) states Ethio-Telecom target marketing campaigns is to increase brand visibility and recognition, particularly among those who rated awareness lower. He suggested Ethio-Telecom to use social media and other digital platforms to share success stories, and brand values to foster a deeper connection with potential customers to improve branding. These researchers suggested that much effort needs to be done to improve Ethio-Telecom's marketing communication activities and foster two-way interaction with customers.

Ethio-Telecom's existing research on digital marketing and public relations is limited, and there is a significant research gap regarding the comprehensive diverse digital media platforms for digital marketing and public relations strategy that include multiple platforms actively engaged by customers.

Hence, this study would fill the existing gap by adopting a multi-platform of digital media analysis integrates both customer and company perspectives by utilizing a mixed methods approach, it provide a comprehensive understanding of Ethio-Telecom's digital marketing and public relations strategies.

Addressing this gap is essential for Ethio-Telecom to enhance communication and improve interaction with customers effectively in telecom industry.

1.3 Research Questions

- How do customers engage with the Ethio-Telecom's digital media and marketing presences?
- Which digital media platforms does Ethio-Telecom employ to integrate digital marketing into its PR efforts?
- What challenges does Ethio-Telecom face when implementing its digital media and marketing strategies?
- What is the significance of leveraging of digital media and marketing for Ethio-Telecom's overall operation?

1.4 Objective of the Study

The study aims to assess effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in Ethio-Telecom's public relations effort to enhance customer engagement.

1.4.1 Specific Objectives of the Study

- To examine how customers engage with Ethio-Telecom's digital media platforms and marketing strategies.
- To identify digital media platforms Ethio-Telecom employs for integrating digital marketing and PR efforts.
- To explore the key challenges Ethio-Telecom faces while implementing digital media and marketing strategies
- To analyze the significance and utilization of digital media and marketing on Ethio-Telecom's overall operation.

1.5 Significant of the Study

This study holds significant importance as it explores the evolving of digital marketing and public relations efforts in customer engagement within the telecom sector, focusing on Ethio-Telecom, is a key player in an emerging market highlighting both success and areas for improvement.

By analyzing these digital strategies, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how Ethio-Telecom can leverage digital communication to enhance brand visibility and customer engagement.

The findings are expected to benefit marketing professionals, communication strategists, and policymakers by offering tailored recommendations that address the unique challenges and

opportunities in the Ethiopian telecom industry, thereby advancing both academic knowledge and practical applications in the field of digital public relations and marketing.

This study also fills a critical gap in existing literature regarding digital marketing practices in telecom sectors by promoting effective culturally relevant communication strategies.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

As far as certain research work is concerned, it is important to mention the limitations encountered by researcher.

The target respondents were highly occupied professionals, making them difficult to access and difficult for the researcher to collect data. During the study, some initially declined to participate, delaying the research timeline.

To address these challenges, the researcher employed various techniques to build trust and foster cooperation with the respondents.

Additionally, confidentiality was assured by providing participants with a written consent letter from Addis Ababa University (AAU), encouraging openness and mitigating concerns. And also the study faced limitations, including time 2and some officials and customers were hesitate to participate in the interviews and in fill in survey questionnaires and as a result, certain survey questions were not adequately addressed during the data collection, affecting the depth of responses in both approaches.

A simple random sampling survey of Ethio-Telecom customers in Addis Ababa was conducted to get a representative sample and enhance result generalizability

However, potential inaccuracies in the sampling frame may have affected the randomness and reliability of the sample. Furthermore, this study did not include data on Ethio-Telecom's implementation of across all digital media platforms.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study focuses on examining digital marketing public relations within the telecommunications sector, specifically the case of Ethio-Telecom.

The study is limited to assessing digital PR strategies, tools, and communication practices employed by Ethio-Telecom. Ethio-Telecom was selected due to its status as a leading telecom company in Ethiopia, serving a large customer base across nationwide, which makes it well-positioned to provide meaningful insight and recommendations. The research is limited to Addis Ababa region within communication department of the company, focusing specifically at its

headquarters that serves as hub for the company's public engagement and brand building efforts. Given Ethio-Telecom's extensive national operations, it is difficult to include all regional branches within the scope of this thesis.

Regarding the temporal scope, this study is confined to 2024/2025 fiscal year to ensure manageability and facilitate in-depth analysis. To present this study clearly and logically, the paper is prepared into five chapters.

1.8 Organization of the Study

To present this study clearly and logical way, the paper is organized in five chapters. Each chapter intended that guided the research process and findings in coherent manner. Chapter one deals with introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study and limitations that the researcher face while conducting this paper. In the second chapter, review of literature will present. And third chapter will incorporate methodology of the study that includes the research approach, data collection methods, sample collection process and how data analyses and also include validity of the research. The data obtained from in-depth interviews and survey questionnaires presented and analysis in fourth chapter. Lastly, the fifth chapter summarizes summary of findings, brief conclusion, and recommendations based on the finding of the study.

1.9 Definitions of key terms

Digital Marketing: is the use of digital channels, platforms, and technologies to promote products, services, or brands to a target audience.

Digital Public Relations: is the use of the internet to communicate with both potential and current customers in the public realm.

Telecom Company: This is the industry that provides telecommunication services including internet, phone and data services either domestic or international calls.

Digital Media: Include digital media online platforms such as social media, websites, blogs, and other digital communication channels.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature

This chapter entirely explores different literary works which is relevant to the issues under study. Hence, it tries to see definitions of digital public relations, digital media as opportunity and threat, changing PR, the evolution of public relations, marketing strategies, customer engagement, and digital media in telecom services and offering a brief overview on these topics. Additionally, the theoretical and conceptual framework relevant to the study is incorporated. Various published documents were entirely reviewed.

Digital marketing has revolutionized public relations in the telecom sector by enhancing engagement with diverse stakeholders and effectively addressing complex and demanding issues. Telecom operators leverage digital media platforms to manage their reputation, interact with customers, and address issues effectively. As the largest telecom provider, Ethio-Telecom offers a valuable study to explore the integration of digital marketing into PR practices in developing markets.

2.1. Historical Development of telecom companies

The emergence of telecom companies around the world followed a series of technological advancement and regulatory changes. Following this, telegraphy, invented in 1830's laid the groundwork for communication companies that endorsed long-distance messaging. According to Casson (1910), telephone was invented by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876 marked the beginning of voice communication. After that telephone companies like first Bell Telephone Company of US established in 1877 and later expanded into other nations (Casson, 1910).

Casson further stated that by the early 20th century, telephone networks were being developed and expanded in many nations and significantly transforming communication by connecting people over long distance across all the continents.

According to Kujur and Singh (2017), technological advancements have revolutionized communication, making it faster and more accessible, while also serve as a powerful marketing channels. As a result, there are developments of social networking websites that pave the ways of communication between organizations and customers (Kujur and Singh, 2017).

2.2 Digital Media Marketing Activities (SMMA) for Telecom

Social media marketing (SMM) is a powerful tool for telecom industries to reach broader customers, drive customer engagements and build brand perception. Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012) argue that constructing and maintaining long-term relationships with potential customers is priority for every sustainable business which includes online elements of business.

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), implementing SMM strategies telecom companies lead to efficiently involve with their target audience determine business progress in forwards and applying inclusive digital media marketing has a lot of benefits to the business.

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016) argue that the need of integrated digital marketing strategies email to meet business goals and communicate with customers and to build relationship more.

Online Advertising: Paid advertising on platforms like Google ad and social media allows telecom companies to effectively reach targeted population and specific customers efficiently (Ngirika, 2017).

This global incidence of social media platforms on today's digital landscape which serve as instrumental tools for marketers to increase brand visibility, an engine to business development and to get target audiences (Poorani,2021).

2.3 Digital Marketing and PR in Telecom Company

Telecom sectors are on its fierce competition, depend mainly on consumer and highly use digital media for customers' services, brand promotion and crisis management (Grunig, 2013).

According to Grunig (2013), "company uses digital media platforms to enhance transparency and build trust. In this dynamic industry, PR uses multimedia content, collaboration with influencer and data analytics to boost customer satisfaction and loyalty."

Public relations play a big role in diversified society to create informed decision and fostering mutual understanding among various organizations and institutions (Daramola, 2003). Institutions such as hospitals, trade unions, government agencies, non-profit organizations and religious organizations to achieve their objectives, they need to cultivate relationship with audiences and stakeholders in general (Ajala, 1993).

Two-way communications: Unlike traditional PR, typically relies on one-way communication but digital public relations foster two-way interactions. This allows customers or stakeholders to involve directly with brands, give feedback and conversation thereby boost organizations listening their audiences and adjust their strategies accordingly (Grunig, 2011).

Content Creation and Distribution: PR professionals expected to create and engage, shareable content that resonate with online audiences this includes utilizing multimedia formats like video, interactive and infographics elements to attract the attention and improve commitment(Grunig and Grunig, 2011).

Real-Time Communication: The rapid digital communications helps organizations to respond crisis or event in real-time. The PR needs to organize to manage the communication fast to alleviate the probably reputation loss to company while facing crisis (Tandoc and Johnson, 2018).

2.4 The dynamic Evolution of Public Relations in Digital Age

In public relations, change isn't inevitable- as the industry is constantly changes to adapt the new technologies and global trends; the industry is evolving drastically over year and year and furthermore, with rise of digital technology, digital PR has getting important part of communication strategies that requires new approach to manage brand reputation, and engage with the audience in proper manner (Torossian, 2024).

According to Torossian (2024), when the digital landscape change, PR experts must adapt relevant and efficiently. In this day's digital world, digital PR has emerged as a vital components of effective PR as the online platforms lead customer decision making, digital PR serve as basis for modern communication strategies through social media, target content, manage rapid crisis communication, brand visibility and develop profound connection with audiences (Torossian, 2024).

In the contemporary era, PR fulfills three crucial functions: includes persuading people, giving information and creating effective community. According to Seitel (2001), PR isn't only just disseminating propaganda but also persuade the people to support and achieve the organization specific goals. This indicates that PR as a communication process aimed at mutual understanding of the organizational success in general.

Meerman (2007) highlights that PR has been advancing significantly by shifting from depend on media intermediaries to directly link with consumers and at this change, it is driven by internet, which provides direct access to the company product information and thereby powerful tools enhance communication efforts.

2.5 The Changing Public Relations

According to Phillips and Young (2009), the rapid changes and advancements in digital media and marketing have significantly affecting public relations, focusing on the need for authenticity. Public relations are changing process that requires consistent engagement, adaptation, and focus on long-term success for the organization (Phillips and Young, 2009).

Phillips and Young (2009) state that digital era has significantly transformed communication as compared to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At that time, the information channels were divided into mass and micro communication, where mass communication involved asymmetrical flows through media including television, radio, and newspaper, magazine whereas micro communication pointed for symmetrical exchanges between individuals.

The rise of the digital era, has led to a substantial raise in number of people engaging in communication which has also influenced public relations practices (Phillips and Young, 2009).

2.6 Digital Public Relations

The emergence of new technologies and media in the past few decades has evoked a new era for the PR practice.

Gordon (2011) explains that PR now has many definitions, as the industry is constantly changing and adapting to world and growing landscape of both traditional and new media.

According to Jurnal ASPIKOM (2021), over years, public relations have adapted and evolved following phenomena to cater to the needs of its users. In this case, technological advances have a major impact on how public relations operate and interact within society. Both big and small institutions have opted to resort to digital public relations, which relies heavily on digital platforms**.**

Public Relations have also undergone an evolution from the traditional era to the digital era. This evolution occurs in public relations' roles, functions, and tasks from the 1.0 to 4.0 era (Arief, 2019).

Digital Public Relations is increasingly popular as it has a number of advantages. Grunig (2009) proposed some of the advantages of digital media, including being effective in field observations; able to track problems and issues in the cyber world relatively easily; utilized to monitor SEO and content analysis, used as a database to measure the type and quality of trust-based relationships, equality in control, satisfaction, and commitment. In addition, digital

marketing platforms have created new dynamic channels to sell products, create audiences, increase web traffic, and increase awareness of existing issues (Alexander, 2016)

There are interesting views about the existence of digital public relations under the umbrella of public relations in the future. It is very vital for public relations practitioners in the future to have a deep understanding of digital technology, including how it can be used (Alexander, 2016).

2.6.1 Digital Marketing and Technology as an Opportunity and Threat

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016) argue that the rapid development of the internet, including World Wide Web and other digital technologies, has fundamentally altered global marketing system at all. For instance, for consumers, the advancement offer plenty of preference of services, products; prices from diverse providers that make them convenient access to buy at appropriate way even to choice buy among the items which include technologies and computers for consumers (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016).

Additionally, digital media and new technology platforms give significant opportunity or help company to expand into new market, provide new services and apply new online communication system that give an equal opportunity to compete with large companies throughout world (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). However, simultaneously such digital media technology exposes organization into many risks like cyber-security or market volatility.

Online channels help the companies to promote, and sell the products globally at discount cost eliminating traditional barriers like physical infrastructure, and geographical in the consumers' nation (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016).

According to Jobber and Ellis-Chadwick (2013), "effective communications is crucial for a company which is market-oriented and builds brands; however, this communication poses challenges and also the digital technology is shifting the people's way of communication channels."

2.6.1. The Role of Public Relations in the company

Cutlip and Broom (2006) highlight that PR professionals have diverse responsibilities across various organizations, working to fulfill the institutional missions, and policies while also building organization's image or set its goals. Additionally, they emphasize that PR experts are responsible for monitoring and managing both internal and external partners (Cutlip and Broom, 2006).

Furthermore, PR plays a vital role in facilitating communication and understanding between various groups of society to align their interests and foster collaborative between public policies and private interest as well (Daramola, 2003).

PR in Customer Management

Effective public relations plays a crucial role in customer management by sustaining positive relationships with customers by fostering trust, managing reputation, and delivering responsive communication, especially in digital environments where customer expectations continuously evolve (Freberg and Kim, 2018; Sisson, 2017).

Furthermore, Grunig and Hon (1999) states that effective PR strategies rely on two-way communication models that allows organizations to listen to customer concerns while shaping positive perceptions. Similarly, Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2006) emphasize PR contributes to customer retention by managing crises proactively and ensuring consistent brand messaging.

2.7 Models of Public Relations

James Grunig and Todd Hunt developed PR model in 1984. They identify four key types of public relations communication model: press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical. These models offer foundational frameworks to guide communication strategies in organizations, emphasizing varying degrees of persuasion, accuracy, and audience engagement.

Press A gentry Model: This is a one-way communication model focused on persuasion and publicity, often using exaggerated or manipulative tactics to gain attention. It does not prioritize accuracy or customer feedback.

Public Information Model: This model involves one-way communication but emphasizes truthful, accurate, and ethical dissemination of information. Originating from early 20th-century public relations pioneer Ivy Lee, it focuses on media relations and building trust without involving audience feedback mechanisms.

Two-Way Asymmetrical Model: Characterized by two-way communication with feedback and research, this model uses audience insights for persuasive communication that benefits the organization more than the audience. It is prevalent in advertising and marketing where influencing public behavior is a key goal.

Two-Way Symmetrical Model: This is considered the most ethical and effective model, focusing on balanced dialogue and mutual understanding between the organization and its

publics. It fosters trust, collaboration, and long-term relationship building by giving equal weight to audience and organizational interests.

2.7.1 Social media platforms

Social media platforms refer to online platforms and tools that allow people to create, share, and exchange information and content with others. Include Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and TikTok.

According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012), communication varies between the different social media platforms, for example we find that twitter is more of a customer service tool, while Facebook is a fun and engaging platform, suitable for promotional outreach.

The main social media platforms which can offer a presence for companies are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. As to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2012), the most commonly used options in the company are:

Facebook company pages enable businesses to engage audiences and promote products through status updates seen by 'fans' who like the page. Fans can grow organically or via paid ads, which help recruit new followers.

Twitter pages allow companies to communicate via short messages including links to the company's website. Twitter is also widely used for customer service, with some companies maintaining separate channels for offers and support.

Public Relation Tools

A variety of tools can be employed to communicate the public. According to Ki and Hon (2006), PR communication is carried out in many forms, including press releases, media interviews, and speeches. The contributions via action also occur in many forms, such as counseling management to alter organizational policy, forming partnerships with interest groups, or holding special events. This is consistent with perspectives on PRs stressing its relationship management function (Ki and Hon, 2006).

2.8 Digital Media Utilization: Current Trends

The wide spread presence of digital media has highly reshaped communication, public relations on a global scale. Digital media and marketing have highly reshaping atmosphere of public relation's communication and marketing globally. As we entered into 2025, many situations are appearing that showing in altering of consumer attitude, technological advancements evolving nature of digital media platforms (Deloitte Insights, 2025).

Utilizing of digital media is getting crucial for communication strategies and marketing across different companies (Chaffey, 2023). The advancement of technology in fast manner and rising of internet penetration have changed the way the company deals with clients (Chaffey, 2023).

According to Baker and Susan (2017), the main trends in use of digital media as follows:

Social media marketing: Organizations are increasingly using social media such as X, Telegram, Instagram and Facebook to connect with their target audiences. This allows direct interaction with dissolution of relationship and community thus improves marketing effectiveness.

Content Marketing: Companies are increasingly producing and disseminating helpful content to draw in and establish a connection with a particular. To increase the authority and trust which boosts traffic and fortifies brand loyalty, they are concentrating on producing top-notch blogs, videos, and infographics.

Mobile Marketing: With more people using smartphones, the mobile market is becoming increasingly vital. In order to guarantee a smooth user experience, businesses are developing their websites and content for mobile devices. This is in addition to using mobile application, and SMS marketing to reach consumers directly without any barriers.

Data Analytics: In this case, to better understand what customers need and how they behave, businesses are using data analytics more and more. It collects data from online channels and sources using analytical tools that aid in the customization of more effective marketing campaign.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): Therefore, facilitate well-informed decision-making and improve marketing campaign. Since the competition began, businesses have been concentrating on using strategies to increase their visibility on search engines.

According to Ethiopian Digital Media Information Ecosystem Assessment (2023), about 21 million Ethiopians have access to the internet and 6.4 are on social media platforms, including Instagram, X, Linkedin and Facebook as of 2023.

Furthermore, the first and foremost digital media platforms chosen in Ethiopia as first is Facebook 31.3%, followed by Telegram 25%, YouTube 16.1, TikTok 13% and Instagram 7.5%. Thus, Facebook is main digital media platform that serve as the main source of information in Ethiopia (Ethiopian Digital Media Information Ecosystem Assessment (2023).

2.8.1 Digital media in Telecom services: opportunities and challenges

According to the Digital Ethiopia Data Report (2024), since the starting of digital media in1990's, information and communication technology has been shaping media landscape of Ethiopia. Though many opportunities accessible by new digital media technologies, developing nations like Ethiopia are not making full use of them.

Jenkins (2006) argues in his book Convergence Culture that the advancement of technologies has led to mass media and the introduction of new communication technologies and distribution all process spread by the internet, Television and radio.

Holig and Hasebrink (2018) argue that mobile internet usage has significantly evolved digital media in recent times, as more people depend on their phones for information, thus contributing growing of the field of digital technology.

Opportunities of Digitalization

Digital media are shaping and influencing the contemporary society; transforming diverse aspect of human life by modernizing combinations, accelerating and fostering the exchange of information (Smith and Anderson, 2020).

Benkler (2006) argues the world is dominated by new forms of digital media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and others that create friendships accompanied by radical changes in production of culture and knowledge. Digitalization provides for organizational development with rise of the digital economy but the same time increases uncertainty and delays long-term planning by introducing new technologies (Benkler, 2006).

Challenges of Digitalization

Information Overload: Many information available online make difficult for the organizations to position. But the PR professionals must alleviate the challenges by ensuring the real message to intended audience in efficient manner (Grunig, 2011).

2.9 Utilization of Digital Marketing in Telecom Systems

According to Hafiz (2008), digital marketing is defined as "a modern approach that aimed at identifying common needs among businesses, suppliers, and consumers to minimize costs and enhance efficiency of goods as quickly as possible."

Additionally, Surrah (2009) states that digital marketing is applying of digital methods to facilitate trade exchanges between parties instead of relying on direct communication.

Chaffey (2012) emphasizes that RACE framework--Reach, Act, Convert and Engage- serves as a valuable structure for enhancing the success of digital marketing efforts. According to him, framework emphasize on five key stages of elements for business effectively using digital technologies such as reaching customers, interacting with them, fostering customer loyalty, gaining customer insights, and building ongoing relationship.

Chaffey further states that "digital marketing measurements are the most desired that support digital orientation of company that immense align its goals, tactics and strategies to achieve its plan and digital marketing involves company leveraging internet based technologies and aimed to interact with customers to promote brands through the use of technology online platforms (Chaffey, 2012)."

According to Clarinda (2020), Search Engine Optimization (SEO) in digital marketing quality and quantity process can enhance traffic direct flow website to search engine results pages. This brings right type of customers to website thereby create better connection with potential customer

Furthermore, Alemayehu and Chalchissa (2023) argue that digital marketing practices play a pivotal role in boosting organizational performance and organization need to emphasize work on digital media tools and social media platforms to improve customer engagement and satisfaction.

2.10 Digital Media in Telecom Services

Today, telecom companies are forced to use digital media platforms to create robust relationships with the customers. This could be true when there is interactive channels and communication within the telecom companies to build more communication. In related to this issues, Rust and Zahorik (1993) argue that customer based approaches build long-term relationships through actively involving with customers on social media platforms thereby provide timely support, get feedback that led into loyalty and enhance customer satisfactions. Similarly, Gupta and Lehmann (2005) argue that "by enhancing data analytics and digital media channels, telecom companies can provide appropriate and effective advertising message that likely increase customer conversion more."

2.11The importance of digital media and Telecom marketing

Digital marketing help organizations to communicate directly with customers through media channels thereby improving clarity and trust when there is crisis.

Digital media platforms play a crucial role in facilitating effective digital marketing strategies within telecom sectors.

The major platforms leveraged by marketers including Facebook, Telegram, Instagram, YouTube, Linkiden and TikTok and among others are provide huge benefit for companies to create direct and close connection and interaction with customers and also foster further feedback mechanisms (Marques, 2018).

According to Alshurideh, Al Kurdi, and Alshurideh (2020), implementing digital marketing strategies can improve the following areas of telecom companies:

Enhance customer Engagement: In this case, digital media allows company to involve directly with their clients through various platforms like mobile application, digital media platforms and email that increases customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention.

Cost-effectiveness: Compared to traditional marketing strategies, digital marketing strategies are more affordable, helping telecom companies to quickly and easily reach a global audience through online advertising and social media campaigns.

Data-Driven Decision Making: Telecom companies can use digital media to better understand preferences and behavior of customer that allows them PR campaign to improve their marketing capabilities and enhance business outcomes.

Consumer behavior Adaptation: As the consumers' need shift toward digital media platforms, telecom companies must adapt their marketing strategies to effectively reach customers and stay competitive in the market.

2.12 Customer engagement in telecom sectors

Customer engagement concept in the digital age through digital marketing and public relations platforms with company is recent phenomena that arise because of technological advancement and customers need is arising in time.

Forrester (2007) stresses that customer engagement as "marketing's new key metric given the rapidly increasing online media fragmentation and the challenges of keeping customers engaged with brands given the proliferation of choice."

Forrester (2007) suggests that focusing on engagement provides a more inclusive understanding of customer behavior, acknowledging that values arise not solely from direct transaction but also from the ways customers influence others. As engagement become central to marketing, communications will evolve into two-way conversations, leading to a

reallocation of budget from traditional media buying toward gaining deeper view into potential customers.

Walmsley (2007) argues that "the primary effect of digital media is less about linking brands to consumers and more about fostering connections among consumers themselves, a dynamic that will shape all areas of marketing, including product design and recommendations."

Customer engagement refers to intensity of individual's involvement in and association with company's offerings or operations started by either customer or company (Hollebeek, 2011).

Digital marketing facilitate transparency and deep relation with customers, construct loyalty and improving engagement in the given market (Smith, 2024).

Furthermore, aspects of customer engagement is customers mental processing and attention towards the business, sentiment and feelings related to the customer brand relationship, customers interaction with business including participate in events (Hollebeek, 2011).

These factors may affect the cognitive, emotional and behavioral facets of customers engagement hence successful customer engagement has been linked to several positive business outcomes including brand advocacy, increase customer loyalty and improve financial performance (Brodie et al., 2011; Vivek et al., 2012).

2.13 Digital Marketing Strategies

According to Wild Ali Ortega-Gutierrez (2025), digital marketing strategies continuously evolve with technological advances and shifting consumer behaviors. Key approaches include:

Content Marketing: Creating and sharing valuable content like articles, videos, and images to attract and engage audiences while boosting brand awareness.

Social Media Marketing: Leveraging platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to connect with customers, share messages, and enhance engagement.

Email Marketing: Sending personalized marketing messages and offers via email to prospects and customers, with the ability to track responses.

Video Marketing: Producing engaging videos to promote products or services on platforms like YouTube and Instagram.

Interactive Content Marketing: Employing interactive tools such as quizzes and polls to foster user interaction and relationship building.

Ethio-Telecom's growth trajectory

Ethio-Telecom achieves significant coverage in the Ethiopia reaching 99.2% with 85% geographic and tele density of 71% and ranks 1st in African and 17th globally the company contributed 29.76 billion Birr in taxes (The Ethiopian Herald, July 11, 2024 edition p 3).

The company is also expanding the capacity and coverage of telecom and digital infrastructure including expansion of 5G, 4G and 3G networks at various areas. The 4G network has now been extended to 124 cities and districts bringing the total number of accessible of 4G location to 424 while the number of 5G stations has increased to 189 *(*The Ethiopian Herald, July 11, 2024*)*.

Ethio-Telecom and advertising

Ethio-Telecom employs multifaceted advertising strategies to reach its mobile customers by using various channels such as SMS, Web, audio /video ads, Voice, USSD and mobile web display. These diverse methods allow the company to target different customer segments with tailored messages, enhancing the effectiveness of its marketing effort.

Promotional campaign

According to Ethio-Telecom Annual Report (2024), advertising takes places at Ethio-Telecom in**:**

Brand promotion: Ethio-Telecom employs ad campaign to enhance brand visibility and attract new customers since its inception that focus on products and services.

Television and radio: ads new products and services in TV, radio to reach wide public in rural and urban.

Print advertising: Ethio-Telecom places ads in national newspapers and magazines to capture the more attention in visual way.

For instance, during the launching of 5G latest network technology in 2023 in the nation promoted in series of TV channels, radio stations and via digital media platforms like Telegram, YouTube and X. Recently advertising in blogs is getting usual. The cost of advertising would have been higher in the media outlet.

2.14 Conceptual Framework of the Study

As far as the digital marketing public relations at Ethio-Telecom are concerned, there are many theories and that fit at best of this study are Uses and Gratification and Integrated Marketing Communications theories are adopted and employed.

According to Mikael (2022), in today's business World Company's failure or profitability is determined by public perception. In the walk of life, the new digital PR platforms such as Telegram, X, Facebook and web are main interaction platforms with PR and altering the way of communication (Mikael, 2022).

In this research, the researcher employed Uses and Gratification theory and Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) theory that would provide inclusive perspective which allows more to explore for the research titled "Digital Marketing Public Relations in Ethio-Telecom: A Case Study."

Furthermore, both theories will provide a strong foundation for this research to assess the success of communication strategies in public relations and digital marketing within the telecom industry.

IMC helps to analyze how Ethio-Telecom utilizes digital media channels to enhance customer interaction and ensure consistent brand message across all PR platforms.

These two theories illustrated in the following way:

Integrated Marketing Communications Theory (IMC)

This theory is co-authorized and introduced by Schultz, Stanley, Tannenbaum, and Lauterborn that published in 1993.

This theory is significant and emphasis the need for markets to organize in many ways; including public relations, sales and direct marketing to create unified experience for customers.

This framework provides a comprehensive understanding of different communication strategies used in public relations and align message across various digital media channels and deliver consistent in rapidly modern changing digital media landscape to enhance the relation with target customers and preferred company in its practices.

This theory is particularly significant for this study because it provides a framework for analyzing how Ethio-Telecom integrates its PR efforts across various digital platforms; as the customers need consistent and cohesive brand experience irrespective of the channel they prefer to engage in (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

Furthermore, IMC provides a lens for studying how Ethio-Telecom uses promotional tools and channels in conjunction with its PR practices in modern digital media landscape and advertising effort.

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)

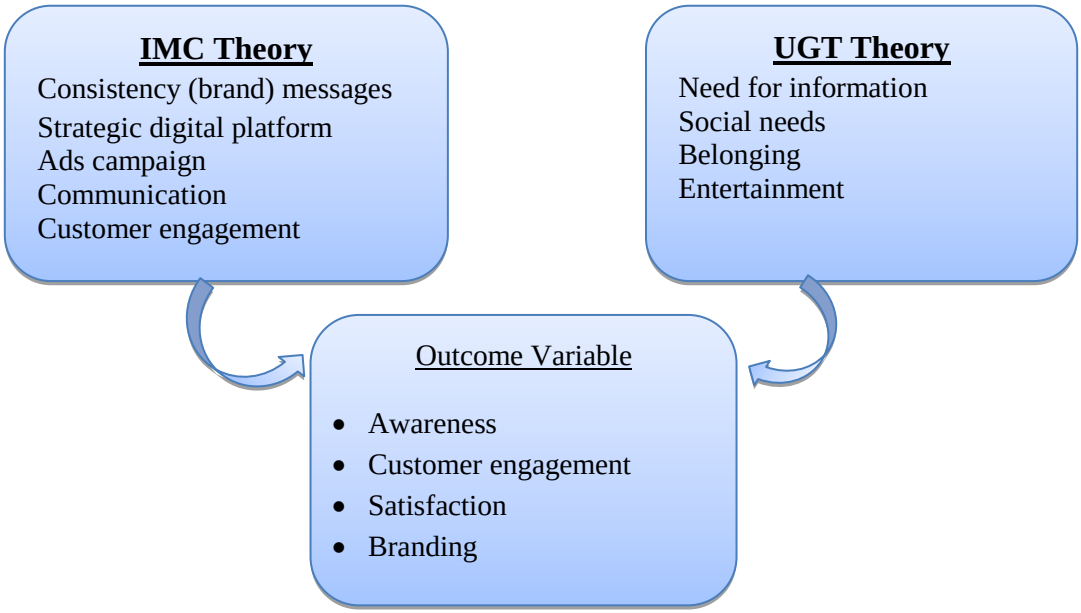
This theory trace back to the 1940's when the researcher started to explore why individuals select various types of media for consumption purpose to satisfy specific particular desires. Through gradually, this theory gained momentum in the year 1970's with contribution of Jay G.Blumler and Elihu Katz, whose work the uses of mass communication current perspectives on gratifications research. This theory suggested that individual participants select types of media to fulfill their individual specific wants and needs either in seek of information, social interaction, entertainment, convenience, personal identity or escape which consciously choices media in a broad range of communication options to fulfill their needs.

In this case, UGT provides valuable insight into how Ethio-Telecom customers engage with company's digital media platforms and the gratification what they seek and identify which digital marketing content types attracts most their attention and define their maximum motivation (Blumler and Elihu Katz, 1973). Thus, understanding motivation and desires of Ethio-Telecom's customers' digital media choice, the company can adapt digital marketing content communication strategies to connect with it target customers in the nation. This includes how customers of Ethio-Telecom leveraging digital media of channels of company such as mobile application, online platforms and digital marketing channels to seek information, access customer support and get major improvement to offer diverse needs and desires of customers thereby enhances strong relationship, engagement and boost satisfaction.

UGT provides the overarching goal, exploring what audiences' actively choice specific media types and to get satisfaction based on their desires while IMC offers practical strategies and tactics to achieve these relationships via integrated digital marketing and PR practices at Ethio-Telecom. Thus, guiding conceptual framework of this study is designed and proposed based concept and detail of both IMC and UGT approach.

The process-oriented diagram representations of the study framework illustrate the relationships.

Fig 2.1 The guiding conceptual framework of the study



Source**:** Conceptual model adapted from UGT proposed by Blumler and Katz **(**1973) and IMC view from Schultz, Tannenbaum and Reinhard (1991) with some modifications by the researcher

CHAPTER THREE

3. Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology employed in the study. It incorporates the crucial elements of the research including research approach, research method, data collection instruments, sampling technique, sample size, data collection method, and data analysis methods. Additionally, it addresses ethical consideration, validity and reliability of the study. Each of these issues are examined in separate sections to evaluate how the digital media and advertisement practice looks like at Ethio-Telecom.

3.1 Research Approach

In the research titled "Digital Marketing Public Relations in Ethio-Telecom: A case study" mixed methods approach was employed. Qualitative data was collected via in-depth interviews at Ethio-Telecom headquarters; specifically selecting managers using purposive sampling that have deep knowledge or insights relevant to the research questions about digital marketing implementation and practices.

The researcher adopted philosophy of pragmatism that emphasizes practical solutions and both integration of qualitative and quantitative methods. This approach addresses diverse research questions to get full information in the topic given by incorporating surveys alongside interviews. Thus, the research helps a rich exploration of qualitative insight and simultaneously valuable quantitative data that provides depth and breadth of findings.

The relevance of this study, explore how digital media is practiced in telecom sector which leading to exploration of effective outcome.

3.2 Research Method

Research method is helps to collect, analyze and interpret the data and answer research questions. It is also how the research gathered evidence, and how the information gathered to derive the conclusion. There are three types of research methods include:

Qualitative methods: Focus on non-numerical data such as focus group discussion, interview and observation to discover experiences or social phenomena

Quantitative methods: Comprise collecting numerical data through experiment, survey and structured observations to test hypothesis or measure statistical variables.

Mixed methods: Involve both quantitative and qualitative approaches allows researcher to capture inclusive understanding.

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the current practices of digital marketing public relations at Ethio-Telecom headquarters and to assess customers' engagement with Ethio-Telecom's digital marketing and media. A mixed methods research approach was employed.

The mixed methods research integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches utilizing survey for numerical data collection and in-depth interviews for comprehensive understanding of the research questions (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018).

Qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews with Ethio-Telecom employees at headquarters in Addis Ababa, while quantitative data was gathered via online survey questionnaires distributed to Ethio-Telecom customers living in Addis Ababa city randomly. The qualitative analyzed thematically, linking coding and theme identification while quantitative data analyzed using descriptive statistics to adequately analyze the research.

In this study, quantitative methods, like surveys are crucial for exploring perception of Ethio-Telecom customers and while qualitative method such as in-depth interview assessed the effectiveness of digital media platforms reaching customers.

This combination of two approach effectively explores the digital media practices both customers and employees perspectives and increases the reliability of the findings and provides a broader context for drawing conclusions.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data Sources

For this study, the data was collected from both primary and secondary sources.

Primary data was collected from three managers such as PR, marketing communication and digital media selected employees at Ethio-Telecom headquarters through in-depth interview based on open-ended questions to gather detail information about practice of digital marketing PR platforms, and how these efforts are reaching a wider customer base.

Similarly, prepared online survey questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms targeting Ethio-Telecom customers. This was to assess their perceptions of digital marketing, their engagement across various PR platforms, and their satisfaction with telecom services.

In addition to primary data sources, the researcher collected data from secondary sources, including websites, journals, books, dissertations and other relevant documents that providing context and background information on the company's digital marketing.

As Patton and Cochran (2002) state that qualitative research approach seeks to answer questions like “who, what, and why” underlying reason behind events and behaviours.

According to Morgan (2014), mixed approach emphasizes practical solutions to address research questions and advocates methodological pluralism.

3.4 Data Collection instruments

The data collection instruments for this study consisted of qualitative and quantitative data tools designed to gather comprehensive view relevant to public relations at Ethio Telecom.

Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted with three managers at Ethio-Telecom headquarters. This instrument was chosen to allow an in-depth exploration of managerial perspectives, experiences, and insights relevant to digital marketing and public relations practices within the organization. Quantitative data were obtained via survey disseminated through Google Forms to a sample of 364 customers. The survey instrument comprised closed-ended questions utilizing Likert scales and multiple-choice formats to quantify customer perceptions, satisfaction levels, and engagement with Ethio Telecom’s public relations initiatives.

Using various research methods enhances the reliability of the data obtained from qualitative and quantitative sources, as noted by Rechards (1994) in his analysis. Thus, the study utilized specific data collection instruments to achieve its stated objectives. Data collected through:

3.4.1 In-Depth Interview

An in-depth interviews were used as a primary data collection instrument to gather adequate information on the subject. This method allowed for the collection of detailed insight into Ethio-Telecom’s digital media practices, including their benefits, challenges and implementation.

Furthermore, interviews checklists were prepared to guide the discussion helping to make insightful conversation with correspondents.

Accordingly, the interview questions and survey questionnaires were prepared in English language. Then the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with mangers. Finally, the interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure an accurate representation of the participants responses.

3.4.2 Questionnaire

In this study, survey questionnaires were applied in order to collect the necessary data.

The survey questionnaires were designed to gather variety variables such as digital marketing and online platforms, attitude, satisfaction and engagement levels from customers to collect quantitative data. The researcher employed a probability sampling method, which is simple random sampling. This sampling method used to select a subset of individuals from a larger population, ensuring that every individual has an equal chance of being chosen.

According to Babbie (2016), this method is fundamental in social science research, including studies in PR, as it helps ensure the sample is representative of the population, minimize bias and enhance validity of research findings.

The survey questionnaires have two major parts. The first part is about the background information of the respondent regardless of their age, regarding usage of Ethio-Telecom's digital marketing PR platform in their daily activities.

The second part contains questions that show realities of research questions ask about service quality, digital marketing, PR usage, responsiveness, accessibility and engagement, and satisfaction level measurements were employed.

The next part respondents required to rate their expectation based on the rank items of order to express their preferences regarding company's digital media platforms service.

The survey questionnaires were structured using close-ended questions based on a five-point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. Additionally, to measure customers' satisfaction, a linear scale was included with the following options, Very dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Neutral, Satisfied and Very satisfied ranking question and multiple-choice questions were also incorporated to gather diverse data kinds.

3.5 Sampling Method

In this study, the researcher employed a simple random sampling technique for quantitative data, as it is the preferred method for gathering data customers with different experiences and perspectives. This will ensure valuable insights for the study.

Thus, by integrating both primary and secondary data sources, presented comprehensive understanding of Ethio-Telecom's digital marketing practices and its impacts on the customer experiences as well.

For the qualitative data gathering, the researcher used purposive sampling to select three managers in communication department at Ethio-Telecom's headquarters.

These managers were specifically chosen due to their direct involvement and knowledge related to Ethio-Telecom's digital media platforms. Selecting individuals with specialize view, the study ensures rich, informative perspectives that are critical to understanding the digital media strategies employed by Ethio-Telecom.

Thus, targeted chosen helped to gather detailed and relevant qualitative data that focused on the company's PR and advertising efforts.

Bryman (1988) states "survey can generate a capacity of quantifiable data from large number of respondents which are expected to representative of wider population to test and approach helps to protect participant anonymity that can raise respondents' confidence in data collection process."

3.6 Sampling Size

For this study, a combined approach of probability and non-probability sampling techniques was adopted to ensure a comprehensive representation of participants, addressing the diverse and specialized nature of the target population.

Simple random sampling was employed to select of the survey participants from defined broader population of various customers relevant to the research in Addis Ababa randomly by using Google Forms shared on customers Telegram, X, Whatsapp and Instagram by using their cell phone numbers.

Google Forms survey questionnaires were distributed to 400 customers and reached 364 Ethio-Telecom customers including youths, businessmen, students, lecturers, medical doctors and adult in Addis Ababa to ensure the diverse representation on the study.

The sample size of this research is 364 customers. Given that Ethio-Telecom has millions of digital media users, so it is challenging to survey all customers at once in the study.

This approach provided valuable insights for the study. Similarly, the researcher employed qualitative data technique that aimed to gather rich information reflecting the current digital media and marketing platforms practice in Ethiopian telecom industry through in-depth interviews with three managers at headquarters.

According to the Ethio-Telecom website, the company has following follower counts: 420,000 on Twitter, 365,195 on Telegram, and 244,000 on Instagram, totaling 1,029,195 followers.

By using Yamane's formula calculating sample size can be expressed mathematically as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N.\ e2}$$

Where: n= required sample size

N= total population size

e= margin of error (expressed as a decimal)

So to explain the calculation, it assume commonly used margin of error of 0.5 (0.05)

$$n = \frac{1{,}029{,}195}{1 + 1{,}029{,}195.\ (0.05)2}$$

$(0.05)2 = 0.0025$

$1 + 1{,}029{,}195 \times 0.0025 = 1 + 2{,}572.9875$

$1 + 2{,}572.\ 9875 = 2{,}573.9875$

$$n = \frac{1{,}029{,}195}{2{,}573.9875}$$

$n \approx 399.8$ but rounding a sample size approximately $N \approx 400$

3.7 Data Analysis Method

This study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data collected, to analysis the collected data. Once the data collected through survey questionnaire was carried out based on data collected from 364 respondents, including both male and female gathered data focused on their engagement and satisfaction with the company's digital media channels. Then, the collected data was first coded and imported into SPSS version 25 for more advanced processing and analysis to check variables accuracy and applying proper value coding to generate the out puts, and present the results visually. Whereas qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews with three managers at company headquarters and interpreted by coding and labeling as interviewees A, B, and C to keep their privacy. Based on this, comprehensive analysis has given and latter relevant recommendations provided to inform future actions.

Finally, the encoded quantitative data from survey questionnaire items were put and analyzed by using SPSS frequency, percentage, table and chart which guided the overall analysis and interpretation of the findings.

The final data comprising 364 valid customer responses and interviews data formed the basis for subsequent analysis.

3.8 Ethical consideration

Throughout this study, rigorous ethical standards were meticulously maintained across all phases of the research process.

The researcher had obtained official permission letter from Addis Ababa University School of Media and Communication to the study organization to get permission from the Ethio-Telecom to authorized data collection in accordance with institutional and organizational protocols.

Prior to conducting the interviews and surveys, participants were fully informed about the research's purpose and methods, emphasizing their participation was based on voluntary and carried no risk to ensure their transparency, oral consent before engagement and respected their comment throughout all process.

They assured that all data collected used solely for academic purposes and with strict measures in place to protected anonymity for coding system for interview transcription and confidentiality.

The rest assured no names or any identifying information disclosed during reporting and analysis. Throughout the research process, all reference sources were appropriately cited to acknowledge intellectual property, uphold academic integrity, and ensure the avoidance of plagiarism.

3.9 Validity and reliability of the study

Validity

To ensure the measurement of validity and reliability, both methods were guided by triangulation strategies. This method was implemented to improve the overall validity and reliability of the study.

As Gibbs (2007) states, "qualitative validity is a process by which researcher ensure trustworthiness, authenticity, credibility and accuracy of findings, and overall accuracy of their findings by using specific procedures."

On the other hand, "quantitative validity refers to the extent the study accurately measures what it intends and the degree to which the findings can be generalized to a larger population to ensure results are reliable and applicable to the specific sample studied" (Creswell, 2014; Babbie, 2016).

Thus, to enhance the accuracy of the findings, several data collection instruments like in-depth interview was employed so as to enhance the validity of the findings of study.

- A consistent interview employed to minimize variability in the questions posed to interviewees. Interviews was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accurate representation of the participants responses.
- To ensure the rigor and credibility of this study, both validity and reliability were carefully tested for data collection instruments: in-depth interviews and survey questionnaires.
- To ensure accuracy of the findings the researcher employed strategy using various data sources of information such as in-depth interviews and analysis based on the data obtained from the participants.
- In order to achieve or enhance trustworthiness of the study, the researcher further employed peer examination or review strategy.
- Lastly, in order to enhance trustworthiness of the study, the researcher used peer review or cross check with other individuals the questions. In doing that, classmate and other relevant AAU lectures have provided their constructive comments to do this entire thesis.

Reliability

The standardized questionnaires have consistently demonstrated their reliability and validity in measuring the intended variables, as evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha exceeding 0.7 (70%), indicating strong internal consistency.

Reliability and validity measured by Cronbacha alpha must be 0.70 and above.

Table 3.1 Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No of Items
.832	.834	18

Source: Researcher's survey data (2025)

According to Cronbach's Alpha result depicted in the table 3.1, the survey instrument shows strong internal consistency for this survey questionnaire, indicating good reliability. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is 0.832 and standardized items yield similar value of 0.834 items strengthen the conclusion to make meaningful analysis.

Both are become above commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 for reliability. This suggests that survey items consistently measure the similar underlying construct related to Ethio-Telecom's digital marketing PR platforms.

For the quantitative section, to ensure validity, the questionnaire prepared to cover vital themes which is relevant to the research objectives to get response from customers' digital media experiences during their daily internet using services.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter presents a detailed analysis and discussion of research findings gathered from the two primary data sources: An in-depth interview were conduted at Ethio-Telecom headquarters with three managers from PR, marketing communication and digital media using open-ended questions that prepared by the researcher to get full information on the research under study. And survey questionnaires were distributed to Ethio-Telecom customers residing in Addis Ababa through their Telegram, WhatApp and Instagram account using Google Forms. A simple random sampling was employed to ensure every customer had equal chance of being selected, enhancing data representativeness.

Once the data collected through Google Forms, first exported into Excel format for preliminary preparation and cleaning. Then, the data was imported into SPSS version 25, that as prepared for more advanced processing and analysis to check variables accuracy and applying proper value coding, to ensure data quality reorganized followed analysis.

The study combined insights from both the company's perspective, and customer experiences. A total of 400 survey questionnaires were shared to Ethio-Telecom customers in Google Forms through their Telegram, X and Whatapp accounts. Of these, 364 valid responses were received and successfully submitted to the researcher's email. Among the remaining distributed questionnaires, 19 questionnaires were improperly completed and thus excluded from the analysis whereas17 participants did not provide at all (reluctance to the researcher). The final data comprising 364 valid customer responses and interviews data formed the basis for subsequent analysis.

This denotes high response rate demonstrates a strong level of engagement among participants. The final analysis was conducted using 364 valid responses collected. Therefore, the study was conducted with 95% confidence level and margin of error of approximately 5.14%.

4.1Demographic Background of the Respondents

Gender of respondents

Table 4.1 Demographic information of the respondents

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Male	259	71.2	71.2	71.2
	Female	105	28.8	28.8	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's survey data (2025)

The above table describe that the demographic information of the respondents expressed in gender and out of 364 respondents 259 (71.2%) were male and 105 (28.8%) female respondents indicating a majority of male respondents in this study.

Age of respondents

Table 4.2 Distribution of Respondents' Age Group

Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	20-29	139	38.2	38.2	38.2
	30-39	157	43.1	43.1	81.3
	40-49	51	14.0	14.0	95.3
	50-59	16	4.4	4.4	99.7
	60+	1	0.3	0.3	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's survey data (2025)

As depicted in table 4.2 largest proportions of respondents fall between 30-39 age groups and consist of 157 (43.1%) and followed by those aged 20-29 accounting 139 (38.2%) respondents. Together those age groups represent over 81% of study of sample, emphasizing that a dominant of early to mid-adults age group. Whereas middle-aged 40-49(14%) sample while older groups 50 -59 accounts 16 (4.4%)respondents compose smaller fraction and final one is 60+ age category is small representation one respondents accounting 0.3% sample. Thus, cumulatively the study tried include all age groups view point to offer broad ranges of respondents' perspectives for this study.

Educational level of respondents

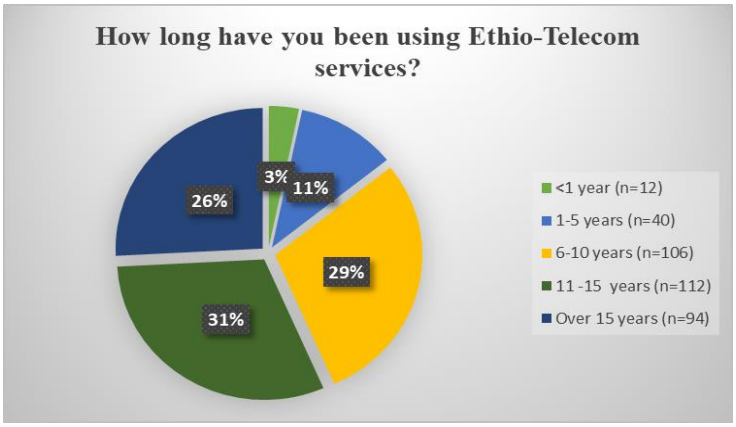
Table 4.3 Educational Attainment Levels of Respondents

Level of education				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
I did not finished High school	2	0.5	0.5	0.5
I completed High school	28	7.7	7.7	8.2
Diploma	22	6.0	6.0	14.3
College Degree	170	46.7	46.7	61.0
Master Degree	132	36.3	36.3	97.3
Doctoral degree (PhD)	10	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	364	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's survey data (2025)

According to the survey data, 0.5% did not finish high school while 7.7% respondents completed high school, 6.0% diploma holder respondents, 46.7% were college degree holders and 36.3% have master degree and lastly 2.7% possess doctoral degree (PhD). This survey demonstrated that majority respondents are degree holders in educational categories.

Figure 4.1 Duration of Ethio-Telecom service usages among customers



Source: Researcher's survey data (2025)

According to the above survey data, Ethio-Telecom service users among the respondents various level with the company's service 12 (3.3%) respondents and 40 (11%) respondents are very recent year users, whereas 112 (31%) and 94(26%) respondents are long years customers and 106(29%) are medium year customers.

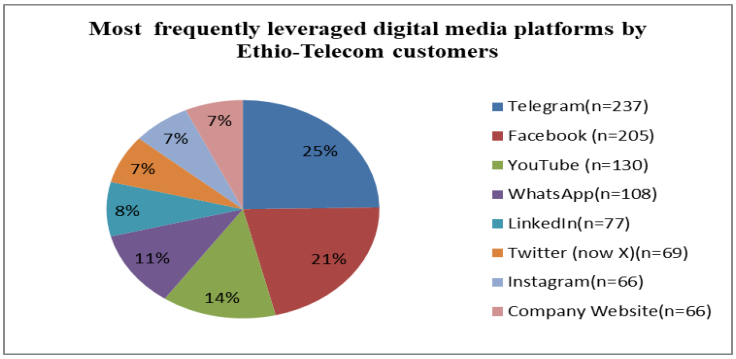
4.2 Customers' engagement with Ethio-Telecom's digital media, marketing strategies

The first research question objective is to examine how customers engage with Ethio-Telecom's digital media platforms, marketing and their interaction. It includes frequency of customer interactions, preferences of digital media platforms such as Telegram, X, Facebook, Instagram and among others. It helps to identify factors influencing customers' engagement and assess whether the existing digital media strategies are addressing customers expectation and satisfaction.

According to the survey result, customers engaging with Ethio-Telecom's digital media channels at varying level to access information or seek support when needed. Customers utilize a range of digital media platforms such as Telegram, X, LinkedIn, Facebook, WhatsApp, Company website and Instagram. The findings reflect that they use it primarily for information search and inquiries about Ethio-Telecom.

4.2.1Discussion of Customers Preferred Digital media Platforms Engage with Ethio-Telecom

Figure 4.2 Customers preferences for Digital media platforms at Ethio-Telecom



Source: Researcher's survey data (2025)

According to the survey results presented in figure 4.2, Telegram is most popular digital media platform among Ethio-Telecom customers, with 237 respondents favoring it.

This indicates most dominant company's digital media platform leveraged during the survey study. On the other hand, the second preferred platforms used by the respondents are Facebook chosen by 205 respondents. Followed by YouTube with 130 respondents, WhatsApp with 108, Linkiden with 77, X 69 and both Instagram and company website with 66 respondents.

In this study, Telegram and Facebook are dominant digital media platforms which the customers prefer to use interact with company. These platforms are deemed ideal for information updates and dissemination. Conversely, the rest platforms used less frequently however important touch point for content delivery and audience engagement. Based on this, the researcher recommended Ethio-

Telecom needs to diversify its digital media platforms by ensuring major ranges of platforms to align with customer preferences. Additionally, the less frequently used platforms should be strengthened to alternative engagement patterns and to meet the growing demands of customers' enquiry. As Uses and Gratification Theory propose, individuals consciously choose specific media platforms type either in seek of information, social interaction, entertainment or personal identity to get something new in contemporary world for personal needs, motivation.

According to Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), the company needs to fulfill customers' needs and expectation or desires to offer diverse needs and desires of the customers then enhance strong relationship, engagement and thereby boost customers' satisfaction step by step. So based on this argument, Ethio-Telecom needs to explore specific media types for the customers' digital media marketing strategies and leverage digital media to meet diverse needs of the customer to achieve its goals.

In this regard, Katz, Blumler, and Gurevith (1974) argue that individuals consume media in a goal directed oriented, influenced by social and psychological factors often seeking to fulfill needs or release tensions through various media types and strengthen social connection through media. In the case of Ethio-Telecom, it is indispensable to first identify customers preferred digital media platforms to engage with them more effectively, build its brand presence, and sustained relationships with potential customers.

Additionally, the company need to aware motivation behind customers' inclination on certain types of digital media platforms and conduct detail analysis to achieve impactful outcomes in the digital media regards.

The investigation will yield invaluable insight for further effective customer engagement and ensure the company's digital media strategies to align with users preferences. Thus, understanding this issue is crucial to foster strong connection with target customers.

4.2.2 Customers' overall satisfaction with information provided by Ethio-Telecom through its digital media channels

Table 4.4 Satisfaction levels of Ethio-Telecom customers

Statistics		
Overall, how satisfied are you with the information provided by Ethio-Telecom through digital media channels as a customer		
N	Valid	364
	Missing	0
Mean		3.23
Median		3.00
Mode		4
Std. Deviation		1.008

As indicated in the above table, the overall inclination of respondents' satisfaction with Ethio-Telecom's information provided for the customers through digital media channels analyzed as follows. The mean value of 3.23 reflects a moderate level of customer satisfaction, median value of 3.00 describes majority of respondents rated their satisfaction as a neutral to slightly positive or below. Furthermore, mode value of 4 indicates that majority of the customers expressed a higher level of satisfaction. Overall, the survey show moderate satisfaction with some customers reporting greater satisfaction on Ethio-Telecom's digital media platforms.

Overall, some potential customers have expressed dissatisfied with overall provided services, thus the company ought to address several areas for improvement and enhances customer satisfaction further.

4.2.3Customers clicking habit on Ethio-Telecom digital advertisements

Table 4.5 Customer interaction, clicking with online advertising

	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
How likely are you to click on Ethio-Telecom's digital advertisements	Very unlikely	23	6.3	6.3	6.3
	Unlikely	104	28.6	28.6	34.9
	Neutral	93	25.5	25.5	60.4
	Likely	121	33.2	33.2	93.7
	Very likely	23	6.3	6.3	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's survey data (2025)

According to the above table, out of 364 respondents, approximately 121 (33.2%) respondents expressed that they clicked with the company's advertising and indicated a positive response rate that offer Ethio-Telecom to improve its marketing strategy however, about 104 (28%) respondents

were unlikely to click and 23(6.3%) respondents weren't inclined to click or lack of interest regarding the advertising of the company and 93(25.5% were also don't have strong feeling on advertisings or neutral. Nevertheless, a small 23 (6.3%) segments of respondents were showed interest in clicking very likely on advertisements, despite relatively low portion.

Overall, the survey data shows that Ethio-Telecom customers have various perceptions regarding the likelihood of clicking on digital advertisement while some segment of respondents were likely or very likely remain unlikely click that engage advertisement.

The result suggest that company needs to improve its advertising approach by adopting strategies better that resonate with customers feeling to increase its digital marketing strategies effectiveness efforts across all level.

4.2.4 Customers rating on Ethio-Telecom services and products availability and accessibility

Table 4.6 Customer ratings of company's products and services

	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
How do you rate availability and accessibility of Ethio-Telecom services and products	Very poor	17	4.7	4.7	4.7
	Poor	68	18.7	18.7	23.4
	Neutral	53	14.6	14.6	37.9
	Good	201	55.2	55.2	93.1
	Very good	25	6.9	6.9	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's survey data (2025)

The above data indicate that majority of the respondents, 201 (55.2% rated the Ethio-Telecom services as "good" showing that favorable perception of the respondents on the company's availability and accessibility in the study area. Thus, majority of the respondents suggest that the company is effectively meeting customers' need in key areas. Furthermore, 25 6.9% respondents rated the services as "very good" this highlighting that company is shining and serve as bench mark for its further expansion to provide quality service. Both positive ratings reflect that the company is growing and meeting customers' satisfaction some level. However, 53(14.6%) rated "neutral", 17 (4.7%) respondents rated services as "very poor." This shows that minority of the respondents were dissatisfied with the availability and accessibility of the products and services in the city.

Overall, the survey data indicate that the availability and accessibility of Ethio-Telecom's products and services need to be addressed to meet customers' needs and expectation. Addressing such issues

is essential to enhance customer satisfaction and to certify more efficient service delivery in a better way across the city.

4.2.5 Customers' habits of noticing of Ethio-Telecom digital media platforms and advertising activities

Table 4.7 Customers' digital media platform visiting habits.

	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
How frequently do you notice Ethio-Telecom utilizing its digital media platforms and advertising for public relations activities	Never	12	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Rarely (sometime)	134	36.8	36.8	40.1
	Monthly	44	12.1	12.1	52.2
	Weekly	88	24.2	24.2	76.4
	Daily	86	23.6	23.6	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's survey data (2025)

Respondents overview on Ethio-Telecom digital media platforms utilizing and advertising for public relations activities majority of the respondents, 134 (36.8%) recognized that the company's advertising efforts for PR, others rarely or sometime checked company's digital media platforms. Meanwhile, 88 (24.2%) respondents were check weekly engage with Ethio-Telecom advertising activities and PR efforts suggesting that positive stance on company's brand visibility among the respondents.

Nevertheless, only 44(12.1%) respondents indicated that they visit (encounter) Ethio-Telecom advertising on monthly basis, reflecting that limited the awareness that isn't yet widespread. Particularly, 12(3.3%) of respondents reported never see the company's digital media advertisings or having low awareness on it. This shows that Ethio-Telecom's PR needs to hard work to increase its visibility for its customers and foster robust linkage with its customers to improve brand perception in minds of all individuals.

4.2.6 Customers Exposure on Ethio-Telecom Advertising, Online messages

Table 4.8 Customers' exposure to online message, advertisement

	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
How often do you see Ethio-Telecom's online messages, advertising and others	Never (I don't see them at all)	15	4.1	4.1	4.1
	Rarely (Once in a while)	88	24.2	24.2	28.3
	Occasionally (A few times a month)	100	27.5	27.5	55.8
	Frequently (A few times a week)	106	29.1	29.1	84.9
	Very Frequently (Almost every day)	55	15.1	15.1	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's survey data 2025)

The survey data indicated that majority 106(29.1%) of respondents frequently observed the company's online messages and advertising while 100(27.5%) respondents reported occasional engage on online content of message and advertisings.

However, 88(24.2%) respondents reported rarely see the messages and advertisings and 55(15.1%) respondents were visit very frequently exposure to the company's digital advertising and online messages while minority of respondents 15(4.1%) never visit Ethio-Telecom's online presence. This indicates that its digital advertising efforts and messages are not reachable currently for some segments of society. Thus, it needs to further enhance its digital presence and engagement strategies to reach all target customers in the city.

4.2.7 How customers describe or level online advertisings

Table 4.9 Customers' leveling of Ethio-Telecom's online advertising

	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
How could do you describe Ethio-telecom's online advertising	Informative	139	38.2	38.2	38.2
	Persuasive	93	25.5	25.5	63.7
	Annoying	80	22.0	22.0	85.7
	Engaging	52	14.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's survey data 2025)

From the sample of 364 respondents, large portion of the respondents 139(38.2%) perceived Ethio-Telecom's advertising is informative showing that the company is effectively conveying relevant messages and advertising to its audiences. Additionally, 93(25.5%) respondents viewed advertising as persuasive, displaying that great influence on the buying perception.

However, 80(22%) respondents stated that the company's advertising is annoying this shows that acute areas of improvement that could affect customer engagement and brand reputation.

And remaining 52 said it is engaging. Therefore, Ethio-Telecom needs to consider adapt other alternatives like creative storytelling and improve visual appeal to reduce negative perception of its customer thereby change passive participants into active participant on its online advertising.

4.2.8 Customers view on Ethio-Telecom building brand efforts and trust

Table 4.10 Customers perception on Ethio-Telecom's building brand awareness, trust

	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
How do you think Ethio-Telecom's public relations efforts are in building brand awareness and trust	Very poor	14	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Poor	50	13.7	13.7	17.6
	Neutral	72	19.8	19.8	37.4
	Good	186	51.1	51.1	88.5
	Very good	42	11.5	11.5	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's survey data (2025)

Regarding brand awareness approximately 14 (3.3%) respondents believe that efforts being made on awareness labeled it "very poor" while 50(13.7%) respondents said "poor" that reflects there should be strong Ethio-Telecom's PR strategies in brand awareness. Moreover, 72(19.8%) respondents were neutral on brand awareness efforts of PR. This indicates missed opportunity for detail customer engagement gaps effectively communicating brands worth.

On the other hand, 42(11.5%) respondents rated company's brand awareness efforts as" good" and the remaining 186(51.1%) rated "very good" brand and trust. Thus, even though majorities were rated as "good or "very good" minority expressed their dissatisfied. Thus, the findings suggest that building brand awareness remain as precondition to boost customer relationships and address the current and future engagement difficulties.

4.2.9 Customers' ratings of Ethio-Telecom's responsiveness and activities

Table 4.11 Customers rating of Ethio-Telecom's responsiveness on digital media channels

	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
How could you rate Ethio-Telecom's activity and responsiveness on digital media channels	Not at all Active or Responsive	14	3.8	3.8	3.8
	Not Very Active or Responsive	59	16.2	16.2	20.1
	Moderately Active and Responsive	178	48.9	48.9	69.0
	Active and Responsive	101	27.7	27.7	96.7
	Very Active and Responsive	12	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's survey data (2025)

The data obtained from 364 respondents with regard to Ethio-Telecom's responsive, 14 (3.8%) respondents responded that Ethio-Telecom is "neither active or nor responsive" this indicates company's digital presence for some customers inadequate or invisible. Additionally, 59 (16.2%) respondents noted that the company is "somewhat not very active or responsive." Furthermore, majority 178(48.9%) respondents believed that Ethio-Telecom is "moderately active and responsive" on digital media channels. Similarly, 101 (27.7% respondents rated the company as "active and responsive" and the rest 12(3.3%) rated "very active and responsive."

Thus, the survey shows that though majority respondents acknowledged some level of responsiveness on company's digital media, still others perceived as lacking inactive or responsiveness in its digital presence. This indicates that it should provide fast customer responsiveness on digital media channels to foster the connection between company and customer.

4.2.10 The level of customer satisfaction on Ethio-Telecom's online service and support

Table 4.12 Customers satisfaction on Ethio-Telecom's online customer service and support

	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
How satisfied are you with Ethio-Telecom's online customer service and support	Very dissatisfied	31	8.5	8.5	8.5
	Dissatisfied	74	20.3	20.3	28.8
	Neutral	107	29.4	29.4	58.2
	Satisfied	135	37.1	37.1	95.3
	Very satisfied	17	4.7	4.7	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's survey data (2025)

As depicted in the above table, regarding to customers' satisfaction with Ethio-Telecom's online customer service and support, 31(8.5%) respondents were "very dissatisfied", 74 (20.3%) were "dissatisfied" and 107(29.4%) respondents were "neutral", 135(37.1%) were "satisfied" and 17(4.7%) were "very satisfied."

Overall, though majority of the respondents expressed satisfaction with company's online support, this indicate that enhancing the quality of services will lead to greater customer loyalty as well as satisfaction onwards. Other respondent remain dissatisfied and very dissatisfied this recommends that Ethio-Telecom need to address the concern of dissatisfied customers and should improve. Furthermore, 29.4% of respondents were fall into neutral this is also lack of strong feeling about the service and couldn't engage fully with regard to online customer service and timely support.

4.2.11 Customers' suggestion on overall Ethio-Telecom's digital marketing strategies

Table 4.13 Customers suggestion on Ethio-Telecom's digital marketing strategies

	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
What improvements would you suggest for Ethio-Telecom's digital marketing strategies	Increased advertising frequency	30	8.2	8.2	8.2
	Better customer service responsiveness	241	66.2	66.2	74.5
	More promotions and Offers	53	14.6	14.6	89.0
	Enhanced social media engagement	40	11.0	11.0	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's survey data (2025)

It is notably that addressing the need and wants of customers through prefer digital media and strengthen its digital marketing strategies that align with customers' expectation at the long run.

With regard to customers marketing strategy of Ethio-Telecom, 241 (66.2%) respondents suggested that Ethio-Telecom needs to apply better customer service responsiveness and timely support. 40 (11%) respondents suggested enhanced social media engagement is preferable to engage with potential customers actively on digital media platforms foster dialogue.

Other 53(14.6%) respondents also believe that more promotion and offers that accompanied by incentives can enhance their experience with Ethio-Telecom's services that drive higher satisfaction. Overall, majority respondents suggesting that company should continue better customer service responsiveness on its digital marketing strategies to improve overall activities.

4.2.12 Comprehensive analysis of customers' perception towards Ethio-Telecom's current digital media practices

This section analyzes Ethio-Telecom customers' perception on management of its content, advertising accuracy, handling customer complaints, reaching diverse audiences, enhancing engagement and over all utilization of digital media tools. The responses are categorized using a five-point Likert scale "strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree"—the data could be categorized and analyzed as follow:

Table 4.14 Customers' perception towards Ethio-Telecom's current digital media practices

Dimensions	Scale	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Ethio-Telecom reaching diverse audiences across Ethiopia through digital media channels	Strongly disagree	13	3.6	3.6	3.6
	Disagree	61	16.8	16.8	20.3
	Neutral	90	24.7	24.7	45.1
	Agree	166	45.6	45.6	90.7
	Strongly Agree	34	9.3	9.3	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	
Ethio-Telecom's digital media significantly enhance your engagement and interaction with Ethio-Telecom	Strongly disagree	15	4.1	4.1	4.1
	Disagree	56	15.4	15.4	19.5
	Neutral	99	27.2	27.2	46.7
	Agree	165	45.3	45.3	92.0
	Strongly agree	29	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	

Ethio-Telecom utilizes a diverse range of digital media tools and platforms for its public relations and advertising efforts.	Strongly disagree	10	2.7	2.7	2.7
	Disagree	42	11.5	11.5	14.3
	Neutral	89	24.5	24.5	38.7
	Agree	184	50.5	50.5	89.3
	Strongly agree	39	10.7	10.7	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	
Ethio-Telecom handled effectively issues of content moderation, negative feedback, and online reputation management	Strongly disagree	42	11.5	11.5	11.5
	Disagree	82	22.5	22.5	34.1
	Neutral	118	32.4	32.4	66.5
	Agree	121	33.2	33.2	99.7
	Strongly agree	1	.3	.3	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	
Ethio-Telecom's advertisement accurately reflects the products and services of the company	Strongly disagree	24	6.6	6.6	6.6
	Disagree	39	10.7	10.7	17.3
	Neutral	78	21.4	21.4	38.7
	Agree	178	48.9	48.9	87.6
	Strongly agree	45	12.4	12.4	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	
Ethio-Telecom customer complaint handling procedure and its outcome is good	Strongly disagree	29	8.0	8.0	8.0
	Disagree	78	21.4	21.4	29.4
	Neutral	93	25.5	25.5	54.9
	Agree	145	39.8	39.8	94.8
	Strongly agree	19	5.2	5.2	100.0
	Total	364	100.0	100.0	

Sources: Researcher's survey data (2025)

Each of the six questions in the above table of survey data is explained separately in the following manner:

Ethio-Telecom accessibility to diverse audiences across Ethiopia through digital media platforms

According to the survey data from 364 respondents, reveals that majority of the respondents 166 (45.5%) agreed that the company is effectively reached diverse audiences across Ethiopia through its digital media platforms. Additionally, 34(9.3%) respondents strongly agreed, showing positive reception to Ethio-Telecom's outreach efforts. However, 74(20.4%) respondents' disagreed, 13(3.6%) strongly disagreed and 93(25.5%) were neutral. Overall, this suggest that while Ethio-Telecom's digital media strategies are largely effective, the remaining showed for further improvement in ensuring more widespread access and outreach across study area.

Ethio-Telecom's digital media enhancement and engagement with customers

With regard to Ethio-Telecom's digital media enhancement and engagement with customers, 165 (45.3%) respondents agreed that these platforms significantly enhance their engagement and interaction with the company. Furthermore, 29(8%) respondents strongly agreed. In contrast, 15 (4.1%) respondents strongly disagreed, and 56 (15.4%) disagreed, indicating that there is a perceived gap in the accessibility or enhancement of relevance of the company's digital media. This highlights the need for Ethio-Telecom to enhance its engagement strategies, particularly through improved content delivery and better accessibility with potential customers at large.

According to UGT, media users engage to fulfill social, cognitive and affective needs. In this context, the survey findings showing that 165 (45.3%) of respondents agree that Ethio-telecom digital media presence highly enhancing their engagement and information interaction needs. This shows they are motivated by the information and social interaction through digital media platforms. The findings suggest that practice of digital media of the company mainly align with cognitive and affective gratification. Nevertheless, notable 99(27.2% respondents remained neutral Ethio-Telecom's digital media content may not satisfying diverse needs of the customers. This implies that company should refine its strategy to address integrative need of some customers' engagement in digital media channels.

Utilization of Diverse Digital Media Tools for PR and Advertising

Ethio-Telecom uses diverse digital media platforms for PR and advertising. On this regard, 184 (50.5%) respondents agreed and 39(10.7%) strongly agreed. This indicates Ethio-Telecom leverages ranges of digital media platforms for PR and advertising efforts. However, 10(2.7%) respondents strongly disagreed and 42(11.5%) disagreed and 89(24.5%) were neutral. This indicates even if

many customers recognize the effectiveness of Ethio-Telecom's digital media significant some remained unaware full range of platforms being utilized. Therefore, still Ethio-Telecom need to address the gap, expanding its digital presence, and increase clients awareness.

Content moderation and online reputation management

Does Ethio-Telecom is effectively handling content moderation, negative feedback and managing its online reputation with the potential customers? On this regard, 121(33.2%) respondents agreed that the company handles those issues effectively and whereas only 1 strongly agreed. However 82(22.5%) respondents disagreed, 42(11.5%) respondents were strongly disagreed and other 118 (32.4%) were neutral. This data shows that there are some potential gap and uncertainty in the company's moderation, negative feedback and online reputation management. As a result, the company needs to address those issues through clearer communication and ought to enhance its approach to address the customer feedback and management in its online presence in responsible manner during crisis or customer enquiry.

Accuracy of Advertising

Regarding Ethio-Telecom's advertising accuracy in reflecting the company's services and products that offered to the potential customers, 178(48.9%) respondents agreed and 45 (12.4%) strongly agreed. This positive feedback indicates that the company's message is connecting effectively with a large number of customers. However, 78 (21.4%) were neutral and 39(10.7%) disagreed and 24 (6.6%) strongly disagreed. This shows that the company need to address the advertisings gap that align or communicate without barrier with customers' expectation, attractive and clear manner.

Customer complaint handling outcome

With regard to Ethio-Telecom's complaint handling procedure, outcome is whether good or not in connect with the customers out of 364 respondents, 145 (39.8%) agreed and 19 (5.2%) strongly agreed. However, 78(21.4%) disagreed and 29 (8%) strongly disagreed and 93 (25.5 %) respondents were neutral. Therefore, this finding indicates that the company's responsiveness and complaint handling resolution process ensure rapid, effective, and timely responses. Overall, improving customer complaint handling the areas needs to change, build long-term loyalty for its services for potential customers in the study area.

Analysis of customer perceptions towards Ethio-Telecom's current digital media practice accessible, complaint handling, digital media engagement, public relations efforts effectiveness, content moderation, complaint handling and reaching a broader audience, customer has positive perception

on those areas. The respondents stated that Ethio-Telecom should refine its digital media strategies to improve content relevance, enhance accessibility and ensure more complaint resolution. There are also remaining critical issues particularly in content moderation and customer complaint handling and revise customer service procedure. Thus, addressing such issues enhance more engagement strategies, strong customer company relationships pattern, and increase responsiveness to customer inquiries thereby minimize negative feedback and maintain smooth relations with users.

The findings also reveal that the need for unceasing development in digital marketing and customer service procedure. This efforts increase customer satisfaction which helps Ethio-Telecom to achieve substantial engagement and service responsiveness all are crucial to expand Ethio-Telecom's competitive edge in the world while realizing greater diverse customer satisfaction in study areas as well as nationwide.

Qualitative findings: Interview data presentation

An in-depth interview was conducted to gather more comprehensive information for this study. The researcher interviewed staff through open ended-question with three selected managers including PR, digital media and marketing communication at Ethio-Telecom headquarters. All were purposively chosen based on their areas of work, knowledge, and direct involvement with digital media practices in the company. The interview questions were prepared in English, and the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to accurately capture participants' responses. These transcriptions were written into a computer to clearly present their ideas. The collected interviews data were first coded, encoded, and tabulated before being analyzed, narrated, and interpreted.

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews were analyzed and presented through a coding process to organize and interpret the information clearly. Participants were assigned labels as like Interviewee A, B, and C to ensure clarity and retain confidentiality. Then the coded data was presented in a structured manner to show key themes views drawn from the interviews.

Public Relations Role at Ethio-Telecom

PR primarily works at Ethio-Telecom to enhance the connection with potential customers, communities and stakeholders which company operates in. According to interviewee A, PR accomplishes several tasks and facilitates the company's external and internal operations with world community including:

Building positive image: Facilitate communication with the existing stakeholders to foster trust, transparency, and engagement; connect with customers or the large public.

Social media engagement: Ethio-Telecom utilizes platforms like Telegram, X and Facebook to disseminate information and updates in its platforms.

Reputation Management: Maintain positive public image through proactive communication and address customer regards and manage feedback to ensure transparency.

Media Relations: The Company cooperates with journalists to share news about services initiatives by means of press release and media briefings either in monthly or weekly basis

Crisis Communication: Quickly address the negative cases and manage media inquiries to protect its reputation.

Press releases and official announcements: Press releases are attached in media platforms to inform stakeholders what development has done to enhance media relations and aware public.

4.3Digital media platforms employs for integrating digital marketing and PR efforts

In response to the research question, in this part the researcher explores what kinds of digital media platforms used by Ethio-Telecom for its PR and marketing, based on the data collected through interview. According to the results of this study, understanding these digital media is indispensable, as the digital media is becoming major tool for the organizations to engage with customers to promote the services, build brand image and capably in the current digital scenery. In this regard, the perspectives shared by interviewees A, B and C provides valuable insights about platform selection, actual usage and its importance to the company.

Ethio-Telecom, is a biggest and pioneer telecom operator in Africa, leverages various digital media platforms to remain accessible to its customers and liberalizing its market.

Ethio-Telecom actively uses digital platforms like Telegrams, X, website, LinkedIn, Facebook and others to interact with customers, share information, promote services and products, and also increase the number of followers and subscribers in those platforms by implementing various engagement strategies. It is employing interactive techniques like question- and-answer campaigns on its digital media platforms where participants who able to share new information or company activities and respond accurately to raise questions are given the opportunity to win prizes. As to interviewee A said: This method not only promote user engagement but also serve as basic tool to disseminate company updates and enhance interaction, brand visibility.

According to interviewee B, to enhance digital media presence to the customers, Ethio-Telecom is engaging with charity organization like Mekedonia through offering monthly support campaigns and promoting its digital media platforms through round for each local charity organizations pledging

that "this month, for every new follower of gained on our digital media pages, we will donate money for every share for the selected charity organization during the stated month."

Interviewee B further said that "s*uch strategy is augmenting online engagement as well as reinforcing the company's commitment to discharge corporate social responsibility. Therefore, this campaign will enhance digital media platforms communication thereby increase subscriber numbers and ensure its content to reach a lot of audiences."*

According to interviewee A, Ethio-Telecom leverages various digital media platforms; however, engagements levels vary across them. For instance, X has followers of 420,000, Telegram 365,195 and Instagram 244,000 followers. So X has more follower than Telegram and Instagram on this study. Thus, this data shows that strong customer demand for using digital media platforms within the company. The company also has 1.5 million Facebook followers and Ethio-Telecom maintains highly interactive, active and timely updating services and technology support for customers through X. Interviewee A added X is the key digital media channel proving fast response with customers service timely, sharing fraud, reporting and the remaining Telegram, Instagram and Facebook are not highly active live interaction as compare with X.

This indicates that Ethio-Telecom focuses on its platforms preferred by potential customers to efficiently interact with them to address complaints and any issues they may have. In this regard, interviewee B said: "*We use variety of digital media platforms to accomplish quickly deliver information to the large customer strengthen our brand and handle effectively relationships.* Our digital media strategy is multi-faceted, combining PR, product and services with new thinking and continuous exploration."

Interviewee C also stated that currently Ethio-Telecom is creating linkage both internal and external world by using digital media platforms such as X, Telegram, Instagram, You Tube, Facebook and among others. In this regard, interview C expressed as follows:

"*We utilize platforms like X, not only to reach the external world but also to internal communication activities within Ethiopia. So this helps people know who Ethio-Telecom is.*

The interviewee B added that all digital media platforms are accessible to all individuals regardless of age, education and skills. *For the past 130 years, it has been continually embracing technological advancement."*

Furthermore, Interview B also further stated that "apart from the above digital media channels of Ethio-Telecom being leveraged, the company has established advanced mobile- based application

for digital media called telebirr. In recent years, in partnership with Dashen bank, Ethio-Telecom is offering credit services to its customers through telebirr platforms to access them seamlessly."

On the other hand, according to interviewee A, advertising is disseminating across both digital media platforms and traditional media channels--TV, radio, newspapers and informing customers about the services and new products to reach out various segments of society by using several local languages across Ethiopia to enhance customer engagement and brand loyalty. However, interviewee A: further said that advertising is decreasing due to the emergence of digital media despite things needs precaution while disseminating the information to public in rapidly evolving environ. Implementing digital media strategies isn't entirely without cost; however it is cheaper than traditional media.

Interviewee A said: "mainstream media, while costly, effectively reaches to millions of people through this traditional media channels. The good thing is shifting people's perceptions and encouraging customers to accept and use our products. This indicates despite, higher costs, investing in mainstream media is strategic for both widespread visibility and changing consumer behavior, which are crucial for product success." This suggests that beyond mere exposure, the goal is to create meaningful engagement that drives acceptance and usage.

Furthermore, Ethio-Telecom is leveraging digital media platforms to robust the domestic presence as well as creating global linkages with external world. These digital media communications apart from domestic service provider in telecom and financial relate an activity helps to further penetrate world market to become one of the biggest telecom companies.

Overall, the company should aggressively continue use those less cost effective digital media platforms to reduce its cost paid to advertising in traditional media channels even though, advertising on traditional media sometime necessary. This is the great opportunity to handle or maintain customers since there is fierce competition as the market is open to other telecom company in the nation's market.

According to the researcher's interviews findings, Ethio-Telecom mainly advertise its products and services through digital media platforms. Nevertheless, traditional media like Radio and TV also used to a lesser extent specifically during the launching of new products and services in the market.

Therefore, what indicate the interview data that Ethio-Telecom mostly uses digital media for advertising, designing various initiatives like monthly support campaigns with the local charity organizations to promote its digital media platforms constantly. Those efforts sustain, create robust relationships and interact with potential customers in the long run. This shows a significant and good

step though; there are many inefficiencies or gaps in digital media utilization and accessibility being seen.

- The findings of this study also show that Ethio-Telecom mainly connects with its clients via the digital media platforms including Telegram, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and in its official website. The researcher also identified that Ethio-Telecom's most operation has become digitalized due to advancement of new technology across the worldwide. Activities are communicated through internet and extending beyond traditional advertising and call center interactions.

4.4 Key Challenges Ethio-Telecom faces while implementing digital media, marketing strategies

In response to the question, this section of analysis tried to see key challenges of Ethio-Telecom faces while implementing of its digital media and marketing strategies. It is recognized that these platforms provides major benefit in customer engagement, communication service delivery. The company also experiences some limitation when applying of such platforms. The challenges may categorize as financial, organizational and technological relate issues may affect overall activities.

In this regard, interviewee A said: "Implementing digital media pose challenges including fraud, technological barriers for audience, spread misinformation, trust issues, and high competition. When problems arise in digital media regards, it takes time to bring back normal that effect on brand reputation and customer engagement."

Regarding the challenges of leveraging digital media at Ethio-Telecom, interviewee B stated that the company has been equipping latest technologies to effectively address the rapid growing cyber threats and these proactive approach assisted prevent potential damage from data breaches, revenue losses, and service interruption, implementing control mechanism to counter cyber-attacks successfully deterred many attempted cyber-attacks before casing any harm.

According to the World Bank Report (2023), Ethio-Telecom faces challenges including connectivity issues, a low internet penetration among population which pose difficult for online customer engagement, and digital literacy. Most customers lack the skills to navigate these platforms that reduce effectiveness of online campaign. The report further stated that insufficient infrastructure may affect quality and services provide in coverage regards specifically in rural areas, the coming of new competition increase burden on the company to improve immediately services and products to customers and financial shortage may hinder the company's more investment ability either to expand

more aggressively. Interviewee C also accentuated that in spite of the challenges linked with using digital media, there are also substantial opportunities that enable Ethio-Telecom to reach a wider customers directly. This enhances customer engagement thereby increase brand recognition and robust relationships with stakeholders. Interviewee C further stated that "*using digital media strategies are more cost-effective than traditional methods***,** *enabling the company to reach customers in a matter of seconds and connect worldwide. Ethio-Telecom keenly monitors all of its digital media platforms to receive and address customers' complaints. When the issues like service disruptions or other issues arises, it report on time to relevant director or local division team to provide practical solution." Interviewee B also added that to facilitate the responsiveness, Ethio-Telecom has established special designed complains management team that dedicated mainly managing digital media cases using tools like short SMS, ChatBot system and direct messaging to provide timely response mostly within minutes. According to interviewee B, digital security threats such as cyber-attack* and fraud have been relatively minimal so far, however, the company take hast action against who commit fraud and it monitors its platforms through dedicated fraud protection team to ensure the integrity and security of digital operation function normal.

Overall, when the company uses those digital media platforms, it has both merit and demerit which include substantial opportunities that enable Ethio-Telecom to reach wider customers directly and facing challenges including fraud, technological barrier for audience, misinformation, trust issues, and fierce competition respectively.

According to the interview findings of this study, Ethio-Telecom is using digital media strategies more cost-effective than traditional methods that reach to the customers with matter of seconds however the company still needs to invest a lot of money to successfully implement and manage such strategies. However, the company should take precaution while using those digital media platforms to protect against the global fraud and the most cyber-attack threats which could severely disrupt its operation and incur big costs in its working system. When things went wrong in digital media regards, it takes a lot of time to back in a normal circumstance.

For instance, cyber securities threats are remain the primary concern thus, the company needs to have dedicated teams and control mechanism to pose the significant reputational challenge. Moreover, the infrastructure gap and connectivity issues that disrupt sometime lasts continue may hinder its ability to deliver high quality digital services to its customers and low digital literacy

customer particularly rural population is barrier to fully utilizing of digital media. These factors reduce the effectiveness of digital media engagements.

Overall, digitalization presents both challenges and opportunities for the large companies. To do better and achieve their aims, the company should modernize its digital media operation system with a new working environ that supported by skilled talent since this is crucial to sustain and effectiveness in an increasing competitive digital scenery.

4.5 Significance and utilization of digital media and marketing on Ethio-Telecom's overall ooperation

In response to the last fourth specific objective of this thesis, it explores the significance and utilization of digital media and marketing within Ethio-Telecom. The data was gathered via in-depth interview with interviewee, A, B and C. And the analysis draw from qualitative data collected from interviews explores how digital media is being utilized and what is its significance for the companies like Ethio-Telecom. Thus, the following section presents the findings, the perceptions provided by interviewee A, B and C.

The emergence of digital media is primarily changing the way of information dissemination, facilitating communication, and interaction across the global level.

In regard to utilization of digital media at Ethio-Telecom, interviewee A said: "There is much improvement in accessibility of digital media in recent years, the company is implementing those platforms extensively more than ever before. According to him, the company disseminates various messages based on the customers' status, availability through digital media including Telegram, X, Website, and customer service support."

Additionally, interviewee B illustrated, *we use a variety of digital media channels to accomplish quickly deliver information to the large customer base, strengthen our brand and effectively handle customer relationships. Similarly, Interviewee A said that Ethio-Telecom leverages via digital media platforms such as Telegram, X, Instagram, You Tube, Facebook, and among others to create sustainable linkages both internal and with external world.*

The company's digital media platforms don't only promoting products and services but also play a vital role in discharging corporate social responsibilities and fostering relationship with the local community. Ethio-Telecom has experienced vast growth in its digital media presence, as of now company has 365, 195 followers on Telegram, 420,000 on X and 244,000 on Instagram along with a variety of other platforms. When asked about the impact of digital media utilization on public

relations, brand sustainability, interviewee C replied that the implementation of various digital media platforms has significantly enhanced the company's all daily operational efficiency, market outreach and communications efforts. According to interviewee C, digital media platforms save significant time, and resource that allow sharing of relevant information about the company without need of extensive media coverage or formal briefings.

As a result, the emergence of these platforms presents Ethio-Telecom with significant benefits since they are simple to use, open to the public, and improve communication.

Interviewee A emphasized that to keep our customers informed and engaged, we use digital screens to display new products, targeting especially on young customers through with easy-to use, and modern advertising.

Interviewee B stated that "Ethio-Telecom is actively engaging in digital transformation activity that aimed at enhancing digital solutions and services. Furthermore, digital media supports consumer connectivity needs and improving digital communication among the citizens. Ethio-Telecom creates contents across platforms such as Telegram, Instagram, LinkedIn, and X to promote its services and engages with customers' efficient way."

Interviewee C said the following on digital media leverages:

"By leveraging digital media and mainstream channels, Ethio-Telecom connects with demand-driven consumers segment including middle-income individuals, technological literate users. When targeting specific people, company uses digital media and mainstreaming channels and establishes a robust digital presence. Moreover, Ethio-Telecom conducts mobile marketing, door-to door outreach, and organizes promotional works in the places where our customers are located- even reaching rural communities including farmers up to farmers directly."

In this regard, interviewee B underlined that "when we utilize digital media, first we identify customer needs or preferences and then address for that looking for specific products. Based on these research, and identified requirements, we prepare user manuals, product pricing, guideline, the product names and then once these resources are developed, we communicate easily with our target and premium customers by using digital media platforms wherever they are."

According to IMC theory, it is important to understand different communication strategies used in public relations and align message across various digital media channels to deliver consistent in rapidly the modern evolving digital media landscape to enhance the relation with target customers.

Thus, based on this argument, Ethio-Telecom is leveraging digital media and mainstream channels tie with demand-driven consumers segments including middle-income individuals, technological literate users, and communicating easily with its customers through platforms such as Telegram, Instagram, LinkedIn, and X to engage with target customers' efficient way by delivering message across various digital media landscape.

As Kotler and Keller (2016) proposed that delivering importance consistent and customer centric message across various digital media channels and leveraging such platforms to broader engagement and responsiveness that resonate with customers are integrated marketing communication tools leads to higher customer loyalty.

Thus, based on the above argument, the company sends informative message sometime to aware customers raising awareness about fraud, providing users with essential security alert more ensure safe and confident utilize of digital media platforms.

From the researcher point of view, the rise of digital media platforms offers great advantage for Ethio-Telecom, as they are easy to implement, accessible to the public and enhance communication engagement. Therefore, Ethio-Telecom's digital media platforms are saving significant time and resource which allow more sharing, disseminating of all relevant information about the company activities without need of extensive media coverage or formal briefings at anywhere. As the digital media continues revolutionizing hastily, it is important that the companies need to adapt their communication and operational systems effective manner accordingly. Overall, the company's digital media platforms are demonstrating IMC promotion with authentic corporate social responsibilities effort and initiation creates consistent, meaningful messages that foster the local community relationships and brand trust. This approach strengthens emotional connection and driving customer engagement and social impact on potential customers as well.

Utilization of Digital Marketing in Ethiopian Telecom Systems

According to the interviewees, Ethio-Telecom is playing a great role in building and boosting digital economy system that provide infrastructure and connectivity for the digital services and business activity transforming all market payment system including shifting mobile internet marketing thereby increasing significance of data.

All interviewees highlighted that telecommunication has been playing critical role in digital economy and digital marketing of Ethiopia to be possible.

Results, Discussion, and Comparative Analysis with previous studies

This study found that Ethio-Telecom utilizes digital media for public relations and digital marketing to facilitate its operations both internal and external communication within the company, going beyond merely interacting with potential customers.

The findings from both methods indicate that Ethio-Telecom actively utilizes digital media platforms like Telegram, X, Facebook, Instagram and among others. Furthermore, the survey results revealed that Telegram is the most widely used platforms, followed by Facebook. However, the interview data indicated that though Facebook is more followers than others platforms, X is the most interactive and frequently used platform facilitate both internal and external communication within the company.

Mulu Girmay's 2023 study, titled: "The Role of Facebook as a Public Relations Tool in Ethio-Telecom: A Case Study" focused exclusively on Facebook and employed content analysis, without considering customers views. This indicates a research gap, as few studies examine Ethio-Telecom's broader digital media usage. Customer engagement on various contemporary digital media platforms and the overall impact of using these platforms remain largely unexplored. Addressing this gap is indispensible for a wide-ranging understanding of Ethio-Telecom's digital media and marketing strategy and its effects.

Similarly, Ahmed Mohammed's (2018) research, titled "Practice of Advertising Strategy and its Effectiveness: In the case of Ethio-Telecom," focused on the advertising practices, assessing only from customers perspective using surveys. However, the study neglected employees views, which limits inclusiveness in Ethio-Telecom's operations. In contrast to Ahmed Mohammed's study, the current study entertained a mixed methods approach, incorporating views from customers and company's view on digital media platforms. Therefore, by building on the prior researches, this thesis further demonstrate the company's digital media utilization and marketing effectiveness of the company's digital communication on broad manner.

The differences in findings between the current research and the two previous studies can be attributed to multiple factors including sampling technique, methodological difference, theoretical frameworks, areas of study and the nature of findings itself.

The attainment of sufficient amounts of respondents in this study significantly strengthens the validity and reliability of the findings which reduce errors and increase representative of the data led into generalizable results.

This study employed both qualitative (in-depth interviews) and quantitative (surveys) methods, using simple random sampling. Unlike the previous studies relied only either quantitative data, content analysis or in-depth interview, this research combines both in-depth interviews and survey data to provide an inclusive view of how Ethio-Telecom leverages digital media for public relations and advertising. It also examines how customers engage with its digital media and marketing strategies.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1Summary

This study aimed to explore how effectiveness of digital media and marketing strategies in Ethio-Telecom's Public relations efforts to enhance customer engagement.

The study was guided by four research questions on the practice of digital media and marketing PR platforms used at Ethio-Telecom, challenges of implementing digital media strategies at Ethio-Telecom, significance and utilization of digital media at Ethio-Telecom and customers' engagement with Ethio-Telecom's digital marketing strategies. To do this, a mixed research methods were employed. Qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews at Ethio-Telecom headquarters; specifically selecting managers that are highly linked to digital media implementation and practices while the quantitative data was collected through an online survey administered to customers residing in Addis Ababa, using Google forms as primary data collection.

Simple random sampling was employed to give each individual an equal chance of selection, thereby reduce bias. For the total distributed surveys, the study successfully obtained 364 completed responses, reflecting a high response rate of 91%. This enhances the reliability and representativeness of the collected data.

The data were presented and analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the interview responses were interpreted by labeling the interviewees as A, B and C.

The Major findings of this research as follows:

- Ethio-Telecom usually leverages digital media and marketing strategies for public relations such as Telegram, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, website as well as PR tools are used to promote services, products to build its brand in minds of customers. Furthermore, the researcher findings from the interviews indicated that the company's most operations have increasingly digitalized and interactive with all stakeholders. According to the interview data, Facebook has more followers than other platforms; however, X is the most interactive and extensively utilized. It plays great role in facilitating both internal and external communication linkages. Additionally, advertising is disseminating more widely on digital media platforms than on traditional media channels. However, the company does not always use these digital media platforms efficiently using due to occasional internet disruption and resulting customers dissatisfaction. These challenges hinder smooth communication

negatively on overall user experience on Ethio-Telecom to maximize the benefit of such digital media strategies.

- Implementing various digital media platform and marketing strategies offers companies like Ethio-Telecom with a more cost-effective and efficient reaching customers compared to traditional media channels. However, these strategies also introduce substantial major digital security threats such as cyber-attacks, fraud, and misinformation.
- The interview data also indicate that Ethio-Telecom's leverage of various digital media significantly enhances the company's daily operations and communications efforts. These platforms save significant time, enable the efficient sharing of relevant information about the company without need of extensive traditional media coverage. Ethio-Telecom successfully disseminating various messages across the nation through digital media platforms, reaching potential customer quickly and directly. This approach is helps Ethio-Telecom strengthen its connection, engagement and communication with its potential customers. However, a major gap identified in this study is that Ethio-Telecom did not utilize extensive all digital media platforms highly during the study period.
- According to the survey findings, Telegram is most widely used digital media platforms among Ethio-Telecom customers during the study period. It stands out as the most dominant and interactive platform, also playing significant role in connecting Ethio-Telecom with its customer. Facebook ranks as the second most preferred digital media platform, also playing a significant role in connecting Ethio-Telecom with its customers. This shows that it is indispensable for Ethio-Telecom to prioritize customers preferred digital media platforms and understand motivation behind customers' selection of certain types of digital media platforms to engage with them more effectively, build a strong brand presence, and sustain long-term relationships with existing potential customers. Thus, understanding this issue is crucial to foster strong connection with target customers.
- Furthermore, according to the survey findings, though majority respondents agreed that Ethio-Telecom's digital media and marketing strategies has enhanced customer engagement and interaction, some respondents remained neutral, while others strongly disagreed or disagreed. This indicates that the company's current level of engagement isn't not fully satisfying customer expectations and interaction through its digital media platforms.

5.2 Conclusion

- This research tried to explore the effectives of digital marketing and media for public relations, and customers' engagement in Ethio-Telecom and how these digital media are being used. And also how advertisings are being disseminated at Ethio-Telecom through digital media platforms and traditional media channels as well. Moreover, what are the challenges and benefits while utilizing digital media for Ethio-Telecom and what is its significance for Ethio-Telecom's the overall operation and how do customers engage with Ethio-Telecom's digital media presences all were discussed one by one. By doing that, the researcher has employed mixed research methods which are qualitative and quantitative. The research data was collected through in-depth interviews and distributing survey questionnaires by selecting those who are relevant to this study.
- Interview data findings indicated that all interviewees believed that digital media and marketing strategy plays a vital role in Ethio-Telecom's overall operational strategy, including gradually enhancing accessibility for all customers. Moreover, the findings also revealed that Ethio-Telecom actively uses digital media platforms like Telegrams, X, website, LinkedIn, Facebook and others to surge and interact with customer, share information and promote services and products. The company uses such platforms to link with internal and external world and disseminate company updates, enhance interaction, and show brand visibility.
- According to the survey results, customers engagement with Ethio-Telecom's digital media platforms at varying level either to access information or seek support when needed. And also customers' preferences vary, with some platforms were more interactive or engage, that leads to their dominant, while others remain less interactive or frequently less used platforms.
- The findings of this study indicated that the practice and level of utilization of digital media and marketing in Ethio-Telecom have shown progress from the previous time, despite this progress, some challenges persist, and company isn't fully implementing all digital media platforms uniformly across its operations.

5.3 Recommendations

- Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that Ethio-Telecom headquarters has made outstanding progress in utilizing digital media and marketing in its public relations. However, much work remains to be done in the future to achieve tangible outcomes and effectively leverage digital media platforms. Focusing on these efforts will be crucial for maintaining the

brand's reputation and satisfying customers' interests in the competitive digital setting. The following are the recommendations of the researcher based on the findings of the study.

- The study revealed that customers frequently face challenges such as service outages and limited accessibility when interacting with Ethio-Telecom's digital media platforms or internet-based services. These issues hinder effective customer engagement and could negatively impact the company's reputation and customer satisfaction. At this point, to address such issues, Ethio-Telecom should invest in infrastructure expansions and ensure platform stability to provide uninterrupted accessibility. Prioritizing consistent internet service and minimize interruptions will be vital to maintain potential customers as much as possible.
- According to the survey findings, though majority respondents agreed that Ethio-Telecom's digital media platforms have enhanced customer engagement and interaction, in contrast, some respondents showed remained neutral, while others strongly disagreed, and disagreed. This variation indicates that the company's current level of engagement doesn't fully meet customer expectations. It suggests there is room for improvement in how the company fosters interaction and satisfaction through its digital media channels.

  Therefore, to address this gap, Ethio-Telecom should focus on enhancing its engagement strategies, particularly by improving content delivery, strengthen two-way communication, better accessibility and address the interest of potential customers to build stronger and lasting relationships and upgrade customer satisfaction.
- Though Ethio-Telecom utilizes various digital media platforms, the survey findings shows that some platforms are extensively used, while others remain underutilized or less frequently for content delivery and audience engagement. Based on this, the researcher recommends that Ethio-Telecom should diversify its digital media platforms to better align with potential customer preferences or foster strong connection with target customers. Additionally, the less frequently used platforms should be strengthened to alternative engagement patterns to meet the growing demands of large customers' enquiry.
- The study also indicated that Ethio-Telecom's digital media platforms play a pivotal role in enhancing the company's image, supporting day-to-day operations, and consolidating its connection with both local and international audiences. However, using digital media platforms offers substantial disadvantage, it may exposes Ethio-Telecom into potential digital security threats, including cyber-attacks, fraud, and misinformation. This can lead to a potential

disruption and overall operations problems on central system. Therefore, it is recommended that Ethio-Telecom must implement a robust digital security framework that supported by skillful professionals trained in cyber-security and digital risk management.

- The most important findings of the researcher is that, though digital media is widely used non-digital media users—particularly rural customers are ignored, with no alternative communication channel provided. Thus, Ethio-Telecom should consider the needs of those non-digital media users in its long-term strategy to ensure national digital transformation. The strategic recommendation for Ethio-Telecom is to increase investments in advancing its network infrastructure and adopt analytical tools to enhance customer engagement more efficiently across diverse customer groups.

5.4 Research Implications

Limited research has been conducted on the benefits and challenges of Ethio-Telecom's digital media and marketing strategies. Therefore, it is recommended that future research focus on assessing on this aspect in other parts of the nation.

While this study focused on city of Addis Ababa, similar studies in other parts of the nation could provide a broad overview of customers' satisfaction, engagement level, and areas needing improvement. Such insights would be valuable for Ethio-Telecom in further developing its digital media and marketing strategies effectively to address diverse customer demands nationwide.

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APPENDIX

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS AND HUMANITIES

SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

APPENDIX– 1 Survey Questionnaires

Dear respondents i would like to thank you for taking the time to my study. I am currently graduate student at Addis Ababa University School of Journalism and Communications as a partial fulfillment for Master of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communications. I am conducting a research study with a titled: Digital Marketing Public Relations in Ethio-Telecom: A Case Study. This survey questionnaires aim to gather a holistic view of Ethio-Telecom's engagement with its customers and the effectiveness of its digital media strategies in both public relations and advertising contexts.

Hence, I would like you to share your experiences regarding to the issue under study. In doing so, your participation is anonymous and the shared information will be used only for the research purpose.

If any further information about this study and if you any suggestions about this questionnaire please contact me in the following address:

Misganaw Asnake Mobile 0923219005 Email: misganawasnake@gmail.com

Thank you for your time, and your fast response in completing the questions based on the instruction.

Survey questionnaires to be completed by Ethio-Telecom customers in Addis Ababa

Dear respondent, please respond to the questions by selecting the correct option

Demographic information of survey respondents

1. Gender □Male □Female
2. Age □21-29 □30-39 □ 40-49 □50-59, 60+
3. Level of education

   A I did not finished High School **B.** I completed High School **C.** Diploma **D.** College Degree **E.** Master Degree **F.** Doctoral degree (PhD)

4. Which digital media platforms do you currently use for public relations and advertising of Ethio-Telecom? (you can select more than one)

A. Twitter (now X) **B**. Instagram **C.** LinkedIn **D.** Company Website **E**.Telegram **F.** WhatsApp **G.** YouTube **H**. Facebook

5. How long have you been using Ethio-Telecom's services?

A. <1 year **B.** 1-5 years **C**. 6-10 years **D**. 11- 15 **E**. Over 15 years

6. How satisfied are you with Ethio-Telecom's online customer service and support?

A. Very dissatisfied **B**. Dissatisfied C. Neutral D**.** Satisfied E**.** Very satisfied

7. How would you rate Ethio-Telecom's activity and responsiveness on digital media channels?

A. Not at all Active or Responsive **B**. Not Very Active or Responsive **C.** Moderately Active and Responsive **D**. Active and Responsive **E.** Very Active and Responsive

8. How effective do you think Ethio-Telecom's public relations efforts are in building brand awareness and trust?

A. Very poor **B**. Poor **C.** Neutral **D.** Good **E**. Very good

9. How would do you describe Ethio-Telecom's online advertising?

A. Informative **B**. Persuasive **C**. Annoying **D**. Engaging

10. How often do you see Ethio-Telecom's online messages, advertisements and other content?

A. Never (I don't see them at all) **B**. Rarely (Once in a while) **C**. Occasionally (A few times a month) **D.** Frequently (A few times a week) **E**. Very Frequently (Almost every day)

11. Ethio-Telecom is reaching diverse audiences across Ethiopia through digital media channels

A. Strongly Disagree B. Disagree **C**. Neutral **D**. Agree **E** Strongly Agree

12. Ethio-Telecom's digital media significantly enhance your engagement and interaction with company

A. Strongly disagree **B.** Disagree **C**. Neutral **D**. Agree **E.** Strongly agree

13. Ethio-Telecom utilizes a diverse range of digital media tools and platforms for its public relations and advertising efforts.

A. Strongly disagree **B**. Disagree **C**. Neutral **D.** Agree **E.** Strongly agree

14. Ethio-Telecom effectively handles issues of content moderation, negative feedback, and online reputation management

A. Strongly disagree **B.** Disagree **C**. Neutral D. Agree **E**. Strongly agree

15. Ethio-Telecom's advertisements accurately reflect the products and services of the company?

A. Strongly disagree **B**. Disagree **C**. Neutral **D**. Agree **E**. Strongly agree

16. How frequently do you notice Ethio-Telecom utilizing its digital media platforms and advertising for public relations activities?

A. Never **B**. Rarely (sometime) **C**. Monthly **D**. Weekly **E**. Daily

17. How do you rate the availability and accessibility of Ethio-Telecom services and products?

A. Very poor **B**. Poor **C.** Neutral **D**. Good **E.** Very good

18. Ethio-Telecom's customer complaint handling procedure and its outcomes are good

A. Strongly disagree **B.** Disagree **C.** Neutral D. Agree **E**. Strongly agree

19. How likely are you to click on Ethio-Telecom's digital advertisements?

A. Very unlikely **B.** Unlikely **C**. Neutral **D**. Likely **E**. Very likely

20. Overall, how satisfied are you with the information provided by Ethio-Telecom through digital media channels as a customer?

A. Very Dissatisfied **B**. Dissatisfied **C**. Neutral **D**. Satisfied **E.** Very Satisfied

21. What improvements would you suggest for Ethio-Telecom's digital marketing strategies?

A. Increased advertising frequency **B**. Better customer service responsiveness

C. More promotions and Offers **D**. Enhanced social media engagement

The Google Forms link

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1DRits8GCkNxP2hwOwRHb8NoB_1ET07SAtHfNvdn_bx8/edit

APPENDIX – 2 Interview Questions

Interview questions for selected managers from PR, digital media, and marketing communication at Ethio-Telecom headquarters.

A. Interview questions for public relations manager at Ethio-Telecom headquarters

1. How the practice of digital media and marketing does change your PR strategies as compared to traditional methods?
2. Which digital media platforms your company use most effective for reaching your target audiences? Why choose those platforms?
3. How do you tailor your digital PR strategies to different target audiences?
4. How Ethio-Telecom implement its digital PR strategies between urban vs rural, youths vs Older ages?

5. How does Ethio-Telecom address the digital division in its PR strategies and others in the current daily activities?

B. Interview questions for digital media managers at Ethio-Telecom headquarters

1. How do you monitor online channels, digital media for potential crisis communication?
2. What are the main challenges does Ethio-Telecom face while utilizing digital media and how you handle it?
3. How do you ensure that your digital content is engaging and relevant to your target audiences?

C. Interview questions for marketing communication managers at Ethio-Telecom headquarters

1. How does Ethio-Telecom use digital, marketing and media for brand building, reputation management, and customer engagement?
2. What are the most effective digital marketing strategies for Ethio-Telecom in Ethiopia?
3. What role does mobile marketing play in the Ethiopian telecom sector?
4. How utilization of digital media platforms is reducing advertising costs company paid to traditional media outlets?