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**FUCULTY OF HUMANITIES, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JOURNALSIM AND COMMUNICATIONS**



**Political Activism and Social Media Responsibility In Ethiopia:-
The Case Of Facebook & Twitter**

A Thesis in Journalism & Communication

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By Elham Ali

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The undersigned have examined the thesis entitled '**Political Activism and Social Media Responsibility in Ethiopia; The Case of Facebook and Twitter**' presented by **ELHAM ALI**, a candidate for the degree of **Master of Arts** and hereby certify that it is worthy of acceptance.

_____ Advisor	_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Internal Examiner	_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ External Examiner	_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Chair person	_____ Signature	_____ Date

UNDERTAKING

I certify that research work titled “Political Activism and Social Media Responsibility in Ethiopia; The Case of Facebook and Twitter” is my own work. The work has not been presented elsewhere for assessment. Where material has been used from other sources it has been properly acknowledged / referred.

Signature of Student

Elham Ali

OPERATIONAL TERMINOLOGIES

Blog: a website/online page containing an author's/group of writers' experiences, observations, opinions. Blogs are meant to educate, entertain or for activist reasons

Clicktivism: the use of social media and other online methods to promote a cause; it gets its name from the phenomenon of clicking to 'share' or 'like' something online

Facebook: an online social networking site that allows registered users to create profiles, upload and share photos and videos, send messages and keep in touch with other users

Internet/online activism: the use of electronic communication technologies such as social media to enable faster communications by citizen movements

Like: the action of showing support or approval for something by clicking a button labelled 'like' that comes with every post placed on Facebook

Offline activism: the use of non-violent forms of agitation, which includes writing letters, political campaigning, economic forms such as boycotts, rallies and street marches

Share: the act of distributing a post on Facebook by clicking the 'share' button. It usually specifies who can see the shared post

Slacktivism : a portmanteau of the words "slacker" and "activism" that refers to actions performed via the Internet in support of a political or social cause, but which require little time or involvement. Examples include signing an online petition or joining a campaign group on a social media website

Social activism: intentional actions meant to bring about social, political, economic, or environmental change

Mediamorphosis: is the term used to describe how media forms evolve and adapt with each other. Mediamorphosis was coined from two words: media and morphosis: to create a new word to describe the simultaneous changes taking place in the media world today.

ABSTRACT

Social media is now all over the world, and become well used alternative media in developing country like Ethiopia where there is no strong political parties and loose freedom of the press. Although the penetration percentages are still low, the power that social media owns in influencing the government and social leaders is becoming increasingly important.

The last two – three years have been in massive rise in use of social media political activism in Ethiopia. When the growth and popularity of social media generated concerns on the political activists, bloggers and influencers made a huge impact towards their followers. The communications mechanism particularly political activist's call for illicit movement/ action was inflammatory. I believe that social media political activism in the recent digital Ethiopia does not consider the potential risk on the ground and government's reaction towards it was also radical. Thus the researcher wanted to study other strategic options for responsible use of social media.

Although research on social media has been conducted, for instance, on the use of social media in protest movements and less emphasis has been placed on their responsible use aspects. Thus, to nurture responsible political social media activism, this study aims to better understand the digital political activism trends in Ethiopia and examine the potential relationship between the activist's posts and followers' reaction.

In order to achieve the above objectives online questionnaires' been uploaded, two semi - structured interviews were conducted and "Irresponsible "social media posts have been shared, collected and analyzed. Data was analyzed with qualitative content analysis.

Although I believed that our social media activism communication are irresponsible, this study supports the use of social media as a new ways of political participation to get the voices of unheard to be heard. All in all, despite being used for irresponsibly, social media usage was also perceived to contribute to concrete changes in the community and the country at large.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The invention of new communication protocol, Internet, and the emergence of social media has changed a lot in the life of everyone across world. It revolutionized the way we communicate, work, and eat, commerce and express our concerns. The number of Internet users has more than tripled in a decade—from 1 billion in 2005 to an estimated 3.2 billion at the end of 2015 (Bank, 2016).

It has the leverage of accessing every information from anywhere and connect us worldwide without boundaries. Internet has now become hugely pervasive and totally affected world media consumption system. As we all know today the news source place in many of the society has shifted and these media choices are propagated with new technological options coming. News used to be done institutionally with professional requirement and checked for trust worthy of the news and ethical evaluation. However now with the alternative media outlets news could be done by anyone and greatly changed the approach of the media landscape.

Practicing objective journalism these days are in a much different position than they were a generation ago. They become dramatically less trusted by the public, face harsh and persistent political criticism as the mainstream media landscapes are largely consisted of a few national television / radio news networks and newspapers. Although the mainstream media, TV, radio and newspapers are still important source of news, the fast pace updates of the cyber communication forced it to be prominent media source in the world.

The world's focus of concern has shifted to social media most recently and social media platforms such as Facebook & Twitter become prominent news wires and have a dramatically different structure than previous media technologies. Content can be relayed among users with no significant third-party filtering, fact-checking, or editorial judgment. An individual user with no track record or reputation can in some cases reach as many readers as possible. A telegraph columnist discussed the origins of fake news as it is information that governments and powerful individuals used as a weapon for millennia, to boost their support and quash dissidence (Titcomb J. & Carson J., 2017).

And I conceptualize that the consumption of fake news would misinform the society. The declining trust in mainstream media could be both a cause and a consequence of fake news

gaining more attraction. Fake news arises in balance and easily because it is cheaper to provide than precise signals, because consumers cannot infer accuracy without cost, and because consumers may enjoy partisan news (Hunt Allcott & Matthew Gentzkow, 2017). Thus, such irresponsible social media content developments and communications would mislead to wrong decisions.

Ethiopia, though with a very limited Internet connection rate, and broadband Internet speeds are extremely slow, operating far below advertised speeds, and frequently with a high contention ratio. Under a public monopoly, mobile telecommunications grew from a mere 1.2 million subscriber in 2007 to around 22 million subscribers by the end of 2012 (Lishan, 2012). Internet and data subscribers grew and become game changers and played a very important role in shaping the impacts of social media.

Social media is now a handy networking mechanism that allows people to communicate freely, to define themselves, to grow and nourish relationships and to keep in touch with friends and families. From Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and a collection of blogs, a news statement from 31400 in 2007 to 221000 in 2011 (Lishan, 2012). As we are part of it, we can witness the penetration & expansion of technologically advanced smart phones, as they now can advance from zero to 20 million viewers overnight (Kamp, 2016). The viral nature of this highly social, user driven environment enables complete strangers to connect over common beliefs, desires or interests and together create winners and losers. However, unlike Twitter, Facebook is the most popular platform in Ethiopia. As Twitter needs a very brief message content, it used to restrict with 44-character limitations, but very recently it gave the capacity of 280-characters (Busby, 2017).

The era of digital activism discusses that technology is strengthening social movements by providing new tools and capacities and they state their perspectives on the value of digital activism: Optimist, pessimist and persistent. As the words implicates the optimists argue that digital activism will change existing political situations and empower citizens but rather pessimists believe that it will bring illicit influence. The last view point, persistent argues that they don't see any deliverance nor damnation rather there will be a little change, but previous power administration will persist (Marcos Sivitanides & Vivek Shah, 2011). This study argues for the middle view point called Pragmatic Optimism, Adam Thierer (2011) though there's a kernel of truth to what the pessimists predict about how the passing of the old order leaving society without some things that might be worth

preserving. And they are certainly correct that each of us should think about how to better balance new technologies and assimilate them into our lives.

In one way or another, Internet critically influenced our socio, economic, educational, cultural and political state of affairs. It is what we see that social media has stimulated citizen participation and commitment in their political life. Even personal communications via social media brings politicians, activists and influential and others together. And it lets politicians and activists reach to their audience in a more targeted manner. The nature of social media where personal posts are multiplied with shares and re-tweets makes it easy to see how many of friends or followers are interested in and what other proactive conversations are entertained below the original post content. Conversations and debates could happen online as in reply, moreover hashtags (#activism) and handles (@user) will help to reach to the large audience at once.

As social media is cheap platform for such a conversation and is now becoming an emerging trend that restructures the communication dynamics for social call for movement, the Arab Spring could be one important big showcase. It will be violent when irresponsible posts expand and multiplied.

Thus, my argument in this study is that it is good that social media can be used as an alternative platform for expression of concern and political discourse, but how can we build responsible tweets and Facebook posts. This study is an attempt to obtain first perceptions of irresponsible discourse with in Ethiopian Twitter and Facebook spheres and to demonstrate what kinds/ forms of social media messages produced would lead to ‘instability’. Moreover, this study will examine what roles Facebook and Twitter discusses their distinct features and characteristics.

Tied with this I will illustrate the trend in which different forms of communications available on Twitter & Facebook facilitate political expression in expansion of irresponsible digital activism statements.

1.2 Political Background

According to www.woldometers.info the current population of Ethiopia is 109, 494,479 one of the most demographic country in Africa with multiple nations & nationalities, and varied cultures & beliefs. It has been well mentioned as regional power in the IGAD and Horn of Africa following its strong engagement in regional peace and security issues.

EPRDF came to power in 1991 and codified ethno-federalism in its 1994 Constitution and decentralized state structures based on nine new ethnically defined regions. EPRDF came to power as an alliance of four ethnically based parties—the TPLF, based in the Tigray Region; the Oromo Peoples’ Democratic Organization (OPDO), based in the Oromia Region; the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), based in the Amhara Region; and the Southern Ethiopian Peoples’ Democratic Movement (SEPDM), based in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region. This broad coalition established the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) in 1991 (Lyons, 2011).

Ethnic politics in a multi ethnic society seems a brave way when tolerance and understanding between varied cultures and beliefs is essentially thought, otherwise prejudice and discrimination might cause tensions. The relationship between the various ethnic groups could negatively affect the social, economic and most importantly the political development of a nation and create conflicts in between.

The ruling party is primarily criticized for failing to have nurtured a genuine, inclusive, and functioning democratic political system. In fact, some positive developments have been observed since the EPRDF took power, including the adoption of a constitution comprising democratic and human rights principles, and the conduct of relatively free and fair elections in 2005. However, in the aftermath of the violently contested election in 2005, the ruling party narrowed the political space by enacting a series of laws, including: the CSO law, terrorism law, press law, and the electoral codes of conduct (Mulugeta, 2014).

It is ironic that a policy – ethnic federalism - which embodies a strongly normative premise as to what constitute the ‘natural’ criteria of a ‘nation, nationality, or people’ (what is thought to ‘constitute’ that group as a nation, nationality, or people) can be seen to have elicited striking innovation in group internal self-definition and external self-presentation, the better to conform with (and operate within) these expectations (Vaughan, 2003). This ethnic ruling system has now been in place for more than two decades and so far, Ethiopia has been a relatively stable country in the region despite some occasional unrest happening within. While there is an ethnic dimension to rule in Ethiopia, it is partial and somewhat diluted through measures that give a larger number of groups a stake in governance. It is nevertheless not surprising that this situation has continued to generate criticism as well as resistance from those who feel politically and economically excluded (Veen, 2016). As far as my observation is concerned, many dissatisfactions and quarrels are now getting ethnicized. But also, on the real terms most recently Ethiopia is experiencing a serious

ethnic collision in almost every corner of the country, higher education institutions are challenged by the time of this research these days. It seems true that Teona Gelashvili (2018) stated as different studies point out that negative feelings towards minorities and stereotypes tend to increase with time and it only takes a “trigger” event to result in hate crimes.

As far as the EPRDF is concerned, the freedom of press in Ethiopia has been put in the constitutional frame for the first time in the nation’s history (Meshesh, 2011). The 1994 Ethiopian Constitution - Article 29, number 2 and 3 of the constitution assures the freedom of press in Ethiopia and states that Freedom of the press and mass media as well as freedom of artistic creation is guaranteed. The media shall be granted institutional independence and legal protection to enable it to accommodate different opinions and ensure the free flow of information, ideas and opinions (Ethiopian Constitution, 1994) and lets people express their opinion and concerns through. Moreover, proclamation for freedom of mass media & access to information Article 4, number 1 also states that freedom of mass media is constitutionally guaranteed. Censorship in any form is prohibited (Freedom of Mass Media and Access to Information; Proclamation Number 590/2008). Nowadays, it is encouraging to have many more television channels besides to EBC recently, such as EBS, LTV, Fana TV, Walta and others but most of them are framed for entertainment. Private radio FM services also increased in number which actually doesn’t mean that the mass media freedom is practiced but sounds like in progress. Media professionals usually claimed that the constitution as well as the proclamation does not give the media leverage to cherish the freedom. In this support, although the Ethiopian Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and media freedom, the relevant laws regulating media operation are still in the process of finalization, leaving much uncertainty about the broadcast and newspaper environment (Gebremedhin, 2006).

Terms like old media, new media, social media and blogging have become useful in defining value or quality. News organizations are becoming increasingly worried about the potentially disruptive effect of social media on their business models. They are struggling to square the circle between using these new powerful open networks to drive traffic and engagement whilst maximizing commercial revenues on their own websites (Newman, 2011). With the decline of mainstream media journalists are getting obliged to get themselves in to the new media blogging and newswires that is where a large number of audiences grasp their news. The use of Internet and social media speedup the

information travel between people and enhanced news exchanges faster than usual, opinion updates will also grow constantly.

In addition to that, a culture of political campaign, expressions of concern and observations are open and engaging in the cloud (in the web). There has been various activism movements on social media in Ethiopia such as the #OromoMovemnet, #DimtsachinYsema, #FreeZone9bloggers and many more.

But I believe that social media is used for different inflammatory purposes and led the audiences for wrong decisions. Digital activism allows activists with access to the digital world and invites to make their case and call for change, it is important as they pick developmental obstacles, expose corrupts and mal-administration but using it otherwise and misinforming with fake stories is irresponsible.

As Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn on the UN general assembly meeting last year stated, “In fact, we are seeing how misinformation could easily go viral via social media and mislead many people, especially the youth. Social media has certainly empowered populists and other extremists to exploit people's genuine concerns and spread their message of hate and bigotry without any inhibition. It is critical to underline one matter which is usually given short shrift, both by the media and others. It is simply hypocritical to deny that some of our countries have been targets for destabilization activities carried out with no accountability by people and groups who have been given shelters by States with whom we have absolutely no problems,” he stressed. (Desalegn, 2016)

Countries like Germany made thought decisions to remove irresponsible and racist social media contents with this the researcher believes that the Ethiopian governments trends of controlling spread such contents on social media is radical.

1.3 Problem Statement

“While we can never measure the Internet’s full effects, we know that it made the current crisis larger, more widespread, and more virulent. It not only carried the information, it also helped spread what is known as “thought contagion”. That is, the rate at which greed and fear mongering took place –via instant access to news and online rumors - was accelerated to unprecedented levels” (Davidow, 2011, p4).

“The future of social movements and its relationship with social media will continue to adapt and grow, but it will certainly be intertwined moving forward. The human spirit is

something that will not change and it will be the defining cause of any societal change, and we may have yet to see what the next tool for change might be.” Eric Clark, (2012). This growth and popularity of social media generated concerns on the political activists, bloggers, influencers, researchers, diplomats and citizens, the communications mechanism particularly political activist’s call for illicit movement/ action is hugely irresponsible. I believe that social media political activism in digital Ethiopia is not responsible, which does not consider the potential risk and government’s reaction towards it is also radical. Thus, I wanted to study other strategic options for responsible use of social media.

Political activism discourse on social media at critical times can lead to intolerable and irresponsible information exchanges, comments, likes and shares which might aggravate the situation in discourse and create a serious confusion of politicians, as well as citizens which might finally result in their political extrication. Such communications on popular social media like Facebook and Twitter could possibly impede the constructive process of reflection and threaten democracy.

This study will try to articulate selected posts how the content and reaction of a given post text shapes its potential effect on the audience and how influential it is in this respect. The degree of plausibility or of naturalism in the treatment of violence is likely to affect the seriousness with which it is taken by the audience. It is about how the audience engages with the text. The notion of activity draws attention to the part of the audience in making choices, making sense of the text. It allows for the audience being a producer of meanings. The activity referred to is both about the intellectual work of the audience and about kinds of physical reaction around the text, that is where active audiences start to act (Burton, 2005).

Hence, texts that followers and fans see on social media, mainly on Facebook and Twitter, where there is hectic youth engagement is influential. Burton also emphasized that media has huge influence on its audience. And nowadays it is no surprise that political candidates are also moving their campaigns online as it is becoming a very effective means of reaching especially the younger voters (Willis, 2007). Which means even political leaders has shifted their discourse activism to online. According to Meriam Webster Dictionary, activism is a practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of conversational issue. Activism has been present throughout history in every sort of political system. Activists are typically challengers to policies and practices trying to achieve a social goal and usually operated behind the scene.

There are varieties of protests from face to face to massive protest. There are also various methods of activism and the most common image of it is public protest such as marching, public meetings. It could also be violent or nonviolent (Anderson & Herr, 2007).

Internet and social media are now indispensable part of people's life everywhere and has even affected the modern-day politics which requires government officials adopt with the system. E-government is the new paradigm that influences and get influenced by many factors in our life: social issues, infrastructure capacity, and governmental factors of working and communicating to the public at large (Rawan Khasawneh & Emad Abu-Shanab, 2013). The Ethiopian government is also using social media for its work. We all know Dr. Tedros, the former Ethiopian Minister of foreign affairs, is active with lots of followers on Twitter with a handle @Dr.Tedros and hope this contributed for him to win the WHO director general candidature as the voting tool was open online.

It could be one good example that the government is aware and gives critical attention to it. While an emphasis is good, the trends of controlling mechanism of these social networking sites have been very radical so far. Even now, while I am working on this paper, 16 December 2017, social networking sites are down. There is news coverage in this regard as 'Ethiopian government blocks social media as violence spreads' which is issued by IT News Africa (2017) and a lot more similar news earlier in the year 2017.

The study aims to better understand the digital political activism trends in Ethiopia. While digitally optimistic, yes social media informs, encourages and connects people and friends but rather it might be taken otherwise. First, I was so taken away with the news when the Germany law that pushes social networks to delete abusive posts comes in to effect on 1 October 2017 (Natasha, 2017) and assumed that why don't Ethiopia have one. I have Facebook account on 2009 and Twitter 2011 and active on both platforms and working as digital communications, I can witness their influence unless responsible/ proper content development is thought.

1.4 Objective of the Study

The Study sought to explore the irresponsible use of social media in political activism and its consequences and followers reaction to the influential activist's posts. The overarching objective of the study is to analyze the digital political activism in Ethiopia on the most widely used social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter and to come up with alternative solutions to alleviate the radical Internet shutdown trends.

Specifically, this study aims to;

- Analyze the current social media political activism trends in digital Ethiopia
- To examine the relationship between the activist's posts and followers reaction
- To identify key digital activists in Ethiopia
- To evaluate social media activism contents as responsible/irresponsible
- To define strategic options for the development of responsible social media usage

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the above objectives this study aims to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the current social media political activism practices in digital Ethiopia?
2. What is the relationship between the activist's posts and followers' reactions?
3. How are activism social media posts evaluated as responsible or otherwise?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it will offer insights into social media activism in social and governance issues using social media interventions as platforms for socio-political change. This in turn, will provide options for social media communications strategies and reduce the significance placed for irresponsible way of digital activism.

The study can also assist the government to see best practices of balanced social media regulations. It will also teach digital activists and followers on what responsible activism are and help them analyze reactions of their activism contents. Thus, I expect from this study to define and enhance strategic options for cultivation of responsible political social media activism contents.

This study will finally add to the body of knowledge on social media activism, and will be an important resource to anyone seeking to explore the dynamics to the concept of political activism through social media.

1.7 Delimitation of the Study

There are some limitations to the study, mainly due to sample posts could be generalized to the broader posts of influential activists. And even by the write of this study due to critical unrests in many of higher education institutions my focus of study Facebook & Twitter social media platforms are down and such disconnections might affect the content under study.

Hashtags & posts for some of the showcases that I am going to pick are started way before this study so that I might lose some important tweets and Facebook posts. Tweets & Facebook posts that I can collect are subjected to publicly available and my social media contents will only be contents in English or Amharic.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

1.9 Organization of the Study

This thesis will comprise five chapters. Chapter one obviously outlines the study's background and research objectives including scope and delimitations of the study will be discussed. Chapter Two presents the theories and scholarly opinions reinforcing the study. Chapter three will discuss the research design & methodology of the study deals with the quantitative and qualitative research methods used to generate data for the study. In the light of methods which will be used in chapter three, chapter four will analyze and present findings in a bid to address the research questions and objectives. The last chapter, chapter five, based on the findings, will comprise recommendations, summary and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Contemporary Ethiopian Politics and Media

Private press was short lived and almost nonexistent in Ethiopia before 1991. It was only when the present government of Ethiopia, EPRDF, took power in 1991 that freedom of expression was guaranteed first in the transitional government's charter and then in the 1995 constitution eliminating the longstanding tradition of censorship (Blen, 2006). Hailemarkos (2006) also agreed in this and stated as it is only a decade ago that the private press has begun enjoying its freedom when the Derg regime was overthrown by today's ruling party EPRDF. Ethiopia has been progressively though reluctantly normalized in opening up the private press. However, over the last decade the pace of development and social change has quickened in all kinds of sectors and has strongly impacted all Ethiopian societies, including those in the peripheries (Gerrard & Eloi, 2015). From 1974 until 1991, all media of communication in Ethiopia were state owned. A legislative framework to provide for the 'freedom of the press' was introduced by the EPRDF soon after it came to power. The media policy of the EPRDF government provided impetus for the establishment of more private newspapers in Ethiopia (Salawu & Aseres, 2015). However, the close and blurred relation between state and party during the 1990s gave the ruling party de facto control over the state media apparatus and resources (Vaughan & Tronvoll, 2003).

According to the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (2018), there are more than 63 communities, regional, FM and national radio stations, 13 private radio and 11 private Television stations has been licensed for broadcasting and so far 9 public television stations are on air. This is against the staggering 603 newspapers and 130 magazines that have taken press license, from which 430 newspapers and 130 magazines have been published and circulated in the period after the press proclamation in 1991 and February 2005. The post-2005 period again has exhibited a dramatic decline of particularly political oriented press. We acknowledge that it is problematic to give specific figures of news publications in circulation in Ethiopia at any given time, as proscription of newspapers is a regular and continuous exercise in the country. It is therefore difficult to rely wholly on the website of the supposedly authoritative Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority.

The beginning of the free press in Ethiopia has been fascinating. Immediately after the 1992 Press Bill, according to Tesfaye (2013), though the figures differ but according to the Government, 385 publications registered between October 1992 and July 4 1997, of which 265 were newspapers and 120 magazines. According to CPJ's 2010 report the situation in the practice of journalism and of the practitioners are deteriorating. In addition, according to Skjerdal (2011), the media scene in Ethiopia is largely dominated by the government. The same author explained that most 5 journalists, estimated at 80 percent, work for state media institutions. Sebsbe (2017) asserts that the rise of ethnic consciousness has become a global phenomenon as many anthropological investigations confirm. People who organize themselves on the basis of ethnic identity have been striving to keep their socio-economic as well as political demands. This occurrence is further reinforced by the rise of communication technology that eases flow of information and contact among members of a certain group.

Moreover, the government is lacking focus in employing of the New Media and provide space for dissent voices and alternative visions (Woldegabriel, 2014). The author stated that in 2012, it was to launch a New Media platform to accommodate dissent voices and opposing views to begin discussions on all specter of Ethiopian politics. However, the level of penetration of the New Media technologies and limited Internet access are the main hurdle to harness the potential of the New Media. This is a platform where different views and ideologies can be entertained and presented to the public. The platform would also be a space where important and current national affairs would be debated from all perspective views. It would be a scene where idea is hammered to chart any future and current agenda with all concerned citizens. The platform would also be a board where citizens will be able to raise their concerns to the government. The government officials will be able to address all concerns publicly and officially (Woldegabriel, 2014).

Abbot (2012) however discusses that New Media jeopardizes the process of democratization by using Internet and social media for anti-democratic and extremist agenda. In newly formed reformative regimes anti-democratic forces could use New Media to undermine democratic beginnings. "Internet and social networking tools can be used to advance extremism and anti-democratic agendas just as easily as 'progressive' and democratizing one". This study also try to analyze irresponsible use of social media for political communication. In-general, according to the recent edit on the www.pressreference.com media and publication after the contemporary Ethiopian politics mushroomed after the Press Bill of 1992. Figures differ, but according to the Government,

385 publications were registered between October 1992 and July 1997, of which 265 were newspapers and 120 magazines. At any one time, there are probably about 20 different newspapers for sale in Addis Ababa, keeping the new media aside. As this all scarcity of space pushed most to migrate to a platform where a little bit of freedom could be exercised in less cost. In the above review it seems that there are changes in the media landscape keeping many other factors constant. However, it does not give the freedom to join.

2.2 Mainstream and New Media

Thurman (2018) tend to argue that the emergence of new media technologies threatens the survival of mainstream media. While there are many dissenting views in the Internet's impact on traditional media's news gathering and financial sustainability. On the other view, Hassid & Repnikova (2016) challenged the notion of the relationship between old and new media as largely contested. They argue that the relationship can be more complementary than adversarial.

New technologies of content production operate within the social and cultural limitations of media institutions. Even at the BBC, which the first to introduce participatory practices in the first decade of the 21st century, "rather than changing the way most journalists work, 'Audience comments', 'Audience content' and 'Audience stories' are steadily implanted within a traditional news-gathering process, and in most cases are being used as just another journalistic source" (Wardle & Williams, 2010). According to Zeller & Hermida (2015), the development and growth of networked technologies, have provided more opportunities for more people to create, communicate and consume news and information. The elevated level of new media technologies does not appear to have eroded public confidence in the mainstream media. For instance, Canadians have historically been known as avid consumers of news. Nine out of ten Canadians consider news provided by traditional news media as reliable and trustworthy (Fletcher, Logan, Hermida, & Korell, 2011). According to the authors, habitual consumption of news is declining, though, particularly among those under 35 years of age, compared to older generations. Industry surveys imply that social media, and specifically Twitter, has become part of the everyday toolkit of journalists, though there are variances in the extent of use on a daily basis (Hedman & Djerf-Pierre, 2013).

2.3 Uses and Gratifications Theory in Social Media

Since the study is looking in to social media responsibility and political activism, I needed to look at the reasons and motives behind the usage. It has been noted that people use social media and micro blogging sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, for many given purposes. Some of these are making friends; posting status updates on one's profiles (telling people what you are doing, feeling, eating, about to do, etc.); posting comments, videos, and/or pictures on other persons' profiles (on people's wall); liking other persons' status; sending messages to people; playing games or quizzes; posting links to events, news, or websites; inviting people (posting web links); creating events and extending invitations; creating groups for people (some of whom share common interest) to join as well as posting links to these events (Waller, 2013).

One important theoretical approach to understand why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs is uses and gratifications theory. The theory has been granted to Blumler & Katz (1974) who claimed that instead of being mere receivers, users of media actively participate in the communication process. They said that people actively guide their media usage and choose the media source that best satisfies their needs. Recently, the uses and gratification theory has also been used to analyze the use of the Internet and social media (Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009; Flanagin, 2005; Ebersole, 2000; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Song, LaRose, Eastin, & Lin, 2004). Some studies have emphasized on gratifications of specific needs. For instance, (Chen, 2011) looked at the usage of Twitter in relation to person's need to connect with others and found that people used Twitter to actively gratify their need to connect with others. Based on their review of research, Sundar and Limperos (2013) argued that new media and their development have not only created new gratifications but also made the already existing ones more visible. For instance, although information-seeking can be seen as a well-established gratification, it is not detailed enough to fit the context of new media.

The same authors criticize that the uses and gratification theory research has mostly concentrated on social and psychological motivations behind the usage leaving out the technologically-driven needs. Furthermore, they point out that new media do not only satisfy new gratifications, but it has also been claimed to have created them.

Thus, although limited in scope, this review tries to show the motives behind the use of social media. Journalists mainly use social media platforms such as Twitter to collect the news, find sources, report the news and share links to news websites (Artwick, 2013)

(Broersma & Graham, 2013) (Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2012). For instance, the study by Groshek & Tandoc (2017) analyzed Twitter activity around the Grand Jury decision in the death of teen Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. Yet, at the same time, journalistic conventions of objectivity, sourcing, and verification are being bent as the socio-technical traits of social media shape journalistic practices. In his investigative overview on journalism and new media technologies, Hermida (2013) points to a fragmentation of professional norms and practices, as “journalists seek to shape a new communicative space to fit within prescribed conventions while they are, themselves, shaped by its socio-technical traits”.

2.4 Social Media and Micro-blogging

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Social Media is defined as “forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos).” According to Wikinvest, “Social media describes websites that allow users to share content, media, etc. Common examples are the popular social networking sites like Friendster, Facebook, MySpace, etc. Social media also includes YouTube, Photobucket, Flickr, and other sites aimed at photo and video sharing. News aggregation and online reference sources, examples of which are Digg and Wikipedia, are also counted in the social media bucket. Micro-blogging sites such as Twitter can also be included as social media.”

The web dictionary defines social media (noun) simply as, “Websites and applications used for social networking.” “Social media are media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Social media use web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social media dialogues.” wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_mediaTechopedia(<https://www.techopedia.com/definition/4946/microblog>) defines Micro blogs as a type of blog in which users can post small pieces of digital content like pictures, video or audio on the Internet. These posts, called micro-posts, are immediately available to a small community or public. It differs from a blog due to its smaller content. Micro-blogging is highly popular among users due to its portability and immediacy.

For majorities of journalists in many countries, social media and micro-blogging has become an indispensable professional tool, employed on a daily or weekly basis to monitor

events, find sources, and verify information. Even the most remote areas of the world have at least heard of Facebook and Twitter, and are probably using them on a daily basis. Numerous scholars (i.e. (Lasica, 2003), (Siegel, 2018)) outline the several benefits social media and micro-blogging services bring to journalism and how it has changed the lives of all individuals in ways that are not yet fully understood. As an example, the study by Thurman (2018) shows that over half of the journalists in Germany (across the seven counties included in the study) agreed with the statement: “I would not be able to carry out my work without social media”.

As media technologies become more advanced the rise of social media and micro-blogging has opened up a new channel of communication. According to Hale (2015), the first media technology that everyone can agree actually was a website called Six Degrees lasted from 1997 to 2001. Six Degrees allowed users to create a profile and then friend other users. Six Degrees even allowed those who didn't register as users to confirm friendships and connected quite a few people this way. In the late 1990's as broadband Internet become popular, websites that allowed users to create and upload content begun to appear. From 2002 onwards, a large number of social networking sites were launched. Some - Such as Friendster enjoyed a surge of popularity, and others developed niche communities - such as Myspace (Dewing, 2012). In 2003, LinkedIn took a decidedly more serious, sober approach to the social networking phenomenon. It is still a networking resource for business people who want to connect with other professionals. In fact, LinkedIn contacts are referred to as “connections.” Today, LinkedIn boasts more than 500 million members (Salman, 2018).

The Facebook started on the campus of Harvard University, where the three friends were students, (Charlene, 2007). As of the fourth quarter of 2017, Facebook had 2.2 billion monthly active users making the platform most popular social network worldwide (Statista Digital Market Outlook, 2018). Using the Facebook platform, users sign up for a free account and then make connections with other users on the service by “Friending” them: it works in connection of friends and families where finally create a network of people and messages could go as easy as a mouth talk.

In July 2006, Twitter is launched, and it is said that it is one of the fastest growing social networking and micro-blogging service, with an average of 330 million monthly active users as of the first quarter of 2017 (Statista Digital Market Outlook, 2018). Twitter is a real-time information network that empowers its users to share and discover interesting content through status updates (or “tweets”). Twitter is often referred to as a micro-

blogging service because it limits your status updates to 280 characters, which actually used to 144 characters.

However, journalists face a number of challenges in utilizing social media and micro-blogging services professionally. Basically, the problem is related to scale. The sheer volume of material being produced has made it impossible, using the platforms' own interfaces, to monitor and verify all the contributors and content that might match a journalist's interests. This problem has been known for some time. For example, Schifferes *et al.* (2014) interviewed journalists in 2012 and found that they were dissatisfied with the search and filtering features presented by social media and micro-blogging, calling them "very hit and miss". In order to address the aforementioned dissatisfaction, platforms has been integrating third-party apps for assisting the search and filtering features. For instance, it's reported by Novet (2015) that, more than a million third-party apps were registered under Twitter in 2011 and more than 30 million third-party apps had been created for Facebook in 2015.

Generally, social media and micro-blogging represents a promising arena for journalism, both in terms of source relations, as well as the gathering and dissemination of news (Enli & Simonsen, 2017). Studies have shown that journalists use social media and micro-blogging for two main purposes. Firstly, for news gathering, including the search for trending topics, contributing in pertinent discussions, and maintaining source relations (Bruns, Enli, Skogerbo, Larsson, & Christensen, 2015), and secondly, for marketing of content, such as news articles, commentaries, and shows, as well as self-promotion and branding of media houses and journalists (Rogstad, 2014). On the other hand, social media and micro blogging are used as a political tool for the activists.

2.5 Social Media in Activism

Dartnell (2006) demonstrates that online activism is a mature, new territory for nongovernmental actors to raise awareness and develop support around the world. The author argues that the Internet has changed the approach to politics because of the "invisible support" of Internet users. The power of web-based activism, the author contends, is in its distributive power, able to reach millions of people in a short time; it injects the same level of credibility that print press accorded social movements in the 20th century, and which it still continues to do. By empowering people and giving them the freedom to engage without being physically present is what sets this form of activism apart

from the rest. In fact, as he argues, governance and social structures are evolving to accommodate the application of technological systems, such that, in future, the traditional methods of activism may altogether change.

McCaughey & Ayers (2003) demonstrate how online activists have not only incorporated recent technology as a tool for change, as well as how they have changed the meaning of activism, what community means, and how they conceive of collective identity and democratic change. The authors contend that activism implies whatever form of agitation that a group of people happen to be doing, as long as it is geared towards change, and that any such group is a 'community' if it is united in a common cause. The confluence of activism and social media legitimized by efforts such as the Arab Spring and Occupy Movement represents a growing area of mainstream media focus.

While many websites and email campaigns already advocate on behalf of social movements, global activists are being implored to expand their usage of online communication in order to enhance their two-way communication with publics (Seo, Kim, & Yang, 2009). This advent of social media era, including those well-known social networking platforms as Twitter and Facebook, arguably has had the effect of facilitating communication between organizations and stakeholders (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011).

A growing segment of social media usage on Twitter includes individuals advocating for humanitarian causes, environmental problems, or political and economic debates (Beirut, 2009). Hashtag activism, a term that entered the public consciousness when New York Times media columnist David Carr (2012) wrote of the phenomenon, gives communicators an ability to streamline their messaging on the microblogging social networking platform.

Valen-zuela (2013) finds that in order to effect changes in society, social movements need to bridge the gap between online and offline environments and ultimately facilitate offline forms of citizen participation. While some skeptics of social media's confluence with protest movements dwell upon the disparaging concepts of "slacktivism," social media assist movements in empowering individuals to carry out activist tasks that were once carried out by centralized organizations (Kessler, 2012, p. 213). #DimtsachinYsema and #OromoMovemnet was the most used hashtags in Ethiopia during the Muslim arbitrary committee imprisonment and Addis Ababa master plan development in 2015, which empowered diffusion of contents, retweets, spread out well beyond than the reach of the original tweets reach, and influence is as high as the followership reach.

2.6 Mediamorphosis and Technological Determinism Theories

“Mediamorphosis” is the term used to describe how media forms evolve and adapt with each other (Nwammuo, 2011). According to Biagi (2003), Mediamorphosis was coined from two words: media and morphosis; (a scientific term used to describe the way an organism or any of its parts undergoes change) to create a new word to describe the simultaneous changes taking place in the media world today. Mediamorphosis theory is developed by Technological determinist theory states that technology is the major determinant of change in the society, mediamorphosis theory believes in the unification of already existing institutions with the changes brought about by technology (Chukwu, 2014).

Human by nature is communicating being and has the urge to spread information amongst one another; however, the ways we exchange information has changed with the socio-economic, political and technological developments go drastically. Information exchange transcends from verbal communication during primitive times to a very advanced way of communication as technology advances so well. The very topical advancement in the information communication is the introduction of Internet, and the emergence of new media technologies. Much like the printing press, Internet and new media technologies have changed the face of journalism forever (John, 2003). As stated by Newman (2009), the mainstream media in its coverage took a mainly pragmatic approach to these issues. They felt outflanked in terms of speed, previously an area many had built their brands around, but all felt uncomfortable running unverified reports and made every attempt to find corroboration before publication or broadcast.

The rapid growth in use of new media technologies made a huge impact on the mainstream media, people started preferring ‘alternative media’. There are scholarly debates on whether social media or micro-blogging is an alternative media or not. Scholars cannot agree on a definition of alternative media, or even decide upon a preferred term. Atton (2002, p. 4) argues that alternative media “are crucially about offering the means for democratic communication to people who are normally excluded from media production”. That is to say, alternative media are defined as much by their content (i.e., radical, progressive, and socialist, anarchist, feminist, queer, or anti-racist) as by the forms and practices of their underlying conditions of production, which are meant to allow democratic participation in making media. On the other hand, leading alternative media scholar John D.H. Downing (2003) refers to “radical media”, arguing that “alternative”

tells us nothing since “everything, at some point, is alternative to something else”. For Downing, radical media are the media of social movements: non-mainstream and counter hegemonic, offering counter-information and aimed at social change.

Although, there is no doubt about the intrinsic changes in the way we share, produce and receive information; Macnamara (2014) states that, emerging role of new media technologies (social media and micro-blogging) as a direct source of news, news sharing and providing alternatives to mainstream media confirm that it is easy to perceive new media technologies and mainstream media as two communication forums opposite to one another in feature-but highly harmonized in using contents of one another for information purpose. Fiddler (1997) describes this coexistence as “a unified way of thinking about the technological evolution of communication media” and observed that new media do not arise spontaneously and independently, they emerge gradually from the “metamorphosis” of the already existing ones.

The migration of readers, viewers and advertisers from mainstream media to new media technologies is not limited to the developed world but has also become a visible trend in developing countries. Recently but very rapidly Ethiopia becomes part of the new media technologies. However, the mainstream media such as newspapers and magazines are still in the interest of the majority as the Internet penetration and cost of using online versions are still expensive. The majority can see both the print and online versions, which means the youth. Most of the media organizations are adopting multipurpose and fast flow journalism skills; Addis-fortune for instance has 7500 wider print circulation and 2000 online subscriptions. At the same time social media accounts such as Twitter @addisfortune and Facebook –Addis fortune Newspaper. According to Woldegabriel (2014), there have been distinctive creations of Ethiopian government in employing new technologies to promote socio-economic development and enhance the efficiency of developmental state bureaucracy. The most successful creations are WoredaNet, SchoolNet and ECX; HealthNet and AgriNet are in process of being weaved in respective sectors.

The previous paragraph takes a look at the changes that new media technologies have brought in the Ethiopian media landscape as its presence is mostly felt by the mainstream media. In relation to this, Thorson & Wells (2015) have the notion that elite mainstream media no longer have a monopoly over the creation of public affairs content, and how citizens receive and, now, share information is changing greatly. Most of media leading scholars cited above within this section, adopts either mediamorphosis or technological

determinism, or both theories. Hence, the mainstream media instead of being displaced by journalists utilizing new media technologies such as social media and micro-blogging, and converge with the new media to enhance its operation. Consequently, the federal government and media-personnel should endeavor to equip media houses with the needed infrastructure to enable them stay afloat in this digital era as new media technologies has come to stay and evolve.

2.7 New Media Technologies in Ethiopia

According to statistics portal, in the 2015/16 fiscal year there were 13.6 million data and Internet subscribers to Ethio-Telecom; in which 44 percent are from 2014/15 (Portal Statistics). According to the Digital use in 2018 Report released recently, there are 16.4 million Internet users in the country with internet penetration at 15 percent (CapitalEthiopia, 2018). Access to the Internet through mobile phones and the availability of smartphone handsets fit for Internet access has increased usage of mobile Internet over the last five years in Ethiopia moving from none who used mobile phones for Internet access in 2007 to 1.8% in 2012. Ethiopia has among the lowest Internet penetration rates in the world at 1.7 percent, which comes to slightly over 1.6 million users 41 in a country of 100 million (Gebremariam & Herrera, 2016). Nevertheless, social media and micro-blogging, especially Facebook and Twitter, are becoming influential platforms of political engagement within certain circles. As Linda Herrera (2012) explained in the Egyptian context, the ways in which “digital natives” use technology are causing “a monumental generational rupture”. New media technology platforms have developed as spaces for the dissemination and recommendation of news and information globally (Zeller & Hermida, 2015). For many, social networking sites have become part of their news consumption. According to Hermida *et al.*, (2012), 43 percent of new media technology users turn to their friends and acquaintances daily for news and information in Canada. Through social media and micro-blogging, audiences are able to curate, reframe or reinterpret the news, taking on the role of secondary gatekeepers through the selective re-dissemination of professionally produced content (Singer, 2013). The shifts in habits and attitudes towards news consumption, together with the continuing relevance of the mainstream media, raise questions as to how media managers and journalists with new media technologies perceive these changes in audience behaviors and preferences, and how it influences their understanding of online news media production and digital journalism.

The media scene in Ethiopia is changed very recently from being state dominated to a share to private media. 2017/18 the emergence of more than 50 community media, more than 15 private radio stations and more than 10 TV stations joined the Ethiopian media landscape. However, Skjerdal (2011) noted that media conditions pressed the public and journalists to look for an alternative arena, where they could exercise better freedom in their activities that marked beginning of social media and micro-blogging. However, the recent trends indicated that though proper functioning of the mainstream media would not end the use of social media. Consequently, it is given that people use social media as an alternative platform where they can discuss issues that are not covered in the government media could it be in Ethiopia or elsewhere. New media technologies in Ethiopia is a kind of fresh trend used by many people, particularly the youth with the Internet access alike many areas of the world. According to CPJ's 2010 report, when situations in the practice of journalism and of the practitioners were worsening in Ethiopia, people started to look for other options.

2.8 Citizen Journalism in Ethiopia

In the last few years, the tools provided by new media technologies and the spread of smart devices to a great part of the world's population have helped to transform the practices of mainstream media. Nowadays, ordinary people play an increasingly significant part in the creation and dissemination of news and commentaries. Many scholars have addressed this recent phenomenon from multiple points of view and have adopted a wide variety of terms to describe it. They refer to it as 'participatory', 'hyperlocal', 'networked', 'open source', 'grassroots', 'wiki', and so the argument continues. Yet, 'citizen journalism' is the term that is most commonly acknowledged (Gillmor, 2003). With more and more people creating and disseminating information online, the question of who is a journalist and what is journalism becomes open to interpretation. According to Patrick et al, (2012) the results are attempts to reassess the conception and definition of journalism to respond to the question that "Isn't any citizen, in principle, a journalist when seeking to gather and disseminate information".

In citizen journalism, the readers, writers and editors contribute jointly in the progressive process of news making and exchange via new media technologies. As a result, citizens play a dynamic role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information. As Mutsvairo (2016) argues, '... times are changing and ...

technology will have a role to play in the way the continent will be governed'. There are motivations that drove citizens to produce grassroots information. When mainstream media coverage fails, citizens can turn into journalists and use new media technology platforms in order to disseminate news from their point of view. In a context where the mainstream media ignore to pay attention to people's real needs and everyday struggles, a large number of citizens start to use social media and micro-blogging platforms in order to produce, upload and share online content related to their situation, narrating their everyday lives. As findings from the L'Aquila disaster case (Farinosi & Treré, 2014) clearly exemplify, new media technologies can provide citizens with powerful tools for the production of independent, alternative and more democratic information (Fenton, 2010).

Several mainstream journalists are dismissive of social media activists and bloggers, relating them with self-interest or unskilled amateurs. In line with this Zeller and Hermida (2015) study the influence of new media technologies on citizen journalism practices and their professional constructs. On the contrary, many social media activists and bloggers look upon mainstream media as an arrogant, restricted club that puts its own version of self-interest and economic survival above the societal responsibility of a free media. Furthermore, there are obstacles that citizen journalism has to face such as risks of fragmentation and the lack of professionalism, funding and visibility; issues which are usually neglected in studies on the driving force behind citizen generated content.

2.9 Political Activism in Hybrid Media System

Dictionary definition of activism is that it is a noticeable and direct action to achieve a result usually a political or social one (Cambridge Dictionary). Political activism is about citizens' active political participation for their country. According to Waterloo et al (2017), traditional protest politics are often represented through demonstration and strike – a distinct form of activism that belonged to small elite. Activism was traditionally limited to those who organized in the streets or went door to door to acquire signatures for a petition. It is due to the widespread use of new media technologies that activism is no longer restricted to organizations or prominent figures with a voice. Lobbying against companies can be done online without ever stepping outside. Activism no longer requires the extensive planning and often difficult picket-sign lobbying in its traditional form of organized protests. Moreover in explaining who became active Boix and Stokes (2009)

suggested that structural resources played a significant role. Structural resources aid social segments in mobilization and becoming politically active, based on distributions of education, income and occupation and along with ethnicity and age. Cultural attitudes motivate engagement and create a positive correlation between information and interest, the belief that one can impact outcomes and make a difference in their own institutional, social or political space. These cultural attitudes are also more likely to be formed in youth and to remain intact as youth mature.

Enli & Simonsen (2017) and Strömbäck & Esser (2014) argue that there has been a process where politics has been adapted to the needs of mass media, and that medialization of politics has reduced the autonomy of politics and made politicians more dependent on the media and their coverage. Chadwick (2014, p. 89) traces the evolution of contemporary political media systems on the basis of a number of well-known (Wikileaks; Obama's campaign) as well as more obscure ('Bullygate' and '38-degrees') cases. He eschews simple distinctions between old and new media, politicians and journalists, professional writers and amateur bloggers, voluntary sites and corporate big businesses – and convincingly demonstrates that contemporary media systems evolve through mutual (inter)actions between all of the above. Most important phenomena in contemporary media systems are hybrids themselves. Take for instance Wikileaks, which could be dubbed as a one-man-band, a simple email-list, a social movement, a network of hackers, a publishing business, and a host of other things. Political campaigns are also hybrids. Obama's 2008 election campaign has been hailed as the breakthrough of new media technologies in political campaigning, driving out mainstream media logics. In short, mainstream media and new media technologies and political logics have become connected in a variety of ways.

The emergence of new media technologies has led to the convergence of channels of distribution and communication formats. The profound impact of media technologies on societies economically, socially and politically has led some to claim that we have entered a new era of Information, Network or Knowledge Society (Cammaerts, 2015). People are able to join the protests easily through hashtags or changing their profile picture. Anyone with access to new media technologies may become a social media activist and have their voice heard. According to (Lau, 2017) "Social media activists" may be defined as anyone who uses social media to further socio-political interests. As compared to pre-social media and pre-micro-blogging eras, political speech on new media technology platforms appears increasingly "exhibitionist" (Siegel, 2018). One result of this is that one's ideas can be

immediately shared with anyone willing to hear them. This has resulted in, among other things, public, political tension. But it is not only fameless individuals that share their politics on social media. An ever increasing number of celebrities and elected officials choose to use social media to critique and advocate for policies, candidates and protests; and this includes President Trump, who shares many of his opinions of other world leaders, laws or policies and even military strategies on his Twitter in order to reach the largest audience in the shortest amount of time.

There have been social movements organized on social media and micro-blogs: the eruption of the nationwide Women's Marches, Black Lives Matter, etc. There are no bounds to what will be posted, and what can come from said posts. It must also be recognized that given the ease with which it can be accessed, the speed at which it changes, and its instant reward, social media and micro-blogs have a constant and consistent presence in the lives of many. Therefore, with a stream of the political opinions of all different types of people flowing constantly at our fingertips, it is imperative that we question its effect on all aspects of life, and specifically, our politics. Understanding the effect of social media and micro-blogs on the political behavior of individuals helps address how media generally influences individuals. A growing subsection of the user generated information on new media technologies is political content - exposing any user to political information as they scroll through their feed (Bode, 2016). Though relying solely on one medium for news might not be the most strategic way to learn politics, ultimately the entanglement of new media technologies and politics allows young adults, or other age groups, to learn about politics and perhaps gain greater political interest (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010). Not only are individuals viewing politics more frequently through their networks, but it arguably is encouraging interest in politics. One reason new media technologies have succeeded in nurturing political thought is because it is "low cost, but potentially high yield" (Murthy, 2015, p. 817). Twitter is an easy way to voice political opinions. Hashtags are common practice and a succinct way to voice an opinion (Ince, Rojas, & Davis, 2017). An individual can tweet #ImWithHer or #EthiopiaWalia and, in less than five words, demonstrate their political affiliation clearly.

The Ethiopian context has witnessed the emergence of political activists who are making waves. A critical mass of young, educated urbanites is using new media technologies as an alternative platform from which to exercise citizenship and to debate and dialogue with others who hold similar and opposing political views. (Gebremariam and Herrera, 2016) seek to offer insights into how Ethiopian youth pursue various strategies to deal with the

structural impediments to their active political engagement. One of the unique features of political engagement among the younger generations of Ethiopia, especially in the urban areas, is the emergence of new media technologies as an alternative political platform. (Salawu and Aseres, 2015) examine the extent of the dominance of the Amharic press and the factors responsible for this. They also look at language politics in the country and activism for linguistic human rights, particularly in the media domain.

When Facebook reached the capital in 2009, many students with access initially used it for leisure and connecting with friends. But as the political situation in the country turned tenser and the formal spaces of political dialogue and reflection started to contract, many people in their late teens and twenties seized on social media and micro-blogs as an alternative platform. The increasing access to new media technologies, coupled with the closing down of the physical political sphere in Ethiopia, has contributed to youth migrating to social media and micro-blogs for different forms of political engagement. As one social media activist shares the experience in, the closure of one of the most influential weekly newspapers, Addis Neger, in November 2009 was a key moment in leading him to adopt social media for his activism. Since 2010, hundreds of youth, if not thousands, have capitalized on this relatively free space to gain political awareness and to engage in dialogue about their political views and perspectives. New media technologies host an array of postings, from blogs, status updates, tweets, pictures, memes, jokes, short stories and poems, to more traditional news items, whistleblowing reports, debates, and feature articles. The platforms allow for innovation and creativity and have expanded the ways in which people craft political messages and undertake strategies. These trials are still in their infancy, and are providing new ways for people to synchronize online and offline political engagement.

It is claimed that the 'old' media are disruptive and destructive forces in democracies (Flinders, 2012), while others applaud and explore the ways in which the 'new' social media may help citizens and grassroots movements to exert real influence and, thus, establish the true rule of the people (Loader & Mercea, 2012). A convergence of opinion from both left and right asserts that newspapers, radio and television distort and trivialize democratic communication. For instance, in her "Kill the Messenger: The Media's Role in the Fate of the World" Maria (2011) says, "Television has shrunk the world and has in the process become a great weapon for eradicating ignorance and promoting democracy". Indeed Ethiopia has also been using Television for an election campaign where candidates speak to convince the voters. A small step from this prognosis to the assertion, that new

media of communication the internet, multimedia and new media and society computer-mediated communication can be used to encourage active political citizenship. This heralding of the internet as the new ‘third sphere’ of free public deliberation, untainted by state or commerce has been accompanied by a boom in experiments using Computer mediated communication to encourage democratic participation (Thambini, 1999).

It is known that media can play a positive role in democracy only if there is an enabling environment that allows them to do so. Political activism is a two-way street; citizens use social media and micro-blogs to get information and politicians use the platforms to disseminate information and connect with constituents. They also use it to learn who their base is and who is listening to them. Activism through new media technologies has certainly grown into a crucial part of impactful political praxis; however my argument focus on the irresponsibility of social media and micro-blogs content management which would lead to mal-administered reactions on the ground.

2.10 Connected activism

Political participation of citizens either in the form of invited publics or social movements discussed as a way to improve democracy and tackle global problems in a different way (Della Porta, 2013). Online and offline activists differ noticeably in terms of socio-economic and political backgrounds, formal network and organizational cultures, and, to some extent, motivational aspects (Laer, 2014). Using digital communication channels, according to Laer, likely extends, but at the same time narrows the mobilizing potential, to a public of experienced activists, most likely linked to established organizations. The Internet is principally used by “super-activists” most likely highly educated – leading him to conclude that the Internet reinforces participation inequalities, and that it might prove insufficient for sustained collective action participation and the maintenance of future social movement organizations.

In times like this the most important thing we at facebook can do is develop the social infrastructure to give people the power to build a global community that works for all of us, (Zuckerberg, 2017). However time like this are not favorable to the traditional form of activism where social media raised the awareness on the activist campaigns, but did not ensure more participation in the on-ground activities against certain developments.

Marcotte (2012) notes that fears that the Internet has somehow discouraged people from getting out in the world and having that critical face-to-face interaction that adds depth to

our activism are misplaced. She argues that one can create invite chains on Facebook that will reach people that were unreachable before, and integrate them more readily into the community. The distinction between online and offline platforms, she argues, is collapsing to the point of meaninglessness, such that what is done offline is actually online activism, which she justifies with the point that one will, for instance, send participants in a protest messages on Facebook or Twitter or even through e-mail, or find a big enough audience to convince through blog submissions and entries.

Some authors researching protests and movements during the Arab Spring argue that social media, particularly Facebook (FB) and Twitter, have mobilized protesters and engaged more people in movements (Breuer, 2012; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012). Some even claim that almost half of protesters have joined movements because of the events' coverage on FB and Twitter (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). The authors argue that the social media not only facilitated the organization of movements by lowering costs of organizing it, but also created a collective identity of a nation and set opportunities for cross-class cooperation. Although FB and Twitter have had the lion share of attention when it comes to social networking sites (SNS), interestingly enough.

During the Arab uprisings of early 2011, which saw the overthrow of Presidents Zine el-Abdine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, it is conceded that digital media played an important role in making the revolution possible – the Egyptian government even attempted to block Internet and mobile phone access in January 2011. However, the local context in both Egypt and Tunisia played an equally important role in the revolutions (Faris, 2013).

Recent literatures suggest that social movements online follow one of three approaches—collective action, collective action with connective capacity, and connective action. Earl & Kimport (2011) defines collective action movements as largely organized offline, and may use new media technology tactics to support on the ground tactics, such as collecting signatures for petitions. Organizers in these kinds of movements often do not leverage social media or microblogs to mobilize support for campaigns, persuade publics, or disseminate key messages and discourses.

New media technologies are transforming the way peoples interact and connect with each other at a local, regional, national and global level (Wilson, Carlson, & Sciascia, 2017). Many literatures such as Carlson (2013) indicate that Facebook, Twitter and other new media technologies facilitate interaction and allow users to maintain relationships across vast distances and time zones, thereby increasing social and political connectivity and

impact. The rapid rise of the use of these technologies as a means of social, cultural and political interaction among activists and groups is an intriguing development. While this is not to suggest there is no digital inequality, it does counter any assumptions people may have little interest in the possibilities of technology and the online environment (Carlson & Frazer, 2015). New media technology as a ‘new frontier’ is where activists are busy interacting and networking in what can be argued as a cultural and political reterritorialization of social media and micro-blogging spaces (Carlson, 2013).

Social media and micro-blogs have served as mobilizing platforms for social movements, and their introduction into this sphere has made it easier for marginalized and/or oppressed groups to coordinate and voice their concerns (Siegel, 2018). Aside from activism, ordinary citizens feel that they can participate and engage politically on social media and micro-blogs. According to evidences from Dimitrova and Bystrom (2013, p. 1570), political activity on Facebook and exposure to others’ political activity were positive predictors of general political participation. Individuals who may not have imagined themselves as ‘political’ in the sense of being an elected official or direct action protestor post and re-post politicized images, phrases, narratives, and survival stories within their social networks of belonging. These contribute to the construction of specific activist causes such as #SaveWalia, #SaveTana, as well as to broader imaginaries about both meaningful survival and quality-of-life.

2.11 Credibility

With the advent of new media technologies such as social media (e.g., Facebook), and micro-blogging services (e.g., Twitter), the ability for media users to dynamically participate in the production and dissemination of current affairs available on a near-global scale. Many study such as by Carr, Barnidge, Lee, & Tsang (2014), have optimistically claimed that these developments give ordinary citizens more power in processes of information collection and dissemination. Early speculation into the influence of citizen journalism on society instilled the practice with an almost messianic ability to save both journalism and democracy by drawing on the public to generate and disseminate information as trust in the mainstream media declined. Journalism and the news media are built on credibility. With the appearance of new media technologies, journalism in the mainstream media gained a competitor in the news offer (Kovačič, Erjavec, & Štular, 2010).

Born out of a credibility crisis in the mainstream media system, citizen journalism itself claimed to solve what it saw as the problems of the news. Some scholars buy into these claims, arguing that citizen journalism provides a route for the reengagement of increasingly distrustful segments of the public. Critics, on the contrary, contend that citizen journalists fail to live up to journalistic standards and provide, at best, questionable information. Others promote a more nuanced approach to the new media landscape, noting the fluid boundaries between amateur and professional, as well as the nebulous nature of the term “citizen journalist”. The remaining part of the literature in this section fills the gap highlighting factors that influence credibility of mainstream media and citizen journalism such as media skepticism and political cynicism as well as fake news and post fabrications.

2.12 Media Skepticism and Political Cynicism

According to Cozzens, M. D., & Contractor, N. S. (1987) Media skepticism is defined as the degree to which individuals are skeptical towards the reality presented in the mass media. Credibility in media communication has been widely seen as partially dependent on the source of the message, for instance the research work by Carpenter (2008), shows that citizen journalists include more non-public official sources and more “popular” voices than the mainstream media. The same author (2010) argues that citizen journalism offers better assortment in news content than mainstream media. However, this trend could explain the challenge on citizen journalists, who are usually anonymous and anonymity is regarded as a source of irresponsibility - that creates difficulty to see the source of responsibility.

According to Miller (1974), political cynicism “refers to the degree of negative affect toward the government and is a statement of the belief that the government is not functioning and producing outputs in accord with individual expectations” (p.952). When people’s expectation on the government is not met, it can help to spark a negative perception among the people towards the government institution. In addition, Bandura (1986) defined political cynicism as the lack of confidence in the political system only.

That is people use various media outlets to know more about on what is going on the country’s politics. Kiouisis (2001) has shown that micro-blog users find micro-blogs to be more credible than non-blog users and that trust in citizen journalism enhances its effects

on political participation. Evaluations of the credibility of news known as skepticism from mainstream as well as social and micro-blogging medias depend on factors such as perceived norms of fairness, accuracy, and bias, which in turn depend at least in part on the structure of news stories (Fico, Richardson, & Edwards, 2004). Similarly, the style of the host or journalist on television news shows can influence the perceived credibility of information as well as the branding of major news outlets (Vraga, et al., 2012).

Taken together, people perform a complicated mental calculus when assessing the credibility of news. They consider not only the message and the source of the information, but also the way in which the information is presented. Thus, perceived credibility can be broadly defined as the assessment of believability and trustworthiness of a message based on multitude factors involved in communication, such as message source, message content, and the medium through which the message is presented. The effects of different news sources on the perceived credibility of information are conditional upon pre-existing attitudes toward the news media and politics. While, on the aggregate, people do not differentiate between the credibility of mainstream and citizen journalism, these assessments are dependent upon an individual's levels of media skepticism and political cynicism. Political cynicism results from an erosion of trust in the government and politicians, and has increased over time in the U.S (Carr, Barnidge, Lee, & Tsang, 2014).

2.13 Fake News and Post Fabrications

Fake news has become a core part of the news and remains most important area of concern across mainstream and new media technologies. Content from non-credible news sites and paid bloggers masked as legitimate newscasts has found fertile ground in the news scene. Social media and micro-blogging like Facebook or Twitter have become an entry point to news for many readers. In that scenario, the headline is the most prominent – and often the only visible – part of the news article. Headlines are vital in both capturing readers' attention and in influencing their online reading experience of news. In fact, approximately six in 10 people limit their reading to headlines only, without clicking on a link to the full article. Eye-tracking studies have confirmed this behavior empirically; many people are “entry-point readers”, who attend to headlines in order to ascertain the overview of an article, but who exhibit minimal reading activities (Holsanova, Rahm, & Holmqvist, 2006). Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) define “fake news” to be news articles that are

intentionally and verifiably false, and could mislead readers. This definition includes intentionally fabricated news articles, such as a widely shared article. It also includes many articles that originate on satirical websites but could be misunderstood as factual, especially when viewed in isolation on Twitter or Facebook feeds. This indicates a number of close sources of fake news: 1) accidental reporting mistakes; 2) rumors that are not created from a particular news source; 3) conspiracy theories (these are, by definition, difficult to verify as true or false, and they are normally created by people who believe them to be true); 4) satire that is doubtful to be misconstrued as realistic; 5) false announcements by politicians; and 6) news that are misleading but not absolutely false. According to Subramanian (2017), there are two main motivations for producing fake news. Firstly, news articles that go viral on social media can draw significant advertising revenue when users click to the original news. For example, teenagers produced stories favoring both Trump and Clinton that earned them tens of thousands of dollars. The second motivation related to providers seeking to advance candidates they favor.

The Chinese government has long been suspected of hiring about 2 million cyber troops to secretly introduce enormous numbers of pseudonymous and other misleading writings into the stream of real social media and micro-blogging posts called post fabrications, as if they were the real opinions of ordinary people (King, Pan, & Roberts, 2017). The researchers estimate that the government fabricates and posts about 448 million social media and micro-blogging comments a year. This strategy is to avoid arguing with sceptics of the party and the government, and to not even discuss notorious issues. It is clear that the goal of this huge secretive operation is instead to distract the public and change the subject, as most of these posts involve cheerleading for China, the revolutionary history of the Communist Party, or other symbols of the regime. Therefore, Identifying and stopping the spread of fake news and post fabrications are vital to ensure that credible news sources maintain levels of trust.

2.14 Content Regulation

In the early 2000s, the growth of online news prompted a new set of concerns, among them that excess diversity of viewpoints would make it easier for like-minded citizens to form “echo chambers” or “filter bubbles” where they would be insulated from contrary perspectives (Pariser, 2011). Most recently, the focus of concern has shifted to social media and micro-blogging. Social media platforms such as Facebook have a dramatically

different structure than previous media technologies. Content can be relayed among users with no significant third party filtering, fact-checking, or editorial judgment (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). An individual user with no track record or reputation can in some cases reach as many readers as Fox News, CNN, or the New York Times. The emergence of the Internet has resulted in a polarized scholarly debate about the impact and normative consequences of ICTs and new media technologies, in particular.

The promise of new media technology companies to make the world more open and connected rings hollow for many. According to Edelman (2018), over a third of Britons believe that social media and micro-blogging is not good for society, and even more (57%) believe the companies take advantage of people's loneliness. A large proportion of Britons believe that social media companies are not sufficiently regulated (64%), lack transparency (63%), and are selling people's data without their knowledge (62%). Some 70% of Britons believe that social media and micro-blogging companies do not do enough to prevent illegal or unethical behavior on their platforms. A further 70% agree these companies do not do enough to prevent the sharing of extremist content, and 69% agree they don't do enough to combat cyber bullying.

Any attempt to regulate social media and micro-blogging implicates the right to freedom of expression. Regulations must balance both the individual right to free speech and the public interest in restricting terrorist activity (Wu, 2015). For instance, Facebook and Twitter have fitted their German websites with additional features for flagging up controversial content, and spent months hiring and training moderators to cope with the Network Enforcement Act, which came into full effect on 1 January 2018. Under the law, known in Germany as "NetzDG", online platforms face fines of up to €50m (£44m) if they do not remove "obviously illegal" hate speech and other postings within 24 hours of receiving a notification. A seven-day period is granted for removal of "illegal" content (Oltermann, 2018).

When speech is protected, there is a requirement that the government must meet in order to justify censorship (Wu, 2015). The U.N. recognizes that all individuals should express their thoughts and ideas in an open and unrestricted environment. As a preliminary matter, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) recognizes the right to freedom of expression. Specifically, "everyone has the right to freedom of opinion; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (United Nations, 1948).

As the world is witnessing an extraordinary increase of polarization, hate speech, radicalization and extremism occurring both on mainstream media and new media technologies. It's difficult for people to determine what realistic information is amidst the proliferation. It is sometimes unclear about how to respond, share and/or comment. The Internet then becomes a force for good or bad actions; hate speech is more and more visible at online spaces, especially on social media (Jagtar, Paulette, & Esther, 2016). As a result, when anyone posts something on social media or micro-blogs, there is an expectation that this is protected speech. Overcoming the collective action problem also requires monitoring. In order to minimize the risk of free-riding, an effective monitoring system must identify violations and violators, a special committee could be created to monitor new media technologies use (Wu, 2015). All the above literatures in this section calls for a kind of new media technologies content regulation.

2.15 Summary

Nowadays, the social media has developed into a social platform for discussing ideas, phenomena, organizing events, demonstrations, and riots, signing petitions and engaging in other interactions. The social media impact on citizens' political activism has been another area of enquiry. Some studies demonstrate that social networking enhances likelihood of citizen engagement in politics such as Lake & Huckfeldt (1998) and impacts organizational membership and protest attendance (Schwarz, 2012). This communication tool is now central to political activism in the modern societies and these chances are misused, and must be grasped in a manner that is both ethical and responsible. Few users consume purely partisan media, but social media platform design and the proliferation of partisan media in traditional channels have exacerbated partisanship and identity polarization by creating "echo-chambers" where views get reinforced and become entrenched—and more extreme—over time. The important part is due to the way people decide whether news and information online can be trusted. A recent American Press Institute (API) study shows that when American readers see news on social media platforms, it's not the source of the news that matters as much as whom in their network shares the link (API, 2017). Attempts to make visible to users the echo chambers in which they operate have been frequent, and this information might change minds of the consumers. This study also agree on this and the new media such as social media have a 'vulnerable potential' to enhance public communications and enrich democracy where the

old limits interactivity and ethics and responsibility need to be integrated in. It seems that social media could impact the common reasons causing the development projects to fail and serve as a platform for development communication. An important debate that has to be considered in the framework of this research is that in the recent years, with the abrupt development of the social media and the various opportunities it presents, the discussion evolved around the importance and the actual role of social applications' users. Is activism really developing, or perhaps it is a "slacktivism"? a term described by Evgeny Morozov (2012) as making one easy to engage in politics "...when all one has to do is like a political candidate or cause" (Badger, 2011). According to Malcolm Gladwell (1996), the technologies may bring a million people to Facebook but fail to mobilize a thousand in the street. An enquiry of the online versus offline activism has demonstrated negative influences of the social networking phenomenon. Some authors suggest that responsible usage of communication channels should be taught and directed, it might narrow people's attitude and misinform them – lead to fueling the online activism to irresponsible damage on the ground.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology is a systematic way of solving a research problem (Kothari, 2004). This Chapter thus discusses research design, methodology used, target population and the sampling strategy. In addition, it also explores data collection instruments, process and analysis of the data, validity and reliability of the research instruments and findings as well as the ethical issues that are central to this study.

This study mainly relied on primary data, which will be collected through questionnaires /web based questioners (Google Form) and Semi Structured Interview. As well as secondary data derived from social media contents posted and Tweeted, books and journal articles.

3.2 Research Design

MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) defines research design as a plan for framing data collection methods of the study. This study will use a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Accordingly it will also use interview and content analysis approaches. This will strengthen the data and bridge the gap between the research questions and results of the study.

This study will adopt a mixed method approach (Creswell, 2014) says that mixed methods refers to the integration of qualitative and quantitative research and data in a study to achieve its goal. Graber (2003) explains the significance of qualitative approach to interpret political texts, and if it is done systematically it may be useful and accurate. Specifically, the qualitative content analysis is often used whenever there is a need for detailed understanding of media messages and the way they are communicated in a specific context.

I will thus use content analysis which is a flexible research method for analyzing texts and describing and interpreting the written artifacts of a society (White & Marsh, 2006) to analyze the political use of social media for interpretation of the content of the social media political activism messages.

3.3 Area of research

The researcher selected respondents of Ethiopia, as it is social media it is challenging to designate specific area population as the target source, but yes Ethiopian nationals only. Though the questioner has been filled and collected online I asked “*where they live since 2016*” and it helped me clear the confusions of respondent specifications.

3.4 Target Population

The target population or the type of universe according to Mugenda (2003) refers to a specific group that is relevant to a particular research study. The target population for this particular study includes the most active users and consumers of social networking sites basically Facebook and twitter, micro bloggers and social media influential users. While micro-bloggers and influential social media users make up the opinion shapers of users, and therefore, constituted the requisite target population.

3.5 Sampling Design and Sample Size

The study expected a total population of 300 active social media users. However according to Creswell (2014), the sampling frame should represent the population, be reliable, correct, comprehensive and appropriate. Thus 118 responses are collected and I considered all of them. This is a doable sample and seems representative sample for this type of communication research. It was also difficult to get many respondents to volunteer to respond for online questionnaires.

Creswell (2014) postulate that sample size is the number of individuals or items selected from the universe or target population to form a sample. The sample size should neither be too small nor excessively large but optimum for reliability, flexibility, efficiency and representativeness. Purposive sampling was used with two Semi Structured Interview respondents made up of influential users and micro-bloggers, because of the role they play in informing online discourse.

As a probability sampling procedure, simple random sampling offers each unit in the sample an equal chance of being selected (Singh and Masuku, 2014). I pick my samples based on purposive sampling and systematic random sampling was also employed to

examine the potential relationship between the activist's posts and followers' reaction and to analyze the current social media political activism trends in digital Ethiopia, respond to the research questions.

3.6 Data collection, procedure and tools

Kothari (2004) argues that data collection is the contacting of the sampled members of the population so as to collect the required information related to the research. The researcher collected primary data using web based questionnaire – Google Forms- to collect quality data using the studying platform itself as a data collection tool. The researcher will also employ Semi Structured interview to get the depth of the study using purposive sampling. The qualitative and quantitative strengths were also combined in ensuring that the researcher is not limited to one research approach.

3.7 Data Type

Primary Data: In order to strengthen the data, I collected online questionnaires' from users on google forms and conducted semi-structured interview with purposely selected social media political activists.

Secondary Data: Secondary sources will be collected from the social networking sites under study, Twitter & Facebook, social media political activist's tweets and Facebook posts and their followers and fans reactions in comments, likes and shares.

3.8 Data Quality

Because of the constraints of resources and difficulty of scanning all contents since Irrecha 2016. According to www.gadaa.com Irrecha is one of the distinct thanksgiving celebrations in the traditional religion of the Oromos (Waaqeffannaa). This day normally falls at the end of September or beginning of October, on this day many Oromos come to the river or the sea or the lake with an outlet that has since long been chosen to be the place for such thanksgiving celebration. And Irrecha 2016 was a moment that dozens reportedly been killed <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/ethiopia-killed-romia-festival-stampede-161002100716026.html>. This research will only attempt the gathering of critical

and engaging political social media messages with the purposive sampling employed. In addition it will not consider contents other than English and Amharic.

As the nature of social media is open for complex identities, I tried to reach out individual account owners so as to get quality data.

CHAPTER 4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data presentation and analysis of the study and interpretations of twenty [20] google questionnaires' distributed on Facebook and hundred and twenty [119] collected online, semi-structured interview conducted with two influential activists on both Facebook and twitter and finally secondary data from the Facebook and twitter posts and post reactions and their critical analysis will be presented viz-a-viz the objectives of the study.

4.2 Social Media Influencers Identification

There are many tools which help people find the social media influencers, the researcher used follower-wonk and social-baker to identify influencers on twitter and Facebook consecutively. Follower-wonk is social media analytics tool used to find, analyze and optimize for social growth and helps to explore the users social graph – it gave me Zone9 bloggers, which the researcher picked Befqadu Z. Hailu, as their representative and Daniel Berhane as influential users. Based on social-baker is also a page analyzer that gave users information about issues their Facebook pages experienced. Tewodros Adhanom, Jawar Mohammed, Daniel Berhane and Getu Temesgen are top influencers on Facebook. However due to the unavailability and in-convenience of the activists lists I managed to interview Befqadu Z. Hailu and Daniel Berhane. But also I managed to go through other prominent activists posts and followers' reaction and their posts impact to the offline activism on the ground. Based on my observation as being one of their Followers [the number of people who follows and engages with] and as a researcher, I will only be focusing on political contents, relevancy to the study and their frequency of posting/tweeting political messages and will analyze some of Jawar Mohammed, Tsegaye Ararsa, Achamyeleh and Muluqen posts and followers and fans reactions on both Facebook and twitter.

Lievrow (2013) who contends that people use new technologies to gain visibility and voice, to present alternative views or to “counter dominant media culture”, which they use to inform, warn, rebuke, correct and agitate for change.

4.3 Influencers profile

As discussed in the above sub heading the researcher provided screen shoot accounts of activists that I will go through their posts and tweets.

Jawar Mohammed, he is one of the most influential social media activist with 1,475,975 followers after full friend acceptance capacity on Facebook and his posts are all in all political and taken mostly as an Oromo freedom fighter and activist.

Tsegaye Ararsa is another Oromo activist, he lives in Melbourne, Australia but other details of his profiles are hidden on his Facebook and twitter accounts.

Achamyeleh Tamiru is another activist in the Amhara front who wrote strong statements to call the Amhara youth. According to his Facebook front page, he studied and lives in Norway and has 60,976 followers additional to his Facebook friend capacity.

Muluqen Tesfaw is another Amhara Activist, who lives in Helsinki, Finland and has 117,753 followers on Facebook. He said he is a Brana radio Editor.

The aforementioned activists are ‘influencers’ that whose posts get a multiple people reach and engagement – they were also the researcher’s major source of data from their posts since 2016 Irrecha until 2018 - They all are not in Ethiopia but agitate others to fire through circulating their irresponsible communication.

4.4 Political Posts and Followers reaction

In the age of the Internet, social media provides platforms to engage in political activities. One of the political activities is where citizens interact with others or participate in online communities (Kushin, 2010). This active behavior of political engagement via social media support the democratization of knowledge are involved in activities such as posting and sharing political commentaries on social media. In the case of dissatisfaction or disagreement on political issues, politicians or political parties, active social media users have choices either to post sensible expression or to ridicule them. If that sensible post shared by the influencers then it will shoot itself to the minds of the followers.

A recent American Press Institute (API) study shows that when American readers see news on social media platforms, it’s not the source of the news that matters as much as whom in their network shares the link (API, 2017).

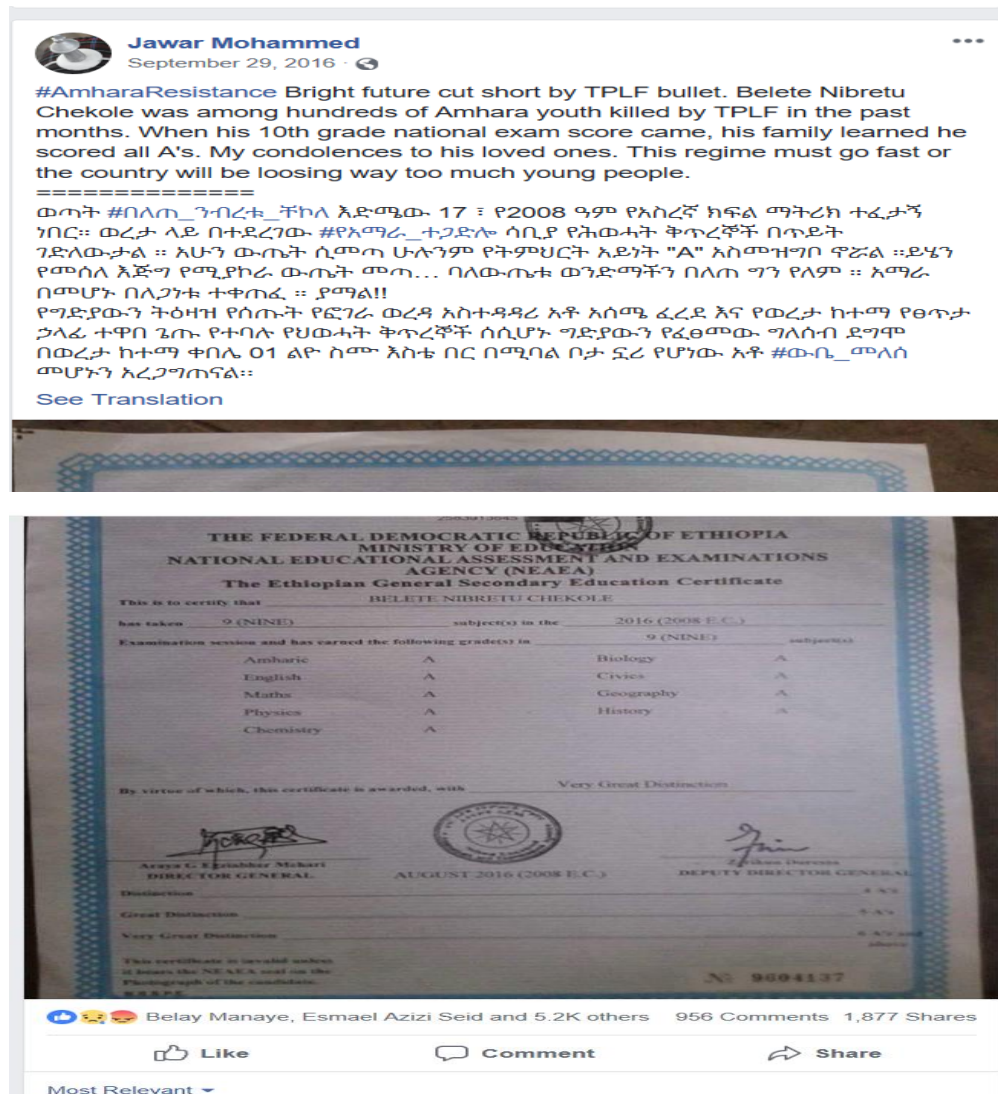


Figure 1. Facebook Screenshot social media activism post 1

It stated that a young Amhara student killed by “TPLF”, Tigray People Liberation Front and calls for Amhara resistance against it. And this post gets 5.2K (K, represents a thousand on social media) likes, 956 comments and 1,877 shares which has multiplied the reach. As you can see from comments under the post lots of regrets and preventing promises circulated amongst followers. It seems that they call for another tit for tat revolution and address others to corroborate and action towards the “killer group” the hatred against a group titled as “killer”.

On the comment, following the post above, they all agree on the content posted where no source is mentioned and owner of stories did not even confirm on the post thread. The

Hashtag he used #AmharaResistance can easily be circulated to catch the attention of the “dis-advantaged” group.

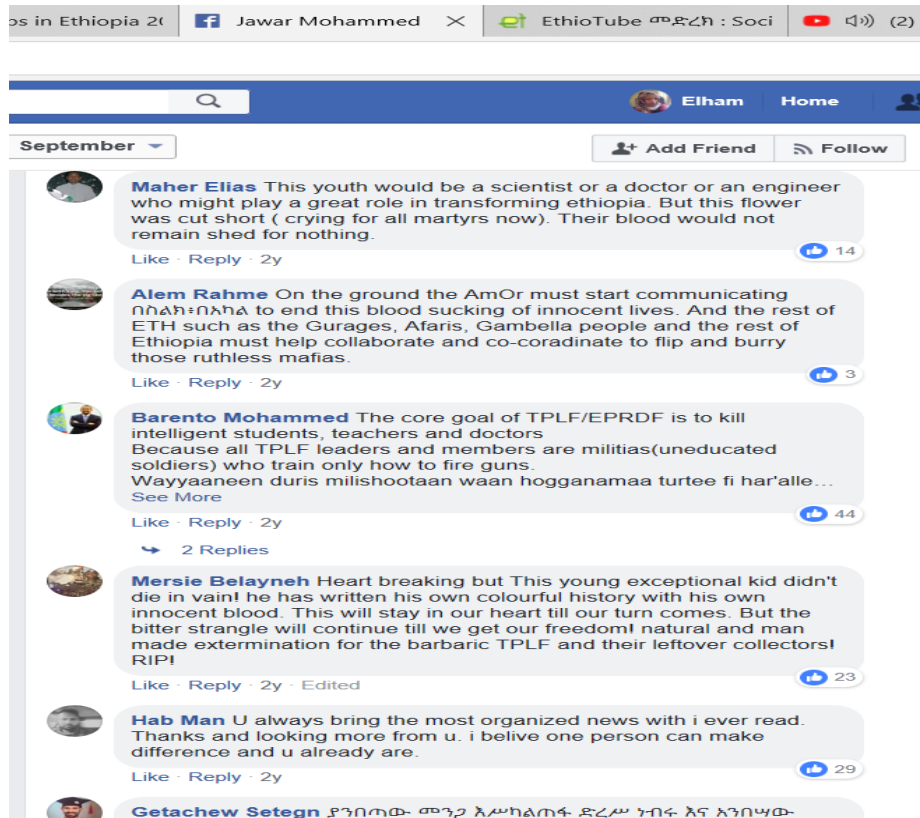


Figure 1.1 Reaction comments on Facebook Screenshot data 1

The following post on the figure below also shows how a single hate social media post can trigger and become war mongering to get people’s blood warm. The picture does not look in Ethiopia at all but some people used social media’s less questioning issue for their own instability purpose.



Figure 2. Facebook Screenshot activism post example with reaction and comments

This post has been circulated on Facebook and it happened to be in my newsfeed and used it for this study purpose. As it depicted above name of shops in Amharic seems that it is really happening in Bale, Ethiopia – it seems that it is a clash between Christians and Muslims as the shops of Christians in there are losing their properties. It reached to 46 people’s reaction and gets 32 shares and 23 comments. The interpretations of audience to posts is highly influenced with the post and comments seems to be some are calming things down but most believed as true.

On another post below from Jawar Mohammed, #OromoProtest posting a video as the Oromo women coordinating others to demonstrate against the ruling regime. 1.6k (one thousand six hundred) likes, 1,494 shares and 41k (41 thousand) views shows that how it spreads out in the world. The pressure and worrying effect goes like wise.



Figure 3. Facebook Screenshot activism post example 3

Muluken’s post below shows as irresponsible activism messaging and seems that followers are even implementing as it has been communicated. Followers usually take influencers calling messages are right and they interpret as it is a right measure to do as posted.

they stated it on their comments, was on voluntary basis. This is particularly evident in modern day politics, with the rise of new medium like social media, and disciplines such as digital communication (Habermas 1989). Social media platforms have succeeded in creating an online citizen journalism which usually engages in activism.

According to the Social Capital Theory, the relationship between social capital and information technology is seen to be bidirectional, where high levels of social capital, such as strong offline connections, is a success factor in establishment of online connections (Fukuyama, 1995). It is this relationship that gives online activism its dynamism.

There was a general feeling that online activism ensures individual security and freedom of expression because of its anonymous nature, so that users can insult, demean and get vulgar under the guise of activism or “social responsibility”. This is supported by the Social Capital Theory, according to which the “anonymising effect” of information technology works against social capital – the said insults and vulgarity discourage rather than encourage participation (Kiesler, Siegel, and McGuire, 1991).

And very recently, in the write-up of this thesis, medical professionals has been killed in the Amhara region with such controversial stories in October 2018 – the post below narrates the story from the BBC Amharic news. It criticizes social media irresponsible communication and messaging leads to a radical misunderstanding and even to the loss of the lives of innocents. Tied with this Addis Ababa University also expressed its condolences for one of its staff became a victim and lost his life.

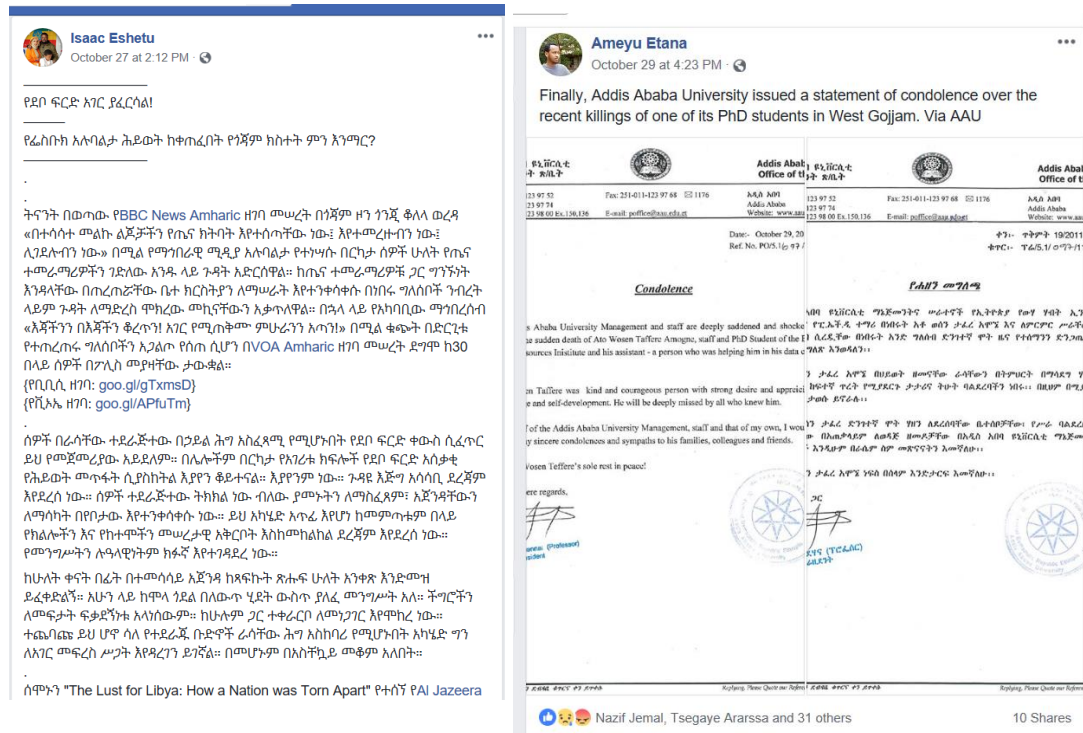


Figure 6. Facebook Screenshot activism post example - 6

Online Activism aggravate offline activism and become more impactful which it creates interpersonal communication and interaction between participants, and therefore personalizes causes, critical problems came in. Most of influential activists are living abroad and seems ‘unwilling actors who want to be seen to be doing something but are, in essence. However, it is possible, and more sensible with the digitization of most human activities to form online ‘masses’ on a need-basis around pressing issues.

Online activism has the distinct advantage of being unregulated. This means that anything can be disseminated, including material that would ordinarily be censored or not shown in mainstream media, which makes it easy to institute campaigns. Marcotte (2012), who says that fears that the Internet discourages people from getting out in the world and having that critical face-to-face interaction that adds depth to activism are misplaced. According to her, one can create invitation chains on Facebook that will reach people that were unreachable before, and integrate them more readily into the community.

Social media consumers sharing material and activities geared towards activism is essential to the success of activism initiatives, even as it is coincided that social networking sites play a critical role in disseminating such information.

Social Media posts like below triggered follower's action in support of the call on the post and is totally irresponsible to get the two regions in trouble [Amhara and Benshangul Gumuz]- these are outrageous inflammatory messaging examples how the political activism practices are going on in Ethiopia.

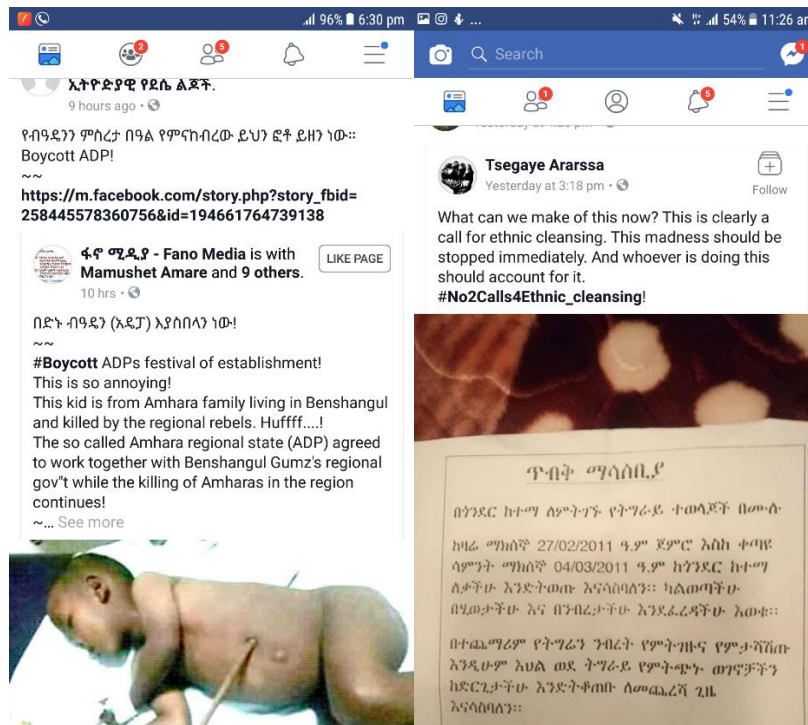


Figure 7. Facebook Screenshot activism post example – 7

4.5 Respondents Profile

In the study 72% were male and 28% are female, the majority respondents are male as indicated below.

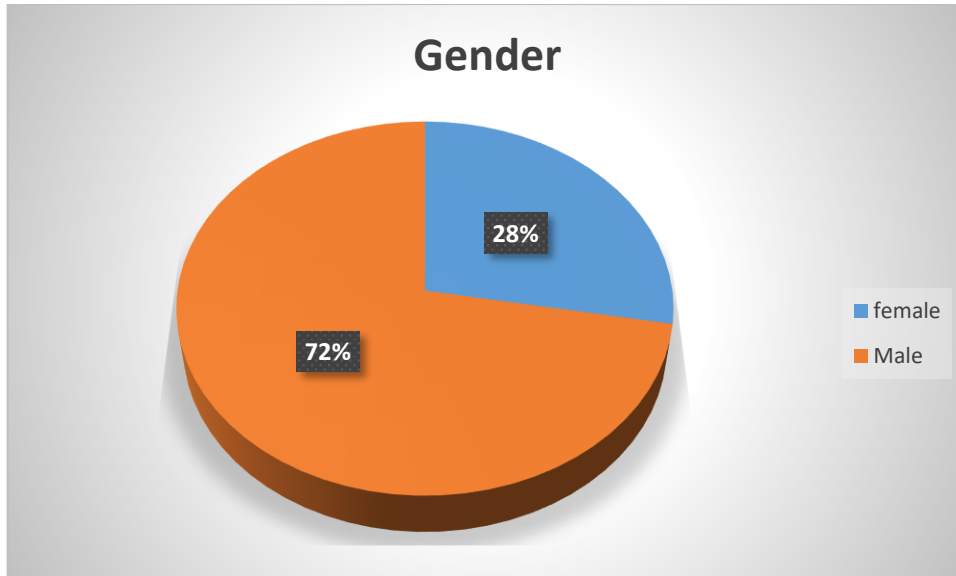


Figure 8. Chart for respondents gender balance

It was observed that 73.5% of respondents are between 20- 38 years of ages and 26.5% were over 39 of age. Age was an important parameter because it demonstrated what category of internet users are most active in activism related activities. From the study the majority of the social media users are in their twenties and beginning of thirties. The youth are the top most internet users and according to the age range in the data collected the youth are the people that most activists prefer because of their agility and young mentality.

Respondents were also asked to state their level of education and it was stated that 56% were undergraduate degree holders/ students and 23% are masters and above the rest 21% were diploma and below.

Masters and PhD holders gave evidently composed and better thought answers for questions compared to others. This played out in responding threads for instance twitter, where the majority of respondents said they will retweet, they compose a critical comment for posts they consider learned, important.

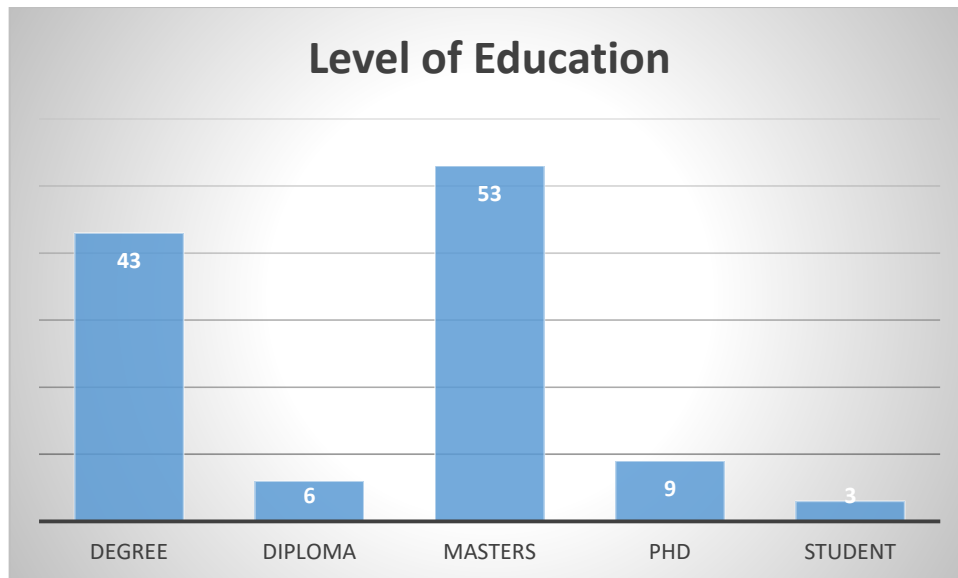


Figure 9. Chart for respondents level of education

When asked which social media tools they use MOST often – respondents made to the choices where it applied for all. And 105 of them or 65% of responded facebook as their mostly used social media tools with 25 (16%) twitter, 9 (6%) Youtube, 7 (4%) LinkedIn and viber 3% and telegram 2% ranking accordingly.

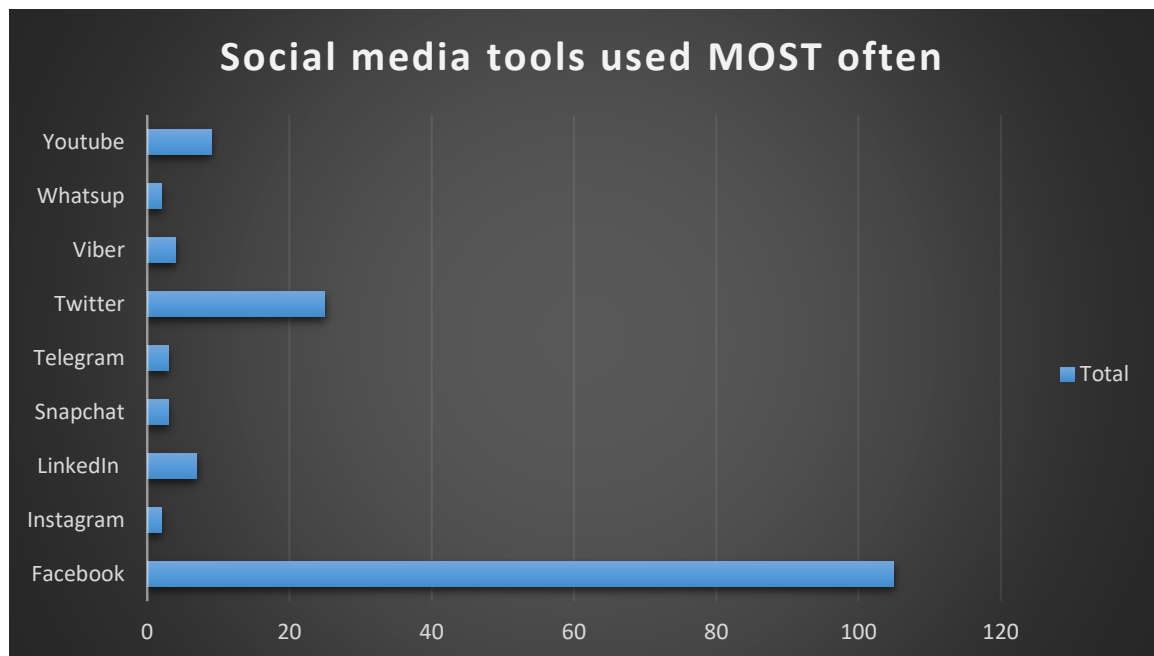


Figure 10. Chart for social media platform used by respondents

When asked on frequency of social media sites they visit, majority of respondents 78% responded as facebook, 11.2% said Twitter, 8% said they often visit YouTube and 3.8% responded as others, which include mobile phone connecting applications as, What’s up,

Viber, telegram, blogs and then like. Accordingly thus, facebook is the most visited, with 78% of respondents visited frequently, social media in Ethiopia and where highest number of activism oriented activities to take place.

For the question of how often the respondents visit social networking sites, majority responded as on a daily bases 17% weekly and others trice a week only. This question is about whether this internet presence helped to online activism. Tostevin (2014) in his The Guardian piece argues that while online activism truly empowers those who are already active mostly creates the illusion of activism without actually empowering actors. This supported by the study where it was observed that the majority of the respondents do not always respond [not taking any action towards a specific post] to posts, tweets and videos on activism.

Investigating how much time do respondents spent on social media, on the parameters of this study on Facebook and twitter- it was observed that 57% spent more than 30 minutes up to an hour. 27% spent less than 30 minutes, 12% spent an hour and 4% said they spent more than 2 hours on social media.

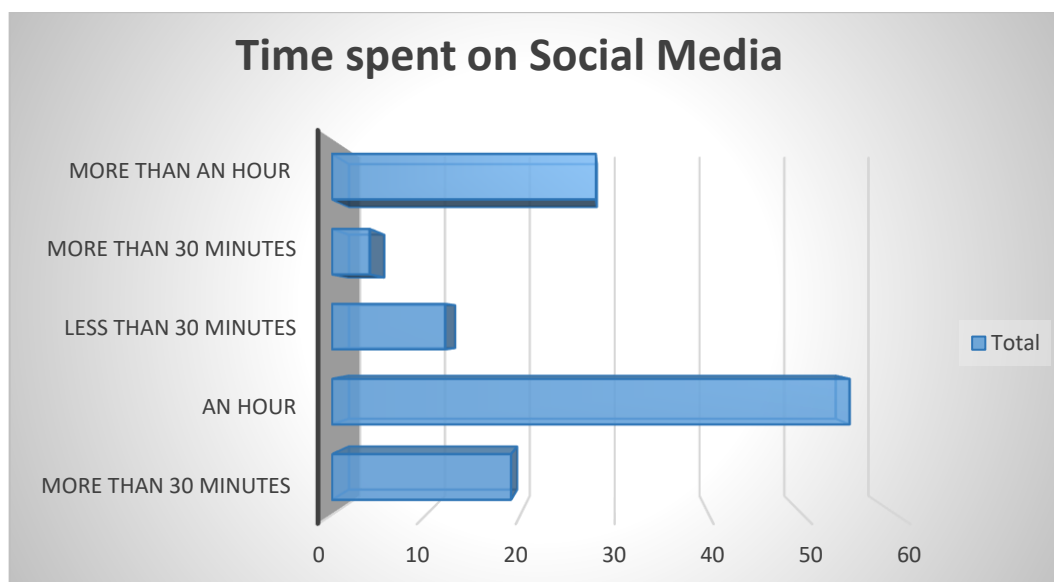


Figure 11. Charts for respondents' time spent on Social Media

For the question of Why do you use social media – where respondents were allowed to choose all that apply from the given purposes, 45% of respondents choose Political, 24% choose 'All' – which means there are even people who still choose their political purpose in it and can clearly tell the hunger of using social media to check the ongoing political

situations taking place. The rest 13% and 12% of respondents says for Social and Personal purposes followed by 6% business purposes.

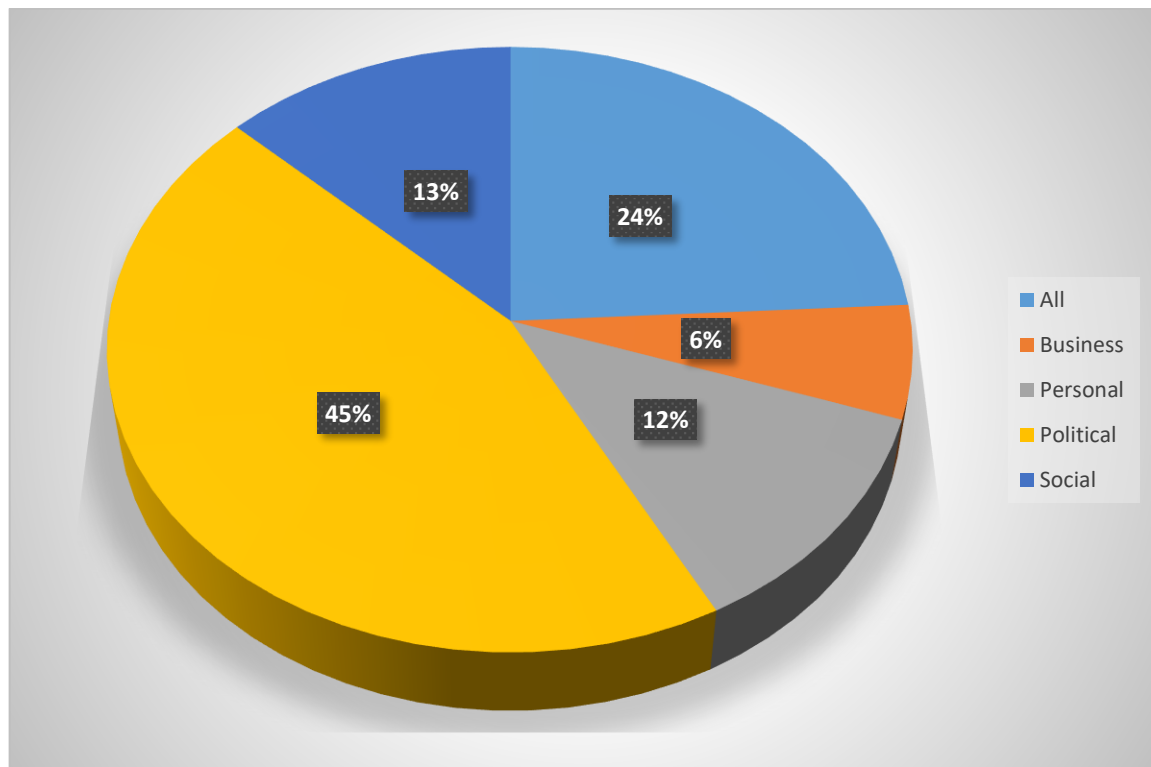


Figure 12. Chart for respondents purpose of using Social Media

Meierhenrich (2014) say , there is very little known on how active the average online activists or how social networks really are in facilitating online activism direction to protest and these figures provide an indicator as to how long the average user spend on facebook and twitter.

This finding compliments another done by Gladwell (2010), who has questioned the effectiveness of social media to organize physical protest, arguing that the concept that every user of the Internet is "a participating member of human society" is simply misguided. Furthermore, Lewis, Gray and Meierhenrich (2014) argue that there is still very little known regarding just how active online activists or networks really are in facilitating inflammatory communications, using the Save Darfur movement on Facebook, which had more than 1.2 million online members; the authors determine that only less than 2 per cent of those members attempted to recruit more people, and that an even smaller percentage made an effort to settle things down.

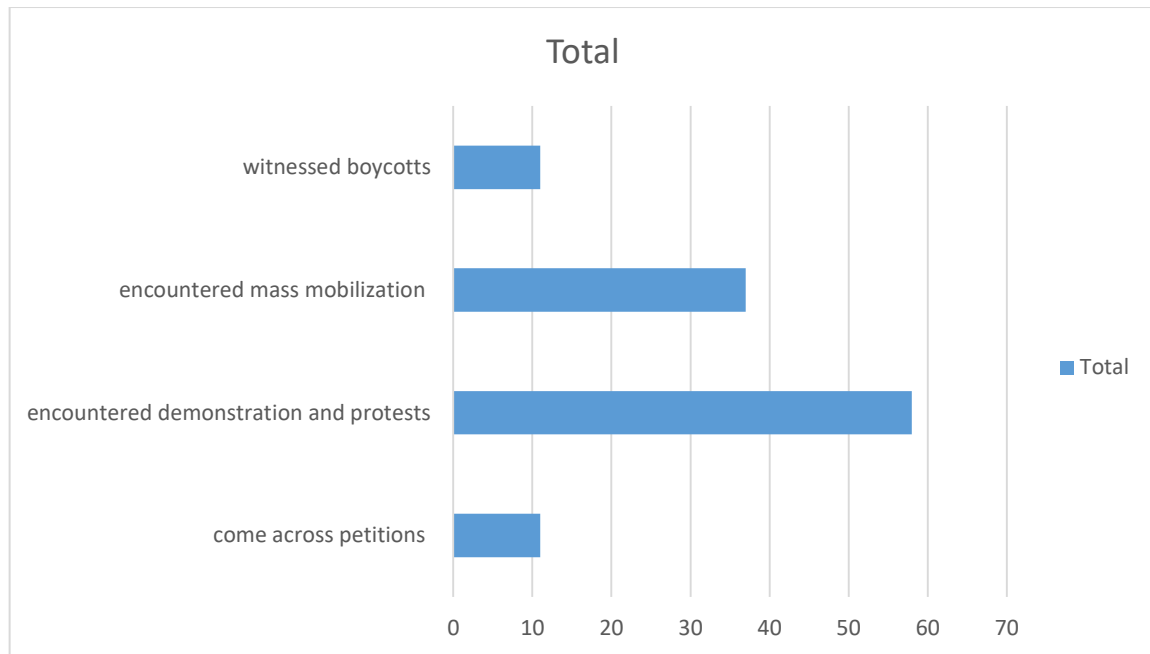


Figure 13. Chart for respondents encounter from social media activism posts

On the frequency with which the respondents encounter and engaged the political activism oriented activities and 9 % witnessed a call for boycotts, 9% had come across petitions and 32% encountered mass mobilization and 50% encountered demonstration and protests.

Accordingly on the bases of political activism – social media political activism messaging plays a critical role in creating a successful communications amongst the social media activism circles.

In this regard the researcher asked two questions on what they posted and what their friends on their facebook and twitter circles has been political which helped me see how respondents engage on the political activism activities that for the first question states 52% states as they engage very often with “All/almost all” of their posts are political, 30% participate just a little and 18% never participated. Even the option of “Just a Little” there seems to be a little political involvement is there with a very little average.

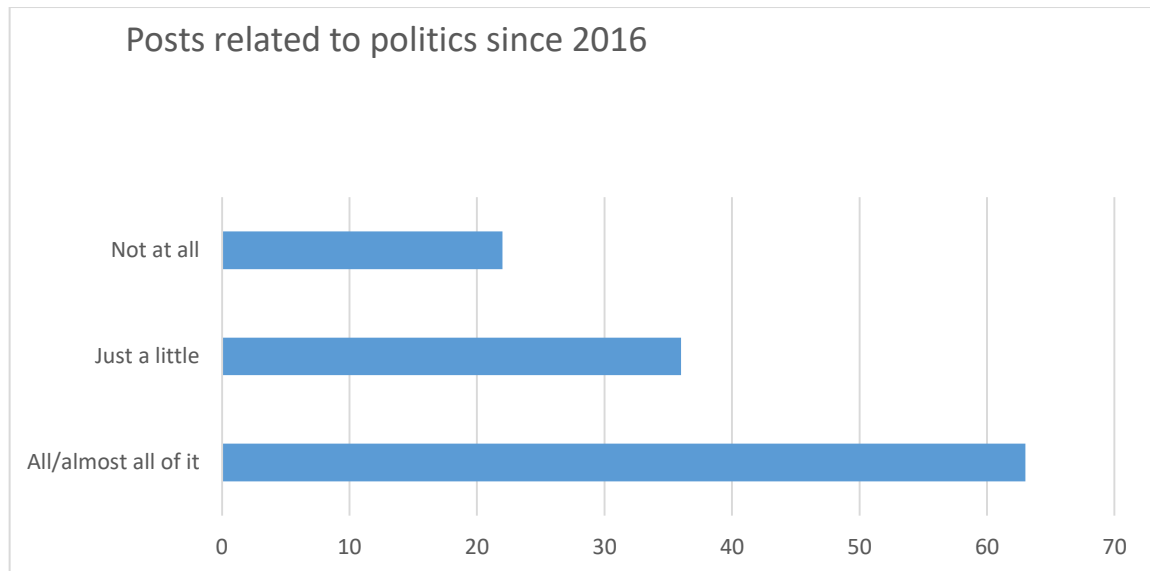


Figure 14: Respondents engagement on social media activism

In the pie chart below, it was observed that 13 % consider social media sites as important sources of information while 11% did not at all. Moreover, 53% of respondents still use social media as their source of information but they don't trust them fully and cross check with other sources to make decisions. There are also 23% respondents who took social networking sites as their trusting source of information took only 50%, means they still take the information. The implication here is that Social media provide enough opportunities for activism on the strength of the number of users who trust information found online. This is also a form of endorsement for online opinion makers such as bloggers that the information they give is often authenticated such that it inspires confidence among social media consumers.

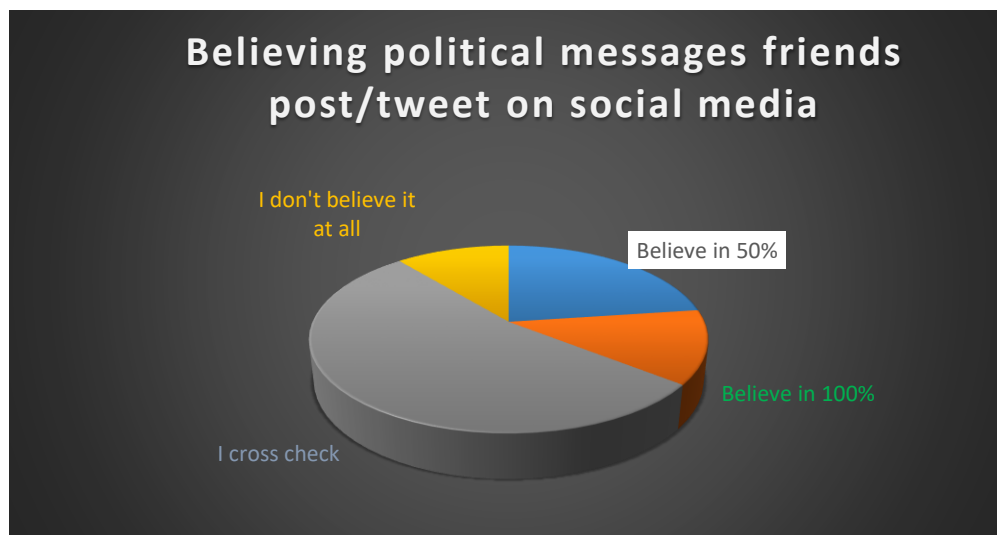


Figure 15. Chart for social media as a source of information

It also indicates that social media are increasingly replacing traditional media as an alternative sources of information. This finding concurs with an assertion by Lievrow, (2013), who speculates that activists have used social media and information technologies to gain visibility and voice, to present alternative views or to “counter dominant media culture”. Usually people consider posts coming-out, mainly from activists, follower consider them as news because activists don’t usually share their personal stories. It is true that all messaging happening on social are prone to any interpretations – followers might not understood as what the owner of the post meant to say. Activists clear such confusions under comments after what they followers reacted below the post.

4.6 Reaction to Political activism oriented messages

When asked that - when your friends on social media post something political that offend you, how do you respond it usually? It was observed in the responses that most of them got negative reactions and gets offended with others posts if it is something they don’t agree with. It was observed that 16.2 % encounter political activism oriented messages very often, 51.7 % encounter it often, 11.3% rarely encounter it and 3.4% had never encountered any. What this implies is that it is difficult for technology-mediated activism to work if participants only show fleeting interest in an idea before moving on. From the study, it is clear that social media is replete with opportunities for activism but for various reasons – such as failure to feel a connection with the material being presented – Internet users often fail to ignore political activism messages.

On whether respondents criticize activism-related activities with which they do not agree, it was answered that 55% say they ignore the post they disagree with, 22%, respond by posting a comment / their opinion on the issue and 18% answered that they will like and respond and where 3% of the population said they will unfriend the friend who posted. The onus is on initiators of online activism campaigns to tailor their campaigns such that they do not border on the vulgar by dwelling on activities that incite or cause social media consumers to resort to insults. Most seems ignorant of posts they don’t agree however both populations saying respond by posting a comment / their opinion on the issue and they will like the post and respond will play a great role magnifying what has been told on activism related activities.

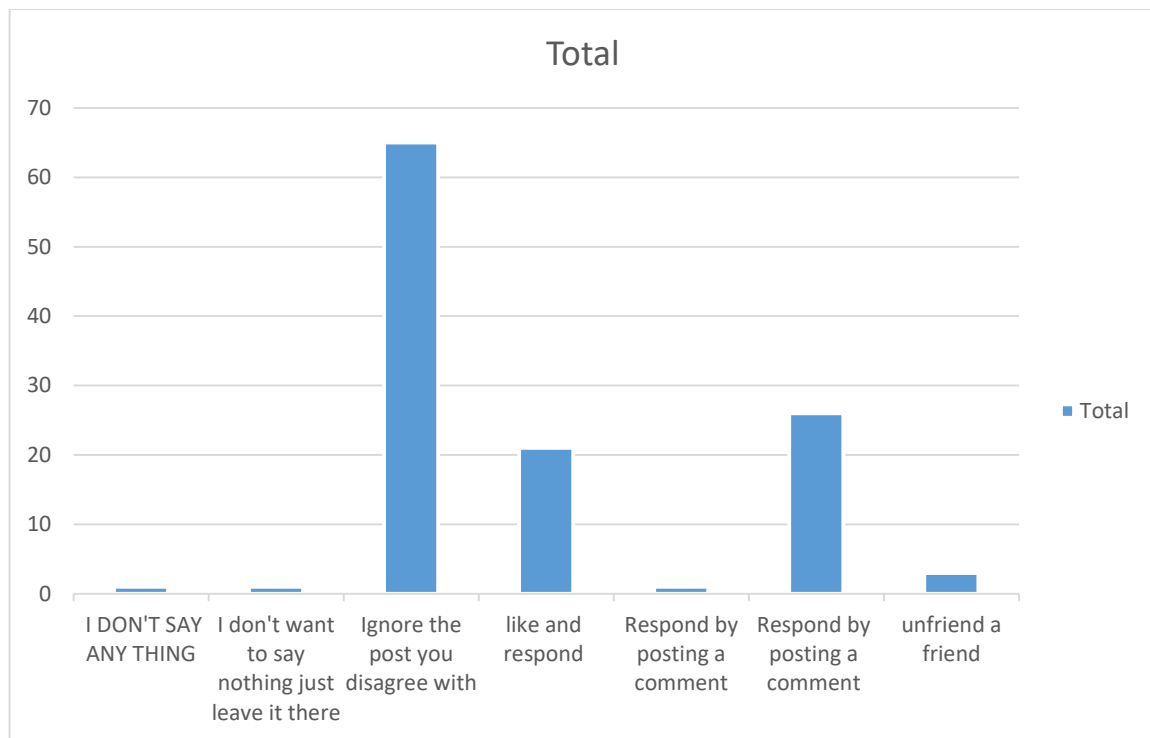


Figure 16. Chart for respondent’s reaction towards activism oriented messages

When asked if the respondents have ever followed a link on activism-oriented information to blog post, or on YouTube, Face book or Twitter, it was observed that 48.3 per cent have, 41.6% had not, and the remaining 10.1% did not know.

It was one of the researcher objective was to see reactions respondents take in both while they agree and they don’t with political activism initiative on a social networking site.

4.5 per cent block or report, 9.0 per cent said they dislike, 14.65 per cent said they unfollow/unfriend, 13.5 per cent said they often disagree without criticizing while 58.4 per cent said they ignore such posts.

This trend points to some form of apathy where social media consumers feel so detached and unconcerned as to not bother about such posts that is populist rather controversial posts gets strong engagement. According to Coleman (1988), in his criticism of the Social Capital Theory, this stems from the fact that individual and group aspirations do not often tally, such that what one considers important, the other may consider useless.

In essence, if a media user is not affected enough to want to contribute to an initiative whether positively or negatively – that seeks to create change, then the approach or timing, or both, must be probed to determine why that is.

4.7 Posting Activism Oriented Links

On posting activism-oriented links, it was observed that 1.1 per cent post links very often, 18.0 per cent post often, 29.2 per cent post once in a while, 24.7 per cent rarely post, and 27 per cent never post. Like in the case with sharing posted links, only about a third of the respondents admitted to having a keen interest in engaging in activism through personal initiative.

For the fledgling platform that online activism is, one way through which it can develop is if people take the initiative to identify inflammatory political messages and non-racist and responsible contents that need attention and highlight them. This, from the study, does not happen often.

Meikle (2000) in a study to test the claim that actors in social media have successfully employed Internet as a tool of change to advance their causes, is skeptical about what he implies is an “an uncensored hype” about the possibilities of political activism which he thinks may be overrated.

This finding qualifies Meikle’s concern that social media has not been utilized as fully as it ought to, for it to make a mark in serious responsible activism.

When asked to say whether they thought online activism influences change, 40.4 per cent or respondents said they believe it does, 46.1 per cent said it sometimes does, 10.1 per cent believe it does not and 3.4 per cent were not sure. The responses here were interesting given the apathy – from responses to earlier questions respondents exhibited to, for example, taking the initiative to find activism-oriented political messages.

Government agencies that are the target of some of these campaigns rarely, if ever, respond to matters raised, while individuals and companies targeted choose to let lawyers handle their cases and respond to allegations.

4.8 Social media Political messaging trends in Ethiopia

Most respondents stated that nonfactual, irresponsible social media political messaging is now trending in Ethiopia. As the mainstream media and censorship goes on the ground it seems that users found it convenient to shoot their grievances. It is well said that people using social media does not have healthy political debate culture that communications

went against the original topic. Ideal war always turned to personal war – insults flow and disrespectful communication amplified in it.

Many of them also emphasized that it is a very polarized media where rumors considered as a true story and affects the stability of the country, the economy of various sectors and the country in the bigger picture. It also seems that respondents agree on the lack of knowledge where people cannot use social media properly and did not filter messages coming out on the facebook/twitter. People now created fake accounts and made stories to disrupt the community. Most of them approved that emotion based, outrageous posts and tweets were trending every day in their newsfeeds.

Most of respondents who have MA and above underlined that social media is a good tool to disseminate information for all over the world at a time, however the trend to use this tool for good is deteriorating. And even it harms the social condition of the entire society, may be because of limited capability of using this tool for better future.

Thus in general almost all of the respondents agree that the social media political communication trends are irresponsible and disrespectful where insults grew up and ideas changed into something worrisome affecting the health of the community.

When respondents are asked – if they ever heard of responsible political social media messaging, how do they express it - Most of respondents replied as they did not hear about responsible political messaging. They said it is not common hearing it and respondents stated what they thought as a balanced story, describes political messaging using social media platforms in a well-mannered and responsible way. Again some people declared that there is nothing called responsible social media messaging, “Ethiopian people do not know about it”. They think people did not see back and forth to post something they felt would make sense to their audiences. Respondents stated that most of activists seems to be warmongers and post stories of igniting pains of others and call for rebellious action.

On the other hand, some of respondents replied as they heard of responsible political communication but did not see that more often. Most activists they know seems they are in a position where some individuals who persistently work on posting messages that grows and nurture hostility and antagonism but also there are some people who check and balance the story before they post it outward. They said some posts are bold enough to criticize everyone be it on the government or the opposition side. The problem is no one

seems to be ready to critically revise their political view. The political rhetoric on social media is more of "either you are with us or with them" kind.

Other respondents also responded as posting contents related to political situations should focus on arguing ideas not confronting with people and also we need to respect individual's political stand and respectful communication is a priority. They said they know activists who cross check before it catches online.

When respondents are asked how do they see government's reaction towards political social media messaging from the prominent activists – as described in the graph below

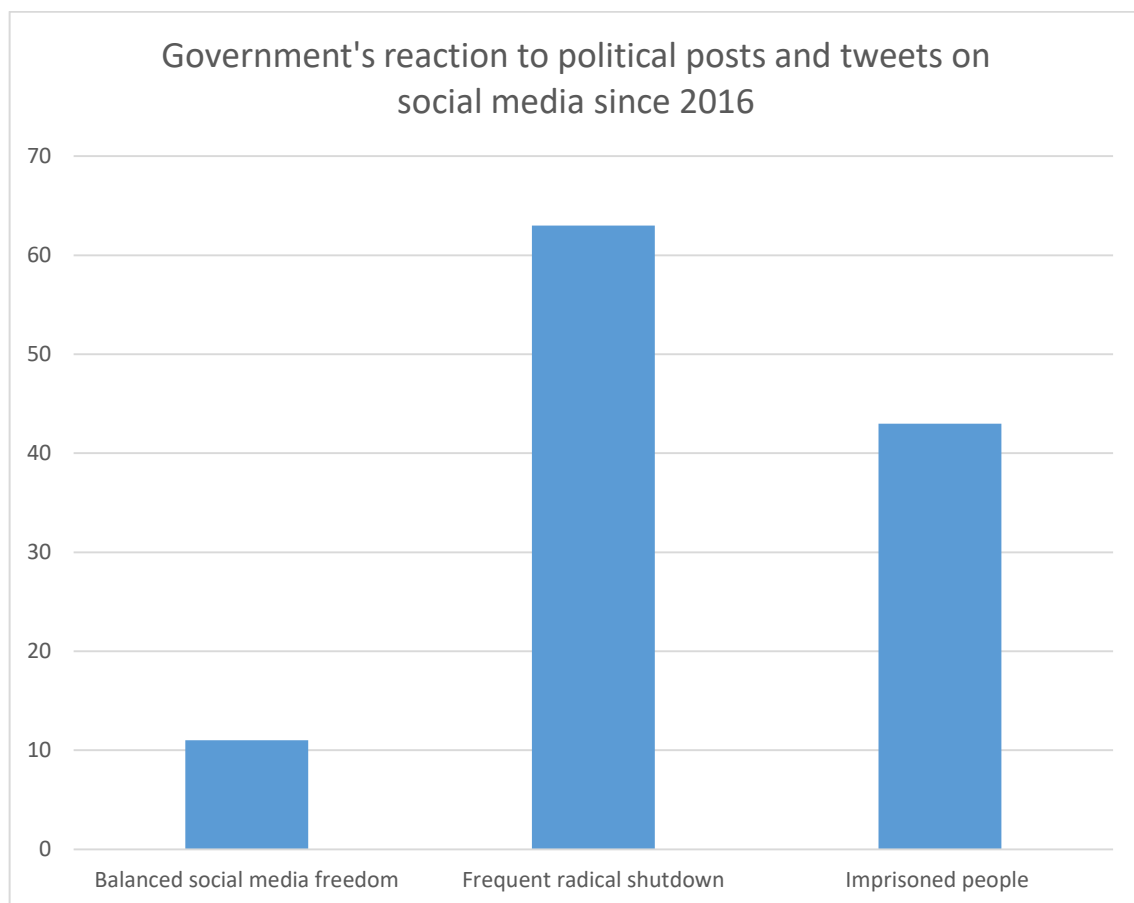


Figure 17. Chart for government's reaction to political posts

Government reacts to most of questioning and freedom fighting posts parallel with official defamation 54% of the population replied as the government reacts with frequent shutdown towards political social media messaging and 37% of respondents there is imprisonment of people who post something that is not aligned with the government thoughts and stands and 11 people or 9% of respondents said that there is a balanced social media freedom.

4.9 Social media as important sources of information

In the analysis above, respondents regard social media as important sources of information on various strengths, which include the fact they deliver messages promptly and that they provide a platform for free airing of ideas – they allow for networking while simultaneously bridging communication gaps

In the above questionnaires it was responded and discussed that social networking sites are also considered important because they facilitate the creation of social awareness. For online audiences it provide information about activism-oriented activities and enhance universal communication through faster coordination and delivery of messages, connecting friends and influencing their circles, and giving users access to various messages at any given time.

Usefulness of activism vindicated properly by respondents on the basis that social media allow strategic planning for activism and facilitates a platform for agenda setting on various issues. It also offers the critiquing and appraising of pressing social and political ideas through facilitating the mobilization of support, easing the work of activists, through offering anonymity, which encourages activists to go online and express themselves, such that one can give one's opinion on a particular subject matter affecting society. However these all can only be taken as true if activists are responsible enough while sharing those messages out for their followers not for a call for revenge and fight, not hatemongering and inflammatory.

4.10 Interview with Daniel Berhane and Befqadu Z. Hailu

Although the researcher often has some familiarity with informants, from background research or earlier conversations, it is founded to be crucial to explain my stand to interviewee's political activity. I am not their friend on facebook but rather their followers and can scan their updated stories whenever they post something. To analyze interviews, of which classic content analysis, grounded theory and discourse analysis are only some examples (Metsämuuronen, 2005; Rakow, 2011; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). It has been pointed out that data collection and analysis are not necessarily chronological steps, but instead, can also overlap. This is particularly true in qualitative research (Metsämuuronen, 2005). Since the aim of this study was to define the current political social media

communication trends in Ethiopia and followers reaction towards influential activists' posts and tweets. In qualitative content analysis, the research questions that have guided the data collection are utilized to direct the analysis (Schreier, 2012). To illustrate the data gained through the interviews and to validate the findings, quotations from the interviews were incorporated into the analysis.

4.10.1 Background of Interviewees'

Daniel Berhanie, a Blogger, social media activist and writer, founder and editor of Horn Affairs, a platform where the Horn of Africa burning issues are covered. He is followed by 123, 353 people and address mainly political activities. Befqadu is also one of the zone 9 blogger, activist, lobbyist [who takes part in an organized attempt to influence legislators i.e Zone 9] and writer with 28,837 followers plus friends he has. His short bio is on his twitter and facebook pages and he stated as he started using blogs and social media actively since 2008 with the thirst of transparent communication on what the government is doing and the violation of human rights he asserted. The researcher chooses the interviewee on purposive sampling. Having their activism political social media engagement in to consideration.

As you can see from the following follower wonk print screen below at this time of the research that Befqadu has 12,713 followers with 22% engagement and 25 average tweets per week and Daniel Berhane with 21,775 followers with just 5 % retweet engagement. Based on this it seems that Befqadu is more active on twitter while Daniel is less active and he usually used automated facebook post to be shared on twitter at the same time. Nevertheless both have large number of followers and both seemed to be pioneers in the Ethiopian political activism movement using blogs and social media like facebook, first.



Figure 18. Interviewee's social media profile

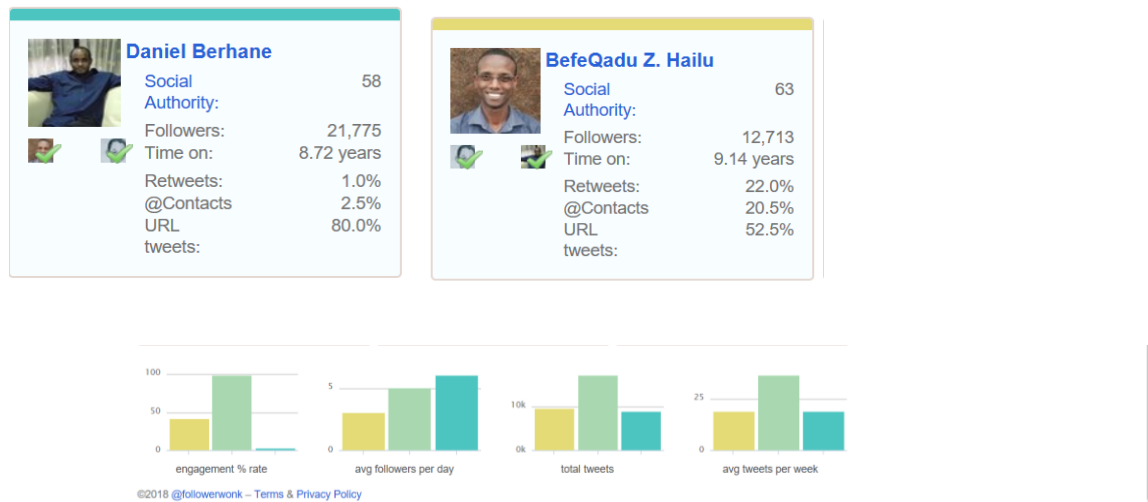


Figure 19. Chart for Interviewee’s twitter profile

According to follower-wonk the figures above states their followers and engagement rate per day and per week side by side.

4.10.2 Platforms used and objectives

Daniel Berhane said he basically started his own blog, Horn Affairs, to exercise his freedom of press following the proverb he strongly believes “freedom of the press is to the person who owns one” which pushed him to own one and reflect his idea. And Facebook also works the same, he said he found Facebook as an easy platform that he can reach the larger audience at the same time. He said he uses his mobile phone to access his pages , Mobile Phones are more affordable way to access social media and let most of the people to be engaged, it seems that mobile phones could help bridge the gap between people with access and people without and contribute to close the digital divide (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The following are platforms that three of the interviewees used where Facebook and twitter took the lion’s share.

Platforms	Description
Facebook	Online social networking service where users can create a profile, add other users as "friends", send instant messages, share photos and videos (Facebook Newsroom, 2014).
Twitter	Online social networking service enabling users to communicate via short 140-character messages called "tweets" (Twitter, 2014).
YouTube	Video-sharing website on which users can upload, view, and share videos (Alexa, 2014).

Skype	Telecommunications application software providing video chat and voice calls from computers, tablets and mobile devices via the Internet (Skype, n.d.).
What's up	Cross-platform mobile messaging app which allows users to exchange messages (O'Connell, 2014)
LinkedIn	Business-oriented social networking service (LinkedIn Corporation, 2015).
Blogs	Regularly updated webpage containing a user's personal experiences, opinions or observations (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.).

Table 1. Platforms used and objectives

When asked which platforms the interviewees [Daniel and Befqadu] were using, Facebook was often the first platform listed, mentioned by both of the participants. Majority of the interviewees perceived it to be the most popular platform in Ethiopia and none of the interviewees mentioned any other platform to be more popular. Indeed, Facebook was clearly the most popular social media platform among the interviewees and Twitter, listed as the second most popular platform.

Though Facebook was mainly considered useful for social networking, interacting with one's friends and getting to know new people but both of my interviewees used it for political commentary. Twitter, on the other hand, tended to be perceived more as a platform where one can gain information and knowledge, for instance concerning current events, and as a channel to follow well organized informants and it connects youth with a better community than facebook. Furthermore both, Daniel and Befqadu used blogs to breath and breadth their thoughts with pieces of articles. Despite not elaborating extensively on the purpose of reading blogs, the interviewees seemed to use them mainly for political opinion discourses and set the agenda for their readers and followers. All in all, it seems that some social media sites, Facebook and Twitter, can offer a more informal platform for political discussions Bailard (2012 and Waller (2013), as politically oriented platforms are choices of all these days in Ethiopia.

Another reason interviewee explained that social media mainly facebook is user friendly and that almost everyone owns it makes it more preferable platform to post political activism messages and enhance their audience reach. However, character limitation of

Twitter hinders its usage and stayed complicated for most of the youth but nowadays with additional characters allowed most seems using it, they said.

Befqadu emphasized that he and his friends in the zone 9 blog collections, he told the collection believes that the Ethiopian politics only be solved through discourse. The civil societies and mainstream media get enfeebled and he said they wanted to do something that can replace through blogs and hashtag social media campaigns like respect #PressFreedom, #TheRighttoAssociation and others and help the people to get their voice and concerns heard. It was also mentioned that social media worked as channels to address various issues particularly for those young adults who were less extrovert. Both of the interviewees used social media to bring about positive changes in their community. Interviewees also mentioned that in addition to the numerous positive ways social media were used destructively. They said they had noticed cyber bullying on social media and one had been bullied on Facebook before. Social media could therefore be used also to discourage others and in terms of political communication on social media interviewee all agreed that they faced lots of negative reactions towards their post – usually controversial messages always get negative reactions and when that is not in-line with the stand of some of their followers. They mentioned that people posts inflammatory comments and they deleted sometimes and sometimes they leave it as it is even in messages they said they received various comments and they act sometimes by commenting underneath mentioning their name with clarification if they wanted.

4.10.3 Impact of social media activism

Interviewees mentioned as their posts so far are impactful, they said their number of followers are increasing from time to time with multiplicity of share and likes that their existing friends did. And this helped their stories and posts to reach large number of audiences. Since 2011 onwards my two interviewee's popularity grew and they even become trusted source of information. Both of the interviews told that they receive feedbacks and recognition from followers and Befqadu mentioned that people has mentioned that they used his posts for their class as supportive documents from AAU and one of the clubs from Mekelle university also told him that they even discussed about it. Daniel also said that even when government officials made mistakes and he posted that with correction, they admit took correction from his post/ tweet back. And sometimes both affirmed that they even receive calls from the government officials that what they post is not correct and put options for detail elaborated posts. One of the researcher's interviewee,

Befqadu Beyene, has been jailed four times for blogging and activism practices and he said all what he has been writing on his blog was right and he affirmed that his followers stood beside him. “You could be sent to jail just because you tried fight justice” he said. Posts of influential activists are not taken as a simple post open it is many interpretations by their followers and usually are impactful. Both agreed that people used their messaging as a source of information, me as a communications officer used to cite their posts parallel with links.

4.10.4 Followers Reaction towards influencers Posts and practices in Ethiopia

Follower’s reaction is also another post/tweet impact measurement. It was discussed in the interview that people, activists, are not cautious in posting irresponsible posts, they might only consider their release but not relegalized what impact would it have to the people they followed by. It was also mentioned that such posts usually are only to appease their supporter but not to clearly state the problem and correct by giving the direction.

“If you want for instance; a government official to correct herself/ himself, you would not be able to teach them by insulting and advocate hate mongering others towards him/her, they would block you at all.” Said Befqadu.

Daniel remembered that Irresponsible social media contents like “somebody is in this place, he is this and that so take any measure to kill him”” kind of posts been moving around “And this is disintegrating, if you are using social media for hatemongering, then it kills” Daniel added.

It was also addressed that the internet penetration is very low in Ethiopia but the impact and influence is way higher than that, it has the capacity of shaking the government bodies. The interviews said that this is because people don’t have media the media that speaks their voices, civil societies to fight their rights and absence of strong political parties made the people to shout in and makes social media way influential beyond its penetration capacity in Ethiopia.

“That is why now almost every government higher officials scam social media posts/ tweets and listens angers and forced to give answers” said Daniel Berhane.

Both of my interviewee also stated that there are a number of government officials such as: @fitsumaregaa, @PMOEthiopia, @DrWorkneh.Official are some of the accounts on both Facebook and twitter and it is said that they would have a chance to set agenda.

Tied with this the interviews mentioned that in 2016/17 there was persistent internet shutdown happening in Ethiopia. Both agreed on why does this happen in Ethiopia where there was very low internet penetration and few users as compared to other countries with strong penetration , it seemed that the problem was on the ground where we have lots of blockages, censoring that is why social media is popular in Ethiopia.

4.11 Summary

The interaction between social media and different political and economic aspects of life can also create a multiplying effect that can stimulate the reaction towards activists posts (Leenders & Heydemann 2012). Therefore social media acts more as an intervening variable in relation to action and movement.

Jawar Mohammed, Befqadu Z. Hailu, Daniel Berhanie, Tsegaye Ararsa, Achamyeleh Tamiru and Muluken Tesfaw are founded to be some of influential political activists based on follower wonk and Social Baker social media analytical tools. Mainstream media skepticism and political cynicism encouraged people to rely more on social media political stories and develop quite strong engagement on facebook and twitter.

Responses show that people who still choose social media for their political purpose in it and can clearly tell the hunger of using social media to check the ongoing political situations taking place in Ethiopia. Accordingly on the bases of political activism – social media political activism messaging plays a critical role in creating a successful communications amongst the social media activism circles.

There are also 23% respondents who took social networking sites as their trusting source and others take 50% of information on social media as true, means they still take the information coming in their newsfeed. The implication here is that social media provide enough opportunities for activism on the strength of the number of users who trust information found online. This is also a form of endorsement for online opinion makers such as bloggers that the information they give is often authenticated such that it inspires confidence among social media consumers

Usefulness of activism vindicated properly by respondents on the basis that social media allow strategic planning for activism and facilitates a platform for agenda setting on various issues.

Both the purposely selected influencers affirmed that cyber bullying on social media are becoming normal and it has been also used also to defame/discourage. It was also mentioned that such posts usually are only to appease their supporter but not to clearly state the problem and correct by giving the direction. Such irresponsibility activism practices resulted mounting and respondents faced instability on the ground.

CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will utilize the analysis and presents a summary of the findings of the study, as well as conclusion gathered from analysis of the findings, in consideration to the objectives of the study.

5.2 Summary of Findings

Based on the results outlined in the previous chapter the researcher derived the results of the study and summarized as follows:

Most Internet users are now aware of political social media activism. All of the respondents who filled the online questionnaire and interviewed influential activists said are active on social media. This is an indicator that the digital activism and communication in Ethiopia has maximized, and continues to do so. From the findings of the study almost 100 per cent of the respondents visit social networking sites regularly though their preferences sites, as Facebook, twitter, Blogs, etc., differ, and 70 per cent of this proportion visit every day. And tied with this it seems that the youth in Ethiopia are a stable online audience, based on responses on subscription of various social networking sites, and the time spent on basically both Facebook and twitter sites.

Social media are becoming an increasingly important source of information; 80 per cent of respondents said they consider Social media as an important source of information. In the study 20 per cent of respondents indicated they were dependent on social media for information. Tied with this is that consumers of social media shape opinion on the basis of what social media influencers say.

For example, it was evident that certain bloggers and influential social media activists command huge followings, who share what they post with their online communities for demonstrations/protest and mob. These leading forms of activism in Ethiopia, from the study, at 31.5 percent. However, the probability that people take action to activist's call against some specific group to displace or take part in movements is not very high – 48.3%

respondents admitted to sharing activism-oriented material that they get online. This then resulted social media as a critical channel in activism.

Following online activism is a bit of a challenge because it is a form that is still developing. Most of the time, activism-oriented messages seems instigating and people still do not filter contents of online activism. As well, users do not take the initiative to find out activities geared towards activism but rather call their followers to fight and act based of the posts they shared. It was also mentioned that most of social media activists are outside Ethiopia but command their followers towards irresponsible act.

Irresponsible Social media political messaging turned followers to engage in to demonstrations, and attacks against a specific group they called for. It was also used as a channel to exchange messages and get revenge to one another. Even though most of the respondents and none of interviewees mentioned that they had been involved in any riots and protests related to social media fabricated violence in the country, they believed most youth had been involved. Since involving social media called violence these actions can be categorized as collective forms of illegal activism, included under social media activism (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). Interestingly, it seems that both interviewees had the perception that social media influential activists usually manifested political participation, although they did not participate actually for the social movements they call on the ground. But it is also mentioned that the youth sometimes understood it in destructive way; for instance if one person passed-away in one specific area and activists post it by mentioning the killer to a specific group of people. Then hatred towards that group went to its extreme and they stand to fight against them before law and order takes place. At the same time, however, respondents in suggestions and both of the interviewees pointed out that young adults' involvement in the society was truly important.

5.3 Conclusion

Irresponsible social media activism as determined from the study is largely that of encouraging followers and fans to implement and act through disseminating information faster, and presenting information and facts that would otherwise be censored in traditional media. This qualifies the argument by (Rutledge, 2014) that social media has redefined activism by facilitating rather than decreasing advocacy, be lending voice to “weak and unheard” – those who have been unable to take part in physical demonstrations now have

a way to add their voices to causes. But could have been used by avoiding inflammation and racist contents.

From the study, it is evident that social media do provide opportunities for activism in various political and social issues. Social media is an indispensable tool for online activism on social matters and governance debates, and gives opportunities for engaging in activism online abound.

But establishing a workable social media strategy, as the researcher found out, is about more than posting an update to inform or demand, and goes beyond relevancy or appeal; success is about being able to create and maintain a conversation with your audience. John Rampton, writing in Forbes, says: “If you’re not generating conversations or new subscribers, or making any money, then whatever you’re doing has failed.” And that conversation should be a healthy discourse.

However, in Ethiopian context, social media is now in a high demand and it is a media breaking the news before the mainstream media, and it is at that level where it can cook offline activism. This is informed by the fact that users do not actually derive much gratification from engaging in online activities of activism, which usually makes them cross check on other sources. Stems from the fact such activities may not have much impact in terms of realizing change, but the speedy circulation and visual elements has the power to act irrespective of truth testament.

Properly then, the relationship between irresponsible online social media activism and followers reaction is a complimentary one, where the former ignite the facilitation to take place by the latter. Where (McCaughey and Ayers, 2003) demonstrate that online activists have not only incorporated recent technology as a tool for change, that activism implies whatever form of agitation that a group of people happen to be doing, as long as it is geared towards change, and that group is a ‘community’ if it is united in responsible cause. This study finds that responsible political social media activism has to be well digested before it is posted and disintegrate.

But, as White (2013) puts it, digital media has, indeed, become “the twenty first century town square”. Even though social media were perceived to have made politics more transparent and interaction with activists easier, they did not seem to eliminate the challenges concerning irresponsible message distribution. Thus, it seems that even though

social media have the potential to contribute to fostering political activism in the society, the way this potential is being utilized also depends on the users' value.

The study also founded that radical internet shutdown to calm down the instability in the country is not a best option rather people tend to check one another and give a chance to spread another baseless story through word of mouth.

5.4 Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher makes the following recommendations.

The most important approach the researcher suppose is we should work on our values, values that matter to the society, values that can unite communities and work on nation building. If so, there is no way that activism calls towards irregular disintegration, users will discuss subjects that matters most.

I believe that we should watch the danger of outrage sharing of racist and inflammatory posts. Though we cannot control irresponsible posts flowing but can control what we magnify and spread all over our social media timelines.

Next, government communications and related organizations engaged in political social activism ought to develop responsive and interactive peaceful contents and methodologies in engaging followers using online platforms who facilitate demonstrations and protests on the ground.

On the same breath, social media activism strategies should be employed in online calls tailored to resonate with the societal peace and development of target followers; otherwise, users will keep shunning and frustrating in using social media, where it was supposed to be considered as alternative option.

Again, online activists ought to be more engaged and proactive, in building Ethiopian values so that they can be seen as active actors in responsible use of social media. Accordingly then, creating a conversation that create a feeling of inclusiveness is important for some users and develop belonging so that they would avoid offensive and hatred communications.

All in all, to be able to truly utilize social media for responsible social media activism towards for development of the community and the whole society, problems regarding access to users' digital literacy skills and distribution of power need to be addressed.

Despite these challenges, the findings indicate that social media have the potential to work as fruitful platforms for healthy conversations. Indeed, the interviewees were found to utilize social media in various innovative ways to adapt the platforms to solve problems and work what the media and civil societies were supposed to do.

Most importantly opening up of the press freedom and organization of civil societies would calm down the shout on social media. I am also now informed that the government is planning to announce proclamation on hate-speech appreciated but doubtful if that still limits the freedom of expression. To conclude, social media should not be perceived as sub-standard and irresponsible platform, but instead, they should be acknowledged as an important use of the technology (Ali, 2011).

5.5 Limitation and Direction for Future Research

Since the aim of this study was to enhance responsible social media activism and to analyze the digital political activism in Ethiopia on the most widely used social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter. Despite its merits, this study also has some limitations in addressing data extensively from both Facebook and twitter, but it seems most data were Facebook based as most of respondents and interviewees were mainly on Facebook. Moreover, data collected from social media accounts of the influencers listed-as discussed in the scope were only focused on those with strong reactions and visibility on the ground. Thus, it can be claimed that any conclusions proposed, although strongly based on the data, are always interpretations of the interviewer.

This study focused on the social media activism practices in Ethiopia and its irresponsible use of the youth in Ethiopia. Hence, in future research, attention should be also paid to the perceptions of other groups of the society. For instance, it would be interesting to compare whether social media have been perceived and utilized in responsible manner on another age group of the population. Though the study was conducted in Addis Ababa, the researcher made online questioner hoping that audiences of regions in Ethiopia could access it and would have been helpful to gain a deeper understanding activism

communication in the regions. But in the study it was evident that most of respondents were from Addis.

In the data, it is indicated that the youth seemed to see social media as channels to interact with influential activists and even with the government figures, more research should be carried out to see how the political figures perceive this interaction. In other words, it would be interesting to examine how the politicians, for instance, see the use of social media in relation to their work and the Ethiopian democracy in general. Furthermore, the present study found that social media were used in various innovative ways to adapt the platforms to the stability and nation building of the country. This further research would undoubtedly contribute to a deeper understanding of the ways social media could be utilized for development.

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APPENDIX A

Survey Questionnaire

Descriptions

My name is Elham Ali. I am a graduating Masters student in Journalism and communications at Addis Ababa University. This is a survey questionnaire for a thesis titled ‘Social Media Responsibility and Political Activism in Ethiopia’. They are 20 questions and might only take 7 to 10 minutes. I would appreciate if you could fill and send me as a message or on Survey Monkey. Thanks very much for your time.

1. Select Your Gender a) Male b) Female

2. Write your date of Birth

3. Where do you live now?

4. Level of education a) Student b) Diploma c) First Degree d) Second Degree e) Other

5. Do you use social media, facebook or/and twitter? a) Yes b) No

6. Which social media tools below you use MOST often? (choose all that apply)
 - a. Facebook
 - b. Twitter
 - c. Youtube
 - d. All

7. Which tools do you use for the following purposes (Political, social, business and personal) choose only one for one category?

	Political	Social	Business	Personal
Facebook				
Twitter				
Youtube				
Others				

8. Do you use social media tools for political information purposes primarily ?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
 - c. I don't know

9. Thinking of what you have posted since 2016 or recently, How much of what you have posted related to politics since 2016?
- a) All / almost all of it
 - b) Just a little
 - c) Not at all

10. How about the people you are friends with on social media how much of what they post is Political, since 2016 or recently?

All Almost all Some None

Twitter
Facebook
Youtube
Other

11. When your friends on social media post something political that you disagree with, how do you respond usually?

- a. Respond by posting a comment or posting of your own opinion
- b. Ignore the post you disagree with
- c. Something else

12. If you see posts that you disagree with on social media tools what makes you disagree with rate the content

- a) Is it because it affects your ethnicity
- b) Is it because it affects your religion
- c) Is it because it affects your political stand
- d) Is it because it is just disrespectful
- e) Is it because it is non-sense

13. Which of the following activism-oriented material have you come across?

- A) Demonstrations/Protests
- C) Petitions
- D) Banners and stickers
- E) Boycotts
- F) Mobilizing people for a cause

14. How often do you participate in such activities?

- A) Very often
- B) Often
- C) Sometimes
- D) Never

15. Do you encounter activism-oriented material (Videos, blogs, posts and/or tweets)?

- A) Yes
- B) No
- C) Don't know

16. How often do you encounter such material?

- A) Very often
- B) Often
- C) Not so often
- D) Rarely
- E) Never

17. Have you ever followed a link on activism-oriented information to a blog post, or on YouTube, Facebook or Twitter?

- A) Yes
- B) No
- C) Don't know

18. If you have been offended with political posts and tweets of your friends on social media, what did you do? -----

19. When you yourself have posted something political on social media (facebook & Twitter) have you ever gotten strong negative reaction? a)yes it does

get a negative reaction to me

b) it does not happen

20. If your answer for question number 14 is yes- why was that and did you do anything to settle that? -----

21. When using social media , have you ever blocked or unfriend someone because he/she

- a) Post too much about politics or political messages
- b) Posted political messages that you disagree or offended
- c) Disagreed with your political posts or stands
- d) Worried if it offend your friends / families

22. How do you rate overall political posts and tweets on social media?

- a. balanced/responsible
- b. irresponsible

- c. Untrue
- d. Disrespecting

23. Do you believe political messages your friends on social media post or tweet?

- a. Never
- b. 50%
- c. 75%
- d. 100%

24. Have you ever heard of responsible political social media messaging? How do you express it?

25. How do you see government reaction to political posts and tweets on social media since 2016? Choose all that applies.

- a) Frequent radical shutdown
- b) Imprisoned people for their posts and tweets
- c) Balanced social media freedom
- d) I don't know

I would appreciate further opinion in this regard- Please state here -----

Thanks Very Much!

APPENDIX B

Questions for Semi-Structured Interview

1. Tell me about your involvement in political activism? How did you get involved?
2. Which social media channels you usually use? How often you check your accounts and how long do you spent once you open them on average?
3. What has been the most difficult moment that you have faced as a political activist? What kinds of issues arose? What are the challenges you have seen?
4. How do you see the follower's reaction in political messaging on facebook & Twitter? Have you ever faced any strong negative reaction on what you posted or tweeted? If so, how do you address them?
5. Do you think the social media messaging are impactful or create change? If so can you give us examples?
6. What could be strategic options for the development of responsible social media communication?
7. How did you manage your activism with the radical internet shutdown? Do you think it calmed down the hatemongering contents on social media?

**Note: Additional follow-up questions were asked, as appropriate with both of the interviewee.*

