



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERISTY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

***SOCIAL MEDIA PRACTICE IN THE AFRICAN UNION:
FOCUSING ON THE UNION’S FACEBOOK PAGE IN 2019***

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY, CENTER FOR AFRICAN AND ORIENTAL STUDIES. IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN AFRICAN STUDIES

BY

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ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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List of Acronyms

CRAN	African Communication Regulation Authorities Network
AEF	African Editors' Forum
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African development bank
AIPPA	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
AMI	African Media Initiative
AU	African union
AUC	African union commission
CDC	center of disease control
DRC	democratic republic of Congo
FB	face book
GDP	gross domestic peoduct
HTML	Hyper Text Markup Language
HTTP	hypertext transfer protocol
<i>IDPs</i>	Internally <i>displaced people</i>
NCA	National Communication Authority
Nd	not defined
NEPAD	new economic partnership for development
NGO	non-governmental organizations
NMC	National Media Commission

OAU-----organization of African unity
PANA -----Pan-African News Agency
PANA-----Pan-African News Agency
POSA-----Public Order and Security Act
PRC -----Permanent Representative Committee.
RECs-----regional economic communities
SNSs-----social *networking* sites
UNECA----- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNHCR -----United Nations higher commissioner for refugees
URL -----uniform resource locator
URTNA -----Union of African National Radio and TV Organizations

Abstract

In this technologywise world, the media landscape is shifting towards digital platforms. Social Media is becoming a tool to convey information and communication to a larger audience This research is done on the Social Media Practices in the African Union and the usage of its Facebook Page in 2019. Social media, particularly facebook is now becoming one of the influential social media alternatives for individuals and it will see the process on how the African union is addressing issues for the African people via its facebook page.

It tried to show how to present information on the facebook page and how to set issues for the readers in an appropriate manner. The paper also tried to look at wheather the posts are covering social, economic and political issues on regular basis or not as well as the reactions of the union against the commnets.

I have conducted an assessment in each month's posts and examine the characters of the posts and reactions against them and tried to quantify the samples taken on each month. Therefore, the paper displays what and how the african union agnedas being addressed through the page .

Key Words : African Union, Social Media, Facebook, posts

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The African union is the successor of the Organization of African Unity/ OAU with the aim of establishing comprehensive cooperation among African nations. Article 2 of the OAU charter clearly puts the economic, political and social objectives of the continent that member states must harmonize their policies with the communication sector (OAU charter: 1963 p-3).

Information communication is one of the key sectors in the continental integration and development agendas. AU's Constitutive Act clearly put the comprehensive agendas of the continent:

Accelerate the political and socio-economic integration; defend African common positions; encourage international cooperation, Promote peace, security, and stability on the continent; Promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies; Promote cooperation in all fields of human activity to raise the living standards of African peoples; Coordinate and harmonize the policies between the existing and future Regional Economic Communities for the gradual attainment of the objectives of the Union. (Constitutive Act, 2000, P.5)

In 2012, the African Union commission formulated Agenda 2063 as the basic platform for the development of the continent. The African capacity building foundation (2016) designed the agenda as:

An indigenous strategic framework for Africa's transformation over the next 50 years anchored on inclusive growth and sustainable development. This was to be done in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the New Partnership for Africa's Development Planning and Coordinating Agency (p.1).

African media has the responsibility of informing the public about the aforementioned inclusive development agendas as well as the practices that every country or individual

has to do for the success of African development. The function of African journalism is thus becoming increasingly important and influential in everyday practice of Africans (Ogola, 2015).

Organizations without strong communication, cannot achieve its goals. In order to address the objectives, the African union has introduced a platform of social media (Foreign Affairs of the Republic Of South Africa: 2002).

Today, Social media is becoming significant channel for information dissemination and communication around the world. It also involved an integrated process of managing volume of ideas and procedures to achieve desired goals and virtual space when needed (Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs, 2015).

Though Social media has enormous benefits, As Taylor (2011) quoted in Brett V. and Manoj M. (2013) if not managed well; it has also adversely a negative role by miss informing the public. The writers also noted that social networks like facebook, are essentially significant to advocate to bring transparency, follow organizations and get latest updates on different issues.

As Rebecca Schein, Wilson and et al (Nd) clearly stated that, the new media currently utilized by organizations as a broadcasting platform to amplify messages from traditional media sources like radio, television, and print media and as new way of co-creating content with target audiences.

The writers also expressed that interactivity, user generated content, and multidirectional communication flows are common agreements that characterize the new media. Engaging users to create content, and comment on communications give a heightened authenticity to messages, improving trust in, and building users' relationships with organizations (ibid).

The African union has official facebook page to address the union's agenda and practices that the organization is doing and the people can go online to get the information, communicate with each other and to interact with institutions in a two-way format.

In Africa there were 620 million mobile connections which was then the second largest mobile market in the world after Asia that employs more than 5 million people (agenda 2063 document, 2015:82). The current internet and mobile technology is convenient to create conducive communication in between the people and the organization.

Therefore, this research is to assess how the African Union is using social media in general and facebook in particular to address its political, economic and social activities, achievements and to inform the people about continental issues. It also used as a stepping stone for further studies and researches.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In this interconnected world, International organizations adopted communication platforms to address their goals and objectives to their stakeholders and followers. The African union is one of the international organizations with its solid aim of integrating the African people by achieving its basic objectives.

The African Union has its development framework, Agenda 2063, which was developed (*Agenda 2063 Framework Document: 2015*) with the process involving various African stakeholders, including the media sector.

AU developed plans, conducts and activities designed to provide information which uses a print media, internet, new information technology, publication media and partnerships with Member States, academia, libraries, youth and civil society (African union hand book 2018: 89). To this end, the African union commission drafted a document that states the communication strategy to make the development of Agenda 2063 and its successful implementation and mobilization of the African society (African Union Commission, 2014).

These days to achieve organizational goals, media is significant. Organizations which does not have its own broadcast media outlet, resorts the social media platforms to disseminate information.

The shift of information flow from the traditional media approach to a new way has happened in which the social media became a significant tool in communication practice. Among the social Media, facebook is one of the important social mediums for organizations like AU to make its goals, actions and achievements information accessible for the larger audience.

The African union is not actively using social media for communication, though it has official facebook page. Potentially AU has expected to have many followers; but it has few likes, views, follows, comments and shares with its posts. Therefore the union is poor in using the page to communicate with the wider public.

This research is thus to assess how the African union uses social media, facebook, to inform the people about its aims, achievements and comprehensive issues of political, economic and social affairs about the continent.

1.3. Objective of the Study

The thesis consists of general as well as specific objectives.

1.3.1. General Objective

The general objective of this research is to assess how the African union is using Facebook to inform the public about its political, economic and social agendas in the year 2019.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives are:

- To explore how facebook is important in addressing the information from AU to the public.
- To see which issues are being addressed on the facebook page of AU?
- To assess the problems of information flow from AU to the audiences
- To assess the types of information posted on the page and what the reactions are.

1.4. Research Questions

- What is facebook and what makes it preferable?
- How AU addresses its agendas via its facebook page?
- What are the issues posted on the Facebook page of AU?
- How AU is using its Facebook page and what are the problems that faces?

1.5. Significance of the Study

This research's finding is important not only for the African union but also for other international organizations on how to use social media for the awareness creation on the society. Particularly, it is significant for AU to see the ways to disseminate information for the people of Africa via its Facebook page.

The fastest growing information communication sector in the African continent (Agenda 2063 Framework document: 2015), is supporting the information flow within each individual and organizations; therefore, this research shows how to inform the audience in a regular and conducive manner on facebook.

Social media is becoming a preferred media platform in Africa; consequently, this research will indicate how AU has to make the page accessible for the people across the continent vis-à-vis the hindering factors to use of face book. It also shows how to post information and data on face book page and react for the comments and suggestions against the posts.

This study is also an important input for the African union to see the social media communication strategy and to develop a better approach to set an African agenda in the people of Africa.

The research can also be used as a stepping stone for further studies concerning social media, Facebook and AU.

1.6. Research Methodology

Since the use of a qualitative approach gives better understanding of problems and suggestive solutions, this research mainly employs the qualitative method in approach.

As John W. Creswell (2014:23) noted that qualitative approach is exploratory and is useful when the research is to be conducted without countable variables as well as when the new topic has addressed with a certain sample. He also noted that qualitative procedures rely on text and image data with unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse (ibid: 201)

On the other hand, the research also employs the quantitative data and quantifying the qualitatively collected data in a pragmatic manner. Therefore, the research is categorized in a mixed approach.

Content analysis is supposed to be major and appropriate for this research because it uses a naturalistic paradigm to interpret meaning from computer-mediated communication (Anjan Pal et al (2017). Using this method, the research can show what the Facebook page of the AU really presented in the year specifically bounded. It also captures users' responses to the posts of on the African union official Facebook page. This in turn enhances the validity of the research.

According to Bowen (2009) as quoted in Daniel B (2019) Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around the assessment topic.

This research uses primary as well as secondary sources as source of information. It attempts to explore how the AU spread out information, news and announcements in different formats on its official facebook page directly. It also employs books and printing materials as secondary sources.

The contemporaneous data is significant to build a clearer picture of facebook of AU. The research employs content analysis as data collection tool to compile; on the other hand the numerical or quantifying the numerical data collected in different months also employed and there are tabular and graphic presentations in the process too.

1.7. Organization of the Research Paper

This research paper is organized in to five chapters. The first chapter deals with introduction including the general objective and the statement of the problem. The second chapter is devoted to the review of related literature.

The third chapter deals with the methodology part of the study. The fourth chapter gives coverage for data interpretation and presentation while the last and the fifth chapters cover the conclusion and reference section of the research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Definitions of Social Media

Eric W.T.et al (2015) defined the term social media by dividing the term in to two its components; “social” and “media”. The “social” part refers to the activities carried out among people, whereas “media” refers to the internet-enabled tools and technologies used to carry out such activities. Several social media studies have focused on understanding various social behavioral aspects, such as social influence, social interaction, social ties, and social identity

It could be considered as an ongoing evolution of Web 2.0 platform. “Web 2.0” was coined by Tom O’Reilly in 2004 to refer to the type of web site where people can retrieve, share, write, and store information as desired.

Eric W.T.et al (2015) also described what the technology of Web 2.0 is. According to him:

Web 2.0 include basic internet technologies for publishing static web pages in the first stage of the World Wide Web (e.g. HTML) and additional tools and technologies for creating dynamic web environment to facilitate user interaction and collaboration (e.g. Adobe Flash). Social media technologies comprise a wide range of tools and technologies, such as media sharing sites, blogs/micro blogs, social bookmarking sites, virtual/online communities, SNSs, and virtual worlds. (P-782)

Social media is the online means of communication and interaction between people involving computer-mediated tools and Internet based applications that allow people to create, process, share or exchange information, ideas, pictures and videos (Solo-Anaeto&Jacobs:2015; 38).

Kaplan and Heinlein (2010) as quoted in Solo-Anaeto&Jacobs (2015) define social media as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web with the allowance of creating and exchanging user-generated contents. It is also defined as the collective of online communication channels with community-based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration (Solo-Anaeto&Jacobs: 2015; 39).

Decades ago, Africa used mainly traditional media as information Sources in decision making and as source of information. Now, the people have different choices to have access for information via social media and social networking not only from news media but from international and local institutions.

Social media is a community that is to share information with one another by having conversations which involve sharing contents like facts, opinions, experiences, personal beliefs and rumors using words, pictures, video and audio. To facilitate the dialogue between people, It consists of various categories (Letitia E.Fourie:2015: 1- 2).

Consequently, this study attempts to answer the role social media has in information sharing and decision-making process as well as creating awareness about African agenda on African people.

Social media does not only allows users to hear what people say about them, their preferences and choices, but also allows users to respond, share and make comments on the information provided. It is characterized by interactivity, adoptability, portability and convergence (Solo-Anaeto M and Jacobs: 2015:38-39)

As GetSmarter (2012) clearly described and quoted by Letitia E.Fourie (2015:5), there are many categories of social media platforms but the major ones are:

1. Face book: it is an online platform of social networks that allow members to share information about themselves and their interests with friends and others. The members can create and update their profile with content likes text, photo, video and audio.
2. LinkedIn: This is similar with Face book but what makes it different is that it focuses more on professional networking instead of social groups.
3. Twitter: This social media platform is a Service that enables the member to send short updates of no more than 140 words or tweets to everyone who has signed up to receive them.
4. YouTube: it is a media-sharing platform that includes photo, audio and video sharing. YouTube also allow users to upload media which can be distributed to anyone with a unique URL for the content shared.
5. Blogging: The term derived from the word web log is a personal website that acts as an online journal that contains text, images, audio and links.

2.2. The Nature of Social Media

Social media has special characters. As Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs (2015:42) clearly described in their article published in the International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, the global nature, multimedia nature, the virtual cultural and ethnic community creation as well as archived in nature are some of the characteristics of the new social media.

Social media usages can be described as a resource that can be utilized by people looking for a communication infrastructure to promote their cause or correct an impression. The relationship between social media mediums and image defining is both an interactive and dynamic one as social media tools provide a medium through which pre-existing sentiments can gain greater clarity, expressions and meaning (BasseyNsa Ekpe:2017:112)

Since the consumers of social media contents are diverse and from all across the world, it is global in nature. Users can upload contents on African cultural assets, lifestyle, arts, music, food, etc, on social media to the world to see and appreciate the various aspects of African values (Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs: 2015:41). It has enhanced better opportunity for Africans to make and display their own socio cultural values, develop, enrich and preserve own lifestyles.

Social networks have low entry barriers and SM tools provide an accessible platform for citizen journalism, which mean that the use of digital media tools to “report on events on the ground, uploading text and videos directly to the Internet with Many to many way of communication. (Madeline Storck: 2011:25-26)

Social media contents are available as archive and people can get any time wanted (Solo-Anaeto and Jacobs: 2015:41-42) to see easily which makes it preferable than the main media. Sites, pages or accounts that are displaying videos, literature, music, images - can be stored and accessed anytime, even in many years to come.

Social media has a multi-media nature, because it allows for written, graphic, pictorial and video elements to be uploaded and shared on it. The interaction and interconnectedness of the users brought another characteristic of social media. It brought the same community or people with similar ethnic origin together and creates an online community. Now, there are pages displayed in African languages like Google Yoruba and Google Hausa (Ibid: 42-43).

The social media influence is now becoming crucial in the life of the people. Wilma Stassen (2010:116) introduces his research with the sentence, “*I saw on face book*”... Which indicates that the present time is highly influenced by the social media platforms specially face book. Through the Internet people one can get news as fast as possible with important updates within hours or minutes. Audiences can get immediate help and assistances through cell phones or in an email account.

If Conventional mediums – newspapers, TV and radio to stay in the market, they have to embrace new technology and adapt their products in ways that add value to what they do. That is why in many countries traditional media are creating their own web sites and reach contents for their audiences.

Social media has the anywhere, anytime and any platform characters (Gordon: 2009), (Picard: 2009) as quoted in Wilma Stassen(2010:117) which creates romantic news communities by blogging and posting updates and stories on Twitter, YouTube, Face book and others.

Through social media, not only journalists can get information, ideas and feedback from their audiences but also the general public can have access. Through constant interaction with users journalists develop a different type of relationship than the connection created by traditional mass communication.

Ohiagu (2010) as quoted in Eluwole T. et al (2014) brought the findings that the information communication technology has a positive and negative influence on the people of Africa. In one direction, globalization and the Internet technology gradually erodes the African cultural values and ways of life. On the other hand, the ICT creates interaction between people of different background with exchange of values, norms, and ideologies. The mobile internet access which matters policy issues as well as strategic plan from governments and international companies, is becoming significant from time to time.

Bahia Calvin (2018:6) as stated in the article focusing on the state of mobile internet connectivity, Since 2014, additional one billion people get online access via the mobile internet technology which can address the rural population, youth and women. Based on the current assumptions, fifty percent of the world population is still offline from the internet.

2.3. Africa, Media and social media

2.3.1. Africa and Media

In the developing continent like Africa, Media has the function of allowing citizens to be exposed to opinions reflecting different views. However, professionalism, credibility, capacity and accountability are the challenges facing media freedom in Africa and the developing world (Alphonse and Valentina R: 2005:22-23).

The Nordic Journal of African Studies (2012) defines mass media, to mean channel to inform a wide audience for influencing the government or the people including Newspapers, magazines, journals, books and other forms of publications and the broadcast media transmitted through sound and visual images such as the radio and television. This did not consider the new media which is the most influential way of communication at everyone's hand.

The African media history could be seen in three consecutive time contexts; the pre- colonial, colonial and post-colonial period.

During the pre- colonial Africa, the people had their own way of communication and information transmission. Jo Ellen Fair (2016) stated that Writing about communication from oral traditions to mass media and new communication and information technologies in a continent of great cultural, historical, economic, and political diversity has been a challenge.

Zaghlimi L. (2016) clearly articulated that press was one of the main arguments of seduction and diffusion of the colonial culture, information and way of life.

The period of colonialism (Bussotti: 2014:1) changed the paradigm and practices of communication in African communities.

During the colonial period, media was useful in exposing the misrule, exploitation and evil of colonial rule to the international community and the mobilization of the civil society groups (Mukasa: 2003) to mount pressure on the colonial government that eventually culminated in the independence of African colonial territories.

In African continent, media has long been a vanguard of social struggle and change. It played a crucial and active role in the anti-colonial struggle and was instrumental in the eventual attainment of political independence of many countries (Esebonu: 2012).

Ogola (2015: 2) in his article journey of failure and triumph of African journalism took the year 1990s as the turning point in African journalism. The decade could be taken as a period of adoption of political pluralism in many African countries and the broader liberalization of African economies.

Private media was flourishing during these times but the Colonial trauma changed the way of communication by reducing the phonic function and, consequently, destroying the traditional and highly established manner of communication used by the indigenous people. The use of the colonizers languages in African media is one of the results of the colonial influence and suppression.

European colonial powers had not only occupied many African countries, exploited their natural resources and deprived their inhabitants of basic rights, but also sought to establish its new culture of communication. Beyond the colonial influence, democratization of media itself is another critical point in the African media development. Even if the concept democratized media is highly contested because of different views, as Akpojivi (2018: p- 27) noted political and economic influences are the hindering factors for the media freedom.

After independence, in many countries, Africans have never had affordable access to independent journalism (Indra de Lanerolle: 2013: 98) and State interests have often dominated broadcast and print journalism usually tailored to urban elites. The writer coined the coming of the new media as new wave communication due to the internet technology.

Zipporah Musau (2016) indicated that still African traditional media like the TV and radio stations are supported and controlled by governments but readers and listeners shift towards the free digital content in the current African media development via mobile phones provide diversified information which makes social media flourish.

2.3.2. Africa and Social Media

As of the (www.internetworldstats.com:2019), the world stats indication, Africa has 521,614,944 internet users among the 1.2 billion population. Among the internet users 204,304,118 are face book subscribers; in a growth of thousands of percents from 2000 to 2019.

The Forbes magazine contributor Toby Shapshak wrote in the year 2018, among the African 139 million monthly users of face book, 98 percent are via mobile. Therefore, in the year 2020, five hundred million people in sub-Saharan Africa could have subscription on mobile which is growing an alarming rate (<https://www.forbes.com>).

To fulfill the African development and growth agenda of the African union, media is very significant, but in the continent, few people have access to media whether broadcast or internet based communication due to the technological factors (Kimani N. and Middleton, 2009:).

They depicted that social media have several roles to play in social developments in contemporary Africa. They underlined the importance “In issues of cultural development of social capital that is social interaction, civic trust and normative behavior which can benefit or harm society –as well as to the articulation and performance of cultural identities, media have played a crucial role”.

Similarly, G. Ogola (2015) expressed that, though accessing internet is difficult, African news organizations online presence is complementing editions of newspapers, radio and TV stations.

Unfortunately, most of African media give coverage of African affairs using western media as source of information and western language as medium of instruction (Manelisi and et al, 2000) due to lack of African media integration and the poor performance of the union’s facebook page in providing exact information about the continent.

The African Union has its own media strategy to give full coverage of the unions' social, economic and political agendas every time in its social media platform via its four official languages; Arabic, English, French and Portuguese (Constitute act of African union: 10) with being equally authentic and distribute information to the target audiences.

In theoretical frameworks, some traditional theories, such as social exchange theory, social penetration theory, and social Network theory, could be valid paradigms for studying and explaining how people form Networks, express their opinions, and pass information to each other (Bing Pan: 2015:2).

2.3.3. Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media in Africa

Internet, being an object of glorification by its technophile, tends to transform human communication towards a more enlightened existence.

Bassey N. Ekpe (2017) clearly points out on journal of African studies that worldwide accessibility to the Internet is one of the greater achievements of these times in reshaping the world.

The online statistics, market research and business intelligence portal that provides access to data from market and opinion research institutions, as well as from business organizations and government institutions describes social media tools as the critical chapter of the Internet, which comes in many forms, including blogs, forums, business networks, photo-sharing platforms, social gaming, micro blogs, chat apps, and social networks. Consequently, Social media is significant tool for marketers, politicians, artists and activists, reporters, media personalities and individuals.

The Internet, above all, social media has brought tremendous negative and positive consequences for the African people. It moved business, educational and cultural and science sections forward while the African values are being replaced by the alien cultural values. Eluwole T. et al. (2014:756) elaborated that the continent is not in a position to hold the old norms because of the damaging effects in terms of internet fraud and globalization influence on the African identity.

The social media has also brought psychological, economic, social and political changes on the people of Africa. Words, actions, or the mere presence of other people have an influence on thoughts, feelings, attitudes or behaviors because it gives us a way to interact with others on face book and other SNSs, to voice our opinions about topics that we may not have the "guts" to do face to face (<https://sites.google.com/site/thepsychosocialpsychology>: 5/8/2012).

Social media brought different social networks for the public like personal networks, content sharing networks and shared interest networks (Mukesh Kumar et al (2014:129). Some social networks are built for a common interest for specific group of people with common hobbies. Educational backgrounds, religious views, political affiliations, sexual orientations or other defining interests like LinkedIn, Good reads Black Planet.

The social media platforms are becoming the best choices of democratization, peace and security as well as economic and social issues. Thomas N. and Michael L. (2013) elaborate in their research, “advantages of social media during the election process in Nigeria and Liberia”, that the new media technologies like mobile phone, the Internet, and social media plays a significant role for civic groups to their activism through Twitter, Face book, YouTube, and other platforms.

Due to the aiding ability of SNSs in human communication, the development of various networks continues to increase across the world as World Wide Worx&Fuseware (2016) elaborated in Courage G. et al. (2018). SNSs have Notable benefits including the creation of relationships, sharing of content and opinions, entertainment and communication

Though there are so many advantages of the SNSs, they have potential to make people addictive, and there are also concerns about privacy of users and control of information. Three years ago, the most popular SNSs, face book came up with 1.71 billion active users worldwide. Garcia Domingo et al. (2017) also noted three of four global Internet users are on Face book, possibly affirming the popularity of this SNS.

Courage Gwena et al (2018) looks at the motivations behind the use of SNSs which includes information search, need for entertainment, maintaining relationships, need to meet new people, need to discuss, need to share media and the need to connect. The people use social media

connections to get new people and facilitate person to person interrelations and closer ties with each other online. This provides opportunities of sharing emotions and collaborates in different situations and creates online friendship. Thurairaj et al. (2015) as Gwena et al (2018:2) clearly noted that SNSs used as an instrument to build social capital, primarily by people who are far away from their homes.

SNSs are also necessary for sharing and used as knowledge resources for information seeking by users even to make inquiries about their health concerns and academic issues.

Media sharing is one of the most significant advantages of social networking sites. Any individual can create videos, audio and photographs to express their status.

The people can maintain their relations through time. It is not through traditional way of communication rather via cost effective manner with former mates, communities, families and friends. Distance shrink by the use of social media.

Entertainment is critical issue for human beings. Consequently, people use social media to download, listen and view music, video clips, share and watch movies and stories. Especially face book is being taken as entertainment network.

People want to discuss about political, economic and social issues. Therefore, they can create their own groups and engaged in discussions.

The Table Below Summarizes Motives SNSs Usage

The motives of using SNSs	Need to meet new people
	Need for entertainment
	Need to connect
	Need to maintain relationships
	Need to share media
	Search for information
	for discussions

Table 1: Motives of SNS

(Source: L.R.J., Baghestan, G.A. &Asfaranjan, Y.S., 2013, ‘A uses and gratification perspective on social media usage and online marketing’, *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research* 15(1), 78–92 SNS, and social networking sites.)

Social media has different applications in relation to the public sector, which includes the government and NGOs, the education sector, and the commercial sector (Eric W.T.et al: 2015). In marketing, Social media is being considered as tool and communication strategy of firms in a new type of promotional mix.

Social networking can also facilitate knowledge sharing in online communities, particularly knowledge related to product information, travel information, and customer experiences. the role of social media in communication, collaboration, learning, and instruction in educational institutions is one of the areas that have been frequently explored; though it was not primarily designed for it.

The governmental and nongovernmental organizations use social media for an Effective internal and/or external communications which are important in performing their functions.

Drahošová M. and Peter Balco (2017) make a research on the advantages and disadvantages of use of social media in European Union for The 7th International Symposium on Frontiers in Ambient and Mobile Systems (FAMS 2017) and they concluded that information exchange and communication, teamwork and work from home, data sharing, sharing hardware and peripherals, services and education are the main significance while spending more time on social media as major drawback.

2.3.4. African Union and Media Platforms

There have been different political, economic, social, cultural and development goals of AU. The way of communications of countries each other with the union and within the member states in the implementation and strategy planning process is minimal due to little attention for the media sector.

Media plays significant role in building a well-informed society. Nairobi-based pan-African organization, African Media Initiative (AMI) director Eric Chinje noted that Africa needs journalism that supports innovation and modernization in an integrated manner. Modernizing the continent is not only growth, but promotes development in the society and bringing togetherness through communication via different platforms on common issues. In transforming Africa, Citizens need credible information from media (<https://www.un.org/africarenewa>).

Therefore the African union has to have the different mediums of communication and platforms for transmitting information from the union to the peoples of member states and different groups in the continent.

In the current technology wise world, leaders of institutions and organizations have their own personal and institutional social media accounts. As Pablo B. and Thomas Zeitzoff (2016) clearly narrated that social media can create differences in political, economic and social issues. In the political arena, the 2011 Egyptian protest, the narrative of the Algerian revolution etc could be taken as an example.

Organizations like the African union which governs many countries have to have traditional communication mediums (TV and Radio and newspapers) and social media choices for the public it wants to address the agenda. Integration is the goal of AU. Consequently, Ifeanyi F. Didiugwu (2013) stated that unless African people understand their history and destiny, as well

as share common problems through free flow of information in various forms, regional integration process will suffer setbacks.

The union has the website and social media (face book) platform to transmit information and to interact with the public.

2.3.5. Social Media Practices in the African Union

Economic, social or Political organizations have their own media outlets to create awareness about their agenda and strategies for the general public. In this technology wise world, different governmental and nongovernmental as well as marketing organizations have their own traditional and sophisticated social media.

The Africa union is big international organization which governs the African states with the aim of prospering and uniting the continent. Therefore, the organization sets the media platform to achieve its strategies and goals. Beyond the traditional media of the member states of the union, the later sets its own online and social media platforms.

Many organizational problems derived from unsatisfactory relationships brought about by inadequate communication between the people and the serving organizations (Jossey: 1998).

The African union has its official online address of www.au.int; that spreads information about the structures of the union and updated information. The information could be accessed on its web site in to five languages; English, Arabic, France, Portuguese and Kiswahili (<https://au.int/en/overview>; 10/01/2019). Since language is one of the critical tools for communication in organizations, these African and international languages are medium of communication for the majority of African people.

Though it is at its infant stage, social media is impacting the way people communicate with each other and creating disruption across the media industries in the world (Friedrichsen and Benninghaus:2013:9). The researchers also emphasized that media companies and other organizations have to have their own digital strategy. But the basic question is what the organizations' strategies to use social media are.

The African union is one of the greatest international organizations which include more than 55 countries in the continent with the aim of integrating and creating prosperous Africa. The union has member states, structures and organs, constitutive act and languages. It disseminates the information in its website by it officially recognized Kiswahili, English, French, Arabic and Portuguese languages.

we take the French language, it is being spoken in more than 21 countries in the continent; the Democratic Republic of Congo taking the lead with more than 77 million speakers (www.worldatlas.com) while the English speaking people is more than 700 million including those who are speaking as foreign language. In more than eleven countries (<https://africa-facts.org>), more than 6.5 million people speak English language as native.

Therefore, the information that could be distributed via the languages mentioned above, could reach to the majority of the people by the language that they speak well. This makes the language barrier of knowing what the African union is doing and intends to work.

The remaining African languages Kiswahili, Portuguese and Arabic also have millions of speakers in the region.

The Kiswahili language became the official language of the African union in 2004 and Mozambican president Joaquim Chissano make speech by the language in the African union summit as AU chairman. The language has more than 150 million speakers in the continent. Consequently, the availability of information of the AU in this language can make this much people know about the continent whatever the types of information available are (*Bob Wekesa: allafrika.com*).

2.4. Facebook

Facebook was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, then a Harvard university undergraduate.

In the year, Zuckerberg, with the help of Andrew McCollum and Eduardo Saverin, launched a website that would change online social interaction forever.

Now, as Richard A. Gershon (2013) stated that the leading online and social media, Facebook is available in over 70 languages all around the world since there have been estimations. Its users post more than 30 billion pieces of information every month.

the social network Users share a variety of data and information about their life and experiences on their Face book profiles, including photos, contact information, movies books and other information.

As defined by Wilma Stassen (2010):

Facebook is a free global social networking website. Users create a personal profile which they can link to their friends' profiles. They can also send messages and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves. In addition, users can join networks organized by a city, region, organization and more (Wikipedia, 2009). It has impacted on journalism in that media organizations create corporate profiles to which their audience link and receive regular updates on their own profiles. (p.122)

Hanna et al. (2011) as explained in Irena Pletikosa Cvijikj and F. Michahelles (2013) the approach marketing is changing the dynamics from one to many to one to one which evolved their customer approach, and offering contact or assistance at any time through SNs such as Face book, Twitter, etc.

Arthur Gold stuck (2017) wrote the marketers use of face book in South Africa. In the year 2016, 91% of the marketing brands were using Face book for their marketing strategies. The company, face book uses its popularity for advertisement and makes big advertisers get direct access and contact with their customers.

Anders Secher (Nd) described social media in his master of arts thesis that The social networking site Face book, allows its users to digitally connect with anyone anywhere in the world in order to share content and information, view and comment on other users' activity and content-sharing, and basically interact online with other users. It is possible to connect with friends and family, make new friends, and talk about life with others by sharing information and content.

In addition to connecting and interacting with friends or strangers, users are also able to interact with companies which have created company pages that users are able to 'like' in order to show

interest in the company, its Face book page, and its business activities in general (Anders Secher: Nd:16-17).

Ralf Caers et al. (2013) reviewed the articles on different ways of social networks and the gaps to be field. Individuals can create an account on the website Facebook.com and can provide personal information like name, gender, date of birth, and email address. With home and profile pages, a user can have password and get an account access (Ralf Caers et al. 2013:983-84).

One can send and accept friend requests; and when once accepted Face book connects the two individuals by allowing them to see each other's profile page and by adding their activities to one another's news feed.

Users can post anything they want in the wall their status, and friends can respond to this statement by text comments or by liking it as shown below the status directly. On the other hand users are informed on the status updates and other activities from friends and joining groups in a chronological order.

Organizations use social media in general and face book in particular to disseminate information for the public at large. Organizations' leaders use social media to communicate with domestic and global audiences, either to provide information about the agenda of their office Agenda, to advertise new proposals and executive decisions, as well as influence online and offline public opinion.

Dizard, (2001) as quoted in Pablo and T. Zeitzoff (2016:7-8) clearly pointed out that Social media can also provide opportunities for new types of communication Strategies and the posts can promote specific aspects of the continent or country and region in order to improve its international image, but it can also be part of broader digital diplomacy strategies.

News reported or shared via the social media have become the talking point of the day; and social media is no longer an alternative media as it used to be, but rather mainstream media (Ali Salman et al :2016: 407).

2.5. Challenges Facing social media in African

Information can be accessed anytime, anywhere and in any place is one the features of the age.

The emergence of Web 2 and related internet applications such as Facebook has had a major impact upon the Internet in recent years. One of the interesting aspects of Facebook is the use of third parties applications and the interactions that this allows. The challenge that faces the internet applications is not as easy as we think. Rather it is encircled by technology wise difficulties especially in the developing African.

In the continent, the new media come across bottlenecks as Kate Cox (Nd: 67) described, though new media has enough space to write and speak, it creates its own problems like the radicalization of groups and individuals. Social media is also exposed to online payment fraud, online child sexual exploitation, cyber-dependent crime and online radicalization as seen in Al-shabab. (ibid: 9).

Shona Leitch & M.Warren, (2009:4) attempt to indicate the Security Threats of facebook. Privacy & Confidentiality threats due to the reason that Text chat, voice chat and private instant message between users may not be encrypted. On the other hand, Authentication & Identity Theft, Intellectual Property Theft, Vandalism, Harassment & Stalking, Defamation & Disparagement, Spam & Cybersquatting, payment and Transaction Integrity, Malwares and Computer Virus threats are the challenges against facebook. Therefore, Organizations need to develop guidelines and policies to determine what information may/may not be discussed in Facebook, and how stakeholders will be notified if they are being monitored to avoid threats.

The media challenges are not only in the social media side but there are political, economic and social challenges also in the traditional media.

Media plays a significant role for the success of everyday lives and practices of Africans and to influence the continent's political, economic and cultural processes and to make big plans like agenda 2063 and other continental developments successful.

Though the function is crucial, there are numbers of challenges. In a number of African countries, the direct control of the state over media is a threat to the healthy function of the media industry (Ogola: 2015:3).

Another challenge for African media is the challenge of finance. Ogola George (2015:4) also indicated that Majority of the media depend on the government revenue which is open for the operation and manipulation of the government. The private media faces the difficulty of getting financial support. The quality of the journalism profession itself is under debate in Africa.

Ogola also mentioned the poor ethical quality of journalists and the propagation of partisan ethno-political interests are other problems in different radio stations and other media outlets in different African countries. The ownership structure is one of the difficulties in the African media operation like In Kenya the nation and the standard media group control more than 90 percent of the media.

The British broadcast corporation conducted a research (2006:6) on Professionalization related with ethics, management and technical standards on media. The report brought four factors that affect the development of media in the continent under the countries surveyed; these are:

Insufficient or poor-quality training institutions, Rapid expansion of media outlets that has further strained resources, Low salaries and status, with the resulting prevalence of “brown envelope” (bribery based) Skills exodus (e.g. poaching of staff to better-paid un, donor or NGO projects (African media development initiative: 2006:16).

African journalists have suffered intimidation, arrest and have even been killed as Winston Mano in Wasserman H. (2011:92) clearly put. The poor working conditions make African journalists vulnerable and less expressive and make them under self-censorship.

2.6. African Media and Integration

Faringer (1991: xi) asserts that the integration of Africa could be realize through the integration of media. Didiugwu F. (2014:710) also argues that Africa’s media practitioners, and news editors have to change the paradigm from the western oriented information flow to the indigenous

pattern. The intra continental information flow is in front for regional integration that had been directed along the direction of political and economic spheres. This requires an acute involvement and extensive usage of the mass media in an integrated manner. (ibid: 711)

The organization of the National Media Commission (NMC) and the National Communication Authority (NCA) that regulate the Ghanaian media environment is one of the indications of the expansion of media (akpojivi: 2018: p-11).

David-West and Peter (2016:13) mentioned the joint commercial media which was established in 2013 by South African based Private Property Holdings and Kenyan-based Cheki Africa Media; portfolio online market focused on property and travel is now operating in South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria as one of the effective common cooperation in between the African media institutions.

The creation of regional news agencies as Ndangam L. (2006) noted, facilitates the regional news flow against the dominance of the Western news agencies. The western based news agencies like Reuters and Agencies France Press/AFP/ resulted in the dependence of African countries media on these agencies for international news content. The dependence is not only the content of the world news but also African news.

On the other hand, the Organization for African Unity (OAU) created the Pan-African News Agency (PANA) in 1979 and conceived as an intergovernmental agency to challenge stereotypical news coverage of the continent.

Integration is one of the key issues for African Medias and communication. Ewumbue M. Churchill (1991) describes media integration as a process of creating new larger legal state-owned media organs, flows and transaction of information within the region. He defines the integration process from the African perspective as:

It describes either the Process of shifting national media loyalties to larger entities, establishing and maintaining an information community, or harmonizing media policies among countries.

M. Churchill describes organizations like the Pan-African News Agency (PANA) and the Union of African National Radio and TV Organizations (URTNA) as the conglomerations of state-owned news agencies and radios in Africa on federal structure.

The African media copies the western model which is a neo liberal paradigm as Higgins Daire (2014: 6) compared that African journalists imitated the western media norms which is a tragedy for the continent with mismatch of the public philosophy. Western media practices applied in the African context to reinforce neo-colonialism.

The formation of pan-African players like ACN (African Communication Regulation Authorities Network), the African Union of Broadcasting (previously URTNA) and The African Editors' Forum (AEF) are the results of the development of communication in this vast continent.

Chairperson of the African Editors' Forum (AEF), MathathaTsedu (2007) expressed that the communication between individual editors, journalists and media activists in the continent is now being improved due to the widening of internet access and the extension of cellular networks.

The joint actions of different media organizations and journalists associations are important for the betterment of information flow and media development at large.

Formal representation of journalists in the media unions, associations and councils is also a major step for the development of the profession. Since journalism is expected to be, objective, balanced, disinterested and fair in gathering, processing and disseminating news and information, journalist could be exposed for internal and external pressures for the interest of different groups (Wasserman: 2011: 28).

The journalistic practice of Africa is now being transformed by new media and new information and communication technologies. The impact of new media cannot be ignored. As Nyamjoh

(2005) described in George Ogola (2015) that Africans are daily modernizing the indigenous and indigenizing the modern with novel outcomes.

Since the new media is inalienable part of journalism, Journalists across the continent have to integrate these technologies in their newsrooms and adapted them to their everyday practices.

The portable mobile phones are appropriate to share and send information in areas where transport and other communication infrastructures are not available. Wasserman H. (2011:28) noted that journalists have to target for and with information adopt, adapt and use the very same technologies with the public.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH SETTING AND RATIONALIZATION

3.1. Research Method

The African Union is one of the effective international organizations comprised of fifty five countries in the African continent; and in the current technology wise world, social media mainly facebook is becoming very essential for such organization with big aims of development and cooperation.

The purpose of the research is to assess the social media practice particular on the facebook page of the union.

The quantitative or qualitative strategies are those that involve collecting and analyzing both forms of data in a single study.

Qualitative and quantitative approach gives better understanding of the use of social media and related qualitative and quantifiable issues; this research mainly employs both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Qualitative method could be applicable when there are no countable variables or when the new topic (Creswell: 2014:23) has addressed with a certain sample in an exploratory manner.

Content analysis is used to analyze qualitative information and data.

The data collected on the page in different parameters in a quantitative manner. The data posted in a selected month which is to be assessed is collected by its category. The social, economic or political issues counted in numbers. The type of data posted (script, photograph, info graphics or video) also counted in a numerical variety.

The information posted on the AU's facebook page in the year 2019 has been taken as total time interval to analyze the data. Based on the appropriation of the information, random selection is taken as means of data collection according to the convenience of the information for the analysis.

Wimmer and Dominick (2000) in Asmamaw Addis (2016: 10) clearly list out the advantages of employing the quantitative analysis to see whether the patterns are incremental or not in quantifiable manner:

For the explanation of patterns or trends in media portrayal, or to identify what exists; testing hypotheses of message characteristics; comparing media content with the real world; assessing the representation of particular groups in society; and drawing inferences about media effects (p.186)

The research also tried to quantify the frequency of data presentation and the information in different parameters. In Analysis, The researcher purposively selects different time intervals to identify the population of the subject to manage stories in the study year.

The research employs content analysis as data collection tool to compile information; and there are tabular and graphic presentations in the process.

3.2. The Rationale Behind the Selection of the Union's Face Book Page

Now the journalism model is changing; as Mukesh Kumar et al (2014:129) indicated, in recent years for many people SNS are becoming the mainstream communication technology. Hence, sites come as most frequently browsed categories websites in the world.

Social media like Face book pose new challenges to journalists because people can publish and release pictures and words around the world using their mobile devices as soon as events happen.

AU creates the better platform of fast and better social networking site which is its official facebook page. The research tried to assesses how the union is using facebook with an attribution of participation, openness, conversation, community and connectivity.

There are different reasons to select the African union official face book page as an area of study. The following reasons are the basic ones.

Firstly, social media which includes different platforms including facebook are becoming the most fastest and modern way of communication and preferred media platforms in the global arena. The African union has no its own broadcast medium whether radio or television to make its agendas and decisions addressed for the African people. The communication and media

platform of the union is social media mainly facebook. Due to this reason, the researcher wants to explore how the union addresses its aims and decisions via its facebook alternative.

The second reason to select this issue is that facebook is now the leading way of communication that connects the people in the global manner specially youths. In the African continent, many young people use facebook. So the researcher tried to examine how the union uses its face book page to communicate and interact with the people of Africa (it is working for) via shares and comments.

The third reason is to look in to how the union communicates with followers of the page and in what manner it addresses information for the audience and readers and what type of information is being disseminated to the people in general and focusing on the African solutions for African problems in social media sector in particular.

At this time, adapting the latest ways of communication, social media, is becoming not a matter of choice but obligation. Therefore, the research opts the African union usage of social media essentially facebook to see the manner how it is addressing information with the people of Africa.

3.3. Theoretical Framework

Andrew McNeill and Briggs (2014) clearly put the advantages of social media to disseminate information related to health and the rapidly spread of information can also be used for the proliferation of disinformation and harmful ideas too.

Influence on social media for the dissemination of messages in an extensive and intensive or qualitative manner is crucial for institutions.

Foss and Griffin (1999) as quoted in Amudavalli A. (Nd) defined theory as, “a way of framing an experience or event- an effort to understand and account for something and the way it functions in the world. Communication theory may refer to a single theory or an entire set of theories related to communication.

The theoretical framework section includes a theory related with the research as well as the communication model that fit with the main intention of the research paper that will be seen below.

3.3.1. Agenda Setting Theory

This paper aims to assess the role of social media mainly facebook as an agenda setting mechanism for AU in Africa which is playing an important role in shaping public opinion on important African issues. The public also use social media to express their concern and grievance on issues that concern their welfare which the traditional media may not dare to broadcast.

As McCombs Maxwell (Nd) pointed out the examining of agenda-setting influence of media on the public usually have focused on public issues. The agenda of an organization is found in its coverage on public issues over some period of time. Over this period of time, whatever it might be, a few issues are emphasized some may get little attention or some never mentioned.

Agenda setting describes the media ability to tell what issues are important. Ali Salman et al (2016: 403) were concerned that the media had the power to present images to the public and McCombs and Shaw as quoted in Ali Salman et al (2016) were focused on two elements of social media: awareness and information. Media do not really influence what to think, but rather on what to think about (Ibid).

Theorists demonstrated that media messages had the capability to influence *how* individuals think about topics with the concept of “framing” and “priming”. As Entman, (1993) mentioned on William F. and Robin Goret (Nd) that Framing refers to the means by which media messages are presented and how the creator shapes it from a perspective. On one hand priming is how media messages are constructed to indicate to audiences what elements are more important.

On the other hand, model is a schematic description of a system, theory, or phenomenon that accounts for its known or inferred properties and may be used for further study of its characteristics (Ibid: 5-6).

Agenda setting is to set an agenda on listeners and target audiences based on the editorial policies of media. In the same manner, facebook page of the African union can be taken as main media to shape the people of Africa based on the needs of the union. Consequently, the social media, facebook could be taken as tool to set an agenda for Africans to bring them to the intended directions.

3.3.2. Models of Communication

This study is situated within the theoretical framework of the communication Models of Public Relations. As Dornyo Philip (2014) stated the different models of public relations to explain public relations practices of organizations. The researcher forwarded the Four models of public relations to explain public relations practices of organizations in two dimensions of the nature (one-way vs. two-way) and purpose (unbalanced vs. balanced) of communication.

The first model is the publicity/press agent/, which is the one way communication in which scholars noted that press agents worked to influence public opinion by creating news. This model is less ethical and less worry for truthfulness without enough research with the aim of manipulating behavior to persuade the public in line with the interest of the organization (ibid:173).

The second communication model is public information, which is one way communication of organizations in nature and communicating truthful information to the public. This type of communication which uses Press releases, brochures and static Web contents does not have persuasive intention.

The third communication model of organizations is the asymmetric and scientific persuasion model with an imbalanced manner. This model uses the research to bring the public to the intended attention and makes the public behave the organizations need of behavior.

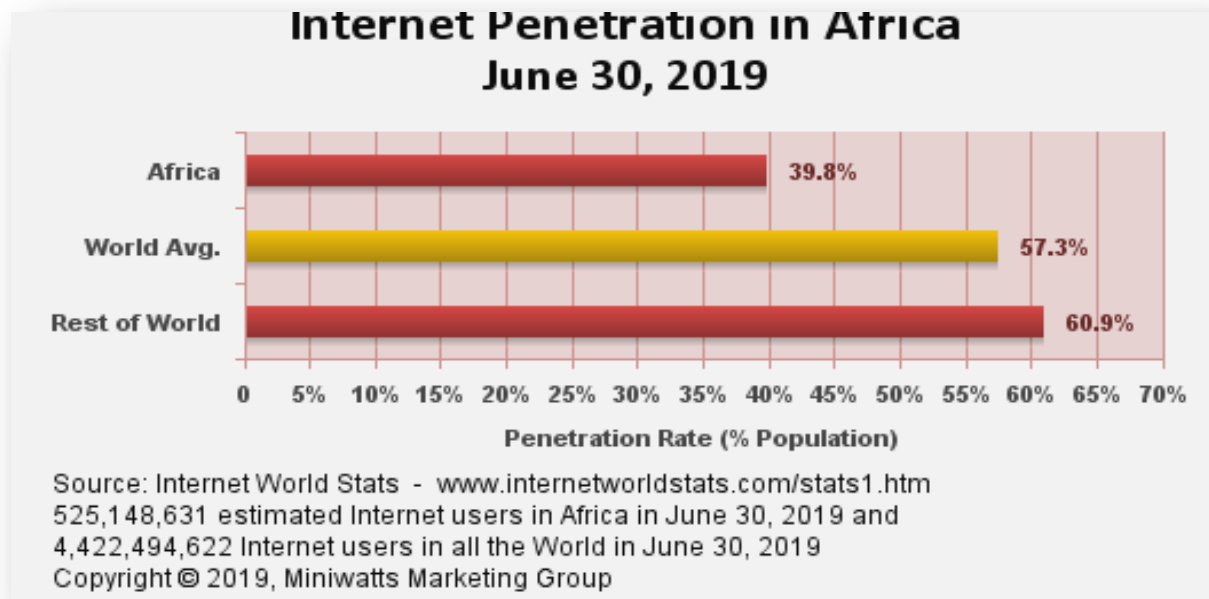
The fourth one is the symmetrical and balanced communication between the public and the organization. The public relation practitioners use dialogue and communication to negotiate with the public, resolve conflict, and promote mutual understanding and respect between the organization and the public. Face book is one of the good examples of this model and comparatively the fourth model is more effective and ethical.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTENT ANALYSIS

4.1. African Union Face Book: Its Strength and Shortcomings

The number of face book users in the Africa is increasing. Based on the internetworldstats.com data, the number of people using face book near halve billion which is 11.9 percent of the global face book users share.



Graph 1: Internet penetration

(Source: www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm / 1/4/2020)

According to the above data, the distribution of face book users varies from continent to continent. The African average is below the world average which is only 40 percent of the population adopts the internet and uses face book. World average is more than 75 percent while the rest of the world is more than 60 percent.

As an organizational entity, the African Union uses different social networks. It uses face book, YouTube, flicker and twitter. The union's face book page is the first hand information pool for the African people about the continent as well as the actions and plans that the union is intending

to do. Scholars can also refer the page as reference for any data analysis and information related with the union and its member states.

The African union commission stresses on effective communication with its Member States/Stakeholders in defining and implementing the African Agenda. On its website (<https://au.int/en/auc/priorities/effective-communication10/03/2019>), the AU clearly narrates that ordinary people of Africa hardly know about the union and its commission achievements;

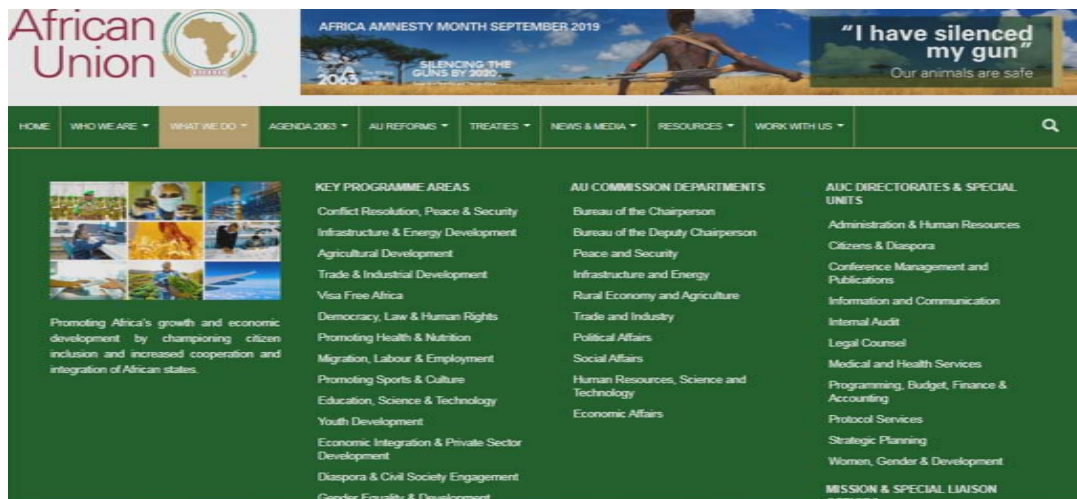
Information and awareness of the many of the achievements of the African Union and those of its Commission are not widely known, particularly among ordinary African citizens. In addition, the continent continues in general to be negatively presented in international media channels. More proactive communication and multilingualism is needed to enhance the visibility of the AU, the Commission and other organs of the Union, develop citizens' engagement in the African Agenda and reverse the negative image of the continent while respecting for diversity. (<https://au.int>)

The African union is big international institution that would have to transmit its actions and plans for the people of the continent in any communication mediums.

The union commission also underlined that communication channels have pivotal role to reach the youth in order to inculcate in them a sense of shared destiny and values as Africans. Effective communication is critical to bridging the intergenerational gaps with respect to values about Africa and Africans.

The African union has its online web site address and since it is in one-directional and no interactive with the people, the former has its own social network platforms as mentioned above.

On its web site (www.au.int), the union indicated the key program areas, the reforms that the union brought; the continental blue print, agenda 2063 and its priority areas as well as the organizational structure, organs and its address with its motto of the year.



Picture- 1 The AU website picture (Source- <https://au.int/en/au-nutshell> 10/04/2019)

Since the organization has no any traditional broadcaster media (TV and Radio) outlet or platform, it uses face book, YouTube, flicker and twitter as social media connection with its stakeholders, people and information seekers.

Beside the face book official account, AU has the flicker account (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/africanunioncommission/>) since 2012 with 221 followers. There are more than 26 thousand photographs with different number of views in its flicker wall.

It has the tweeter account (<https://twitter.com/AfricanUnion>) too with 432 thousand followers and more than 8 thousand tweets till mid-September of 2019.

The YouTube channel is one of the social media choices for the people who want to know about African union and Africa at large.

The AUC's you tube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/AUCommission>) has more than 4 thousand and five hundred subscribers. For example, the documentary on silencing the guns which is one of the flagship projects of the AU and the aspiration of agenda 2063 of silencing guns in the continent in the year 2020 has 2, 815 views within 8 months. Compared to the population number of the continent, it is too small visa-avis the technological problems related with access.

The official face book page of the AU is one of the main social media network with the society. The page has less than a million of followers since the page created in 2010.

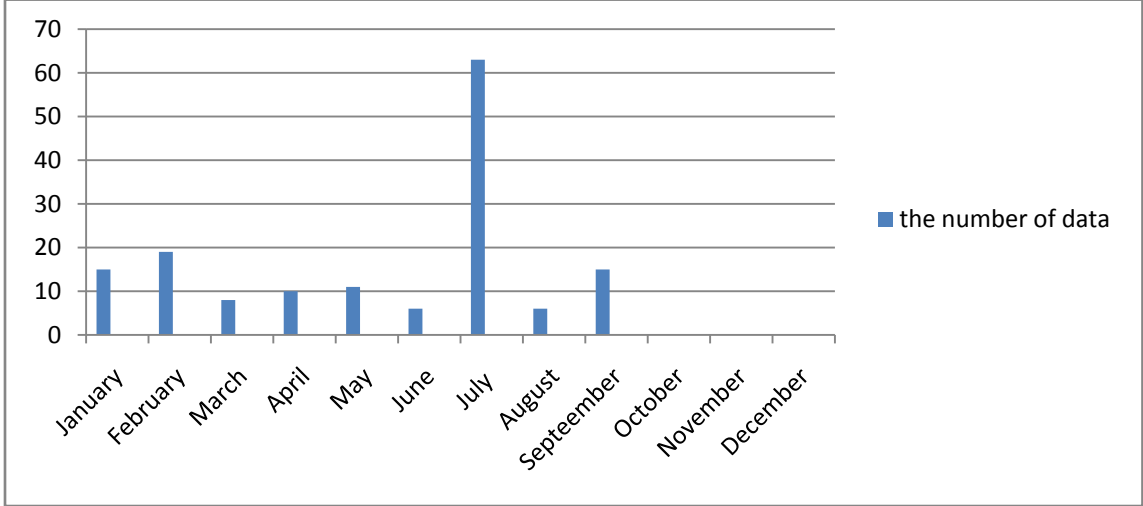
The researcher focuses on how the union is using this page to address its information to its stakeholders and people to create awareness about its mission and vision. The union’s face book page is the first hand information pool for the African people about the continent as well as the actions and plans that the union is intending to do. Scholars can also refer the page as reference for any data analysis and information related with the union and its member states.

The page be liked by 380,079 people and followed by 385,599 people inside and outside the continent (www.facebook.com/AfricanUnionCommission/) which is very small compared with the current massive number of population in the continent.

The union spreads information which gets priority via the page repeatedly or once in a day. As clearly pointed out on CDC’s Social Media Guidelines and Best Practices document (2012:2), the posts on an official page requires Careful consideration of its nature. Face book posts and activities must be cleared, and within the frame work of standards.

The researcher compiles the number of posts on the wall of the AU during the study period specified as shown below.

The number of Posts from January to mid-September, 2019



Graph 2- (source- the researcher’s data)

As shown in the above table, the number of data and information posted in different months are also different in quantity. Though no space limits, there are information posted repeatedly with the same content and format. For example during the first month of the New Year, January 2019,

the Arabic national anthem of the African union posted six times in a day with different number of people those shares the issue.

When we see the posts and their repetitions in July, on July 5/2019, there was a press conference by the AUC commissioner of economic affairs, victor Harrison about regional integration and Africa's development dynamics report and domestic resource mobilization and financial institutions which was posted eleven times within a day. The maximum number of comments given per post was five and the minimum was without comments. On the other day, July 8, there has been another Press Conference on Niger, Niamey meeting. The press was given by Commissioner for Political Affairs of AU, Cessouma Minata Samate, on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa; the speech was posted on the face book page of the union nine times in the same day which is unnecessary.

Among the total number of data shown above, the highest number of posts which covers 41% was in July, while the posts in June and August was 3% which is the lowest. This indicated that, though it is expected to have posts every time, the posts were not regular but event based.

Beside the unnecessary repetitions with the same content and format, there is no any subtitle and translation. The press was majorly in French language with little English but how the people can understand problem of "migration", in the continent? In a similar day, there were two similar posts about the same issue which is the First Mid-Year Coordination Meeting of the AU and RECs opening speech of Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, president of Egypt which is unnecessary repetition.

It is possible to add something which is unaddressed by the former issues posted. In the same month, July 26 and 27, The African Women Media Awards ceremony welcoming speeches posted repeatedly with the same content and format. But it has different numbers of people who share the post. As if there is no issue in the continent, this might create redundancy and boringness on readers and those who view the information.

Adum A. Nnanwuba et al (2015: 6) on 'Journal of African Studies' that media Sustainability could be assured by Content, format and business models. Lack of content quality and diversity which considers the local conditions with an offer of ideological diversity is the challenges of

African media. Therefore, beyond the number of posts posted daily, the content and format of the issue are very significant.

Sometimes, there are very critical issues that the people want to see and read but the way that the admin posts is not the real issue rather it looks like an advertisement on events.

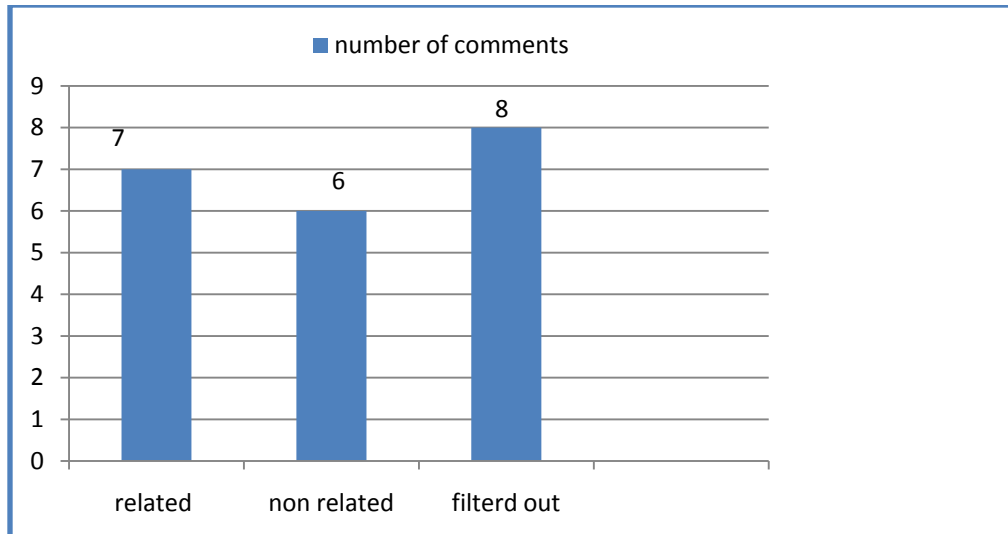
The people react for the written or video posts on the page and there are comments on the same issues. The comments are constructive on one hand and which are not related or destructive in nature.

As the United Nations higher commissioner for refugees /UNHCR/ (2019) put the African unions theme of the year which focuses on refugees and returnees on its front page in its website. AU organized different events in 2019 to promote its theme of the year and to solve many problems that faced the continent (www.unhcr.org).

The face book page of AU and the social media department invite people to the latest updates on everything and anything about All News, Announcements and Activities. The page started the year 2019 with the issues to announce that the unions' 32nd session of the general assembly of the union in January 10 and 11 in the year 2019. The summit officially adopts the theme of the year “refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs)”.

On 4 January, when the session announcement advertised, the page shows the date and the theme of the year rather than advocating the main theme of that ordinary session of the union and the main issues to be discussed in the conference. The post had more than one hundred likes, twenty three comments and twenty two shares. Most of comments are not directly towards the issue posted. But, the comments are about different issues which are not related with the issues. The page administration deletes the inconvenient comments too.

The graph below can also show the characteristics and proportionality of the comments whether they are related, none related or filtered out not to be displayed on the window with the issues.



Graph 3: (source- the researcher's data)

From the above graph, the followers gave very few related comments in support of the announcement of the session. The criticizing comments on the post are also few in numbers the comments which the administration department filtered out are 8 which are more than the related and non- related comments. If the comments were given correctly about the posts, it is easy to correct mistakes or to strengthen the issue at hand.

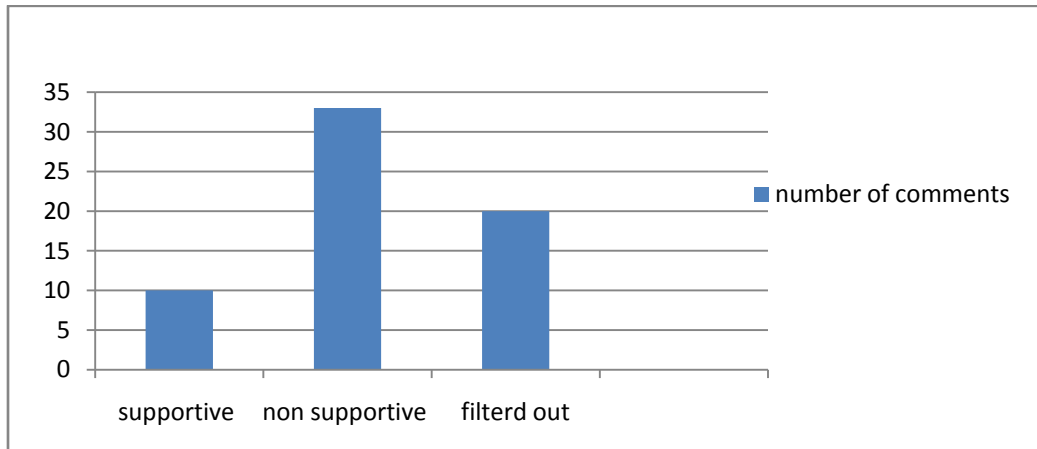
Though there are so many critical information and affairs of the continent, there were no any posts From January four to January fifteen, 2019 for more than a week. The page has to display the current issues about the continent and member countries at any time.

After a week from the post displayed on the page, the summit took place on the date specified on January 10 and 11 in Addis Ababa. But the information raised and the decisions passed was posted on the page after couple of days in January fifteen.

Related with the written document that was released on the page in the date mentioned above; there have been more than one hundred eighteen likes, 63 comments and 62 shares.

As Kwon et al. (2010) and Tampere et al. (2016) point out in Anjan Pal (2017), Users comment on SNS for at least three purposes: to provide information, to express emotions, and to forge connection with the online community.

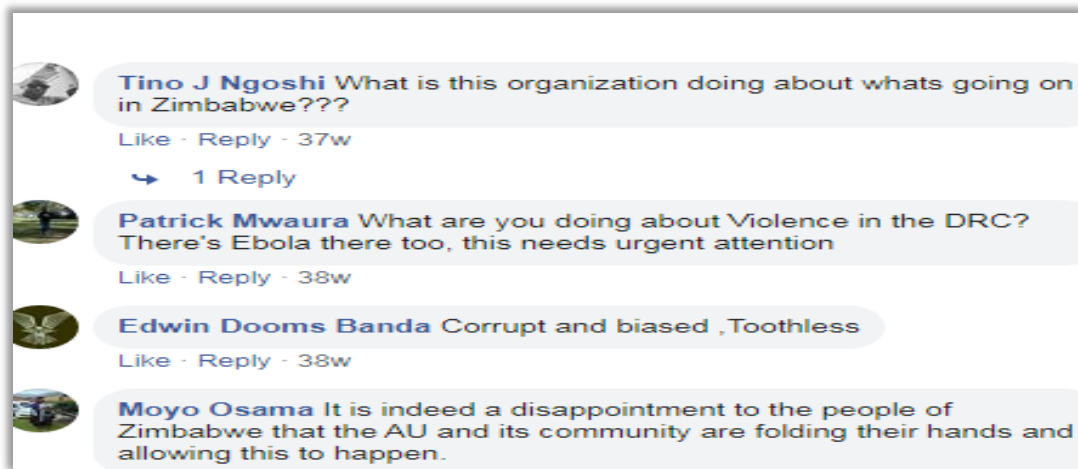
The character of the comments are also different; some are supportive for the issue raised while others are derogatory and non supportive as well as unrelated with the issue. The administrator deleted the comments which are out of ethics on the page. This post includes the remarks of Chairperson of AUC Moussa Faki Mahamat in order for the Union to achieve the development objectives of Agenda 2063. The graph below can also tell us the nature of comments against the issue posted.



Graph 4; (source- the researcher’s data)

Based on the above table, there were totally sixteen comments with their own characters which were supportive for the post, non supportive as well as the filter out comments that the admin. Erase on the page. More of the comments were in relation to the current situations of Zimbabwe and the conflicts in the countries like DRC which is out of the issue raised. Comments may be for or against but they ought to be on the issues posted because it is significant for the owner to correct the fouls and strengthen the positive performances.

There are also critics on the AU in general on its effectiveness in its actions beyond the paper value of the strategies formulated. These are the sample comments given against the post “Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa at center of 32nd AU Summit Opening of the 37th Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC)”.



Picture 2: Comments for posts

(Source: www.facebook.com/AfricanUnionCommission/posts;10/11/2019)

The page administration expressed filtered out the unethical and non relevant comments which is difficult for the researcher to evaluate the later.

The page can be cross-linked or tagged with external partner's pages or any branch administrations of the union but it lacks Tagging.

4.1.1. Posts on the AU's Face Book Page

The official page gives coverage for issues in a video, photograph, written or graphic format. Most of the time, opening and closing ceremonies for conferences, non-edited speeches and video files loaded which needs a minimal effort. One can get unnecessary video and graphic expressions.

In this technology wise information age, people want to get short, clear and to the point information. The twenty minutes documentary which was posted on the page (<https://www.facebook.com/AfricanUnionCommission>) is very exemplary with clear explanation of what the African governments want to achieve in economic development and business opportunities to succeed the agenda "African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA)". For example, the files posted in the first six months in the year, 2019.

Months/2019	format of the files posted on the page		
	Videos	Written/with photos	Photos, Graphic and others
March	0	4	4
April	1	4	6
May	3	5	2
June	1	1	3
July	62	9	4
August	0	4	2

Table2: The 6 month's post of AU's FB page

(Source-the researcher's data)

From the above table, files released from the union are randomly selected and event based in nature. The files are cuts from the speeches of the leaders and are links from the monthly bulletin of the union.

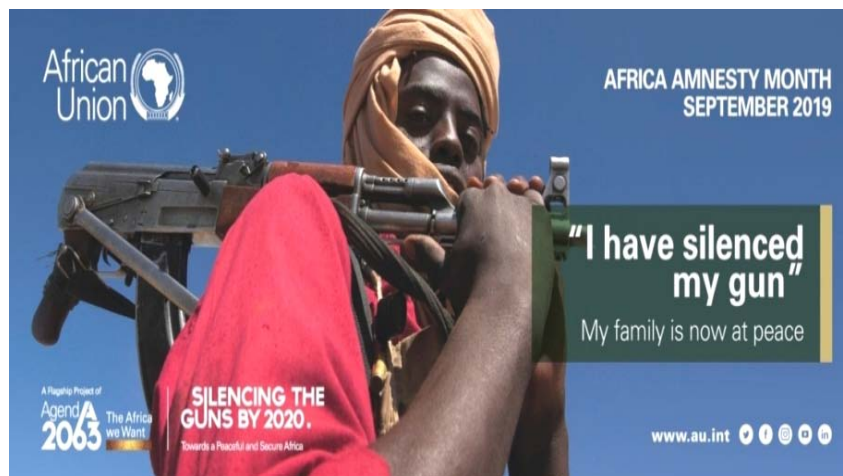
On the other hand, the proportionality of the files for those who want to see the documentaries and the written documents are not appropriate. Except July, all the data shows that the video documents posted are very few compared to the photographs and written files. The video files loaded on the month, July, indicate that the posts are not purposively selected and shaped to be read and see by the followers.

There are repeatedly posted videos in the month, because there is no space and time problem and specified rule and regulation that restricts from posting in a different manner. Some days, the posts are unnecessary because it shows the people coming and going out from hall which is nonsense. For example, the post of seventeen minutes video is without sound and it doesn't include necessary pictures. The information which is expected to reach for many people, it has to be edited and updated in its information content.

The African union as an international organization should have an updated information in its official page with different forms like photos, videos and graphics. Since the organization has its experts in different sectors, there have to be balanced video, scripted and graphic posts on different issues explained by experts.

The union changes cover photos and graphics like personal accounts. If we see how many times the cover photo changed from September to December, 2019, there have been twelve pictures with different themes.

The AU updated the cover photo which focuses on the main issues of agenda 2063 and the main goals that the union is expected to achieve. One of the updates on September 13, 2019 was that of the silencing the guns; a theme for 33rd ordinary session of the 2020 AU general assembly which was too early for the event to be held in January.



picture:3 Motto of the AU 'silencing the guns' (source - [African Union](#): September. 13,2019)

As shown in the above photo, the AU set '*silencing the guns in the year 2020*' in its fabulous document, agenda 2063 while the reality is quite different from the reality on the ground in the continent.

On the other hand, the page showed the cover picture with the themes fighting corruption, supporting youth, gender empowerment and agitating about agenda 2063 as well as about the African continental free trade area, Ebola protection and science and education.

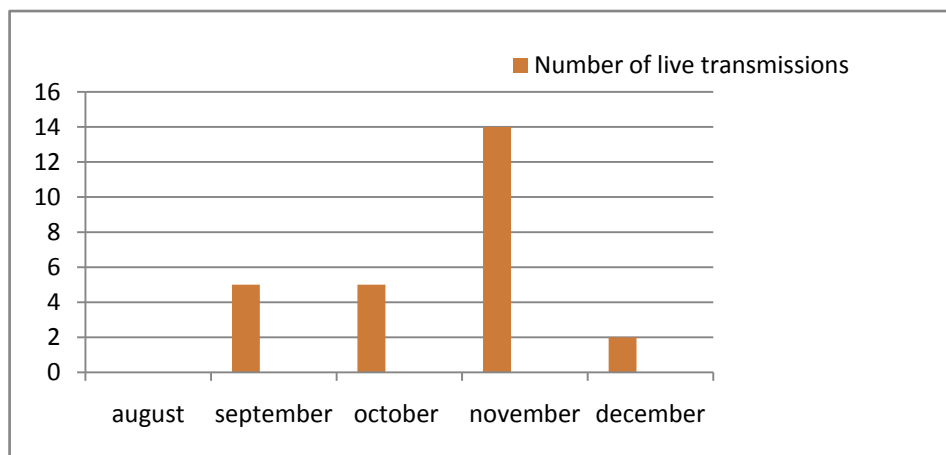
The official page of the union also changed its cover picture with the graphics of the announcement of the gender equality and women empowerment conference which was held in Addis Ababa from 28 October to 1 November in 2019. Related with this, there are 8 comments and 8 shares. Among the comments, four of them are non- related with the issues.

When the administrator of the page changes the cover picture, there are no clear criteria and time specifications or permanent date. For example the first change of the picture was done in October 21 and the second was done after eight days in October 28. The third change was done after 6 days in November 4 and the third one was posted in November 13 but the fourth one was posted after almost halve a month. The cover picture was changed in the date December 9 and December 29 consecutively. The above analysis tells us that the changing of the cover picture is in a random manner.

On the other hand, the African union page has live transmissions. When we see from august to December 30, 2019, there has been live streaming from different places. The conferences and events held in the date specified were loaded on the page in the same day.

The videos and speeches of the different officials of the AU organs loaded without any editing and arrangement.

The table below indicates the number of live transmissions on the page within the last five months of 2019.



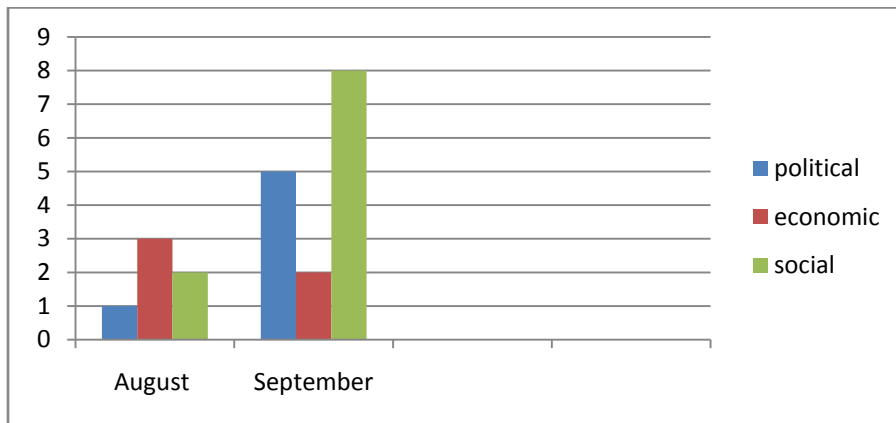
Graph- 5: Number of live transmissions on AU FB page(source- the researcher's data)

The posts are mainly announcements of meetings and press conferences. The uploaded videos are non-edited and lengthy; and most of the time the speeches of leaders. There are not well edited videos as well as purposively written articles about specific issues. Most of the official face book pages of organizations have writers on specific issues in order to address the public.

In the case AU, posts are not purposively written on specific issues and the issues are not identified as significant as possible based on the current situations in the continent. The post are not regular in time rather it is randomly written.

There are multiple of problems in the African continent from conflict and civil war to poverty. Many scholars suggest indigenous and scientific solutions for the difficulties. The articles and press releases have to have balanced in the political, economic and social sectors. Since the posts are not purposively selected and written or documented in video or pictorial manner, there may be posts repeatedly in the same sector consecutively.

The two consecutive months of last august and September, the number of posts categorized under the political, economic and social sectors is shown below.



Graph 6::Number of posts categorization(source- the researcher’s data)

As shown in the above graph, there is one political issue, three economic and two social affairs posted in the months mentioned. Accordingly, all the posts are based on the conferences taking place in the same date with the post indicated including the cover page change of the union. The graph indicates that more posts are on social affairs of the continent, though they are not enough

in number for two months. But, the posts should be proportional in different sectors whether it is political, economic or social.

As clearly elaborated in WWW.CDC.GOV/SOCIALMEDIA, posts on the official face book pages should pass through the clearance channels of the organization. The official face book page of the union is an official voice for the AU. On the other hand, the page is carrier of the AU brand and logo. The comment and share policies have to be developed.

4.2. Social Communication And Provisions Of Information

The official face book page of the African union is one of the main platforms of the AU to provide information about the plans and actions taking place in the continent. But, there are problems against the organization in the provision of data and information on its social communication.

Since social media is information sharing, careless posting of information and the miss interpretation could result in security risks (Brett V &Manoj M: 2013). Therefore, the provisions of information have to be in a clear and understandable manner that considers the communication barriers.

Some of the barriers of communication could be physical, cultural, linguistic, and technical or due to information overload. Linguistic barriers are other face of face book communication problems; since most of African people speak local languages.

The African media has the problem of integration and information sharing; that most of them used western media as source of information. Consequently, the public obliged to trust the third party information instead.

Now, the unverified messages that spread on the Internet through social networking sites (SNS) called Rumors are the threat of face book and tweeter. Friggeri et al. (2014) and Agrawal et al. (2013) as quoted in Anjan Pal et al (2017) stated that spread of the unverified messages harm the trustworthiness of organizations that is why countries develop the counter rumor applications and SNS systems.

In Africa, face book is the largest social networking in connecting people but the platform faces multifaceted challenges. André essoungou (2010) mentioned the poor infrastructure and the prohibitive cost of broadband connections and the limited number of computers.

Kabwato L. (Nd) demonstrates other challenges of the social media, face book; Fake news: Satire or hate news. Fake news is typically sensationalistic “news” published online by websites that raised irritation.

The privacy and security concerns are one of the critical issues in SNs. Internet perpetrators may misuse the significant information. As A. Mukesh Kumar et al (2014) pointed out that a Social networking site is an appropriate platform for virus authors to spread their malwares faster than traditional methods. Face book develops it own privacy policies to keep the security of its customers.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Before the colonizers came to Africa, the people had their own ways of communication while the colonial times, the Europeans tried to load the communication of western style. Due to this reason, the African media are criticized that the way of news making and source of information are the west. After independence, most of the media outlets especially television, radio and newspapers were under state control and there was not free press, though changed through time.

It is important to examine the development of African media in general and African social media in particular. Now things are being changed, the internet based social media is becoming a challenge for the traditional media and any one can have an access for the information in a single click in his mobile phones. There is no space challenge for writers and is becoming users' choice.

The African union governs billions of people with the goals of integration and development. In this process, social networking, facebook is playing significant role to develop and mobilize the people and bring prosperity in the continent.

Organization cannot effectively function without effective media Organizations; therefore, they are creating their own social media outlets to transmit their information to the people.

A social networking service is an online service, platform, or site that focuses on fascinating the building of social relations among people who, for example, activities, share interests, background, or real-life connections.

Though social media, facebook is playing an important role and it is preferable method of communication, the usage of the platform is not as conducive for users as possible in the union. Still the information provided in the form of script, photograph, video and graphics are not properly written and purposefully posted on the page. There are no professional experts and writers on different issues in different times and most of the time the information disseminated is event based. Due to this reason the followers are few in number compared with the population who are using facebook.

In Africa, though infant compared with the other world, social media is booming and the number of people, who use social media, above all facebook, is growing.

Due to the technological advancement, information is becoming near to everyone at hand. Consequently, everyone is practicing the journalistic activities; and different institutions are changing their way of communications especially in the social media scheme.

As seen from the data analysis, in the current technologically advanced century, the media sector is changing its platform from traditional medium to the technology wise social medium.

Though the page has posts of info-graphics, video, scripts and photographs, it is not well arranged and regularly posted. The AU should have regular writers and expertise explanations on agendas of the union or for comments given and requires further explanations on the page.

The page does not have the expected information about the region. It lacks proper responding for the comments given from followers for the posts. On the one hand, it also lacks proportionality of posts in different regions of the continent. On the other hand, the posts are randomly written and most of them are announcements.

It is important to use the facebook page as the main way of communication for the African people and the information about the continent have to be provided in a scientific manner and it should be managed well.

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