



**Addis Ababa University**

**Graduate School of Journalism and Communication**

**The Role of Facebook as a Public Relations Tool in Ethio  
Telecom: a Case Study**

**By**

**Mulu Girmay**

**February 2023**

**AAU**

**The Role of Facebook as a Public Relations Tool in Ethio  
Telecom: a Case Study**

**By**

**Mulu Girmay**

**Advisor: -Amanuel Gebru (PhD)**

**A Thesis Presented to the School of Journalism and Communication  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master  
of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communication.**

**February 2023**

**AAU**

## **Declaration**

The undersigned hereby certifies that this thesis is my original work and that all informational sources utilized in the thesis have been properly cited.

Name: Mulu Girmay Mengiste

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of submission: February 2023

Place of submission: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Approved by Examining Board**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
Advisor	_____	_____	_____
Internal Examiner	_____	_____	_____
External Examiner	_____	_____	_____
Head of Department	_____	_____	_____

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, thanks to Almighty God for his blessing and help from the beginning to the end of my stay in this academic program. I would also be glad to extend my deepest gratitude and appreciations to my advisor, Dr. Amanuel Geberu, for his unreserved effort in providing me with all the necessary guidance and encouragements that contributed a lot to the successful completion of the study.

My special gratitude goes to my friend Daniel Biset who helped me during the Qualitative data analysis using software ATLAS TI. I would like to thank my families for their support and encouragement they have given me throughout my academic life and I hope that they will be proud of my achievement. My father Girmay Mengiste also deserves my special respect and appreciation for his love and prayers. And my mother Woyzer Takele also deserves my special thanks and appreciation for her contribution in improving the quality of this work.

Finally, my special thanks go to the Ethio Telecom digital marketing head Mr. Fasil Tezera; and the Staff members of Communication Division who participated in interview. To extend my heartfelt gratitude to those who cooperated in providing me access to the data relevant to make this study a reality.

# Contents

Declaration .....	I
Acknowledgements .....	III
Figures and Table .....	VII
Lists of Acronyms .....	VII
<i>Abstract</i> .....	VIII
Chapter One .....	- 1 -
1 Introduction .....	- 1 -
1.1 Background of the study .....	- 1 -
1.2 Statement of the Problem .....	- 5 -
1.3 Objectives of the study .....	- 7 -
1.3.1 General objective .....	- 7 -
1.3.2 Specific objectives .....	- 7 -
1.4 Research questions .....	- 7 -
1.5 Significance of the Study .....	- 8 -
1.6 Scope of the Study .....	- 8 -
1.7 Limitations of the study .....	- 9 -
1.8 Organization of the study .....	- 9 -
CHAPTER TWO .....	- 10 -
2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .....	- 10 -
2.1 Introduction .....	- 10 -
2.2 concept of Social Media .....	- 10 -
2.3 concept of Public Relations .....	- 12 -
2.4 Social Media and Public Relations Practice .....	- 13 -
2.5 The Impact of Social Media on Public Relations .....	- 15 -
2.6 Social Media - as Broadcasting Channel .....	- 17 -
2.7 Facebook as a Public Relations Tool .....	- 18 -
	IV

2.8	Facebook in Ethiopia.....	- 20 -
2.9	Two-way communication Public Relations Model.....	- 22 -
2.10	Asymmetric Versus Symmetric Social Media Use .....	- 23 -
2.11	The Media Richness Theory.....	- 25 -
CHAPTER THREE .....		- 27 -
3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	- 27 -
3.1	Introduction .....	- 27 -
3.2	Research Design and Approach .....	- 27 -
3.3	Methods for Data Collection .....	- 29 -
3.3.1	In-depth interview .....	- 30 -
3.3.2	Content Analysis.....	- 31 -
3.4	Sampling Technique.....	- 32 -
3.5	Determination of Sample Size.....	- 32 -
3.6	Methods of Data Processing and Analysis.....	- 33 -
3.6.1	data processing and Analysis of In-depth Interviews .....	- 33 -
3.6.2	Data processing and analysis of content of Facebook page posts .....	- 34 -
3.7	Reliability, Validity and Trustworthiness .....	- 35 -
3.8	Ethical Considerations.....	- 36 -
CHAPTER FOUR.....		- 37 -
4	RESULT AND DISCUSSION .....	- 37 -
4.1	Introduction .....	- 37 -
4.2	Data presentation and Analysis .....	- 37 -
4.2.1	Data from interview .....	- 37 -
4.2.2	Data from content analysis.....	- 55 -
4.2.3	Discussion of the findings.....	- 58 -

Chapter Five.....	- 63 -
5 Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations .....	- 63 -
5.1 Summary .....	- 63 -
5.2 Conclusion.....	- 63 -
5.3 Recommendations .....	- 65 -
References.....	- 67 -
List of Appendixes .....	- 73 -
Appendix 1 .....	- 73 -
Appendix 2.....	- 75 -

## **Figures and Table**

	Page
Figure 1: Intended Public of Facebook Posts	55
Figure 2: One-way vs. Two-way communication	56
Table 1: Frequency of Posts	55

## **Lists of Acronyms**

FB	Facebook
PR	Public relations
SM	social media
PRSA	Public relations society of America

## ***Abstract***

*This study is conducted mainly to assess the trends in the role of Facebook as a public relation tool in Ethio Telecom. It followed a triangulation approach by combining in-depth interviews with ten Ethio Telecom public relations practitioners and a content analysis of 5 months posts of Ethio Telecom Facebook page. The samples of the in-depth interview for the study are purposively chosen from the organization's communication division, which is in charge of overseeing the organization's social media activity. As a result, ten people were interviewed in-depth, and 316 Facebook postings that were shared on the organization's official Facebook page between January 1 and may 31, 2022, were examined. The study's findings indicate that Ethio Telecom use Facebook often as PR tool; however there is more one way communication resulting in less interaction to increase the relationship and foster closer relationship between the organization and its public. The interaction is more from the organization to the customers and the public with few responses from the customers. There is a need for more two way interaction between the organizations and their publics. False information on Facebook is one of the issues the organization faces in its activities, and its Facebook efforts lack plans and are mostly focused on information distribution. Facebook is widely used in society, is easy to use, and takes less time to complete tasks than other platforms, which are the reasons why the organization decided to use it. Regardless of the findings, the organization under study should strive to achieve a more balanced and interactive use of Facebook as a public relations tool.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on some basic parts of the research, such as background, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, significance, scope, and limitation.

### 1.1 Background of the study

Social media has been defined by one of the scholars as the platform that connects people together by ignoring the geographical factor and also the opportunity to produce and share content with the community. Thus, social media has changed the community into an online community where the popular social media sites are used by millions of people on a daily basis. Social media are the extension of traditional word-of-mouth networks, which are always the most effective tools for disseminating information, and with the enablement of technology, it allows anyone with an internet connection to access and voice their opinion through social media (Grunig, 2009).

Wright and Hinson (2009) studied extensively how social media tools are implemented in PR and they perceived social media positively with respect to strategic communication for PR professionals. In another study (Herger and Howell, 2007) on the importance of blogging in PR, research results revealed what the potential of blogs can be used for rather than what PR practitioners actually do with blogs, and showed that “from a public relations perspective, there has been limited investigation and understanding into the nature of cyberspace as a communications medium.” Researchers (for example, Weber, 2007) also highlight that the communications world is increasingly moving in a digital direction and those who can grasp this transformation will be able to communicate far more effectively than those who do not. As such, and given the phenomenal usage of Web 2.0 platforms in corporate communications, it is critical for PR professionals to understand how social media works.

The emergence of new technologies and media in the last few decades has evoked a new era for the PR practice. In November 2011, the PRSA launched the so-called "Public Relations Defined" collaborative initiative, aiming to 'modernize' the existing definition (PR definition, 2011). From all the candidates that the PRSA evaluated, a new definition was adopted in March 2012:

*Public relations are a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and the public.*

Social media has had a significant impact on how people and organizations communicate. Web 2.0 and social media have made it possible for businesses to move away from only delivering information and toward engaging their audiences through two-way conversation (Mersham et al., 2009). Since it first became popular in the late 1990s, social media has been used by public relations professionals all over the world. Not many organizations, meanwhile, appear to have taken advantage of this exceptional chance to interact directly with their audiences.

According to Wang (2015), public relations professionals have switched from using traditional media to social media as a tool. There are many different forms of social media, including social networking sites (e.g., Facebook and Twitter).

According to Matthews (2010), Facebook has transformed internal communications. A shift from the conventional one-way output of corporate communications to an expanded dialogue that allows interactive two-way communication between company and consumer is made possible by social media marketing, which enables organizations to communicate directly and instantly with their stakeholders. According to Grunig (2009), the introduction of these Facebook platforms has altered both the philosophy and practice of public relations. With the help of new technologies, the profession has been able to better communicate with its audiences and move toward a two-way symmetrical communication model.

As the Top 20 Valuable Facebook Statistics Updated on March 2019, Facebook represents a continually evolving marketing platform and communication channel especially given the recent news coverage and insights. As routinely hear customer/prospect insights about their views of all social media channels which require making well-informed, digitally driven decisions in ways to

communicate with target audiences. Worldwide, there are over 2.32 billion monthly active users as of December 31, 2018.

There are 1.15 billion mobile daily active users for December 2016, an increase of 23 percent year-over-year. (Source: Facebook as of 2/01/17) This is hugely significant and shows the dramatic growth of Facebook.

1.52 billion people on average log onto Facebook daily and are considered daily active users for December 2018. This represents a 9 percent increase year over year (Source: Facebook as 1/30/19). The Implication: A huge and vastly growing number of Facebook users are active and consistent in their visits to the site, making them a promising audience for marketing and communication efforts. Growth was experienced across all global regions for the fourth quarter of 2018.

So it is impossible to ignore the influence of social media on our society. While it took traditional media such as radio and television more than a decade to reach 50 million users, it took Facebook less than nine months to reach 100 million users (Patel, 2010). Mobile technologies including laptops, tablets and smart-phones allow us to be constantly connected, which has had a dramatic impact on our daily lives. Internet and social media usage is increasingly taking place on mobile devices, particularly on smart phones. In fact, according to research firms Nielsen and McKinsey, share of internet time on social media spent on smartphones is reported as 31 percent compared to only 18 percent on PCs (Perez, 2012). Social media has changed the way society learns and communicate.

Many Ethiopians are joining Facebook daily, claims Sileshie (2014). Its accessibility has greatly increased, and it is quickly evolving into a media platform for social, cultural, and political events.

Facebook platforms have spread globally. The social media platform is widely utilized in Ethiopia as well, and media outlets, governmental and non-governmental organizations, journalists, public personalities, etc. use it to publish news and other pertinent information.

According to the data posted on Ethio Telecom's Facebook page, the "Digital 2019" report by "hoot suite& we are social" reported that Ethiopia has registered a 61% increment in social media users in the year 2019, ranked second-best next to Western Sahara in growth rate. Accordingly, the total number of social media users, until the end of March 2019, had reached 10.6 million (Ethio Telecom, 2019).

Ethio Telecom has the vision of being a world-class telecom service provider in Ethiopia. The agency has the mission to connect Ethiopia through state of the art telecom services; provide high quality, innovative and affordable telecom products and services that enhance the development of our nation and ensure high customer satisfaction; build a reputable brand known for its customers' consideration; build its managerial capability and manpower talent that enables Ethio Telecom to operate at an international level; and support community and environmental development. The organization has different values to lead the vision: customer-centric, excellent, accountability, impartiality, and sharing. Ethio Telecom uses social media to achieve its goal. It is widely used in public relations practice.

Telecommunications service was introduced in Ethiopia by Emperor Menelik II in 1894 when the construction of the telephone line from Harare to the capital city, Addis Ababa, was commenced. Then the interurban network continued to expand satisfactorily in all other directions from the capital. Many important centers in the Empire were interconnected by lines, thus facilitating long distance communication with the assistants or operators at intermediate stations frequently acting as verbal human repeaters between the distant calling parties.

As a continuation of the 2005/06–2009/10 five-year plan and after concentrating its efforts on education, health, and agriculture, the Ethiopian government has decided to focus on the improvement of telecommunication services, considering them a key lever in the development of Ethiopia. Ethio Telecom was born on November 29th, 2010, from this ambition to support the steady growth of our country within the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), with ambitious objectives for the year 2015. The Ethiopian government has decided to transform the telecommunication infrastructure and services to world-class standards, considering them a key lever in the development of Ethiopia. Thus, Ethio Telecom was born from this ambition to bring

about a paradigm shift in the development of the telecom sector to support the steady growth of our country.

Social media sites including YouTube, Facebook, Telegram, Tiktok, and others were employed as a tool by the Ethio Telecom communication division. The Ethio Telecom Facebook page has 1,116,313 followers as of the day and month of August 17, 2022, according to the company's official Facebook site. The Facebook page was one of the social media initiatives managed by the communication division.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

These days communication has become subject to change with the technological advancements. Technology has brought enormous impact in the information communication sector. Due to this impact a shift from the traditional approach to information dissemination to a new model has happened in which the social media became a significant tool in a communication practice. The organization is no exception in this case and the ever-changing technology has affected the organizational communication activities around the world. Therefore the opportunities of Facebook platforms are offering to organizations as additional ways of reaching out to their publics and how the organizations are harnessing the potentials is an area that needs to be looked into.

Social media has had a huge impact not only on people, but also on brands across industries as they devise strategies to engage their audiences and win their loyalty. Public Relations are no different as professionals constantly seek to communicate with and hear from customers, who are ever-present and active on social media

According to Broom (2009), the internet has radically changed how public relations and communication professionals do their business. These professionals now heavily rely on new media. Regarding this, the new media landscape presents at least three fresh difficulties: keeping up with new media technology; managing media relations with unconventional "journalists," and representing organizations in the new media landscape.

According to Ewuola (2019), there have been significant changes in the public relations sector over the past few years due to new media, technology, and opportunities for client and corporate communication. The reason is how well the new platforms are handled.

According to Matthews (2010), the increased use of social media has caused social media to be incorporated into numerous public relations strategies. Because of social media, public relations professionals now have a variety of ways to interact with their audiences directly without relying on traditional media. Public relations professionals can share real-time updates on their organizations' operations and receive immediate feedback from their audiences.

Social media is going to continue to develop and change, and corporate communications practices are going to change with it. Social media has already proven to be a valuable tool for the industry, and the future promises more widespread teaching and implementation of these tools. The advent of social media has resulted in the evolution of corporate communications. From unchanging, traditional practices, the public relations industry has evolved rapidly to accommodate constant change and new tools, creating opportunities for meaningful conversations, successful campaigns, and realizing industry ideals (Matthews, 2010).

Dawit (2019) conducted research showing that social media was used by nearly all (98%) government organizations in Ethiopia. Facebook is the social media platform that PR professionals prefer the most. Some of them additionally utilize WhatsApp, Telegram, Messenger, YouTube, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Instagram. The majority of respondents (64.6%) said they had been using social media for more than three years. This suggests that PR professionals were aware of the value of social media in their work. They have used social media for a while.

According to Wubareg's research (2019); social media has made PR professionals' jobs more difficult because the field now calls for a wide range of expertise and skills, especially given the daily emergence of new social media technologies. PR practitioners today have to possess more expertise as a result of social media. Hence, this study aims to contribute to this knowledge gap by investigating the role of Facebook as a public relations tool in Ethio Telecom focusing on interactivity of the platforms.

However, there are unexplored issues with PR practitioners in using the Facebook page of Ethio Telecom. The website is a news, social, and marketing platform and is very important as such in communicating to the people the day-to-day activities of the corporation. However, it needs an investigation to find out different aspects of the web pages as a public relations platform. It is important to know how Facebook has been used and what the technical features are in public relations work. It is also necessary to know whether the corporation's mission, vision, and values are reflected in its use of the Facebook page. The researcher assessed the above gaps, which are still untouched in the study area. To this end, the researcher is interested in analyzing the role of Facebook as a public relation tool in Ethio Telecom.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

#### **1.3.1 General objective**

The objective of the study is to assess the role of Facebook as a communication tool in The Ethio Telecom.

#### **1.3.2 Specific objectives**

In order to achieve the overall objectives, this study had the following specific objectives:

- To explore the existing practices of the Facebook page on Ethio Telecom
- To identify the nature of contents uploaded in the Ethio Telecom Facebook page,
- To examine the role of the Ethio Telecom Facebook page in relationships and information communication between the organization and its public.
- To examines the opportunities and challenges for using Facebook as a communication tool in the Ethio Telecom

### **1.4 Research questions**

The study has the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are the public relations practices using Facebook as a communication tool In the Ethio Telecom?
- RQ2: What is the nature of content uploaded on the Facebook page of Ethio Telecom?
- RQ3: What are the challenges and opportunities of using Facebook as a communication tool in the Ethio Telecom?
- RQ4: To what extent does the Facebook page play its role as a public relations tool, promoting communication between the organization and the public?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The researcher believes that finding of this study is significantly providing effective information on the use of Facebook social media in Ethio Telecom. Moreover, the Organization can be benefited in recognizing what challenges and opportunities its Facebook page has so far. Besides, this investigation has also been significant for policy makers in adopting and implementing the standard features and practices of Facebook media in order to fill the gap in conducting its mission. The last but not the least, this paper can be used as source of material for those who are interested to conduct a relevant study for the enhancement of social media in the region.

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study focuses on an assessment of the role of Facebook as a public relation tool in the Ethio Telecom. The researcher selected Ethio Telecom based on the followers in official Facebook page compared with others organizations. In-depth interviews with head office of Ethio Telecom public relations practitioners were intended to provide depth to this research by exploring practitioners' opinions of Facebook use in the practice. This study also aimed to add insights about trends in practitioners' Facebook use by analyzing contents of Ethio Telecom Facebook pages uploads of 5 months. The thematic scope of this study is limited to the Public relation practitioner of the Ethio Telecom. The scope of this study was further limited to interviews with senior public relations practitioners as these were expected to provide valuable insights into the role of Facebook in public relations.

## **1.7 Limitations of the study**

Finding pertinent resources for the study, particularly important local resources, was difficult because Facebook is a recent phenomenon that is seldom studied. Due to the time and financial constraints of this study's Master's program, the researcher chose to conduct fewer interviews and concentrate the qualitative research component's attention on free content analysis. The study only looks at Ethio Telecom's Facebook page; as a result, it does not address the organization's presence or involvement on other social media.

The target responders were extremely busy people who were challenging to reach. The responders' organization was crucial to the researcher, and some of them refused to participate. This prolonged the study process. However, the researcher built a rapport with them by using public relations strategies. Additionally, the researcher promised anonymity to the respondents.

The continuous and fast-paced evolution of Facebook might limit the longevity of this study's findings, particularly regarding Facebook platforms and the importance of different media types. However, this study does contribute to the body of knowledge by identifying of patterns and motivations behind the use of Facebook platforms in public relations. It also provides several opportunities for future research in this field.

## **1.8 Organization of the study**

Chapter one of the study deals with the introductory part. In this section, the discussion of the problem, the background, the objectives, the significance, the limitation and the scope of the study are discussed. Chapter two of this study deals with the review of literature relevant to the research. In chapter three, the methods and methodologies that are employed to do the research are result and the discussion in chapter four while chapter five deals with the summary, conclusion and recommendations part.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The researcher has tried to review different literatures which are related to the use of social media focusing on Facebook in public relations. First, this chapter elaborates on the conceptual framework of social media on public relations, including the potential opportunities and challenges for the practice. Second, it investigates how public relations practitioners make use of social media platforms. Last, a summary of the literature findings leads to the formulation of the research questions underlying the present research.

#### **2.2 Concept of Social Media**

Social media defined in several ways. The fundamental starting points for the definition of social media include both technological elements and platform qualities. Social media, as defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), is a technological perspective, a collection of web-based programs that are founded on the principles of Web 2.0, as well as the content that permits the production and exchange of user-generated content. In order to develop highly dynamic platforms for individuals and groups to share, produce, converse, and modify user-generated content, social media uses mobile and web-based technology (Kietzmann, Hermkens& McCarthy, 2011).

Social media is referred to as a logical progression in the communications industry. The phrase "social media" is frequently used to refer to websites, online tools, and other interactive communication technologies that enable users to engage with one another in some way, such as through sharing information, opinions, knowledge, or hobbies. This is according to Kitchen (2010).

Social media is often defined in narrow terms Tuten (2008) regarded social networking as synonymous with Facebook and MySpace. Social media is often characterized as sites where participants can produce, publish, control, critique, rank, and interact with online content. Social

media can also be defined as a group of new kinds of online media that share most or all of the following characteristics: participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness (Mayfield, 2008).

On the other hand, Taprialand & Kanwar (cited in Etenesh, 201) stated five distinctive characteristics of social media which make it much more powerful than traditional media. These are accessibility, speed, interactivity, longevity, volatility, and reach.

**Accessibility:** Social media is simple to use and free or low-cost. It is easy to use and connect with others as well.

**Speed:** the content, once published, will be visible to all connected communities. Not only are publishing responses not delayed—they are near instantaneous as well.

**Interactivity:** social media offers two-way or more communication. Users interact with one another by asking questions, leaving comments, sharing information, and offering alternative perspectives.

**Longevity/Volatility:** owing to the nature of the medium, social media content remains accessible for a long time. It can be updated at any time as well.

**Reach:** should the tribute go to the internet; anything put on social media can reach anyone crossing social interaction of the yore limited by cut breaks.

According to Broom (2009), there are only 24 hours in a broadcast day, and there is a finite amount of editorial content available to traditional media. Therefore, it is impossible for any one of these channels to convey all of the news and information accessible. The time and focus that recipients have to devote to the numerous communications is similarly constrained. In a media world crammed with messages, only a tiny fraction gets past the door and into the home, and fewer get attention. Nonetheless, institutionalized power is largely exercised through control of the means and content of mass communication. Mass media constitute the key components of a nation's public information system, a system in which public relations practitioners play an

increasing proportion of the content. Many sources compete for access to the media, however, so practitioners must continually adjust their communication strategy to rapidly changing media and audiences.

The popularity of social media has drawn growing attention from public relations scholars and practitioners. The significance of social media-related public relations suggests the need for an examination of the state of this research area to date.

### **2.3 Concept of Public Relations**

There are many more definitions of PR. The reason for this is that the industry itself is always changing and adapting to the world and the growing power of the media, old and new (Gordon, 2011). However, most of them define it as a discipline that is concerned with the exchange of information and as a strategic management function that seeks to build relationships with the various stakeholders of an organization by maintaining meaningful two-way communication (Phillips and Young, 2009).

The emergence of new technologies and media in the last few decades has evoked a new era for the PR practice, which is why in November 2011 the PRSA launched the so-called "Public Relations Defined" collaborative initiative, aiming to "modernize" the existing definition (PR definition, 2011). From all the candidates that the PRSA evaluated, a new definition was adopted in March 2012:

Public relations are a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and the public.

Broom & Smith (1979) stated the role of PR as, as the name goes, the task of the communication facilitator involves allowing communication or exchange of information between an organization and the customer. The primary aim of this role is to encourage a two-way discourse between an enterprise and its customers.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) also described that the role is important as it aids organizations to engage in two-way symmetrical communication. The two-way symmetrical communication allows for all those involved to access sufficient information to carry out choices or decisions for mutual benefit.

The foregoing perspectives demonstrate the essence of public relations to organizations in their attempt to establish, maintain, and enhance relationships with key stakeholders. However, as new forms of communication develop and old forms evolve especially with respect to the internet and social media—public relations practice seems to be headed for change. As opposed to the traditional communications paradigm, the elements of the promotional mix, such as public relations, which were largely within the control of organizations, have now become democratized as internet users can now generate and adjust content (Mangold&Faulds, 2009).

With the broad range of new communication channels, public relations practitioners are faced with a daunting challenge as "internet-based social media tools such as blogs, podcasts, online video and social networks are giving voice to the opinions of millions of consumers" (Carrabis, Cass, Gillin, Nacht&Peverill- Conti, 2008).

This literature clearly shows how public relations' role has changed in the era of social media. The part informs the study by bringing out the roles of pros in a social media environment, which indicates how the practice is done in government nowadays. There is even a new job title, termed "social media expert. In addition, these changes suggest that in the current media climate, PR needs to consider social media as part of its communication strategy.

## **2.4 Social Media and Public Relations Practice**

Heath (2001) asserts that the transformation to digital technology has far-reaching implications for the practice of public relations. Capabilities are expanding while equipment prices are dropping. The size, cost, and capability of the computer are stretching and changing the boundaries, roles, and relationships of public relations practitioners inside and outside their organizations. He continues to say that technology has been changing for some time, enabling

public relations practitioners to do more work in less time. Productivity has been enhanced by tools such as e-mail to clients, employees, and other members of the public.

Marketers and public relations professionals today are confronted with an astounding array of new communication channels. Internet-based social media tools like blogs, podcasts, and online video and social networking are giving voice to the opinions of millions of consumers. While mainstream media continues to play a vital role in the dissemination of information, even these traditional channels are increasingly being influenced by online conversations (Gillin,2012).

Traditionally, public relations used press releases, brochures, annual reports, books, etc. to get publicity, but now these tools don't provide the same results as social media do. For public relations professionals, however, social media extends beyond traditional media relations and offers the potential to share information, engage the public, and build relationships with the public. The types of social media available to organizations and the public have the potential to both extend and narrow relationships (Kent& Taylor, 2003 as cited in Oneya, 2010).

Oneya (2010) also described the new public relations tools that have meant a variety of new strategic communication tactics and channels have emerged, giving public relations professional's new ways to reach stakeholders, the public, and the media. Additionally, individuals, activists, and non-profit organizations can also use social media to influence organizations and attract media attention. Today, individuals and organizations no longer have to rely solely on traditional media channels and gatekeepers.

More recently, according to Wang (2015), public relations practitioners have shifted from traditional media to social media as a tool since their inception. There exist various types of social media, such as social networking sites (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), content communities (e.g., YouTube and Instagram), and virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life), etc. These social media forms have been examined by lots of public relations studies. In general, social media lets PR bypass the media and go straight to customers. Using social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter allows PR to follow and be followed by journalists, drive web traffic,

manage issues by responding quickly to criticism or negative perceptions, and increase exposure for businesses.

According to research, the introduction of social media platforms has significantly altered the field of public relations (DiStaso et al., 2011; Lipschultz, 2018; Motion et al., 2015; Wright & Hinson, 2013; Xie et al., 2018). Even more significant than the printing presses invention, according to Macnamara (2010a), was the development of Web 2.0 and social media. As a result, a wide range of studies from around the world have looked at how social media has affected the field of public relations and how practitioners have seen and used various social media platforms.

Several academics have argued in favor of utilizing this novel form of media (e.g., Allagui&Breslow, 2016; Clampitt, 2017; Smith, 2017). For instance, according to Breakenridge (2008), PR professionals now have the opportunity to interact directly with customers and influencers while also addressing traditional media through a different channel thanks to social media or PR 2.0. The conversational nature of social media even prompted Solis and Breakenridge (2009) to declare in the title of their book that it was "putting the public back in public relations."

## **2.5 The Impact of Social Media on Public Relations**

Research has shown that the emergence of social media platforms has dramatically changed the practice of public relations (DiStaso et al., 2011; Lipschultz, 2018; Motion et al., 2015; Wright & Hinson, 2013; Xie et al., 2018). Macnamara (2010a) even called the formation of Web 2.0 and social media as significant as the invention of the printing press. As a result, a large variety of international research has examined the impact of social media on the practice of public relations and how practitioners have perceived and applied different social media tools (e.g. Eyrych et al., 2008; Navarro et al., 2018; Zerfass et al., 2017).

Several academics argued in favor of utilizing this novel form of media. For instance, according to Breakenridge (2008), PR professionals now have the opportunity to interact directly with customers and influencers while also addressing traditional media through a different channel

thanks to social media or PR 2.0. The conversational nature of social media even prompted Solis and Breakenridge (2009) to declare in the title of their book that it was "putting the public back in public relations."

According to Edosomwan et al. (2011), social media has enhanced both the quantity and efficiency of communication channels within organizations. As a result, Macnamara et al. (2016) anticipated that organizations would move away from the conventional PESO (Paid, earned, shared and owned) model and toward the new SOEP model (shared, owned, earned, and paid), with the emphasis being placed on shared media and owned media respectively. They used the importance shift away from traditional paid media and earned media and in favor of shared media to explain this development. In order to generate exposure for public relations initiatives, for instance, Allagui and Breslow (2016) predicted that social media strategies will gradually replace events.

Public relations professionals in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region anticipated that owned and controlled social and digital media would become increasingly relevant. This was supported by their Latin American peers who thought social media's significance would significantly increase. In Europe and the Asia-Pacific area, earned media was seen as continuing to be significant, particularly when it came to internet recommendations or strategic alliances, whereas traditional paid media saw a significant fall in significance. Conversely, Latin American practitioners anticipated a decline in the significance of earned media.

Organizations were urged to use all media kinds complementarily despite the purported shift in power across media types. For instance, Sutherland (2016) stated that while using social media to improve interactions between an organization and its publics. According to this theory, traditional and social media are connected systems that promote interaction between users both online and offline. For instance, promoting an event on social media and inviting attendees who were tagged in images from the event to leave comments afterward would improve ties with the general public.

## **2.6 Social Media - as Broadcasting Channel**

In contrast to one-way and asymmetrical communication, two-way symmetrical public relations uses research, listening, and dialogue to manage conflict and nurture connections with both internal and external strategic publics. According to Kent's (2013) argument, social media should be utilized to forge connections rather than as a cheap means of disseminating the organization's messages or as a replacement for the dwindling mass media. He recommended those in public relations to look out for the interests of their audiences rather than just the organization. Practitioners were also urged to promote long-term strategies, as well as openness, inclusivity, and increased public input.

International studies revealed that the practice, however, ignored the advice to use social media as a dialogue tool. Organizations have been condemned by Grunig (2009) and Valentini (2015) for exploiting social media as a broadcast channel for advertising and promotion while ignoring the two-way symmetrical approach to cultivate relationships with their publics. Other researchers agreed with them, finding that non-profit organizations used social media to convey organizational information, which increased public awareness but not involvement. Gabriel and Koh (2016) noted that Malaysian public relations professionals used a similar dissemination strategy. Kautz et al. (2020), who discovered that German sport clubs depended on reporting, promoting, and informing when communicating, corroborated this finding.

The similar strategy was employed by practitioners in the Asia-Pacific area, according to Macnamara et al. (2017), who used social media more as a broadcasting channel than as a tool for interaction and social listening. Additionally, a study of the Fortune 400 companies in the US found that blogs were not used by organizations as a two-way symmetrical medium.

Theunissen and Sissons (2017) dissented from the notion that social media "are not living up to their potential" as held by other academics. They said that academics would prefer to impose "an outdated framework on paradigmatically distinct spaces of relational enactment" on social networking and media sites. This was supported by Watkins (2017), who said that if the material

is deemed beneficial, one-way communication on the appropriate social media platforms could help in connection building.

While most US organizations focused on giving helpful information, a recent study on Twitter revealed that many Fortune 500 companies also utilized two-way symmetric principles by responding to queries and comments in order to create relationships with their audiences. However, Theunissen and Sissons (2017) stated that rather than interacting with engaged and critical publics, practitioners still used social media to manage relationships and secure compliance.

## **2.7 Facebook as a Public Relations Tool**

According to Dornyo (2016), new communication channels have altered the game's rules in every aspect of strategic communication and the relationship management industry. As a result, social networking sites are used by more than two-thirds of the current Fortune 2000 corporations. Facebook is allegedly the social media platform utilized by professionals the most frequently for communication.

In order to evaluate how 275 non-profit organizations used social networking sites to promote their organizational goals and programs, Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas (quoted in Etenesh, 2019) conducted a content study of the profiles of those organizations on Facebook. They wanted to know, among other things, how non-profit organizations use relationship development techniques on their Facebook profiles. They discovered that the majority of the many interactive Facebook applications had not been integrated into the profiles of the non-profits. They failed to take advantage of social networking's interactive features, and as a result, Facebook. Additionally, they hardly ever disseminate company news.

In order to evaluate how 2008 Fortune 50 firms used Facebook, McCorkindale (2010) also carried out a quantitative content study of those pages. In order to establish what had been written or published about the company, the investigation examined 55 Facebook sites. The study's findings revealed, among other things, that few businesses were using Facebook as a means of information dissemination. Additionally, the Facebook page's communication tended to

be monologue-like and one-sided, ignoring Facebook's two-way relationship-building capabilities.

According to Barnes et al. (2020), the way that businesses use social media has greatly evolved since it became popular. The use of blogs was initially the primary focus of social media, but as time has gone on, platforms like Facebook and Twitter have become more prevalent.

Wright and Hinson (2017) found that Facebook was used most frequently among US public relations professionals, followed by Twitter and LinkedIn, with Instagram and YouTube far behind. The usage of Google+, Snapchat, Pinterest, and Flickr was minimal.

## **Facebook**

Facebook was introduced by its creator, Mark Zuckerberg, in February 2004. Facebook has rapidly expanded the number of its members and is currently one of the most popular social networking sites in the United States of America, despite the presence of other formidable competitors like MySpace, Twitter, and LinkedIn (Tuunainen, Pitkanen, & Hovi, 2009).

Facebook helps users retain a sizable, dispersed network of friends and build their social capital, which is the advantage one derives from relationships with others (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007, as cited in McCorkindale, 2010). Facebook was initially aimed at colleges and universities, but it is now widely used in high schools, business professional networks, and other groups such as nonprofits (Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Acquisti, & Gross, 2006).

According to the Pew Internet Project (2014), 74% of online adults used social networking sites by January 2014. For example, as of July 2014, Facebook owned 1.31 billion monthly active users (Statistic Brain, 2014).

Users of the social networking site can connect with Facebook friends and post and share updates, videos, and other content with one another. In order to draw in new audiences, Facebook has continuously added new features like the "tag friends" or "like" button and

imitated the popular features of rivals (Press, 2018). One such example is the Live Feed, which is comparable to Twitter's stream (Hall, n.d.).

The social network that is used the most for reading news globally is undoubtedly Facebook (Reuters Institute, 2019). Despite numerous privacy and data scandals over the years, Facebook's popularity was fueled by the addition of features like video-sharing and live video.

Facebook provides social utility services that help people communicate more efficiently with their friends, families, and colleagues. The technologies of Facebook facilitate the sharing of information through the social graph and digital mapping of people's real-world social connections. It was opened to members of the general public, aged 13 and above, in September 2006. There are over 1,679,433,530 Facebook users worldwide, out of which 9.3% (146,637,000) of the subscribers are from Africa. There are over 4,500,000 Facebook users in Ethiopia. (Internet World Stats, 2017)

## **2.8 Facebook in Ethiopia**

Since the Internet has revolutionized the way most people in the world live, Ethiopia is no exception. According to Ali (2011) as cited in Daniel (2019), the internet has become an integral part of our economic, political, and social life. It alters the way we purchase goods, the way we bank, and the way we communicate with one another. Thus, the emergence of the internet not only changes the way we live, it also offers a platform for the rise of different social media and social networking sites.

In contrast to many other parts of the world, social media use in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon, according to Daniel (2019). Social media's advent has altered several facets of business interactions and communication. Ethiopia has been experiencing social media and networking platforms. Young people, adults, academics, and members of the general public have all used social media and social networking sites. Additionally, participation in social networking sites has transformed numerous facets of citizen communication and interaction.

According to Jensen and Sarrocco (quoted in Daniel, 2019), Ethiopian Internet use allegedly started in 1993 with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. With the assistance of a US-based nongovernmental organization, the medical school at Addis Ababa University was able to access the internet the next year (NGO). This demonstrates that the internet was always a luxury service for the general public in Ethiopia because it was used to improve organizational communications.

When it first became widely available in 1997, internet service in Kalo (quoted in Daniel, 2019) was extremely limited and was first provided by the now-defunct Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation (ETC). Despite being a diplomatic center, Ethiopia nevertheless has one of the most underdeveloped internet infrastructures in the world after two decades of operation. This demonstrates that Ethio Telecom hasn't done anything to encourage the general public to utilize the internet.

According to We Are Social, a website that works on a global digital report, by January 2019 there will be 6.1 million active social media users in Ethiopia and the penetration is estimated at around 5.6 percent. By January 2019, Ethiopia had 5.6 million mobile social media users, with a penetration rate of 5.1 percent. The number of active social media users has increased by more than 61 percent compared to the same time last year, and the number of mobile social media users has increased by more than 56 percent.

Among the many different social networking sites, Facebook is the most visited site in Ethiopia, with an estimated 9.43 minutes per day. (2019) (We are social)

As the Internet World State (n.d) website report shows, currently, 16 million Ethiopians use the internet. Around 80% of Ethiopian youth are active users of social media. There are more than six million Facebook users present today in Ethiopia. Demographically, users aged 25-34 are the most active users of Facebook.

The statistics show that recently the use of social media has dramatically increased. As the researcher observes, social media in Ethiopia, there is a continuous need to frequently investigate how social media is altering society. The influence point of social media on public relations

needs further investigation. The social media platform of Facebook is also one of the areas of research to do on its role in public relations practices.

## **2.9 Two-way communication Public Relations Model**

According to the World Bank (2009), as stated in Daniel (2019), two-way communication between the government and the public results in governance outcomes that are of greater quality and more sustainable. Many governments do not have sufficient capacity for effective one-way communication. Elections, crises, and politically sensitive topics shouldn't be the only times when the public is consulted and engaged. The public agenda may be dominated by conflicting forces if governments don't communicate. Perhaps even more crucial than listening is demonstrating to the populace that the government is paying attention. In the long run, however, citizens must believe that their opinions are valued.

Efficiency is an incentive that may serve as a motivation for organizations to improve their communication capacity. E-government initiatives, such as Web 2.0 technologies and SMS applications, can serve to promote improvements, as can traditional communication tools, such as community radio call-in shows and local television. Community media can stimulate two-way communication between civil society and the state. (Daniel, 2019)

In two-way communication, which is asymmetrical by nature, persuasion and manipulation are used to persuade audiences to act in the way that the organization wants them to. Research is not used to ascertain how stakeholders feel about the organization. When two-way communication is symmetrical, the company communicates with the public to negotiate agreements, settle disputes, and advance understanding and respect between the company and its stakeholders. Practitioners of two-way asymmetric communication engage in scientific study to ascertain the most effective methods for influencing the public to act in the manner that their organizations desire. Through study and dialogue, practitioners of the two-way symmetrical paradigm transform the ideas, attitudes, and behaviors of both their organizations and the public they serve.

Looking for comment on information spread that was starting to be thought of as a component of the communication process is led to the introduction of the concept of two-way communication.

However, the goal of asking for input wasn't to reverse a stance that an organization had taken; rather, it was to use the criticism to present a different strategy of persuasion so that the audience would accept the organization's interests. (Seitel, 2011 as cited in Daniel, 2019)

## **2.10 Asymmetric Versus Symmetric Social Media Use**

The academic literature has been dominated by attempts to apply Grunig and Hunt's (1984) two-way symmetrical model of communication to examine the potential of new media to build constructive relationships between organizations and their publics.

Alfonso and de Valbuena Miguel (2006) came to the conclusion that while new media do provide a means of enhancing two-way symmetrical communication, present practice, at least in terms of online press rooms, did not accomplish this. McAllister and Taylor (2007) conducted a study on community college websites to explore the issue of two-way symmetrical communication and ascertain whether the websites promoted dialogic connections. They concluded that there was a general lack of interactive features that could elicit feedback or input from important stakeholders and claimed that these flaws restricted the ability of public relations professionals to gather data and track public opinion from individuals as well as regional, state, and federal organizations. Their evaluation of the website offerings was based on the sender-receiver transmission model of communication, and they saw them as examples of essentially one-way asymmetrical communication that served a similar function as a brochure. The authors came to the conclusion that the websites under study did not promote connection building with important audiences. (McAllister & Taylor, 2007)

Symmetrical two-way communications are cited in numerous studies as being a crucial component of effective business communication by Hassink, Bollen, and Steggink (2007). They used this method for their own investigation into online investor relations and came to the conclusion that symmetrical communication was not implied by the existence of email contact forms for investors on corporate websites. It was found that whether symmetrical communication was present depended on the corporation's response behavior, such as whether it reacted at all or the promptness and caliber of the response it got. Organizing a symmetrical dialogue with

investors may call for a framework that is very different from the conventional supply-driven asymmetrical communications process, according to the study, which revealed that firms generally underperformed in this area. (Hassink, Bollen&Steggink, 2007)

It will be interesting to consider Galushkin's (2003) theoretical case for contesting elements of the media richness theory and the social presence theory. Hermann (2007) investigates Weick's process of sense making in order to examine online communications in the context of investor online discussion boards. She also makes several theoretical recommendations for future research, such as contrasting interaction analysis typologies, using network analysis, or investigating strategic ambiguity.

Emery (1991) The Marshall McLuhan studies, which claim that we are experiencing a whole new era of technology, are related to the technological determinism idea. While studying media and culture in England, McLuhan found himself attempting to understand the media landscape that surrounded him. The development of the phonetic alphabet, the printing press, and the telegraph all resulted in significant advancements in human communication. McLuhan, also referred to as the "Oracle of the Electronic Age," warns that new electronic media are altering how people feel, think, and act. According to McLuhan, the current technological landscape will likely be remembered as a significant turning point in the history of communication.

It is a theory that presumes the media is the key element in mass communication processes that evoked widespread controversy during the 1960s, mostly due to the colorful writing of Marshall McLuhan, a professor of English. McLuhan declared that each medium alters our physical environment, imposing on us a particular pattern of perceiving and thinking that controls us to an extent we scarcely suspect. (Emery et al., 1991)

According to Grunig (2009), in contrast to one-way and asymmetrical communication, two-way symmetrical public relations uses research, listening, and dialogue to manage conflict and nurture connections with both internal and external strategic publics (p. 2). Kent (2013) suggested that social media should be used as a two-way symmetrical instrument to establish relationships rather than a cheap way to spread the organization's messages or to replace the

dwindling mass media. He recommended those in public relations to look out for the interests of their audiences rather than just the organization. Practitioners were also urged to promote long-term strategies as well as openness, inclusivity, and increased public input.

International studies revealed that the practice, however, ignored the advice to use social media as a dialogue tool. Organizations have been criticized by Grunig (2009) and Valentini (2015) for exploiting social media as a broadcast channel for advertising and marketing while ignoring the two-way symmetrical approach to cultivating relationships with their public.

Social media gives public relations professionals the chance to fulfill the two-way symmetrical communication model because it is built on multidirectional dialogues. According to Grunig (1992), this is a crucial component of successful public relations. According to Grunig (2009), social media must be exploited to its fullest extent as a component of strategic public relations, and businesses that merely employ social media for information dissemination are to be criticized. Through direct interaction and attentive listening, a two-way symmetrical approach helps practitioners to use successful communication and forge relationships with varied publics.

## **2.11 The Media Richness Theory**

The media richness theory in the opinion of Martin (2009) is based on the assumption that the purpose of any communication is to resolve ambiguity and reduce uncertainty. It states that the different types of social media differ in the degree of richness they possess and based on capacity to convey multiple verbal and nonverbal signals, ability to allow immediate feedback, usage of natural language, and presence of personal focus. Accordingly, some social media are more effective than other in resolving ambiguity and uncertainty. Messages that are less equivocal do not require rich media. Instead, lean media should adequately carry these messages.

Katz & Lazarsfeld (2010) stated that in the hierarchy of media richness, face-to-face communication is the richest followed by telephone, electronic mail, and print communications. Therefore, applying the theories discussed above to social media, people may be influenced either positively or negatively depending on the amount and type of information that needs to be

processed and transmitted (media richness), personal reasoning or perception (social cognition) and the degree of socialization needed (social presence).

Media richness theory argues that performance improves when team members use “richer” media for equivocal tasks Dennis & Kinney (2008).

This is true if the social media can be incorporated in public relations practice. For social media has been promoted in academic literature as one of the best ways to open up the organization to dialogue and build ongoing relationships with publics (Grunig 2009, Kelleher 2007 and Kelleher and Miller 2006) .

Robson & James (2013) clarify that social media is a tool for achieving public relations practice objectives. Some authors suggest the social media sphere requires organizations to be transparent, authentic, give up control, engage, collaborate, and be personal, relevant and speedy with their communication (Hearn, Foth, & Gray, 2008; Henderson & Bowley, 2010). This makes it more rich media for organization public relations.

Various studies concluded that social media has had a significant effect on public relations practice and have changed the way organizations communicate with their publics. Several studies identified cost-effectiveness as well as the possibility to communicate directly and engage with publics as opportunities. Lack of control, reaching more publics with limited resources and the need for technical training, were identified as challenges.

Many scholars have celebrated social media as two-way symmetric media that can be applied as a part of excellent public relations. Research on the adoption of social media shows that practitioners have increasingly jumped on the social media.

It is concluded that despite a growing body of research on Facebook and its use in public relations, no recent study could be identified that examines the role of Facebook as a communication tool in Ethio Telecom. This motivated the researcher to conduct this research, which aims to present an updated and comprehensive picture of the role of Facebook as a public relation tool in Ethio Telecom.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter elaborates on the methodology used in the present research. It discusses the design and philosophical perspective of this research. This entails a description of the triangulation approach by combining quantitative and qualitative research methods, followed by an explanation of the sampling and data gathering procedures. It also elaborates on the chosen methods of data analysis, including the coding processes involved.

#### **3.2 Research Design and Approach**

This study employed pragmatic paradigm research design to assess the role of Facebook as a tool for public relations practices, taking the Ethio Telecom Facebook page as a case in point. In this context, the researcher seeks the best method or methods for answering the research questions by illuminating the subject of inquiry from all possible angles.

Daymon and Holloway (2010) proposed that the most prevalent paradigms in public relations and marketing communications studies were positivism and interpretive. According to them, positivists believe in the existence of objective reality and aim to picture it objectively. Hennink et al. (2020) stated that researchers following an interpretive approach try to understand the experiences of people from the perspectives of those people. The researchers acknowledge that the perceived and experienced realities of people are subjectively determined.

As a result of their specific paradigms, positivists are more likely to use quantitative research methods such as surveys, whereas interpretivism tends to use qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews (Daymon & Holloway, 2010).

Johnson et al. (2007) have argued that these conflicting worldviews nurtured a so-called “paradigm war” between quantitative and qualitative scholars. This prevalent antagonism led to the emergence of the pragmatic paradigm, which aims at synthesizing both qualitative and

quantitative research methods. In this paradigm, neither of the earlier research paradigms are preferred. Instead, all research is believed to involve interpretation as well as intentions (i.e. subjective reality) but needs to be founded on empirical experience (Yardley & Bishop, 2008). Importantly, pragmatists believe that the choice of research methods depends on the underlying research questions and therefore the purpose of the research, rather than a specific worldview (Johnson, 2007).

For this research, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods was chosen as the most appropriate approach to explore the role of Facebook in contemporary public relations practice. Morse's (1991) simultaneous triangulation approach was followed whereby quantitative and qualitative data were collected independently from each other and analyzed complementarily. This procedure aimed to produce a richer and more insightful analysis of the topic under study.

To triangulate the data, in-depth interviews with Ethio Telecom public relations practitioners followed by a content analysis of Ethio Telecom Facebook page posts. The interviews were intended to shed light on the practitioners' perceptions and to add depth the findings the quantitative method aimed at obtaining quantifiable data and discovering trends in the role of Facebook as a public relation tool. Thus, they increased the credibility of findings and facilitated a deeper understanding of the context.

The qualitative research method used in this study, which is an interpretive research method in which the researcher has direct contact with the participants. The qualitative method is a method for determining the meaning and perspectives that individuals or groups attribute to human or social problems.

In contrast, qualitative research aims at understanding the knowledge that people have constructed and how they make sense of the world and their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Braun and Clarke (2013) described the qualitative approach as seeing that reality and meaning is subjective. According to Stacks (2011), the approach illustrates a specific issue and delivers an in-depth understanding of that issue. Therefore, qualitative research can assist in

comprehensively describing complex problems and discovering local and personal meanings and intentions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Stacks (2011) recommended qualitative research as suitable for a detailed analysis of how organizations react to a specific public relations issue. However, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argued that these findings might not be general and were impractical for predictions. They also stated that qualitative research methods were time-consuming and prone to researcher bias.

Neuendorf (2002) defines content analysis as a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented. The quantitative section of the analysis dealt with frequencies as well as descriptive and inferential figures of organization's Facebook page Posts. On the other hand, Krippendorff (2004) views qualitative content analysis as more “interpretive”, paying close attention to comparatively small chunks of texts. Qualitative content analysis is used to aid the identification of themes and patterns in the organization's Facebook Posts, and make meaning as well as inferences from the quantitative section.

Content analysis provides the versatility and structure to identify thematic patterns and explore relationships between variables through inferential statistics. Hence, content analysis is deemed most suitable in investigating how organization uses Facebook as a public relations tool.

### **3.3 Methods for Data Collection**

Primary and secondary data are used as sources of data in this study. Primary data is closely related to the method and techniques of data collection. In this study, primary data was collected in qualitative in-depth interviews with public relation practitioners of Ethio Telecom and in quantitative content analysis in Ethio Telecom Facebook page posts.

Secondary data is the data that is collected by someone else for a different purpose. When gathering secondary data, every source of information used must be identified in the paper. In this research, secondary data is collected from books, journals, online magazines, and research works on the role of social media in public relations practice.

### **3.3.1 In-depth interview**

In-depth interview is an important qualitative research method in which the researcher collects data directly from the participants. Interviews are significant in unfolding opinions, experiences, values, and various other aspects of the population under study. An in-depth interview involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation. Gorry and Westbrook (2009) state that interviews are the most widely employed method in qualitative research because it allows a thorough examination of experiences, feelings, or opinions.

An in-depth interview is also used as a research method. An in-depth interview is necessary to get information on how Ethio Telecom practitioners use Facebook in their organizations. The choice of qualitative interview for this research provides a unique research opportunity to get to the root of the issue being investigated. The interviews allowed respondents to openly discuss their opinions, choices, and motivations, which made an in-depth interview the most appropriate method for this study.

A drawback of in-depth interviews is also present. The drawbacks include the possibility of prejudice; the time required for analysis; the risk of recall inaccuracy; the possibility of selective perceptions; and the fact that individuals don't always say or do what they mean (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

The format of an interview is determined by its goals or objectives. On the basis of different methods of extracting information, interviews may be broadly categorized into three categories: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. If the interviewer has a list of areas or topics instead of specific questions, it becomes a semi-structured interview. In the same way, if an interviewer follows a list of predetermined questions, the interview becomes structured. There is no fixed sequence to be followed in this type of interview. The questions are asked about a specific area, and as the conversation develops, different questions keep coming. Unstructured interviews, on the other hand, are more like a casual conversation. There is no specific set of predetermined questions. If the interviewer doesn't follow the list of specific questions prepared

for the interview, a structured interview may turn into a semi-structured or unstructured interview.

Accordingly, a semi-structured in-depth interview was used as a main tool to gather data from key informants regarding their understanding and experience of Facebook's role in public relations activities.

### **3.3.2 Content Analysis**

This study also adopted content analysis as a research method, and employed quantitative techniques such as frequencies and descriptive statistics. Neuendorf (2002) defines content analysis as “a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented”. The quantitative section of the analysis dealt with frequencies as well as descriptive and inferential figures of companies’ Facebook homepages and Posts. On the other hand, Krippendorff (2004) views qualitative content analysis as more “interpretive”, paying close attention to comparatively small chunks of texts. Qualitative content analysis is used to aid the identification of themes and patterns in the organization Facebook Posts, and make meaning as well as inferences from the quantitative section.

Content analysis is used in this study as a research method for one primary reason. Content analysis provides the versatility and structure to identify thematic patterns and explore relationships between variables through inferential statistics. Hence, content analysis is deemed most suitable in investigating how companies use Facebook as a public relations tool.

Accordingly, this study has employed a content analysis data collection method in order to understand how Ethio Telecom used the Facebook page to perform public relations practices. In this regard, relevant Facebook posts of the corporation are investigated in order to answer the "why?" and "what?" questions that has arisen about them. The question about what the posts are saying and why is addressed with the content analysis method. Hence, content analysis is deemed most suitable for investigating how organizations use Facebook in public relations activities.

### **3.4 Sampling Technique**

A convenience sampling procedure is employed. The samples are chosen on the assumption that they are the individuals in charge of the organization's social media communication activities, as well as members of the corporation's communication division. In this regard, individuals on a managerial level whose tasks are related to social media are contacted by the researcher first to make an appointment for interview and discuss the appropriate date and time. After making a schedule, the researcher interviewed the respondents one at a time, taking twenty minutes on average per single interview.

Purposive sampling technique also used for content analysis. This is deemed the most suitable technique because of the study's exploratory nature. The sample is taken from Ethio Telecom activity in the year 2022. The organization's Facebook Posts chosen were between 1st January, 2022 and 31st May, 2022, that is, the first five months of the year 2022. The posts under study were chosen as these were easily available on the Facebook page.

### **3.5 Determination of Sample Size**

According to Etikan et al. (2016), researchers use convenience sampling by choosing participants according to practical criteria such as accessibility, availability or local proximity. They believed this convenience sampling to be appropriate if the findings were not intended to be generalized and if a research project faces constrained resources. As qualitative research does not aim to provide generalize data, and the scope of this study was limited to Ethio Telecom public relations practitioners, generalizations for the entire population and other countries were not intended.

However, Boyce and Neale (2006) argued that conducting in-depth interviews and transcribing and analyzing the findings were time-consuming, which posed a challenge for this research timeframe. Therefore, the sample size was limited to ten practitioners. This number was considered enough to validate and discover patterns across the data as proposed by Terry et al. (2017).

A sample is a subset of a population, either individuals or objects, that represents the population (Smith, 2017). In the context of this research, the content analysis of the population consisted of the Ethio Telecom Facebook page posts. The sample comprised of 316 posts that posted between 1st January, 2022 and 31st May, 2022.

A purposive sampling method was used to select the posts under study. Researchers use this non-random sampling technique by selecting participants or messages due to characteristics such as knowledge, experience or availability (Etikan et al., 2016; Stacks, 2011). The posts under study were chosen as these were easily available on the Ethio Telecom Facebook page.

### **3.6 Methods of Data Processing and Analysis**

#### **3.6.1 Data processing and Analysis of In-depth Interviews**

In order to analyze and interpret the qualitative data that is gathered using in-depth interview and document analysis data collection methods, qualitative data analysis software named ATLAS TI is used.

ATLAS TI to analyze literally means to take apart words, sentences, and paragraphs, which are an important act in the research project to make sense of, interpret, and theorize such data. This is done by organizing, reducing, and describing the data. In this regard, he maintains that an analysis ought to be rigorous, systematic, disciplined, and carefully methodologically documented. Related to this, the researcher worked with a large amount of unstructured textual data—namely interview data—which was described as having serious data management problems which could not easily be solved by the use of standard database systems. Although such programs can be used to fulfill one of the central tasks of qualitative data management – the retrieval of relevant segments of text – they nevertheless impose serious limitations. They require that text segments and coding schemes be defined before the data is entered, which contravenes the inductive categorization strategy preferred by most qualitative researchers.

Accordingly, the data gathered through in-depth interviews and qualitative content analysis data collection techniques is transcribed. A total of two hundred minutes of interviews are transcribed

into the software and coded. On the first stage of coding, similar related topics are merged and grouped to form a bigger category on the one hand, and topics irrelevant to the study are eliminated on the second stage. At this stage, the data is analyzed in such a way that they can generate themes that address the general and specific objectives of the study.

The themes are generated, which are mainly focused on answering the research questions of this study. In this regard, thematic data analysis is employed to analyze the data qualitatively.

### **3.6.2 Data processing and analysis of content of Facebook page posts**

Data gathering for this study took place on June, 2022. The tool used in gathering the data for this research is the Microsoft Snipper Tool. Microsoft Snipper Tool is software with options which allow screenshots to be captured from any part of the computer screen. With the Microsoft Snipper Tool, screenshots were cropped or cut out from the Facebook Pages of the organization under study. Screenshots were copied and pasted on the corresponding coding form with an appropriate serial code to make data traceable to coding forms.

Facebook Posts made by the organization under study appear on their Facebook Pages. Individual Posts could include texts, videos, images and hyperlinks. However, for the purpose of this study, attention was only given to text items (in the actual Post and in images) as well as images within Posts. Videos and hyperlinks were excluded as they would have prolonged the time for the study – a luxury that could not be afforded. One these three categories of companies' key publics: (a) current customers, (b) prospective customers and (c) the general society was chosen depending on whether a Post aligned closely with either of the categories. Posts aimed at current customers mentioned customers directly or provided information related to the current users of the company's services. Posts directed at prospective customers were promotional in nature, attempting to make the company and its services more desirable. Posts aimed at the general society were universal in nature, and did not specifically mention the company's customers or prospective customers.

### **3.7 Reliability, Validity and Trustworthiness**

Before conducting interviews, the researcher did a comprehensive literature review and concentrated on the content of Facebook pages, ensuring a long-term engagement and acquisition of deep knowledge about the adoption of Facebook in Ethio Telecom public relations. To ensure honest answers, participants were offered the possibility of refusing to take part or to answer questions (Shenton, 2004).

Liamputtong (2012) recommended triangulation by using various data sources as the most powerful means for strengthening credibility in qualitative research. This research used methodological and data triangulation by combining the thematic analysis of interview data with analysis of content of Facebook page to corroborate the findings. The provision of a thick description of the study's process, participants and the settings added to the study's trustworthiness (Daymon & Holloway, 2010).

As proposed by Shenton (2004), credibility was advanced by constant peer reviews in the form of regular meetings with the researcher's advisor, who continuously provided feedback on the researcher's findings and analysis.

According to Daymon and Holloway (2010), confirmability is achieved through triangulation and the reflexivity of the researcher. Scholars consider reflexivity to be an integral means of ensuring a high quality of qualitative research as it might be influenced by the researchers' personal beliefs, experience and history. Therefore, the researcher continuously reflected on his position and role as a researcher during this study. He positioned himself close to the interviewed public relations practitioners as he has eight years working experience in the field of public relations and Journalism in Ethiopia.

Daymon and Holloway (2010) argued that fairness, the use of appropriate strategies and the facilitation of knowledge among participants and comparable groups make qualitative research authentic. This research promoted the understanding of participants on the role of Facebook as a communication tool in Ethio Telecom by providing a comprehensive description.

Stability, reproducibility and accuracy are needed to establish the reliability of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019; Weber, 1990). According to Weber (1990), stability is achieved when one coder codes the data under study more than once. The researcher repeated coding two weeks after the first coding process to provide this intra-coder stability. The researcher did not find any deviations in coding and determined there was consistency across the dataset.

Weber (1990) argued that accuracy could be achieved by following a standard coding procedure. However, he also stated that these were seldom established for texts and could be therefore neglected. Hence, these procedures were disregarded in this research.

Weber (1990) proposed that external validity, which involved contrasting the findings of the content analysis with external criteria, is a strong method to achieve validity. Concurrent validity, for instance, can be achieved when two different research methods yield the same results. This was confirmed by Jick (1979), who proposed that the use of multiple research methods would cross-validate the obtained data. This research used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, and mutual validity was achieved as quantified interview data confirmed the content analysis data.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

All ethical principles including anonymity, confidentiality and participants consent have been considered before starting the research. All selected participants for the interviews must have been assured that their confidentiality has to be given top priority. They were all informed that their confidentiality could be maintained by keeping their names and quotes anonymous and storing all data they provided in a secure and confidential environment during the study and destroyed later. There were no anticipated risks to the participants as no physical efforts or hazards were involved.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the thematic analysis of the conducted in-depth interviews with public relations practitioners and the results of the content analysis and uses figures, including percentages and trends, to illustrate the obtained numerical findings.

This study has different specific objectives, which are derived from the main objective of the study. These objectives are focused on the role of Facebook as public relations tool in Ethio Telecom; to examine the role of the Ethio Telecom Facebook page in relationships and information communication between the organization and its public; Examining the opportunities and challenges of using Facebook as a corporate communication tool, and investigating the existing practices of Ethio Telecom's Facebook page as a communication tool.

#### **4.2 Data presentation and Analysis**

##### **4.2.1 Data from interview**

All participants worked as public relations practitioners and leaders in the organization's communication division. Five of the interviewees had more than 10 years of working experience in public relations. Also five had worked in public relations for three to eight years. Most of the interviewees had public relations or communications qualifications. Five of the interviewees held a Bachelor of Journalism and Communication Studies; four held a Master of Communication Studies; and one held a Diploma in Journalism.

This thesis adopted the method of presenting interview participants by referring to them as interviewees A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H,and I to protected the privacy of the participants.

#### **4.2.1.1 Facebook as a communication tool on Ethio Telecom**

As it is clearly stated on the official web site of Ethio Telecom(2022), the company has a mission to connect Ethiopia through state-of-the-art telecom services; provide high quality, innovative, and affordable telecom products and services that enhance the development of the nation and ensure high customer satisfaction; build a reputable brand known for its customers' consideration; build its managerial capability and manpower talent that enables Ethio Telecom to operate at an international level; and support community and environmental development. The corporation stated its vision as "to be a world-class telecom service provider." While the values of the corporation are customer-centric, excellence, accountability, impartiality, and sharing,

The corporation's strategy is vested with best customer experience, reputable brand, innovative products/services, and technology excellence; developing a people-oriented learning organization; growth in financial capacity; and excellence in operation ; ensuring participation of the public by disseminating, using website and other means, information about the activities of the organization and using different tools of promotion.

Keeping this in mind, questions such as, "What is their understanding regarding the corporation's use of Facebook as a platform for organizational communication?" were posed to respondents following some preliminary questions focusing on whether they are familiar with Facebook and how much the organization uses Facebook for organizational purposes.

*At Ethio Telecom, social media is managed independently at the manager level.*

*Ethio Telecom uses Facebook as a media outlet. It pays just as much attention to the traditional, and sometimes even more, than the traditional media. (Interviewee A)*

All media types were viewed as necessary by interview participants for the success of communication efforts. Instead, the organization used integrated communication methods to reach the audience through a variety of touch points by combining traditional and social media. Consequently, it may be inferred that despite their rising popularity, social media still does not fully displace traditional media as an organizational communication channel.

*I always believe a combination is preferable. Because the customer sees the same message across numerous platforms when you have, as we like to say, a layered campaign with many touch points. And I believe repetition has a lot of power (Interviewee D)*

According to the responders, a component of the standards and strategy clearly outlines why the organization uses Facebook. Due to its widespread use, the organization uses Facebook as a major social media channel. They all concurred that they utilize Facebook more frequently now than they did in the past. Facebook was characterized by the respondents as a frequent and widespread communication tool.

*There is a specific strategy regarding the use of social media and it is clearly stated that we do this and we do not do that on social media. Any information that should reach the public will be disseminated. It also has a goal to achieve success on Facebook. For instance, how many followers and posts you have on the page at the end of the year are stated in the strategy". (Interviewee C)*

All the respondents are familiar with Facebook and all of them answered that Ethio Telecom is one of the organizations in Ethiopia that used Facebook actively. The organization used Facebook as one of their media outlets. The respondents explained that they used the most popular social media, Facebook, as a communication tool by public relations practitioners. Looking into the activity of the organization on social media, one can notice differences in the choice of the organization's communication channels with the environment in comparison with the channels chosen.

*To enhance and encourage discussions between an organization and its stakeholders, it is critical and required to communicate organization messages and issues through Facebook. Because these platforms have altered the way businesses and people communicate, anyone can have a voice and participate in this new digital society through Facebook. (Interviewee A)*

The respondents reflect that if an organization decides to open a Facebook page, it is expected that the organization should actively engage and contribute to the conversations. As an organization, it understands the powerful role that Facebook has for internal and external communications.

*Customers are currently using Facebook more frequently and are spending more time online. Facebook enables businesses to communicate with a far larger audience and much more frequently than they could do with traditional media. (Interviewee D)*

All interviewees mentioned the most frequently when asked which other social media platforms, compared to Facebook, had the greatest impact on the organization's public relations. The majority of those respondents agreed that Facebook was the most widely used social media network.

*I think Facebook has kind of hit a plateau and it is at a scale now where we can't ignore it. (Interviewee C)*

The respondents believed that social media had influenced public relations, although Facebook has since taken over as the most popular social networking platform. The majority of interviewees in public relations used the well-known social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Facebook was the most popular social media site at the time.

*Facebook is the most important social media channel because it's the one everyone tends to use. And it's populous in public. (Interviewee F)*

In general, Ethio Telecom mainly used Facebook pages as a platform for communication channels. They are widely used Facebook for communication tools.

#### **4.2.1.2 Justification for choosing Facebook as organizational communication**

Most of the respondents agree these days; Facebook has become a popular trend among most of the people in the world. Social media has rendered traditional media obsolete. The emergence of the new media has enabled society to access every piece of information he/she needs at the tip of

their finger. Unlike in the previous times in which the third party, electronic or print media, including television, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, brochures, etc., for communication with the public, with the emergence of social media, organizations are also enabled to reach out their public in a simplistic manner by posting texts, pictures, or videos and directly communicating with them without gate keepers.

The respondents described that since Ethio Telecom uses Facebook as a communication tool has too many advantages, including the ability to quickly and easily contact the vast majority of the population, it is advantageous. The respondents stated that not using Facebook these days would be detrimental to an organization and that doing so would be essential to achieving the intended goals. One reason why the organization decided to use Facebook as a communication tool might be attributed to its popularity.

Most of the respondents said that the quick and simple way of delivering information best describes the current information trend. The conventional method of disseminating information through print and electronic media takes a lot of time, requires a large task force, and is expensive. The information must go through numerous manufacturing steps before it is made available to the general audience

*In the past, if you sent a press release to the traditional media, they might not have accepted you, but today, when we post on our Facebook page without sending a press release, the traditional media will quote the news and report it. (Interviewee, G)*

According to the respondents, Facebook is a good way to communicate with their customers. They use Facebook pages as a communication tool and a medium to increase their customers' awareness of new and existing products as well as their achievements. This motivated the organization to acquire Facebook pages so they could meet with their target audience.

*As an asset in hand for Ethio Telecom, the Internet has simply become a great communication tool. We reached the targeted customers easily. People nowadays, especially young people, focus on Facebook. Our targeted customers are largely the young population, which is why we have a Facebook page. (Interviewee A)*

According to respondents, it's widely known Facebook is a very popular and powerful way of socializing with people and it's used widely in our country as well as there are an estimated millions Facebook users in Ethiopia.

*New technologies in communication the game has changed thanks to Facebook in every aspect of relationship management and strategic communication. Ethiopian telecom is the one that is most commonly utilized as a result of Ethiopian telecom. In modern public relations, following the trend is the best course of action. (Interviewee E)*

The respondents described as the majority of the population in Ethiopia is young, this is the main way to make it accessible, as this younger segment tends to use Facebook. In particular, the Internet is accessible to the younger generation. Ethio Telecom services are bringing products and services to the youth on a large scale.

#### **4.2.1.3 Contents types of organization Facebook page**

All respondents agreed that Ethio Telecom official page addressed the organization's every activity. It uses pictures, videos, and text posts. Respondents said they use it to disseminate organizational information. In addition, they responded that it helps to inform and educate the public and create awareness regarding their organization's products and services.

*Ethio Telecom provides adequate information about products and services on its Facebook page. Ethio Telecom is constantly offering new and different services to its customers. In this way, we will provide customers with general information on the service through Facebook. (Interviewee H)*

The respondents reflected organizational policies and strategies, procedures, services, products, pieces of training given by the organization, awareness creations, events, and other organization activities that are allowed to be publicized are carried out by using Facebook.

*We posted information about our achievements, like some awards that we won, on our Facebook page, and we received congratulatory messages from our customers. (Interviewee D)*

Although the organization is vested with the power to ensure the participation of the public by disseminating information by whatever tools of communication and despite the fact that Facebook is a favorable platform to engage the public, the Ethio Telecom's appearance on Facebook is much more to deliver news and is minimal in encouraging participation.

According to interviewee participants the majority of the posts on Facebook are focused on the activities of the organization. Most of the Facebook posts by the organization are commercial regarding the products and services of information.

*The Ethio Telecom has a lot of responsibilities and provides different telecommunication services for the public. If we have a service launching program, we have lots of coverage in our Facebook page. (Interviewee F)*

The Interviewee participants reported that the organization also uses Facebook to counter fake news. In this regard, the organization monitors the social media and if any fake news is found that needs to be addressed; an immediate response will be given so that the false information is neutralized before creating any danger in the relationship between the organization and the public. To combat such false information, the organization monitors social media and addresses the public with factual information.

Also the respondents reflected that the organization uses its Facebook page to clear up any murky issues. It provides information about the crimes committed by individuals in the telecom sector. If there is confusion regarding new services, information will be released on the Facebook page.

*It provides up-to-date information to the public regarding the blurring of services and products. For example, from time to time, there may be crimes related to telecom fraud. We will release information on how people should be careful.(Interviewee H)*

According to Ethio Telecom Facebook page (2022) Starting from January 1 to July 31, 2022, three hundred eighty-six posts were made by the organization on its official Facebook page. On some days, up to five Facebook posts are made per day, and more than two posts are shared on average. Most of the posts content is focused on marketing promotion, which is information about products and services of the organization. Some of the posts are the activities of the organization that are related to events. Also, the congratulatory message and the response to fake information also have coverage on the Facebook page of Ethio Telecom.





pictures posted in Ethio Telecom official Facebook Page

All practitioners reported that they measured the outcomes of their Facebook activities against their objectives. However, these were quantitative, such as in the form of reach, the number of followers or comments and click-through rates. None mentioned a qualitative analysis of Facebook conversations.

In general, Ethio Telecom mainly uses Facebook for information about its products and services. among other things, like countering fake news, delivering news regarding what the organization’s doing and nothing else in using the platform to communicate with its public and enhance its internal communication activities. Some of the staff, in relation to the position they have, receive feedback and inquire occasionally. Sometimes up to five posts are made per day, but the average is two posts per day.

**4.2.1.4 Stakeholder engagement on Ethio Telecom Facebook page**

The researcher asked the respondents to what extent do the PR practitioners, stakeholders, and different publics of Ethio Telecom in different places participate on the Facebook page? The Interviewee participants believed that Ethio Telecom tried its effort to engage the public's by Facebook page.

According to participants, Ethio Telecom addressed the feedback in two ways : those who do media monitoring and those who give feedback.

*Media monitoring collects comments and information about Ethio Telecom on Facebook and other media. This will be answered by gathering the opinions and analyzing them. There is a section called "Media Monitoring" that collects this. The second job is to give feedback on the questions and comments given under the posted posts. This is becoming a resource for us to improve the services we need to improve.*  
*(Interviewee E)*

The respondents described that Posts directed at current customers mentioned customers directly or provided information relating or useful to current users of the organization's services. Posts directed at prospective customers were promotional in nature, aimed at making its services more desirable. Posts meant for the general society were universal in nature, encompassing both current and prospective customers. Such Posts did not specifically mention current or prospective customers of the organization but rather sought to address the mass public.

Practitioners were also questioned about whether they used Facebook to communicate with their audiences in a symmetrical two-way or to transmit organizational information. Most respondents said they used Facebook for both of those things. Sometimes it serves more as a platform for advertising; other times, we develop strategies for reciprocal interaction and long-term relationship development.

Giveaways and competitions were mentioned by interview participants as techniques for interacting with Facebook users. On the surface, these statistics could suggest that users of Facebook are increasingly using it in a symmetrical two-way fashion. This assumption might be challenged by the fact that many practitioners emphasized Facebook's value as a direct broadcasting route. Additionally, contests and giveaways fail to meet the criteria for two-way symmetrical communication, which includes respecting opposing viewpoints and empowering the community.

According to participants the organization mostly used Facebook for promotional objectives, which may have been more one-way than conversational. One explanation could be that the practitioners preferred single, controlled interactions than several, ongoing conversations. Even more interviewees claimed that achieving social media involvement was challenging.

Some of them stated that the organization solely used a two-way symmetrical approach. However, most practitioners said that the organization tried to raise the interest of the public by providing compelling content of interest to them. They used this as a basis to start a conversation with the public.

*We aim to engage diverse audiences by sharing timely, relevant content on a regular basis and asking viewers to comment, share, or tag a friend, we hope to engage audiences. (Interviewee E)*

However, some participants acknowledged that it was difficult to engage on their trend of using Facebook.

*In an ideal world, it would be about having a conversation, but in actuality, you're lucky to even start one. Many individuals comment or offer feedback, but few actually want to engage in conversation. (Interviewee H)*

Some of the respondents stated that the public would give feedback on Facebook content via interpersonal communication rather than commenting on social media posts.

*Some of the people who follow us don't want their "likes" or comments to be displayed. However, they always mention that they noticed something and have a question or comment when we communicate with them via email or in person. The sentiments "I adore what you're doing" and "I love that post" are often used interchangeably. It has demonstrated to us that, for the time being, our social media is read and viewed. However, we won't always receive immediate feedback on our platforms. Nevertheless, we are aware that it is being digested, much like someone on the radio who wonders whether anyone is listening. And you don't realize they are watching, reading, or*

*listening until you see them outside of the "office" or on another platform. (Interviewee A)*

The Facebook sites of the groups made it very simple for them to communicate with their target audiences in terms of how interactive they were. The in-depth interview revealed that these organizations often receive an average of two posts per day regarding their products and services from their Facebook page. The organizations' public relations practitioner asserted that people from the digital marketing section were charged with managing their Facebook accounts to increase participation. Additionally, they stated that their existing and future plans will take user feedback into account.

*On our Facebook page, comments are helpful when making decisions. It reveals the client's issues, some of which are incorporated into the FAQs on our page. (Interviewee D)*

Most interview participants reported that they used Facebook for disseminating organizational information as well as for two-way communication. Some of the participants even stated that they used social media only in a two-way symmetrical manner. This data must be interpreted with caution as the practitioners' perceptions of Facebook use might differ from the actual use. The contents of the posts on the Facebook page show that although practitioners claimed to use Facebook to engage the public, Facebook was actually used for promotional purposes.

**Ethio telecom** Feb 26

ውድ ደንበኞቻችን  
ከወዲሁ እንኳን ለ126ኛው የዓድዋ ድል መታሰቢያ በአል አደረሳችሁ፤  
አደረሰን እያልን በዓሉን በማስመልከት በማህበራዊ የትሰሰር ገጻችን  
የምትሳተፉበት እስከ 10 ሺህ ብር ድረስ ሽልማት ይኖረናል  
በማህበራዊ የትሰሰር ገጻችን ከየካቲት 22-24 አብረውን ይቆዩ፤ ይሳተፉ፤  
ይሸለሙ!  
መልካም የበዓል መዳረሻ!

**እንኳን ለ126ኛው የዓድዋ ድል በዓል አደረሳችሁ!**

እስከ 10ሺህ ብር የሚያሸልም ልዩ የዓድዋ የማህበራዊ ሚዲያ ወደድር

በኢትዮ ቴሌኮም እና በቴሌብር የማህበራዊ የሚዲያ ገጻችን ከየካቲት 22-24/2014 ይከታተሉን

**የድል አብላሪ የ128 ዓመታት ባለዘና ነን!**

**ተጎቅሎ ሃገር እና ህዝብ በማገልገላችን ከራት ይሰማናል!**

Shegaw Shegaw and 5.3K others

5K 1K 206

**Ethio telecom** Mar 1

ውድ ቤተሰቦቻችን  
የአድዋ ድል መታሰቢያ የማህበራዊ ሚዲያ ውድድር ሁለተኛ ዙር እነሆ!  
በዚህ ዙር የአድዋ ድል ክብረ በዓል ላይ የተነሳችሁትን አራፍ አራፍ ፎቶዎች  
በኢንስታግራም ገፃችሁ ላይ **#Ethiotelecom** ወይም **#telebirr**  
በመጠቀም ያጋሩ! በብዙዎች የተወደደ ምርጫ ፎቶ እንሸልማለን።  
መልካም ዕድል!

**ልዩ የዓድዋ የማህበራዊ ሚዲያ ተጎቅሎ ወደድር**

**ፎቶ ያጋሩ 10 ሺህ ብር ይሸለሙ**

በዓል እያከበሩ የተነሳቸውን ፎቶዎች በኢንስታግራም ገጽዎ ላይ **#ethiotelecom** ወይም **#telebirr** በማድረግ ለወዳጆቻችን ያጋሩ

**በብዙዎች የተወደደ ፎቶ ያሸልማል**

በአስተያየት መስጫው ላይ የሰፈሩት ደንብ እና ሁኔታዎች ተፈጻሚ ይሆናሉ

Selemon Zemene and 1.5K others

1K 1K 63

**Ethio telecom** Feb 19

ብሔራዊ ኩራታችን የሆነው የኢትዮጵያ **#ህዳሴግድብ** ኃይል ማመንጨት በመጀመሩ መላው ኢትዮጵያውያን እንኳን ደስ አላችሁ! እንኳን ደስ አለን!

A monumental milestone & historic achievement for Ethiopia & Ethiopians!  
**#Ethiopian Renaissance Dam #GERD** commenced generating electricity.... See more

የካቲት 13/2014 ዓ.ም



**እንኳን ደስ አላችሁ! እንኳን ደስ አለን!**  
**Congratulations to all Ethiopians!**

1.6K

1K 131 80

**Ethio telecom** Jan 28

የእናንተን የውድ ደንበኞቻችንን እርካታ ለማረጋገጥ ሁሉም ከዘመኑ ጋር አብረን እየተራመድን ምርጫ ምርጡን ለእናንተ እያቀረብን በጥንካሬ አብረናችሁ ወደፊት!

ጥር 21 ቀን 2014 ዓ.ም

**ተሞክሮዎን ያጋሩን**

በቅርቡ አገልግሎት ላይ ያዋልናቸው አዳዲስ አገልግሎቶቻችን እንዴት ናቸው? እስኪ አስተያየቶቻችሁን አጋሩን

Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Telegram, YouTube, TikTok

Eyob Gmariam and 1.7K others

1K 1K 32

Pictures posted in Ethio Telecom official Facebook Page

#### **4.2.1.5 Opportunities and challenges of using Facebook as an organizational communication tool**

Ethio Telecom has been engaged in Facebook officially to communicate with the public. While engaging, it is obvious that one can find opportunities to exploit the potential of Facebook and face challenges that hinder one's activity. So what are the opportunities and challenges for using Facebook as an organization's public relations practice?

#### **Opportunity**

As stated earlier, the communication division, specifically the digital marketing section, of the organization is the responsible organ for administering the social media activities. The communication division is well equipped with materials that are important to accomplish tasks on social media. There is access to the internet, a camera, computers, and professionals to do work on the materials. The staff is trained professionals whose education and experience is related to the communication sector. The majority of them have a background in journalism, which puts them in a good position to handle social media communication tasks.

The respondents stated that the number of followers on the Facebook page is increasing day by day. This creates an opportunity to provide organizational communication activities in a better way.

*The popularity of Facebook among society is also another asset for the organization to exploit its potential and reach a wide range of the public in a simple and quick manner. Patients valued Facebook as an awesome way of spreading good news.  
(Interviewee H)*

Most of the interviewees considered Facebook to be quick and a cost-effective communication tool.

*Definitely, the benefits are around being able to spread your message quicker and louder. We, like Ethio Telecom, use the internet for free. There is a chance that this in itself will cause you to use the internet resource indefinitely. (Interviewee D)*

The respondents believed that Facebook was used not only as a simple channel to disseminate but also to gather information. Some interviewees stated that they used Facebook as a listening and information-gathering tool before communicating with the public.

*You start by listening, so you can get a sense of where your audience and consumers are at. And then you can engage directly with your audience. (Interviewee I)*

According to the participants, the Facebook platform is one of the sources of information for conventional media. When the organization releases a press release immediately, the conventional media used for news purposes is considered with news value.

*The conventional media uses our Facebook page as a news source. This makes it easily accessible to the media without the need to send any press releases. (Interviewee E)*

The majority of them valued Facebook as a direct channel for connecting with their audiences. However, it was claimed that using them successfully requires a professional approach.

*The number of people using Facebook is increasing in Ethiopia. Young people, in particular, use this social media platform extensively. This is important for our organization to reach the target audience. Overall, from a communications and PR perspective, I think Facebook is great. It has a lot of benefits, but it's just the challenges of how you manage it, which is the key part. (Interviewee A)*

According to respondents, the internet access is expanding in Ethiopia. Ethio Telecom has launched new services on 4G in many cities. 5G has started in limited areas in Addis Ababa. This expansion will make Facebook and other social media users very happy.

In general, the presence of Facebook as a platform to disseminate information to the target audience and the opportunity to gather information easily from different pages created by various stakeholders and organizations and in a fast way compared to other means Without the advent of social media, it would be impossible to communicate with everyone. Facebook has made it simple for organizations and institutions to target specific audiences in order to achieve their desired goal(s). Without this technology, discussing the simultaneous reach of multiple audiences in diverse locations may be challenging.

## **Challenge**

Despite the fact that most practitioners had positive opinions about Facebook, they emphasized that there were a number of issues to take into account. However, respondents disagreed with the claim that using Facebook was "cheap," saying that it took a lot of time.

*The drawback is time; managing Facebook takes a lot of time, especially when things go wrong. (Interviewee I)*

The participants addressed the issue that arises from the fact that Facebook and other social media platforms are accessible to all people without regard to their level of education, skill, or other attributes. Because of this, information that has not been validated by the appropriate authority or individual is more likely to be spread on Facebook. As a result, it is more likely to believe fake information. Anyone can reveal any piece of information for any reason at any time without thinking about the repercussions. Although this is open to all characteristics of Facebook benefits in promoting the notions of freedom of expression and access to information when it is abused, it also brings danger to individuals and organizations.

*A lot of fake information is released in a way that Facebook doesn't seem to control. They are not responsible. Sometimes fake information is released by pretending to be Ethio Telecom information. This is challenging our public relations practice. (Interviewee I)*

The participants considered unlike the traditional media, which requires tangible evidence and cross-checking, Facebook lacks a filtering mechanism which can separate fake news from real. Besides this, the level of awareness of people is also another thing to be questioned in relation to fake information on Facebook.

The respondents explained that fake Facebook pages related to Ethio Telecom increase from time to time. Information and news about Ethio Telecom scams will be released on this platform. Therefore, in such a condition, the organization's image and reputation tarnish.

*There are so many fake accounts and pages on Facebook. Someone with a fake account may post false information, even with a real-seeming image made with Photoshop, which can simply deceive the person who reads it. Because Facebook is a new trend for the majority of Ethiopians, and because it is expanding at an incredible rate to reach more and more people these days, the majority of users have a limited understanding of how to cross-check and verify the information shared on social media. Most of the time, such fake information goes viral and reaches too many people in a matter of a few minutes because many users take it for granted without questioning and share it as if it were true. (Interviewee B)*

Ethiopian Telecom is not an exception when it comes to handling false material alongside its Facebook activity. There is a component to keep an eye on false information that could harm the organization's reputation and make people leery of everything, and to address the public about it.

The respondents reflected that the other challenge is hate speech and negative comments under the posts made by the organization.

*Under posts made by the organization, some people leave uninteresting and, occasionally, even insulting comments. The organization responds to comments from those who request feedback for further details. (Interviewee F)*

*I think Facebook is alienating some genius users due to the volume of fake news. I think some people are turning to social media like Twitter and Telegram for this*

*reason, seeing it as a status or class. Although there are many users on Facebook and many followers of our page, there is a fear that it may decrease in the future. (Interviewee A)*

A constant commitment, quick response times, as well as social media skills were defined as necessities when communicating on social media. Only a few practitioners described Facebook as easy to use.

*It is important that you don't start in a flurry and then stop. It needs to be something that is incremental that you commit to over a period of time. So, I guess that is really a challenge for people just in terms of resources, coming up with content that is going to be engaging. When dealing with situations, you must be able to answer rather rapidly and frequently without having complete knowledge and may have a view on something that is incomplete. Previously, you had time to consider your remarks, be cautious, and likely obtain more information. (Interviewee C)*

Other issues raised included the inability to have sophisticated conversations and the actualization of communication through the use of simpler, more colloquial language.

*Given the condensed nature of Facebook platforms, you must be quite direct and succinct when explaining something. Doing that is frequently exceedingly difficult. So, doing that requires a great deal of talent. (Interviewee F)*

Some participants stated that Facebook assisted them in being more responsive and transparent, which enabled them to build trust among the public. In contrast, few practitioners stressed that Facebook posed a significant risk to organizations that did not apply them properly.

*The drawback is that organizations are in really bad positions because they aren't ready and don't want to tell their tale. Since it's so widely known, they nevertheless receive the same amount of attention—if not more—than they had before. As a result, they lose credibility as a brand if they don't interact. They are perceived as nameless companies. People ultimately place their trust where their money is. (Interviewee E)*

Some interviewees asserted that echo chambers and entrenched opinions were generated by social media, both of which might severely obstruct dialogue. Practitioner burnout may result from the abundance of information and ongoing dedication.

*Sorting through the vast amount of information and determining what is reliable and what is not can be challenging. But there are also risks associated with echo chambers, just like with algorithms and the like. So, that is a huge concern.*  
(Interviewee B)

Some respondents also thought that abusive behavior on Facebook platforms and citizen journalism complicated the organizations' communications.

*People are telling bad things, although they clearly have no clue. And that is Facebook.* (Interviewee A)

The other challenges the respondents raised were language limitations and the high cost of devices such as mobiles and computers, as well as the internet fee, which have kept the number of users from increasing.

Concerns regarding the legitimacy of Facebook are raised by the majority of those interviewed. Due to the platforms of Facebook giving anybody the opportunity to broadcast information anyway they want, it lacks accuracy and is difficult to be credible, which makes it difficult for consumers to choose the truth. Because most of the material is unverified, the biggest drawback might be stated to be that it lacks credibility and is inaccurate.

#### **4.2.2 Data from content analysis**

Quantitative content analysis included the frequency of the organization's Facebook Posts, Intended Public of Facebook Posts, and One-way versus Two-way Communication were analyzed.

**Table 1: Frequency of Posts**

Months	Post	Average per day
January	57	1.9
February	45	1.5
March	63	2.1
April	86	2.8
May	65	2.1
Total	316	2.10

Table 1 shows that 316 Posts were analyzed overall. Out of this number, the organization posts on its Facebook pages more than 2 posts per day.

### **Intended Public**

**Figure 1: Intended Public of Facebook Posts**

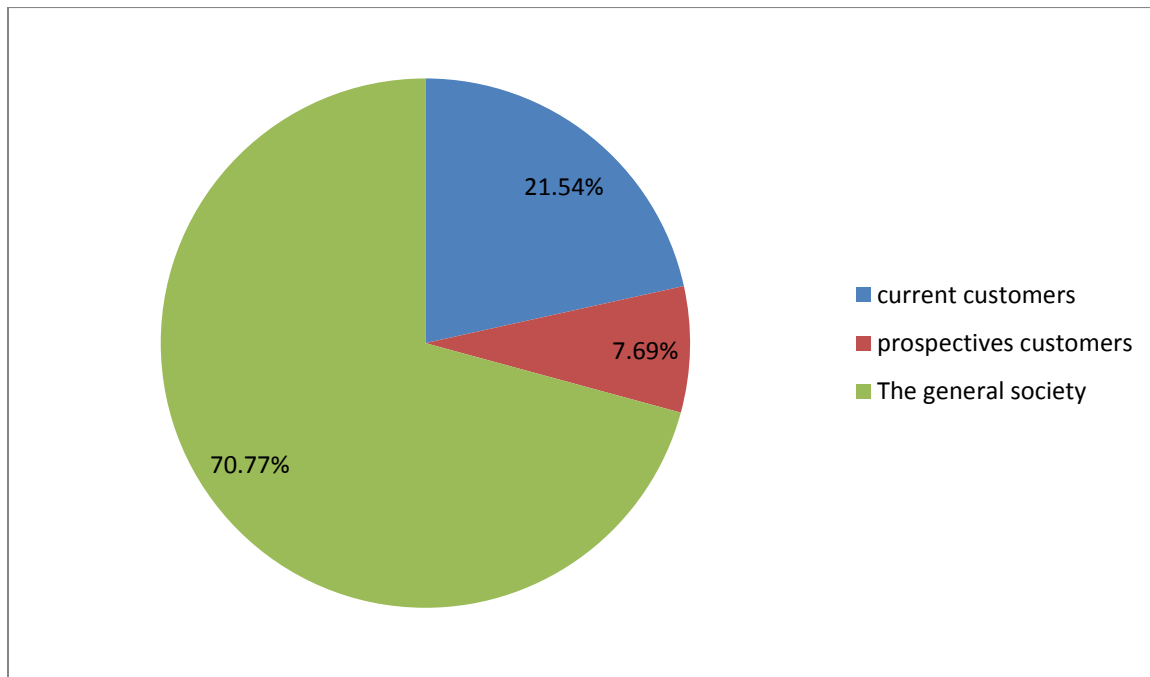


Figure 1 indicates that 70.77% of the Posts made were targeted at the general society, forming the majority. Posts targeted at current customers formed 21.54% of the sample. Posts targeting prospective customers were the least with 7.69%

## One-way versus Two-way Communication

**Figure 2: One-way vs. Two-way communication**

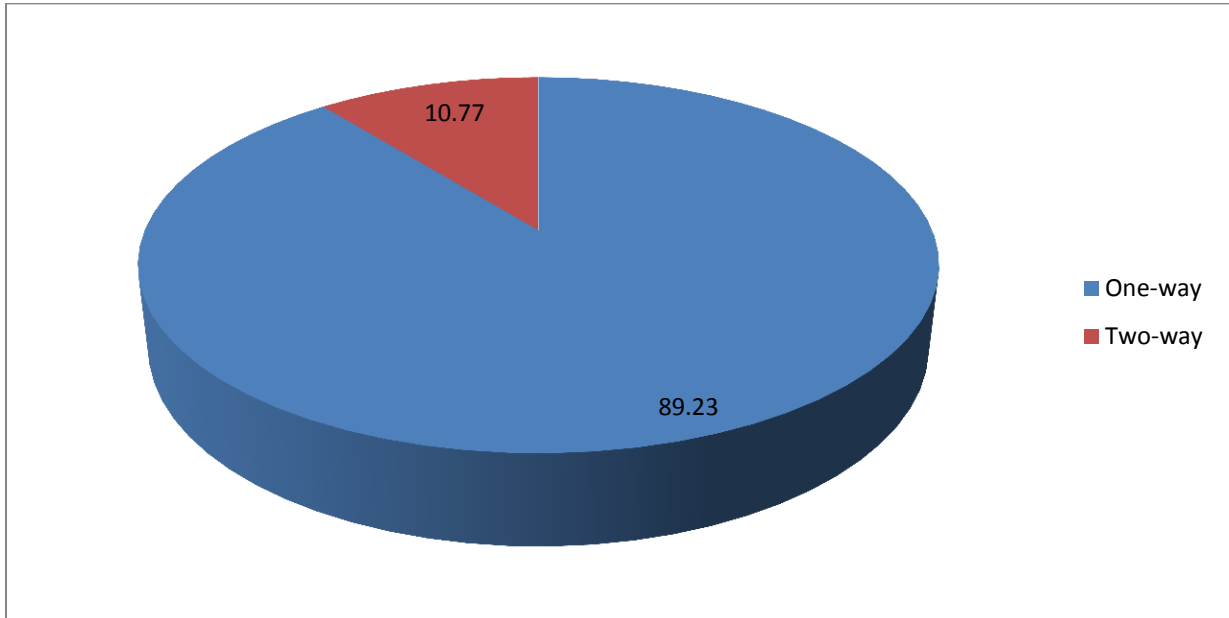


Figure 2 clearly shows that one-way communication dominated the Facebook Posts of the companies studied and constituted 89.22% of the total posts as compared to the 10.76% of two-way communication.

The intended publics for the study were categorized into three: (a) current customers, (b) prospective customers and (c) the general society. Posts directed at current customers mentioned customers directly or provided information relating or useful to current users of the company's services. Posts directed at prospective customers were promotional in nature, aimed at making the bank and its services more desirable. Posts meant for the general society were universal in nature, encompassing both current and prospective customers. Such Posts did not specifically mention current or prospective customers of the company but rather sought to address the mass public.

The findings (Figure 1) indicated that almost three-quarters (70.77%) of the total Facebook Posts made by the organization under study targeted the general society. The Posts lacked specificity and did not mention either current or prospective customers directly. Following the general society, Posts targeted at current customers made up about a quarter (21.54%) of the total

sample. It is clear that the preceding statements either provided information relating to users of the organization services or mentioned customers directly.

Posts targeted at prospective customers trailed and formed far less than one-tenth (7.69%) of the total sample. As indicated in the literature review, the American Red Cross study conducted by Briones *et al* (2011) concluded that using Facebook to communicate with key publics generated feedback to improve the services of the organization. The findings of this study demonstrate that almost all (92.31%) of the Posts made by the organization studied were targeted at only current customers and the general society.

These findings imply that the organization studied are likely to receive most of their feedback from only the general society and current customers, as they were the major publics targeted for communication. Moreover, such communication targeting particular sections of key publics on Facebook appears limited, McCorkindale's (2010) asserts that companies must endeavor to understand Facebook, as it can be used to communicate with a wide variety of publics.

### **4.2.3 Discussion of the findings**

This topic discusses the combined findings of the interviews and content analysis to answer the research questions underlying this study. The results were combined to assess the role of Facebook platforms of Ethio Telecom in public relations practices, and the major content uploaded on the Facebook page. The combined findings also served to answer; the challenges and opportunities of the Facebook page and the Facebook page play its role as a public relations tool, promoting communication between the people and the organization.

The findings of the study indicate that the organization chose Facebook as a communication tool because of its widespread use. A quick and simple way of delivering information best describes the current information trend.

Facebook, according to the practitioners, is a popular platform that "everyone tends to utilize." This result was in line with that of Thomsen et al. (2016), who suggested that because of its widespread use, Facebook might be regarded as a mainstream social media site. News outlets

that frequently described Facebook as pervasive (e.g. Lee, 2017; Simons, 2020) and even as a monopoly provided support for this (Hughes, 2019a; Laurent, 2019).

The professionals in public relations thought Facebook had a big impact on their field. This was corroborated by every interviewee, and the majority of them even said that social media affected "everything." Their discovery concurred with several academics' findings that social media has a substantial impact on public relations (DiStaso et al., 2011; Lipschultz, 2018; Motion et al., 2015; Wright & Hinson, 2013; Xie et al., 2018). Given that social media transformed communication from one-to-one to many-to-many communication, as explained by Kaplan and Haenlein, this result was not unexpected (2010).

The findings indicated that Facebook was by far the social media platform most used by Ethio Telecom. These findings might lead to the assumption that the organization used the most popular platforms to increase awareness by reaching out to as many members of the public as possible. Thus, Facebook reach, which is the number of users who actually see the organization's message, plays an important role for organizations.

The results of this study demonstrate that there is a better understanding among the practitioners of Ethio Telecom of the potential of Facebook to improve the organization's capacity to interact directly with the public without the intervention of third parties, reporters, and editors. The practitioner believes that Facebook is more advantageous for an organization's communication practice than traditional media because of its open nature, which enables direct communication between the organization and the public, as well as its simplicity and quicker turnaround time when compared to traditional media.

The results of the content analysis showed that Ethio Telecom uses Facebook often. Ethio Telecom, the official Facebook page of Ethio Telecom (2022), was established on August, 2018 and as of August 17, 2022; the page in the day month has 1,116,313 people following. 316 Facebook posts on the organization's official page were published between the months of January 1 and May 31, 2022.

The study find that the majority of the posts on Facebook are focused on promotional purposes. Most of the Facebook posts by the organization are commercial regarding the products and services of information. These findings were in line with those of Bhargava (2010) and Jiang et al. (2016), who found that public relations practitioners used social media mainly for publicity purposes. The fact that social media is frequently regarded as a part of integrated marketing communications may help to explain the high use of social media in integrated marketing (e.g. Blakeman, 2015; Mangold&Faulds, 2009; Percy, 2014). The widespread use in event promotion could be explained by the fact that professionals believed social media was likely to be helpful for event promotion, as earlier studies have demonstrated (Jackson &Angliss, 2018; Moise&Cruceru, 2014).

Therefore, it is assumed that although organizations increasingly used social media as a conversational tool, they did so primarily to serve the interests of the organization rather than those of the public, as Kent (2013) proposed. The issue that emerges from these findings is that neglecting the conversational nature of Facebook might give rise to disappointment from members of the public who expect organizations to be conversational instead of simply promoting their products or services.

This research confirmed the assumption that Facebook has had a substantial impact on and grown in relevance within Ethio Telecom's public relations strategy. However, rather than using Facebook as a two-way symmetrical route for communication, Ethio Telecom public relations practitioners still appear to use it to promote organizational messages. The control paradigm or the need to 'get the message out there' instead of engaging with targeted publics may be reasons for the still prevalent focus on the promotional use of Facebook. Another finding showed that practitioners appeared to use Facebook more strategically than in the past.

It was clear that the practitioners who were interviewed thought Facebook had a big impact on public relations. Facebook was appreciated by them as a quick and affordable communication method for engaging with their audiences. Despite these advantages, participants also mentioned potential drawbacks for public relations, such as the requirement for appropriate time and fake news, which ran counter to the claim that Facebook was inexpensive. The lack of skilled human

power appeared to be a significant determining factor in whether or not Facebook platforms were adopted.

A major finding of the interviews was that the participants had concerns about ethical issues related to the use of Facebook. The platforms' failure to remove harmful content that are lead to de-value the channel because people don't trust it anymore. Several interview participants mentioned that data scandals, privacy issues and fake news also decreased trust in Facebook.

This is in line with preceding research that reported a low degree of have confidence in social media. Edelman (2020), for instance, identified social media as the at least trusted media kind globally, with a lowering trend. Zerfass et al. (2018) and Meng et al. (2019) came to similar conclusions as they determined that most European and North American practitioners identified constructing and maintaining have confidence as the most important strategic conversation problem for the future. Although these practitioners were involved about pretend news, they did now not believe it affected their organizations.

According to the study, the organization is outfitted with the tools necessary to do activities on Facebook. It also has access to the internet, a camera, a computer, and professionals who can work on the materials, giving it the chance to participate in Facebook. The practitioners are qualified specialists with training in communication. The popularity of Facebook among society is also another asset for the organization to exploit its potential and reach a wide range of the public in a simple and quick manner. On the other hand, fake information that has the potential to harm the organization image or endanger organizational activities, hate speech, negative comments under the organization's posts, and a skill gap among professionals are the challenges that the organization faces in relation to its social media tasks.

In general, the potential of Facebook to serve as an organization's communication tool at Ethio Telecom is well perceived by the practitioner. There is a section whose responsibility is managing the social media activities of the organization. There is frequent use of Facebook in the organization. On the official page, sometimes up to five posts are shared on an average of two posts per day. The elements that led the organization to utilize Facebook were its widespread

popularity, its ease of use, and how little time it takes to complete tasks The challenges the organization faces in relation to its work on Facebook, however, include fake news, hate speech, and a professional skills shortage.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary**

This research aimed to assess the role that Facebook plays in contemporary Ethio Telecom public relation as a tool. It applied a thematic analysis of in-depth interviews with Ethio Telecom public relations practitioners shed light on their perceptions and motivations behind the adoption and role of Facebook in public relation. Furthermore, content analysis that had been in Ethio Telecom Facebook Page post between January 1 to may 31 2022 to identify trends in the use of Facebook. The study's findings indicate that Ethio Telecom use Facebook often as PR tool; however there is more one way communication resulting in less interaction to increase the relationship and foster closer relationship between the organization and its public. The interaction is more from the organization to the customers and the public with few responses from the customers. There is a need for more two way interaction between the organizations and their publics.

#### **5.2 Conclusion**

The primary goal of this research is to assess the role of Facebook in Ethio Telecom's public relations practices. It is also conducted to address specific objectives of describing to what extent Ethio Telecom uses Facebook to reach out to its public; examining the opportunities and challenges for using Facebook as an organizational communication tool; investigating the major content uploaded on the Facebook page; and examining to what extent the Facebook page plays its role as a public relations tool, promoting communication between the people and the organization.

In this regard, based on the study's findings, it can be said that Ethio Telecom employees have a positive perception of Facebook's use for organizational communication. In fact, opinions on the advantages Facebook might have for society vary somewhat. Some people think it offers many

advantages, while others are dubious, arguing there is no filtering mechanism in place to distinguish between accurate information and fraudulent information.

Ethio Telecom uses Facebook to interact with its customers since it is aware of the trend toward using online information systems in both Ethiopia and the rest of the world. However, even while social media is a platform that encourages public engagement and participation in the organization's decision-making process, its primary purpose is the dissemination of information. The conventional media, including print and electronic, are following the same old trend right now. The information that the business share is primarily concerned with its own operations, products, and services, which is not very conducive to discussion. The organization is aware of the possible advantages Facebook may provide to improve the relationship between the organization and the general public. However, The engagement of Ethio Telecom lacks a plan to use Facebook for dialogic purposes and instead merely uses it as a vehicle for disseminating information.

Ethio Telecom's Facebook page is used as a broadcasting channel, not a two-way symmetrical channel, to promote organizational messages. The continued emphasis on the promotional usage of Facebook may be due to the control paradigm or the desire to get the word out there rather than interact with targeted audiences. However, the use of Facebook by practitioners looked to be more strategic than in the past.

The study's findings showed that the organizations it looked at created Facebook pages because their target users viewed social media in general and Facebook in particular as having the largest user base. As well as being the best way to solicit audience input, Facebook was discovered to be the finest platform for disseminating information about goods and services.

Ethio Telecom seems to still place a strong emphasis on well-established social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram while avoiding adopting more recent ones like TikTok. The most popular platform by far was Facebook, reflecting its dominance in the social media space.

The motivating factors that led the organization to use Facebook as a method to communicate with its audiences were its straightforward and simple-to-use nature; the shorter amount of time it takes to complete a particular activity compared to traditional media; and its popularity among society. The group provides the tools necessary to participate in Facebook activities. The organization has resources, an Internet connection, and experts who can work with the resources and spread the intended message on social media. These can be seen as chances for the organization to participate on Facebook when joined to the platform's larger audience. One of the issues the organization has is Facebook's susceptibility to accepting information from unreliable sources who purposefully or unintentionally spread incorrect information. Hatred comments published under the organization's posts are another obstacle to the organization's Facebook activity.

Another crucial subject for the practitioners was ethical issues, such as fake news, data crises. This represented the ongoing public debate regarding the unethical practices of significant Facebook corporations and the reasons for the medium's decline of trust.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are given:-

- The organizations under study should strive to achieve a more balanced and interactive use of Facebook as a public relations tool. In light of this, the following suggested recommendations can be considered: an assessment of their existing social media strategy in order to identify actions which generate the most feedback; and an application of established industry best practices that foster online relationship building.
- This research supports the suggestion of earlier studies advocating for a two-way symmetrical use of social media. Practitioners are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the advantages of a conversational use of social media and to promote this approach within their organizations.
- The vulnerability of Facebook to entertaining fake information is a global challenge that the online media faces. Thus, the organization needs to develop a better strategy that can

help to deal with the dissemination of false information. Follow up and evaluation of the activities on the social media is also required so that a better activity is to be done in the future.

- Generally speaking, the rapid development of Facebook makes it imperative to continuously update research findings to provide the most recent and pertinent insights regarding the usage of this now-ubiquitous media type in public relations. There isn't much research on Facebook's role in public relations, though, specifically for Ethio Telecom. It is advised that more research be done.

## References

- Alfonso, G.-H., & de Valbuena Miguel, R. (2006). *Trends in online media relations: Web-based corporate press rooms in leading international companies. Public Relations Review. [Electronic version].32, pp.267–275.*
- Alfonso, G.-H., & de Valbuena Miguel, R. (2006). *Trends in online media relations: Web-based corporate press rooms in leading international companies. Public relations Review.*
- Allagui, I., & Breslow, H. (2016). Social media for public relations: Lessons from four effective cases. *Public Relations Review*, 42(1), 20-30.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2015.12.001>
- Awofadeju, Peter Olayinka (2019). *Impacts of social media on public relations practice: IJRDO - Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research*
- Bhargava, D. (2010). *The use of internet in public relations and its impact on the practice: A New Zealand perspective [Master's thesis, Auckland University of Technology]. Tuwhera.*<https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/1052>
- Blakeman, R. (2015). *Integrated marketing communication: Creative strategy from idea to implementation* (2nd ed.). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Breakenridge, D. (2008). *PR 2.0: New media, new tools, new audiences.* FT Press.
- Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2008). *Social network sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13, 210-230.*
- Broom, G.M (2009) *Cutlip and Center s Effective Public Relations. IOlh Edition. New Jersey: Pearson Education.*

Broom, G. M., & Smith, G. D. (1979, August). *Toward an understanding of public relations roles: An empirical test of five role models' impact on clients. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism, Seattle, WA.*

Daniel Biset (2019). *MA thesis: Social media as a Government Communication tool: The case of Addis Ababa City Government Mayor's Office. (M.A. thesis, University of Addis Ababa)*

Dawit W Eyesus (2019). *MA thesis: challenges of using social media among PR practitioners: The case of federal government organization in Addis Ababa. (M.A. thesis, University of Addis Ababa)*

Emery L., Philip H. A. and Warren K. Agee (1991) *Introduction to Mass Communication. 10th ed. Harper Collins Publishers. New York (p.56-57).*

Etenesh Nigussie (2019) *an assesment the role of social media in public relations: a case of Facebook page in mekelle city-Tigray public relations bureau. (M.A. thesis, University of Addis Ababa)*

Edelman. (2020). *Edelman trust barometer 2020 – Global report.*  
[https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2020-01/2020%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report\\_LIVE.pdf](https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2020-01/2020%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report_LIVE.pdf)

Edosomwan, S., Prakasan, S. K., Kouame, D., Watson, J., & Seymour, T. (2011). The history of social media and its impact on business. *The Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 16(3), 79-91.

Ensor, J. (2019, September 10). *Christchurch shooting videos remain on social media – expert. Newshub.* <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/newzealand/2019/09/christchurch-shooting-videos-remain-on-social-media-expert.html>

*Facebook Statistics (2014) Retrieved August 22, 2014 from: <http://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>*

*Galushkin, I. (2003) Text messages: a potentially rich medium in distributed organizations. Prism Online PR Journal 1 (1). Accessed 15 March 2007.*

*Giannini, G. T. (2010). Marketing public relations: A marketer's approach to public relations and social media. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.*

*Gillin, P (2009), Secrets of social media marketing: how to use online conversations and customer communities to turbo-charge your business, Quill Driver Books, Fresno, CA.*

*Grunig, J. E. (1992). Communication, public relations, and effective organizations: An overview of the book. In J. E. Grunig (Ed.), Excellence in public relations and communication management. Routledge.*

*Grunig, J.E. and T. Hunt. (1984). Managing Public Relations. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.*

*Grunig, J. E. (2009). Paradigms of global public relations in an age of digitalisation. PRism, 6(2), 1-19.*

*Hessink, H., Bollen, L & Steggink, M. (2007). Symmetrical versus asymmetrical company-investor communications via the internet. Corporate Communications: An International Journal. [Electronic version]. 12, pp. 145-160.*

*Hunt, T., & Grunig, J. (1994). Public Relations Techniques. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.*

*Internet Live Stats (2014, September 16). Internet users by country (2016). Retrieved June 19, 2016, from <http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users-by-country/>*

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). *Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. Business Horizons.*

Kautz, F., Schaffrath, M., & Gang, A. C. (2020). Identifying the different approaches in use of social media outlets: A case study of German professional sport teams. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 13(2), 239-261. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2020-0006>

Kent, M. L. (2013). Using social media dialogically: Public relations role in reviving democracy. *Public Relations Review*, 39(4), 337-345. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2013.07.024>

Kitchen, P. J. (2010). *A marketing communication scenario for 2010. Research Paper for CIPR. London, UK: Chartered Institute of Public Relations.*

Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B.S. (2011). *Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. Business Horizons.*

Kumar, R. (2011). *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners* (3rd Ed.). New Delhi: Sage.

Laura Matthews. (2012). *Social media and evolution of corporate communication.*

Laurent, L. (2019, June 5). *Apple, Facebook and Google have lost the monopoly argument.* Bloomberg. <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-06-05/apple-facebook-and-google-have-lost-the-monopoly-argument>

Lee, J. (2013). *Encroachment in public relations.* In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of public relations* (2nd ed., pp. 290-292). Sage Publications.

- Lee, T. B. (2017, February 17). *Mark Zuckerberg is worried about sensationalism in news. But Facebook could do more to help.* Wired. <https://www.vox.com/new-money/2017/2/17/14645480/fake-news-clickbait-sensationalism>
- Lovejoy, K., Waters, R., & Saxton, G. D. (2012). *Engaging Stakeholders through Twitter: How Nonprofit Organizations are Getting More Out of 140 Characters or Less.* *Public Relations Review*, 38(2), 313- 318. Retrieved November 3, 2012, from <http://arxiv.org/ftp/arxiv/papers/1106/1106.1852.pdf>
- Macnamara, J. (2010a). Public communication practices in the Web 2.0-3.0 mediascape: The case for PRevolution. *PRism*, 7(3), 1-13. <http://prismjournal.org/>
- Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). *Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix.* *Business Horizons*, 52, 357-365.
- Matthews, L. (2010) *Social Media and the Evolution of Corporate Communications.*
- McCorkindale, T. (2010). *Can you see the writing on my wall? A content analysis of the Fortune 50's Facebook social networking sites.* *Public Relations Journal*, 4(3). Retrieved from <http://www.prsa.org/intelligence/prjournal/documents/2010mccorkindale.pdf>.
- Macnamara, J., Lwin, M., Adi, A., & Zerfass, A. (2016). 'PESO' media strategy shifts to 'SOEP': Opportunities and ethical dilemmas. *Public Relations Review*, 42(3), 377-385. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2016.03.0>
- Neuendorf, K. (2002). *The Content Analysis Guidebook.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Oneya, F. P. (2010). *The impact of social media on public relations practice, MA Thesis.* University of Nairobi.

Phillips, D., & Young, P. (2009). *Online public relations: a practical guide to developing an online strategy in the world of social media*. London: Kogan Page Limited.

Press, G. (2018, April 8). *Why Facebook Triumphed Over All Other Social Networks*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/gilpress/2018/04/08/why-facebook-triumphed-over-all-other-social-networks/#7307e6bd6e91>

Public Relations Society of America. 2004. *About Public Relations*. New York: Public Relations.

Theaker, A. (2004). *The Public Relations Handbook (2nd ed.)*. Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis.

Theunissen, P., & Sissons, H. (2017). *Relationship building in public relations*. Routledge.

Thomsen, D. L., Sørensen, M. T., & Ryberg, T. (2016). Where have all the students gone? They are all on Facebook now. In Cranmer, S., Dohn, N.B., de Laat, M., Ryberg, T., & Sime, J. A. (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 10th International Conference on Networked Learning* (pp. 94-102).

Tuten, T. L. (2008). *Advertising 2.0*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Wright, D., & Hinson, M. (2017). *Tracking how social and other digital media are being used in public relations practice: A twelve-year study*. *Public Relations Journal*, 11(1), 1-30. <https://prjournal.instituteforpr.org>

York, A. (2020, January 15). Reach vs. impressions: What's the difference in terms? Sprout Social. <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/reach-vs-impressions/>

## List of Appendixes

### Appendix 1

English version of the interview questions

**DIRECTIONS:** Please provide truthful and complete responses to all of the questions. All provided information will be kept in strict confidence and used only for academic or research purposes.

In accordance with the main objective of this research these questions are meant to explore and understand how the Ethio Telecom has been using the Facebook to communicate with its publics.

- What is your educational background and level?
- What is your work experience?
- What is your role in the organization?

1. to what extent does your organization used Facebook page as a communication tool?
2. Can you tell me the factors that make your organization to choose the Facebook page as a tool to communicate with its publics?
3. What types of contents mostly uploaded in the Facebook page?
5. What efforts are made so that this uploaded information reaches the target audience?
4. To what extent do the PR experts, stakeholders and different publics of Ethio Telecom at different places participate on Facebook page?
6. Do you get inquiries or feedback through Facebook pages from your publics? If yes how often do you respond? If not what is the reason?
7. What are the opportunities and challenges for using the Facebook Page as a corporate communication tool?

8. Do you think that the Facebook page negative sides? Explain?

9. What do you think/suggest for the future about Ethio Telecom Facebook page to bring a better result at your corporation?

10. what about the use of twitter and website as communication tool in your organization?

11. Do you have any other idea about the topic?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

## Appendix 2

Amharic version of the interview questions

መመሪያ: ለጥያቄው ትክክለኛና ታማኝ መረጃ እንዲሰጡ ይጠየቃሉ። ይህ ጥናት ለትምህርት ለማስተርስ ድግሪ ብቻ የሚውል ነው።

- በምን ዘርፍ ነው የተማሩት?
- እስከ ምን ደረጃ ተምረዋል?
- በስራው ምን ያህል ልምድ አለዎት?
- በተቋሙ ያለዎት ኃላፊነት?

የጥናቱን ዋና አላማ መሰረት በማድረግ እነዚህ ጥያቄዎች ኢቲዮ ቴሌኮም የፌስቡክ የማህበራዊ ትስስር ሚዲያን እንዴት ባለ መልኩ ለተቋሙ ኮሙኒኬሽን ስራ እየተገለገለበት እንዳለ ለመዳሰስና ለመረዳት በሚል የተዘጋጁ ናቸው።

1. የሚሰሩበት ተቋም የፌስቡክ ገፅን በምን ያህል ደረጃ እንደ ኮሙኒኬሽን መሳሪያ ትጠቀሙበታላችሁ?
2. ተቋሙ የፌስቡክ ገፅን ለመጠቀም ምክንያት የሆኑ ጉዳዮች ምንድናቸው?
3. በተቋሙ የፌስቡክ ገፅ ላይ በይበልጥ የሚለቀቁ ይዘቶች ምን ዓይነቶች ናቸው?
4. በፌስቡክ ገፁ ሚሊጠፉና የሚለቀቁ ይዘቶች ለታላሚው እንዲደርስ ምን ጥረቶች ይደረጋሉ?
5. የፌስቡክ ገፁ የህዝብ ግንኙነት ባለሙያውን፣ የባለድርሻ አካላትንና ህዝቡን በምን ያህል ደረጃ አሳታፊ ነው?
6. በፌስቡክ ገፁ ትስስር ጥያቄዎች ወይም ግብረመልሶች ይደርሳሉ? ምላሽዎት አዎ ከሆነ ለቀረቡልዎት ጥያቄዎች ወይም ግብረመልሶች ምላሽ ይሰጣል? ምላሽዎት አይደረስም ከሆነ ምክንያቱ ምን ሊሆን ይችላል?
7. ተቋሙ የፌስቡክ ገፅን መጠቀሙ የፈጠረው እድሎችና ተግዳሮቶች ምን ምንድን ናቸው?
8. ተቋሙ የፌስቡክ ገፅን መጠቀሙ አሉታዊ ጎኖች አሉት ብለው ያስባሉ? ካለው ያብራሩ?
9. በተቋሙ የፌስቡክ ገፅ አጠቃቀምን ይበልጥ ውጤታማ ለማድረግ ምን ሊደረግ ይገባል ይላሉ?
10. ተቋሙ እንደ ቲውተርና ዌብሳይትያሉ የማህበራዊ ሚዲያ ትስስሮችን በምን ያህል ደረጃ ይጠቀማል?
11. ከተነሳው ርዕስ ጉዳይ ጋር የሚገናኝ ሀሳብ ካለዎት ቢጨምሩ?

ለጊዜዎት አመሰግናለሁ።