



**The Practice of Online Journalism: The Case of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation
(EBC) Website News**

Mulugeta Kussa



A Thesis Submitted to the School of Journalism and Communication

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and
Communication

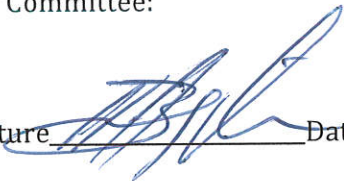
Addis Ababa University
Addis Ababa

November, 2014

Addis Ababa University
Graduate School of Journalism and Communication

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Mulugeta Kussa Gudeta, entitled *The Practice of Online Journalism: The Case of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) Website News* and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communication complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by Examining Committee:

Examiner Dr. Negeri Lencho Signature  Date Nov. 27/2014

Examiner _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Examiner _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Advisor Abdissa Zeraie (PhD) Signature  Date Nov. 27 2014

Abdissa Zeraie (PhD) 

Chair of Department or Graduate Program Coordinator

ABSTRACT

The Practice of Online Journalism: The Case of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC)
Website News

Mulugeta Kussa

Addis Ababa University, 2014

The innovation of the Internet, among others, has brought about a paradigm shift in the way journalism has been practiced and consumed for ages. The introduction of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s has enabled journalism to go online, something that has minimized the control of producers over content and capacitated the audience/users. The Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), formerly known as the Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA), is one of the major media houses in Ethiopia that has gone online in 2009 side by side with its operation in radio and television.

This study has attempted to find out what the practice and presentation of EBC's Website news looked like, particularly in terms of employing the key features of online news: interactivity, hypertext and multimedia. Informed by the network theory, the study employed a qualitative approach: document analysis, in-depth interview and observation were used as data collection tools. A two-week news of EBC's Website was analyzed to find out whether and how those key features were utilized. The familiarity of the journalists and editors working on EBC's Website, Amharic version, with those key features of online journalism was also probed through in-depth interviews.

The finding indicates that EBC's Website was not interactive at the time of the study. The journalists were also not accustomed to the use of hypertext. Among the multimedia formats, video and still pictures were the only ones employed but with their own limitations. The study also shows that journalists currently working on EBC's Website lack the necessary training in online journalism. Based on the findings, some pertinent recommendations were made for improving the practice and presentation of online journalism in EBC's Website in particular and in other similar web based journalism in general.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank God for His all-round help that has been with me while I was working on this paper and beyond. He is the reason behind the accomplishment of this research.

I also want to appreciate my advisor, Dr. Abdissa Zerai, for his insightful comments, advice, and detailed feedback he has offered for the realization of this piece of work. I am very much grateful to him.

My deepest gratitude goes to my friend and former colleague, Netsanet Feleke, for the support she has given me throughout this arduous journey.

I would also like to thank my colleagues Asegid Tesfaye, Genet Tilahun and Meressa Fayera for their relentless assistance in transcribing the data and typing the manuscript.

Finally, I want to appreciate members of the online staff of EBC for their cooperation in availing themselves for the interview and facilitating the process during my fieldwork there.

Table of Contents

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Acronyms.....	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction	
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Historical Overview of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation /EBC/.....	4
1.2.1. Ethiopian Radio.....	4
1.2.2. Ethiopian Television/ETV/.....	5
1.2.3. EBC Website.....	5
1.3 Statement of the problem.....	6
1.4 Objectives of the Study.....	8
1.4.1 General Objectives.....	8
1.4.2 Specific Objectives	8
1.5 Research Questions	9
1.6 Significance of the study.....	9
1.7 The scope of the study.....	10
1.8 Limitations of the Study.....	11
Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature	
2.1. The Internet.....	12
2.1.1. Brief History of the Internet	13
2.1.2. Brief History of the Internet in Ethiopia.....	14
2.2. Media and the Internet.....	15
2.3. Traditional versus New Media.....	17

2.4. The World Wide Web.....	18
2.5. Media Convergence.....	20
2.6. Computer Mediated Communications (CMC).....	24
2.7. Key Features of Online News.....	27
2.7.1. Interactivity	27
2.7.2. Hypertext.....	30
2.7.3. Multimedia.....	31
2.8. The Network Theory.....	32

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design	35
3.2. Data Collection Techniques.....	35
3.2.1. Document Analysis.....	36
3.2.2. In-depth Interview	36
3.2.3. Observation.....	36
3.3. Data Sources.....	37
3.4. Sampling Technique.....	39

Chapter 4: Data Analysis, Presentation and Discussion of Findings

4.1. Introduction.....	40
4.2. EBC's Online Room.....	40
4.3. EBC's Online Staff.....	41
4.4. EBC's Online News Source.....	41
4.5. Interactivity in EBC's Website.....	47
4.6. Hypertext in EBC Website.....	51
4.7. Multimedia in EBC Website.....	53

4.8. Staff Training.....62

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction.....67

5.2. Conclusions.....67

5.3. Recommendations.....71

Bibliography.....73

Appendix A English version of the Interview Questions for the journalists, editors and Editor-in-chief of EBC Online and Monitoring Directorate

Appendix B Amharic version of the Interview Questions for the journalists, editors and Editor-in-chief of EBC Online and Monitoring Directorate

Appendix C English version of the Interview Questions for the former Deputy Editor-in-chief of EBC Online and Monitoring Directorate

Appendix D Amharic version of the Interview Questions for the former Deputy Editor-in-chief of EBC Online and Monitoring Directorate

Acronyms

EBC	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation
ERTA	Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency
ETV	Ethiopian Television
OAU	Organization for African Unity
WWW	World Wide Web
INSA	Information Network Security Agency

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The development in science and technology has been constantly causing changes in the way people live, travel, work, meet, talk, etc. For instance, one had to be physically available in the stadium to watch a football match between two clubs in Europe or any part of the world years ago. But, today, with the introduction of live transmission technology, any major sports event can be watched live and equally be enjoyed with the fans at the place of the event physically. The innovation of the internet has also significantly changed the way people live. Particularly, life in developed countries and urban areas of developing countries is highly affected by the introduction and expansion of the internet. Activities like service delivery, marketing, banking, education, information exchange, among others, are becoming highly dependent on the internet.

Similarly, technological advancements and subsequent changes have also been notably affecting human communication, particularly mass communication. The invention of writing had opened a way to preserve ideas and transfer them as messages from one person to the other. This was one of the turning points in human communication. The innovation of the printing press by Johann Gutenberg in 1455 resulted in landmark expansion of mass communication. The breakthrough in the technology of printing press gave birth to print journalism which is being exercised till date. The introduction of radio in 1920 and that of television in 1939 are some of the major turning points for the advancement of mass communication and the practice of journalism. Of course, radio and television have been playing great role in expanding the practice of mass communication since they can be used by both literate and the illiterate. The launching of the World Wide Web in 1992 using the prior innovation of the internet was another significant

technological advancement that is affecting mass communication and the practice of journalism. The following extract shows how the internet has enabled the consumer in making the choice that was made by editors alone before:

The process of news journalism has been profoundly affected by new media, not just in the technology available to its gatherers and to its editors and distributors, but to its consumers and their modes of consumption. The exploding multi-channel environment, the technology to manipulate it, and the internet with its endless options and direct sources all give the consumer the choice previously made by the news editor (Fenton, 2010: 73).

The expansion of the internet and subsequent technology to access and disseminate information has not only changed the way news is received but also the way it is perceived.

The traditional media (print, radio and television) are challenged by the online medium for a number of things. The immediacy and interactivity nature of the online medium, among others, is increasingly attracting online audiences. Particularly, the young generation is the one that prefers the online medium to traditional media, something that radically challenges the paradigm of news delivery the traditional media are accustomed to. This has made the traditional media to lose their privileged position in delivering the world to their audiences (Fenton, 2010).

Over the past decade or so, fundamental changes have taken place in broadcast newsrooms. Seen from the outside, the news output of many broadcasters has expanded rapidly since the early 1990s, and covers a wide range of media platforms from television and radio to tele-text, web and mobile phones. Subsequently, broadcasters have undergone changes in the organization and practices of production. This is perhaps most evident with regard to production for multiple platforms in an integrated media organization, (Erdal, 2007: 51).

The online audience is not just a receiver of the news published by media houses but is able to comment, correct(edit) and express his/her opinion regarding the issue in discussion. There are possibilities for the audience even to produce another version of the same news even with a better depth and analysis sometimes. It has not been the case in the traditional media or with a very limited chance to do so. This is a paradigm shift from a highly producer controlled media output to less control by the producer.

This change in the way news and information is received by the audience and loss of monopoly by the traditional media over the audience has led print and broadcast media to consider their position in line with the new technology of the internet. After fathoming the dynamic change in the area of mass communication resulting from the fast penetration of the internet and related technological advancement, almost every traditional media has gone online in addition to its offline operation. At first, this was not welcomed with open arms. But, the resistance has shrunk in front of the inevitable phenomenon of the online media advancement. Today, internationally renowned broadcast media such as British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Cable News Network (CNN) and Aljazeera, as well as print media like *The Guardian*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* have online version of their non-internet based stories. Locally, the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, formerly known as Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency, and Fana Broadcasting Corporate as well as the Ethiopian Press Agency, *The Reporter*, *Addis Admas*, *Addis Fortune* and *Capital* are some of the major media houses that have gone online in addition to their respective broadcast and print outlets. The fact that these traditional media are going online as well is an indicative of the growing online audience that the media wants to reach in order to remain relevant. Nevertheless, there is a need to understand the nature of the online audience and meet that nature in the process of going online.

Any institution or organization that we see today is the product of its past activities or what happened to it in the past. It is the past that shapes the present in some way. This also holds true for any media organization. That is why it is important to look into a brief history of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC).

1.2. Historical Overview of the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC)

The Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) is one of the oldest broadcast state media that has been operating in radio and television for over half a century. EBC has recently started online operation as well. It is one of the oldest media houses in Africa. The radio, television and online operation of EBC is briefly discussed in the following section:

1.2.1. Ethiopian Radio

Radio broadcasting started in Ethiopia in 1935 just before the Italian occupation in 1936-41 (Skjerdal, 2012). After one year operation of its establishment, it was taken over by the invading Italian forces and served for their propaganda purpose until 1942 when it was restored and began broadcasting with local personnel that makes it the only Sub-Saharan radio not established by colonial authorities (Janas, 1991:47 as cited in Skjerdal, 2012).

During the 35th celebration of the coronation of Haile Sellasei I in 1966, the medium wave transmitter that had a capacity to cover most of the country was inaugurated. On the occasion, the name of the station was also changed from Addis Ababa Radio to Ethiopian Radio (Gebeyehu, 2011).

1.2.2. Ethiopian Television (ETV)

The Ethiopian Television (ETV) was formally launched in 1964. It was established with the help of a British firm known as Thomson. ETV was able to broadcast the historic founding conference of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in the same year (Gebeyehu, 2011). ETV was the only television channel in Ethiopia until recently when some regional television stations went operational which are also controlled by regional governments.

The Ethiopian Radio and ETV were operating separately until they were merged by proclamation in 1995 and dubbed the Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA). The two media were also operating in separate places until 2009 when they started operating from the same building around the National Theatre at the center of Addis Ababa. ERTA was reestablished by proclamation on July 4, 2014 (while this study was underway) as the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC). Therefore, all the names that are used in this study as EBC would also mean the former ERTA.

Since its establishment, EBC has been serving the government and its content and operation is highly controlled by the state. The Director General of EBC is appointed by the Prime Minister.

1.2.3. EBC Website

EBC went online through the World Wide Web in May, 2009 as www.erta.gov.et. The website was designed by Information Network Security Agency (INSA). Later, it was changed to www.ertagov.com in September 2012 after the Information and Communication Technology Department of EBC redesigned the website. EBC website is administered by the information and communication technology department found on the 11th floor of EBC building while the Online

and Monitoring Directorate of EBC at the 5th floor manages the content. EBC Website operates in two languages separately - Amharic and English. The Amharic website is found at www.ertagov.com/amharic where as the English version is accessed at www.ertagov.com/news .

Through its online operation on EBC Website, EBC is able to take its radio and television news and programs to its audience live and recorded. The live streaming consists of ETV, Ethiopian Radio and F.M. 97.1 Radio whereas the recorded one includes prime time news as well as some selected entertainment and educational programs in video format. Of course, this was made possible through the computer technology, connected to the Internet, which is the same at the producing and receiving ends. This new way of journalism through the Internet has evolved its own unique nature referred to as key features in this study.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

In Ethiopia, the influence of the internet on how people receive news and information is being witnessed also. A number of broadcast and print media have recently gone online in addition to their normal operation as a result of the change in the way news is received online.

Erdal, (2007) states that the news output of many broadcasters has expanded rapidly over the last decade, and covers a wide range of media platforms including websites. He describes this as a fundamental change resulting from the expansion of the Internet technology. EBC is one of these broadcasting media that have attempted to expand their output through launching a website. EBC officially went online in an organized way through a World Wide Web in May, 2009 with a few online news staff members. It is now five years since EBC has launched its online operation through a website. Various researches had been undertaken at different times in diverse areas of EBC's radio and television operations; but its online operation (website) is yet to be researched.

There were some studies undertaken in the area of media and the new technology of the Internet in Ethiopia. A study conducted by Gebeyehu, (2011) on Media and New Technology in Ethiopia discussed how EBC was using the new media technology or simply the Internet technology in its newsroom while carrying out its daily activity as a media house. The finding indicated that EBC newsroom employed new media technology to gather process and disseminate news. However, Gebeyehu's study does not include EBC's Website which was at its infancy during his study period. He was concerned with new media technology as employed by the broadcast newsroom.

Another study undertaken in this area of media and the Internet was that of Feyisa, (2011), M.A. thesis, which takes the Oromia Mass Media Organization as a case in point. In his study titled "New Media Technology as a Source of Foreign News in Oromia Mass Media Organization: Challenges and Opportunities", Feyisa studied how journalists in this media organization are making use of the Internet to get foreign news. His finding indicated poor Internet infrastructure, sluggish connectivity as well as lack of skill to use Internet as challenges in dealing with foreign news. His study deals with finding foreign news mainly for the traditional media by using the Internet.

Both studies of Gebeyehu and Feyisa dealt with the way the Internet technology was serving the broadcast media in the process of news gathering and disseminating via the traditional media. They both had not included the websites of their respective media houses of study. It is, therefore, worthy to look into how EBC's Website on its own is operating in its online journalism. In this regard, it seems that EBC's Website is lacking some unique features of online journalism. Thus, it is necessary to explore EBC's online (website) news in terms of some of the key features of online news employed by renowned international online news media. It is obvious that radio and television have their own unique features that the media operators need to

stick to in order to be effective. The same holds true for newspaper and online media as well – both have their own unique features. So, it is one thing to go online in a bid to address the online audience in the era of the internet; but it is entirely a different thing to know the behavior of the online audience and the unique nature of the online operation and approach accordingly. That is why scholars suggest some features of online news such as interactivity, hypertext and proper multimedia usage as a key to remain relevant to the online audience.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore the extent to which EBC's Website news employs the key features of online news mentioned above and suggest ways of utilizing the medium better. The study also attempts to shed light on the need to have well organized web news presentation format to track down and develop online audience in the ever increasing internet users' world.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1. General Objective

The general objective of the study is to explore EBC Website news in terms of the key features of online news – interactivity, hypertext and use of multimedia.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

1. To find out how interactive EBC Website is
2. To explore the utilization of hypertext by EBC online news.
3. To examine the use of multimedia by EBC Website
4. To identify the familiarity of EBC's Website journalists with interactivity, hypertext and use of multimedia.

5. To identify challenges, if any, journalists working on EBC's Website face.

1.5. Research Questions

Research questions are guidelines that control the whole work of any study. They are the ones to be fully addressed at the end of every research. Research questions also help the researcher to remain focused throughout his/her work. Accordingly, the following research questions are framed for this study:

1. How interactive is EBC Website?
2. To what extent does EBC online news utilize hypertext?
3. What does EBC Website multimedia usage look like?
4. How familiar are EBC Website journalists with these key features of online news?
5. What challenges, if any, do EBC Website journalists face while working online?

1.6. Significance of the Study

The online audience is rapidly increasing across the world with the fast internet penetration and advancement of new media technology. Ethiopia is not an exception in this respect. Therefore, this study is significant for the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, other online news producers as well as researchers in various aspects. First of all, the study would help the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation to know where it stands now in terms of producing and disseminating online news as compared to where it should be. It would enable EBC to recognize the unique features of online news and prepare itself to meet the standard needed for the online news platform, thereby addressing the online audience based on its nature. Secondly, the study can help other media houses engaged in producing and disseminating online news as well as those

planning to operate in the online media to understand effective ways of addressing the ever increasing online audience. It will help them to be acquainted with how to present media products online and know the nature of the online medium. Thirdly, the study can serve as a starting point for other researchers who want to explore the online medium in Ethiopia. It can initiate researchers to make a detailed study as what makes the online audience and media different from other traditional platforms and the nature of their news.

1.7. Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation's online news (web news) only. It does not include EBC's news that is disseminated on Facebook, YouTube and other social media platforms as this is at its infancy in EBC. EBC's Website news is accessible on www.ertagov.com in two languages – Amharic and English. However, this study only deals with the Amharic version of the website news as it is the one that gets more attention of EBC's online news team. This attention is manifested in the greater number of the online team members working for the Amharic version and the greater quantity of news treated there as compared to that of the English version. The Amharic version is also the one that gets more visitors.

In addition, the study explores EBC's website news only in terms of its interactivity, hypertext usage in its news and the use of multimedia as they are considered as unique features of online news. This study does not go into the details of news gathering process and the content of the online news which can be an area of further study by itself for other researchers.

The study depends on the EBC's online news of two weeks disseminated from June 1 – 15, 2014. This is because this season was a time when the data collection for this research has taken

place. The researcher believes that continuous assessment of two weeks news is sufficient to explore interactivity, hypertext and multimedia usage of EBC's website news.

1.8. Limitation of the Study

The fact that there was no previous study in this specific area of EBC'S Website has limited the opportunity of getting various references from Ethiopia's context in this area. The time available for this research is as well another limitation for not considering the content of each news posted in terms of writing for web and studying the whole process of news gathering in detail.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

The essence of the Internet and its historical background would be discussed briefly in this chapter. In addition the impact of the Internet on media and mass communication is explored here. This includes the changes that resulted in the practice of journalism online and the unique features of online news evolved with the innovation of the Internet. Moreover, the nature of computer mediated communication as well as the theoretical framework for this study is discussed in this chapter.

2.1. The Internet

The following is an official definition of Internet made by the Federal Networking Council in the US in 1995 as cited in Lister et al., (2009:164).

‘Internet’ refers to the global information system that (i) is logically linked together by a globally unique address space based in the Internet Protocol (IP) or its subsequent extensions/follow-ons; (ii) is able to support communications using the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) suite or its subsequent extensions/follow-ons, and/or other IP-compatible protocols; and (iii) provides, uses or makes accessible, either publicly or privately, high level services layered on the communications and related infrastructure described herein.

In other words, the Internet simply describes the collection of networks that link computers and servers together (ibid.: 2009). This interconnection of networks of multiple computers has revolutionized human communication since its operation went public.

2.1.1. Brief History of the Internet

Technological advancements have always played a very significant role in the changes witnessed in human communication particularly in mass communication. The innovation of printing press, radio and television are but the major technological findings in human history that have brought about turning points in mass communication. The internet is another landmark innovation that has further advanced mass communication, among others.

The Advanced Research Projects Agency at the US Department of Defense (ARPA) is generally credited with founding the internet. Bolt Beranek and Newman Inc (BBN), an American consulting company, believe they also deserve to be recognized for their achievement in installing the first ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) link between two computers; one at the University of California Los Angeles site (UCLA), and the other at Stanford Research Institute (SRI) in 1969 (Green, 2010).

Computer networking, open source (including Internet Protocols), and the fast development of digital switching and transmission capacity in telecommunication networks led to the dramatic expansion of the internet after its privatization in the 1990s. The internet is, in fact, an old technology: it was first deployed in 1969. But it diffused on a large scale 20 years later because of several factors (Castells, 2009: 61-62).

The internet technology that was started in US Department of Defense gradually went commercial and has seen fast expansion throughout the world. According to a data from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), there are over 2.7 billion internet users in the world in 2013 which corresponds to 39 percent of the world's 7.1 billion population.

It shows that the vast majority of internet users (77 percent) are found in the developed world while only 31 percent of the population is online in the developing world. ITU statistics shows

that Europe is the region with the highest Internet penetration rate in the world (75 percent), followed by the America which cover (61 percent). Only 16 percent of Africa's population are using the Internet until the stated period which is half the penetration rate of Asia and the Pacific.

In terms of households, 41 percent of the world's households are connected to the Internet in 2013. Half of them are in the developing world, where household Internet penetration has reached 28 percent. In the developed world, 78 percent of all households are connected to the Internet. 90 percent of the 1.1 billion households not connected to the Internet are in the developing world. Europe and Africa are the regions with the highest and the lowest levels of household Internet penetration, respectively: 77 percent in Europe, compared with 7 percent in Africa. The majority of households in America are online (61 percent), compared with around one third of households in the Arab States and Asia and the Pacific. As per the data of ITU, between 2009 and 2013, Internet penetration in households has grown fastest in Africa, with annual growth of 27 percent, followed by 15 percent annual growth in Asia and the Pacific, the Arab States and the Caribbean Islands.

2.1.2. Brief History of the Internet in Ethiopia

Internet was used for the first time in Ethiopia in 1993 when the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) established in Addis Ababa to store-and-forward email service called PADISNet (*Pan African Documentation and Information Service Network*) which connected daily via direct dial calls to Green Net's Internet gateway in London (Samuel, 2001). Of course, the use of internet at its early stage in the country is limited to few individuals and international staff working in UNECA. It gradually found its way to the larger public and there are 960,331 internet users in Ethiopia until June 30, 2012 according to the frequently referred

Internet World Stats. This is just 1.1 percent of the total population. The statistics shows that the nation is one of the least countries with a very low internet penetration. According to Net Index, a global network performance and internet speed test, the broadband download speed of Ethiopia is 5.83Mbps in March 2014 which is 115th out of 190 countries. As per the latest data available on Internet World Stats, there are 902,440 Facebook users in Ethiopia until December 31, 2012 which has 1.0 percent penetration rate.

It is worth to see the position of Ethiopia in comparison with its neighbor, Kenya, in terms of internet penetration and Facebook users to help one understand how very low internet penetration rate in Ethiopia is. The same Internet World Stats states that there were 12,043,735 internet users in Kenya until the aforementioned time for Ethiopia. That is 28.0 percent of its population. As per the statistics, there were 2,045,900 Facebook users until that time in Kenya which amounts to 4.8 percent penetration rate. Kenya's broadband download speed in March, 2014 was 6.72 Mbps which was also better than that of Ethiopia in the same month.

Internet service is solely provided by the state owned Ethio Telecom, formerly known as Ethiopian Telecommunication Corporation, in Ethiopia. The government has not yet welcomed private telecom service providers in spite of directives issued to liberalize the sector in 2005 (Tesfaye, 2013).

2.2. Media and the Internet

Technological advancements in human history have played a very significant role in capacitating and transforming the media. The invention of the printing press in 1450s, that of radio and television in 1920s and 1930s respectively are some of the major landmark innovations in the history of media and the practice of journalism in general. The breakthrough in the innovation of

the internet introduced not only incremental developments of the past but also a fundamental change of direction as a result of telecommunications revolution (Kaul, 2013). The following is how Kaul sums up the way the Internet influenced the flow of information and challenged the practice of journalism which made the role of professional journalism more important:

Media as an institution is shocked by its weakened authority and influence, victimized by the desecration of information and is lost in the digital noise. It's faced with a revolution on all fronts: the upheaval of information production, distribution, and consumption. It appears like professional journalism is attacked on all sides – and seems less necessary and useful. However, yet the solution to the “information overload” that overwhelms us daily is journalism! (Kaul, 2013:132).

Opgenhaffen (2009) argues that it is not adequate to treat the Internet as a specific medium among other media like print newspapers, radio, television and magazines. Instead, he suggests that it may be better to see the Internet as a meta-media or as an “infrastructure” citing (Stoll, 1995: 55) for this. He goes on to say that the web is the digital version of the print; online radio and television are in the same way the versions of their offline operation and so on. Though there is still a debate whether to consider the internet as a specific medium or as an infrastructure for various media, the fundamental change introduced in journalism as a result of the internet is not debatable.

That is why Kaul (2013:127) says “New technology is reshaping the most fundamental aspects of our communications system, and we are now forced to reconsider our most basic assumptions about how that system will be used to gather and to distribute the news.”

2.3. Traditional versus New Media

The traditional analogue media (mainly print, radio and television) have been largely one way in their information flow, from the journalist to the public (Kaul, 2013). According to Kaul, the passive audience model has limited the involvement or engagement of the public in journalism and public affairs. As a result, people's knowledge of the world is highly shaped through the media which allow the audience mainly to receive information. This kind of practice is now changed as a result of the introduction of journalism practiced online through new media. As discussed by Rosa, (2012) below, the difference between the sender and receiver existed in the traditional or classical media is now blurring in new media.

The passage from classical media to new online media consists of progressive indifferntiation, over time, of the "sending" and "receiving" positions. It is an historical process in which the indifferntiation of positions represents the progressive interchangeability in space and over time of the two positions: each position may become more indistinguishably occupied by any individual. It is in this sense that new media follows on from classical mass media. From an historical point of view, they emerge from the growing lack of distinction between previous distinctions (Rosa, 2012:150).

Kaul (2013:28) on his part describes the change introduced to media as a result of the new technology as a revolutionary and fundamental. This is how he puts the change:

Digital technologies have charted revolutionary changes in journalism and fundamentally altered the nature and function of media in our society, reinventing age-old practices of public communication and at times circumventing traditional media and challenging its privileged role as gatekeepers of news and entertainment. There are myriad ways in which digital technologies have impacted on the practice of journalism, from the way reporters gather information and present news stories to how news organizations structure themselves and do business. Digital technologies have expanded quickly, permeating society with new formats and possibilities of communication.

Traditional news journalism is characterized by a clear demarcation between news producers and news consumers, and news content is distributed at predictable and recurring points in time (Karlsson & Strömbäck, 2010). In contrast, they describe the online news production as a one that is set in a digital environment, which influences news production processes as well as news content. This change in journalism landscape has come to scene first with the introduction of the World Wide Web.

2.4. The World Wide Web

The World Wide Web (WWW) was launched commercially in 1992 based on the prior innovation of the internet (Winston, 1998). It paved the way for the expansion of web journalism which is referred to as online journalism in this study. However, not everybody in the traditional media was happily welcoming the change that was brought about by the new media, particularly the web. The media houses themselves were first cautious whether to embrace the change or continue in their long lived practice that maintains their full control over their audience.

The traditional journalism practice was characterized by linearity, editorial control, gate keeping and monopoly of content by media houses. Here is how Kaul (2013:125) puts it: “The high tech revolution has significantly altered the way the public obtains its news and information, and has deprived the mass media of its traditional monopoly.”

This privilege of the traditional media has been there since the inception of journalism and it was unchallenged until the introduction of this new practice of journalism introduced with the internet. According to Fenton (2010:6),

This new journalism is open to novices, lacks editorial control, can stem from anywhere (not just the newsroom), involves new writing techniques, functions in

a network with fragmented audiences, is delivered at great speed, and is open and interactive.

Therefore, the mainstream media houses realized the inevitability of remaining irrelevant if they rejected the new media. “The process of news journalism has been profoundly affected by new media, not just in the technology available to its gatherers and to its editors and distributors, but to its consumers and their modes of consumption” (ibid.:73).

The fact that the new media has removed the passivity among the media audience by enabling simultaneous reception, alteration and redistribution of cultural objects is another significant nature of the online journalism (Kaul, 2013). “The exploding multi-channel environment, the technology to manipulate it, and the internet with its endless options and direct sources all give the consumer the choice previously made by the news editor” (Fenton, 2010:73).

The other nature of online journalism through new media is its interactivity. Audience members can interact with each other or with reporters or sources, engaging in a dialog (Kaul, 2013).

He also talks of the possibility for the audience to participate in discussion room online and to send email to the reporter including the possibility of interacting with the content and correcting factual errors. This was something impossible or very limited in traditional media.

As a result of the pervasive nature of the new media, the traditional media was forced to undergo some reforms to adapt to the new way of journalism practiced mainly through the World Wide Web. On the other hand, the fact that there is overwhelming information online also demanded to offer the public a value added journalism (Fenton, 2010). “With the boost of users looking for information in new places, the mass media industry, in general, seems to have moved to keep

their audience's attention by increasingly going online to offer news and information" (Kaul, 2013:131).

The Internet as an infrastructure plays an indispensable role for the online news and information in various platforms. The World Wide Web has become a platform where the old meets the new through the convergence of all media outlets.

2.5. Media Convergence

Media convergence is defined in various ways by different scholars. Larry Pryor, a professor with the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California, quoted in Quinn & Filak (2005:4), sees convergence as "what takes place in the newsroom as editorial staff members work together to produce multiple products for multiple platforms to reach a mass audience with interactive content, often on a 24/7 timescale"

According to Erdal (2007), fundamental changes have taken place in broadcast newsrooms over the past decade. According to him, the news output of many broadcasters has expanded rapidly since the early 1990s, and covers a wide range of media platforms from television and radio to tele-text, web and mobile phones. This has caused changes in the organizations and practices of production of broadcasters. The production for television and radio has integrated with the production for digital media and this production for multiple media can simply be termed as media convergence. Jenkins (2006:2) puts convergence as follows:

By convergence I mean the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experience they want.

The basis for media convergence is digitization of production systems, which enables content to travel across media boundaries (Erdal, 2007). According to Opgenhaffen (2009:16),

As a result of the process of digitizing the information into bits and bytes, all information can be combined, transformed or even manipulated. This digitization of information has erased the boundaries between print, television, radio and online technologies so that journalistic messages can be a multimedia combination of texts, photos, sounds, movies as well as animated infographics.

As Kaul (2013:129) says “the task of investigating, producing and disseminating news increased not only the skills required of a reporter, but also the speed of publication in the frenetic pace of writing instantaneously and 24/7”. Of course, the idea of multi-skilled reporter is controversial. The changes brought in by digital technologies have “opened the arena for ‘multiskilled’ or ‘deskilled’ journalists, according to advocates and critics respectively,” (Erdal, 2007:53).

There are media managers and publishers who are in favor of the idea of the multi-skilled reporter made as a result of media convergence. Bromley (1997) as cited in (Erdal, 2007) argues that multi-skilling is not a new idea as correspondents usually work for both radio and television and even small print media in their locals. Their argument is that a journalist who used to report only for a print has now become able to do it for television and radio as well and this has broadened his/her skill. According to Kaul (2013:129), “Media industry veterans may find the tech-driven changes unfamiliar and uncomfortable at first, but they would do well to embrace the inevitable.” He further says that such a journalist would finally become a specialist, not in anything in particular, but in effective ways to perform journalism. This would also mean that producing more news with same or little more money” (Quinn & Filak, 2005).

On the other hand, the idea of a multi-skilled reporter is not plausible for the critics of convergence. They dismiss the idea saying, “jack of all trades, master of none” kind of doing things is not viable in journalism (Quinn & Filak, 2005:27). Their argument is that journalists would remain non-skilled in any one of the medium as they try to be skillful in all the media and this would result in low quality and standard in reporting, and eventually in journalism.

The National Union of Journalists’ Commission on multi-media working found out in the US that in most cases journalists felt cross-media integration led to increased workloads, and in some cases working longer hours with more deadlines and no additional pay (Fenton, 2010). This obviously can lead to compromising quality of the reporting. On the other hand, media houses use it as cost cutting mechanism as multi-skilled reporter means fewer reporters for a single media organization.

Forms of Convergence

Scholars agree that forms of convergence differ from country to country as well as based on the purpose of the study underway. Professor Rich Gordon of Northwestern University has identified at least five forms of convergence in the United States as discussed by Quinn & Filak (2005:27) below:

The first one is *ownership convergence* which relates to arrangements within one large media company that encourages cross-promotion and content sharing among print, online, and television platforms owned by the same company.

The second is *tactical convergence* which describes the content-sharing arrangements and partnerships that have arisen among media companies with separate ownership. According to

these scholars, the most common model is a partnership between a television station or cable channel and a newspaper where each company keeps its own revenues.

Structural convergence is the third form of convergence which is associated with changes in newsgathering and distribution, Gordon wrote, but it is also a management process in the sense of introducing changes in work practices.

Information-gathering convergence is the fourth form of convergence which takes place at the reporting level and is in Gordon's term for situations where media companies require reporters to have multiple skills. In some parts of the world, this represents the most controversial form of convergence as people debate whether one person can successfully produce quality content in all forms of media.

Storytelling or presentation convergence as the fifth form discussed by Gordon is a type of convergence that operates at the level of the working journalist, though it needs management support in terms of purchasing the most appropriate equipment. He predicted that new forms of storytelling would emerge from the combination of computers, portable newsgathering devices, and the interactive potential of the Web and television, as journalists learned to appreciate each medium's unique capabilities.

The way Quinn & Filak (2005:7) summed up the essence of convergence below seems viable concerning how it should be seen.

...we would argue that convergence is about doing journalism and telling stories using the most appropriate media." The importance of the news event should dictate the depth and type of coverage, and influence the size

of the team involved. Multimedia assignment editors will decide on the most appropriate medium for telling the story.

In the converged media, it is the Internet connected computer that has a very significant role to play both at the sending and receiving ends. That is why it is important to discuss the nature of computer mediated communication in the section that follows.

2.6. Computer Mediated Communications (CMC)

Computer Mediated Communications (CMC) as defined by Lister et al. (2009:13) includes communication through “e-mail, chat rooms, avatar-based communication forums, voice image transmissions, the World Wide Web, blogs, etc., social networking sites, and mobile telephony.” They underscore that CMC have offered unprecedented opportunities for making connections between individuals, within organizations, and between individuals and organizations.

“Computer-mediated communication (CMC) systems, in a variety of forms, have become integral to the initiation, development, and maintenance of interpersonal relationships” (Walther, 2011:443). However, there are scholars such as Lister et al. (2009) and Opgenhaffen (2009) who take CMC beyond its focus on interpersonal communication and extend it to the study of online news. Of course, the Internet is the backbone of CMC without which this kind of communication is unthinkable. Lister et al. (2009) and Opgenhaffen (2009) add that,

Traditionally, the focus of computer mediated communication research has been lying on the dialogic aspect of Internet communication, while the presentation and consumption aspects of online news have been understudied (ibid.,:11).

Although the CMC were originally used to understand computer based interpersonal communications, in comparison with face-to-face communication, it can be used to study the online news presentation format as well. The interactive, hypertext and multimedia features of the web, the online journalism, determine the users' choice and activity online.

The introduction of the World Wide Web which operates through CMC has created a shift in paradigm in the way news is received by introducing interactivity hypertext and multimedia. The passivity and linearity the traditional media have demanded from the audience is challenged with the introduction of interactivity, hypertext and multimedia alternatives by online news.

Deuze (2003: 219) discusses the concept of dialogical journalism as "A more radical and democratic way of locating connectivity and an open culture in journalism would be dialogical journalism, where the contents of a news medium – for example, a (part of a) website – are fully maintained by journalists interacting with citizens."

It indicates how the web has transformed the traditional media. The fact that the internet is used to access mass media (television, radio and newspaper) at one's convenient time and based on one's interest makes the Computer Mediated Communication theory vital in studying online news presentation format.

The Internet, the World Wide Web, and wireless communication are not media in the traditional sense. Rather, they are means of interactive communication. However, I argue, like most other analysts in the field, that the boundaries between mass media communication and all other forms of communication are blurring (Castells, 2009:64).

The World Wide Web is a communication network used to post and exchange documents such as texts, audios, videos, software programs and anything that can be digitized (ibid, 2009).

Because of this nature of the internet, Castells argues that it does not make sense to compare it with television and newspaper in terms of audience and hours of viewing as it is often the case in the traditional media.

In practice, he argues, Internet users (the majority of the population in advanced societies and a growing proportion of the third world) live with the Internet.

He lists evidences by various scholars that the Internet, in its diverse application “is the communication fabric of our lives, for work, for personal connection, for social net working, for information, for entertainment, for public services, for politics and for religion” (ibid, 2009:64).

According to Castells, entertainment and news cannot be curved out of these when it comes to the internet. In addition to the interpersonal communication used for various purposes, which is the focus of CMC, “it is better to go further and also study which information is published through online platforms, how this information is presented, and how citizens can access and consume this information” (Opgenhaffen, 2009:13).

The study of the representation and consumption of information in addition to the interpersonal communication is imperative in the light of the immense success of web pages functioning primarily as news sites for information dissemination characterized by a different logic than the more conversational spaces like newsgroups, mailing lists, bulletin boards and e-mail traffic (ibid.:13-14).

According to Opgenhaffen (2009), the dialogic and text bias of CMC has largely ignored its multi-media dimensions and precluded the development of theories and models that fit the contemporary issues of CMC.

...when studying online news media, one should not only focus on the conversational function of online news. Also the presentation, access and consumption of this news should be investigated. Indeed, both the publishing,

the access and consumption of news is mediated by the computer (or the Internet as an infrastructure) and can be catalogued under CMC (ibid.:13).

For Opgenhaffen “the news website that is used to publish and consume the online news is not only a channel through which the news is transmitted, but also a collection of codes, signs and principles mediating the news message” (ibid.:14). He argues that the fact that we choose a certain medium for our news influences the decision concerning the formats that can be used to describe the news event (e.g., text alone, or a combination of text, pictures, sounds, and infographics), and whether internal or external hyperlinks can be used. He believes that the “formal and structural features of the online medium are somehow the compelling factors that influence the look and the perception of the content.” He goes on to say that the same message disseminated through different medium does not mean the same thing and also differs in the way it is used or consumed.

2.7. Key Features of Online News

While discussing traditional and new media, scholars (Opgenhaffen, 2009; Dahlgren, 1996; Deuze, 2003, Noci, 2013) describe online media based on certain characteristics among which three features tend to recur: interactivity, hypertext and multimedia. These are the major distinguishing features of online media in terms of their presentation or form that scholars agree up on and they will be discussed separately.

2.7.1. Interactivity

Kiousis (2002) as cited in Karlsson & Stroömbaöck (2010: 3) defines interactivity as:

...the degree to which a communication technology can create a mediated environment in which participants can communicate (one-to-one, one-to-many

and many-to-many), both synchronously and asynchronously, and participate in reciprocal message exchanges (third-order dependency)

According to Karlsson & Strömback (2010), this definition attempts to synthesize other definitions of interactivity, and tries to strike a balance between interactivity as a structure of technology, as communication context, and as user perception. Below is the way they discuss interactivity:

Interactive features open up the possibility of having co-created content on news sites, hence blurring the sender_receiver dichotomy. The implication is that interactive features result in new negotiations between 'producers' and 'users' regarding the content of online news sites, partly replacing the old model of the media imposing the content on users whose only option is to consume or not to consume the news (ibid.: 3-4).

Therefore, the idea of interactivity is thus a shift in control over content or shared content control. It gives the chance to the users to provide their feedback, reaction and even their own part of the story which may challenge the original story itself. The interactivity level could be two-way or multi-directional as opposed to the one-way usually practiced in traditional media.

The idea of interactivity has been there even before the internet though not at the extent it has got to today. For instance, radio live talks and phone-in programs could be considered as interactive to some extent for a limited number of the audience members. There are also other ways of giving feedback in traditional media through telephoning and writing letters etc. However, the kind of interactivity introduced in journalism with the internet is that which addresses the news audience as active instead of passive media consumers, as described by Pavlik (2001) cited in (Deuze, 2003). This is the one that grants the audience control over the content of the media

product not just limited to giving feedback. Interactivity in the internet era allows audience members not only to receive the news as in the passive audience but also to disseminate it (ibid.).

Deuze (2003:214) classifies interactive options of the website applied by online journalism as distinct features of the web for their story telling capacity into three - navigational, functional and adaptive interactivity. The following is how he discusses the three:

Navigational interactivity is the one that allows the audience to navigate or move in a more or less structured way through the content on the site. Phrases like: 'Next page', 'Back to Top' buttons or scrolling menu bars are given as an example for this.

Functional interactivity allows the user to participate to some extent in the production process of the site by interacting with other users or the producers of a particular page or site. According to Deuze (2003), this can happen through direct mailto: links, bulletin board systems (BBS), and moderated discussion lists.

Adaptive interactivity - in this case, every action of the user has consequences for the content of the site, as the site's programming adapts itself to the surfing behaviour of every individual user and 'remembers' users' preferences. Options such as allowing users to upload, annotate and discuss their own content, offering chatrooms and personal customization through smart web design are instances listed by Deuze. He also argues that the adaptive interactivity offers users the most sophisticated level which adapts itself to the behaviour of the visiting surfer. Deuze further discusses the more interactive opportunities websites give to users, the more involved the users will feel about the website even if they do not use all the options for themselves. However,

“While observing interactive options in news sites, several scholars have noted that most sites do not develop interactivity beyond functional and navigational levels,” (ibid.:214).

2.7.2. Hypertext

Hypertext is “a structure composed of blocks of text connected by electronic links; it offers different pathways to users”(Livingstone, 2002: 235). According to Opgenhaffen (2009:21),

The hyperlinked structure forms the base of the Internet so that it is impossible to navigate from medium to medium and from article to article without hyperlinks. In other words, it enables the interconnection between different content and different online media.

On the other hand, Deuze (2003:212) notes that “texts, interconnected through links –hyperlinks – can refer internally (to other texts within the text’s domain, ‘onsite’) or externally (to texts located elsewhere on the internet, ‘offsite’”.

The first one is found on the site itself either within the text or elsewhere on the same site. The second is found outside the site and leads to another site operated by another organization or person. As this leads to another site which could be that of competitors’, it is usually not used by online news websites to avoid losing the audience to others.

The issue of using hypertext in online news is related with providing the audience with better opportunities to navigate within and outside the text giving a chance to more background and various sources to the issue in discussion. For Deuze (2003: 212) “the whole purpose of hypertext in fact is to open up and make available all kinds of documents (content) as much as possible.” It also avoids the fundamental linearity demand of the traditional media and leaves the choice to the audience as to which part to read and in what order to do so (Dahlgren, 1996). The

control by the traditional media over the audience regarding the order in which the news is received is totally lost here.

Hypertext in online journalism provides several advantages over print journalism if used innovatively. It solves space limitation, offers variety of perspective and direct access to sources.

2.7.3. Multimedia

With regard to multimedia, it can be seen as the combination of information made available in different formats, produced in different sections of one or more media organization (Deuze, 2003). It is the matter of leaving the audience or users with various choices of platforms in a converged media.

Media created online are digital by definition, but also forms of old media can be converted into digital media so that a message online can contain text, pictures, video, sounds, etc. As a consequence, traditional borders between media disappear as all media are now combined into a new digital multimedia format (Opgenhaffen, 2009:19).

The multimedia opportunity created for online journalism through the instrumentality of the internet brings all the formats into one place. Nevertheless, scholars advise to make use of appropriate platform as it suits the story in discussion.

According to Deuze (2003), multimediality in news sites can be understood to happen as a result of convergence of media modalities, or as a divergent paradigm. Following the first paradigm, he argues that multimedia can be seen as the combination of information offered in different formats, produced in different sections of one or more media organizations. Talking about the second paradigm, Deuze (2003) asserts that all parts of the site are developed from a multimedia starting point, offering the end-user several ways into, and through, the site's contents.

The three key features of online journalism as discussed above need to be used innovatively and media houses need to be ready for the changes happening within them as a result of introducing those features. According to (Dueze 2009),

When news sites opt to add or increase (external) hyperlinks, (functional/adaptive) interactivity and (convergent/divergent) multimedia, they also opt for changes beyond the addition of some underlined text, an extra page with a feedback form or a link to a streaming video fragment. Such changes also have to do with editorial organization patterns, and challenges to established journalistic ways, norms and values of storytelling. Living up to the characteristics and potential added value of journalism online particularly challenges perceptions of the roles and functions of journalism as a whole (Deuze, 2003: 216).

Online journalism as many scholars argue demands fundamental change of thinking and way of operation from traditional media organizations as well as the journalists themselves. The change goes beyond employing those key features and affects the process as a whole from news gathering to disseminating and thereafter including the values of the media house. Since the online media functions within the global network of the internet, the expectations and demands of this global system also need to be met to remain relevant to the audience.

2.8. The Network Theory

This study takes its theoretical framework from the Network Theory of Manuel Castells. He is a Spanish sociologist especially associated with research on the information society, communication and globalization. The following is how he defines a network in Castells, (2000:15).

A network is a set of interconnected nodes. A node is the point where the curve intersects itself. Networks are very old forms of social organization. But they have taken on a new life in the Information Age by becoming information networks, powered by new information technologies.

According to Castells, the nodes may be individuals, groups, organizations, or societies. The connections could be individual-to-individual or individual-to-group.

If a node in the network ceases to perform a useful function it is phased out from the network, and the network rearranges itself – as cells do in biological processes. Some nodes are more important than others, but they all need each other as long as they are within the network. And no nodal domination is systemic. Nodes increase their importance by absorbing more information and processing it more efficiently. If they decline in their performance, other nodes take over their tasks. Thus, the relevance, and relative weight of nodes does not come from their specific features, but from their ability to be trusted by the network with an extra share of information (ibid.:15-16).

In the case of this study, a news website can be taken as a node since it functions in the network within the Internet. As long as it functions in this network, there are certain things that it has to fulfill to remain important and relevant in the network. Since the network functions in the global environment, there is a necessity for the nodes to consider the global trend while also dealing with local issues. The proper use of the key features of online news as mentioned earlier in this study are some of the requirements that need to be met in this network.

Networks, as social forms, are value-free or neutral. They can equally kill or kiss: nothing personal. They process the goals they are programmed to perform. All goals contradictory to the programmed goals will be fought off by the network components. In this sense, a network is an automaton. But, who programmes the network? Who decides the rules that the automaton will follow? Social actors, naturally. Thus, there is a social struggle to assign goals to the network. But once the network is programmed, it imposes its logic to all its members (actors). Actors will have to play their strategies within the rules of the network (ibid.:16).

As the border between the news producer and consumer/user is increasingly blurring in the Internet age, the sender – receiver model of the mass media as we used to know does not seem to be appropriate for the nature of the online medium including the website. Therefore, as a node in the global network of the information technology, EBC Website news has to be governed by the rules and expectations thereof in order to survive. It has to acknowledge the power that the audience holds in this new platform as opposed to the traditional media.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The design of the study is based on qualitative research method to address the questions posed at the beginning of this study.

According to Berg (2001), qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of things. Qualitative data are obtained in a variety of forms among which notes made while observing in the field, interview transcripts, documents, diaries, and journals are found (Wimmer & Dominic 2011). Through qualitative research approach, the study aims at finding out whether the key features of online news such as interactivity, hypertext and multimedia are used and how they are used by EBC Website.

This method is employed mainly to know how EBC's Website employs the key features of online news with its news posted every day on its website. To this effect, each text news of the stated two weeks (June 1-15) was checked if it has utilized those key features and whether there was integration among them. This period was chosen simply because it was the data gathering time for this study and the researcher saw exploring news of consecutive two weeks on EBC's Website would suffice to serve the purpose of this study.

3.2. Data Collection Techniques

Document analysis, in-depth interview and observation are used as data collection tools for the study.

3.2.1. Document Analysis

The document analysis focuses on EBC's Website focusing on website level and news level analysis of two consecutive weeks which ranges from June 1-15, 2014. The website level analysis examines the site in terms of its interactive nature, hypertext and multimedia usage mainly depending on its news homepage. The news-level analysis explores whether and how these key features are employed in or with each news item and their integration with one another in the stated period. To this effect, each news item on the Amharic version of EBC's Website during the aforementioned period was assessed in terms of the news source; hypertext, interactivity and multimedia usage.

3.2.2. In-depth Interview

In-depth interviews are a one-on-one interview approach. Intensive interviews are unique for using smaller samples providing detailed background about the reasons respondents give specific answers (Wimmer & Dominic, 2011). According to them, elaborate data concerning respondents' opinions, values, motivations, recollections, experiences, and feelings can be obtained through in-depth interview. The interview would be a semi-structured one as this would enable the researcher to be flexible in terms of adding or removing question in the process based on their significance.

3.2.3. Observation

According to Wimmer & Dominic (2011), observation, like all qualitative techniques, is concerned more with description and explanation than with measurement and quantification. According to them, since the data through observation are gathered firsthand, it "is not dependent on the subjects' ability or willingness to report their behavior" (Wimmer & Dominic 2011:125).

“Sometimes it [observation] alone is the only appropriate approach, especially when quantification is difficult” (ibid.:125). These scholars also suggest observation as a more appropriate way of qualitative technique to study the newsroom, particularly the way things are done there and decisions are made.

Observation is usually inexpensive especially if it does not require extensive travel, demanding only writing and recording materials in most cases. In addition, “perhaps the most noteworthy advantage of field observation is that the study takes place in the natural setting of the activity being observed and thus can provide data rich in detail and subtlety (ibid.: 125).

Direct observation was undertaken by the researcher. This included observing the setting of the online newsroom with availability of relevant materials, its relationship with radio and television newsroom as well as the flow of news among various platforms in EBC. The ease of journalists in working with the internet was also observed while they are doing their job on computers. Of course, one cannot know the internal feeling of the subjects under study through observation. This cannot affect this study as it is not attempting to know the feelings of the subjects but their overt skills in connection with key features of online news.

As a person who had worked for EBC, the researcher had easy access to EBC and its online newsroom for the purpose of the observation as well as the interview.

3.3. Data Sources

The major data source for the study is EBC’s Website which is available online. EBC’s Website news, Amharic version, is available to the public on its official website – www.ertagov.com/amharic at the time this study was undertaken. The website itself was taken as the major source of data in order to explore how it employs interactivity, hypertext and

multimedia. In addition, primary data was gathered through in-depth interviews with EBC's Website editor-in-chief, two editors and four reporters. This is to know the familiarity level of the reporters and the editors working on EBC's Website with those key features of online journalism. Since their training and skill acquired in the area has direct relation with what they are doing, the interview was believed to shed light on how their academic background and trainings are related with their works on EBC Website. Former Deputy Editor in-chief of EBC Online and Monitoring Directorate who was in charge of the website news for three years since it was launched was also used as a source of data for this study. Therefore, in-depth interview was also held with her. This would help to know the intention for commencing the online news by EBC as well as the preparations made thereof in terms of human and material resources available to the online department. Since the then Deputy Editor in Chief had already left EBC, this interview was conducted at her current office in Addis Ababa.

The interview questions were originally prepared in English and translated into Amharic for the purpose of letting the interviewees respond to the questions at their convenience. Only one reporter was interviewed in English on his own choice. The interviews conducted in Amharic were later transcribed from the tape-recorder and then translated into English before using them in the analysis.

As the researcher was a journalist for over seven years with rich experience in conducting interviews on various occasions, the interviews were handled with great professional standard. This experience is of great significance to be used in the study in conducting the research. All the interviews were tape-recorded for later transcription while important notes were taken as well for later analysis.

3.4. Sampling Technique

In this study, online news of two consecutive weeks disseminated/posted by EBC's Website from 1st of June, 2014 was purposively chosen for document analysis. This is because the researcher sees examining two weeks of news available on the website as sufficient to understand the practice and presentation of online news by EBC's Website in terms of the key features – interactivity, hypertext and multimedia. The target for the document analysis was the current Amharic version of the EBC's Website as it has more visitors than that of the English version. The Amharic version is also the one that gets better attention by EBC Online department which is expressed by the greater number of journalists assigned to work on it than that of the English version.

The Amharic version of EBC Website, in general, has 11 staff members working including an editor-in-chief who is in charge of the directorate and two editors at the time of the study. In-depth interview was held with seven of them - the editor-in-chief, both editors and four senior reporters who have worked for one year and above and were willing to be interviewed at the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation. The inclusion criterion was lowered to one year to include as many of the journalists working online as possible. This has enabled to understand the journalists' and the editors' understanding of the key features of online news – interactivity, hypertext and multimedia usage as well as how they are practicing it.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis, Presentation and Discussion of Findings

4.1. Introduction

The data for this study is mainly obtained from EBC's Website itself and those working on it. The data obtained from the website through document analysis and through interviews was presented, analyzed and discussed to present the findings. EBC's Website news of two consecutive weeks (from June 1-15, 2014) were examined mainly in terms of the key features of online journalism interactivity, hypertext and multimedia usage. The period was chosen simply because it was the data collection time of this study. Each news of the Amharic version in the stated period was examined in terms of its utilization of those key features. The data obtained from the interview of EBC's Website former and current staff which ranges from the senior reporters to the editor in chief of the online news would also provide some sort of enlightenment on the extent of familiarization of the staff with key features of online news and the way they are practicing online journalism.

4.2. EBC's Online Room

EBC's online room is situated on the fifth floor of the organization's head office found around Beherawi/National Theatre Building/ in Addis Ababa. The online room is found on the same floor with EBC's news center. EBC's online is structured separately from the radio and television news as a directorate by itself and is known as the Online and Monitoring Directorate, headed by an editor –in- chief. The online wing is directly involved in news production and dissemination through the website as well as some social media whereas the monitoring wing mainly deals with media monitoring.

4.3. EBC's Online Staff

EBC's online wing currently operates with 11 staff members for the Amharic version. Almost all the journalists working here have first degree and above in various fields of study. Senior reporter is the minimum position EBC's Website journalists are occupying during the time of this study. All the journalists are relatively new to the department except one journalist, who was there when the website was officially launched in May, 2009. The rest are all under two years since they joined the department. The newness to the online journalism has its own impact on the quality of the online news produced and disseminated by EBC's Website. The staff members have no difficulty in working with computer and using online resources as observed by the researcher.

4.4. EBC's Online News Source

As per the observation by the researcher and byline found on the two-week news assessed, EBC's Website mainly gets its news from the broadcast (television and Radio) newsroom. Handwritten news for the broadcast media were brought to the online newsroom and then rewritten for the web. There is nothing wrong with using radio or television news for the online medium. However, it should be in such a way that it suits the online platform. The question is the way it is presented when it comes to the online medium. Here is what former Deputy Editor-in-chief of EBC's Website, Samrawit Sintayehu, who was responsible for leading the department for three years since its beginning, has said concerning the way news was obtained for the website.

As the department had no enough staff when it started operation, television and radio reporters were expected to submit their script to be used for the website. But it was not easy. First of all, since they do not

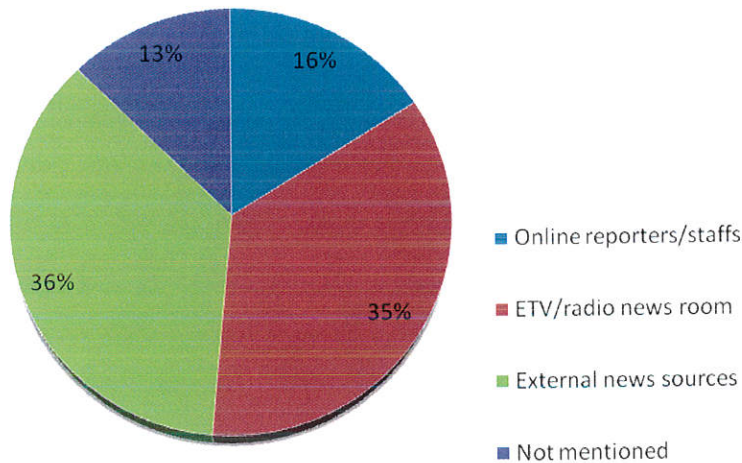
belong to the online division, they give priority to the medium they primarily work on – radio and television. This was a problem in terms of being timely as an online medium. Secondly, the script they were writing targets either radio or television. So, there were many problems when we were bringing the news to be used for the website. The re-writing of the news for the website was also challenging (personal interview on July 25, 2014).

The website faces at least two critical challenges because of the way it was obtaining its news as stated by the former Deputy Editor-in-Chief. The first one is lack of immediacy which is another significant feature of online news. EBC as a broadcast medium has two major news hours in a day in its Amharic broadcast which is its main working language. These major news hours are 1:00 am and 8:00 pm local time. Therefore, every news that is produced in EBC mainly targets these major news hours. In this case, a reporter who covers any news of the day has these news hours' deadline in mind and can think of having ample time to meet the broadcast deadline. On the other hand, the online medium is different from the broadcast in terms of the news hour. Every second can be an appropriate time to break news in the online medium. Immediacy is one of the features that make the online medium relevant. The trend in EBC's Website was, as this researcher also knows as a person worked in EBC's online department before and in his observation for this paper, radio and television reporters come with a news report to produce it for the major news hours stated above. After their handwritten script is edited by the day's editor, the reporters will now go to the studio to read the news. It is after this process for the broadcast media is over that the website department starts to look for the hand written script to rewrite it for the website. It is obvious that this process affects the immediacy aspect of the online news. Since EBC's Website is working in the global network of information, it has to disseminate its news in such a way that it keeps its immediacy to remain relevant as stated by the Network Theory.

The other critical challenge that is caused as a result of using television or radio news the way they are for the online medium is that of presentation format. The online news cannot be the same with that of radio and television in terms of its presentation to the audience/user. The radio or television script of the news is brought and re-written as it is and is uploaded online as a text news for the website. Since this is done without much change that considers the online medium's nature, what makes it online news is the fact that it is presented through the internet.

EBC's online department has recently employed more staff members for its website in a bid to covering news by its own reporters, thereby address the problems mentioned above. This has somehow improved the immediacy problem seen before only in the news covered by the online staff. But this is not significant as it is only 16% of the whole news in the two-week news under study. 35% of the news in the stated period was taken from EBC's broadcast newsroom. News taken from external sources such as Ethiopian News Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs official website and others make up to 36% during the study period. 13% of the news have no mentioned source written at the bottom of the news as it was the case with the other news but are believed to be taken from the broadcast newsroom as per what the editors informally told the researcher. This makes the percentage of news coming from the broadcast newsroom to have the lion's share. However, the source of the news did not seem to affect those key features: interactivity, hypertext and multimedia usage since the online news produced by online staff members did not differ from the rest in this aspect. It only affects the immediacy of the news which is another feature of online news as it lengthens the production and dissemination time.

EBC's Website news sources from June 1-15, 2014



The source of the news for the online medium can be from the broadcast newsroom, online staff reporters or other external sources. What matters is whether the news is presented in such a way that it suits the nature of the online news, in this case the website. In this regard, even those news written by the reporters from the online department do not differ from those produced by others in terms of employing the key features of online news.

The following four pictures taken on June 4, 2014 show what EBC's Website front page looks like from top to bottom. The pictures are taken through print screen by scrolling down as it is not possible to capture the whole page together.

4.5. Interactivity in EBC's Website

Interactivity as one of the key features of online journalism is essential to be well understood and properly utilized by the online media. According to Kiouisis (2002) as cited in Karlsson & Stromback (2010:3), interactivity is the degree to which a communication technology can create a mediated environment in which participants can communicate and participate in reciprocal message exchanges. He goes on to say that interactive features open up the possibility of having a co-created content on news sites, which blurs the sender receiver idea of communication. It widens the room for the audience's say which can result in shared content control based on how open the media house is to entertain the views of the audience.

Based on this concept of interactivity, EBC's Website is yet to be mentioned with the idea of interactivity. As a matter of fact, none of the two-week news items has received any comment or feedback which is the minimum form of interactivity from the users/audience. This is what the Editor-in-chief of the Online and Monitoring directorate Bekri Nasir has confirmed while explaining what interactivity is for him and how they are using on the website. Bekri is currently in charge of online and monitoring department.

Interactivity is a decisive nature of the online media whereby the audience can give its own reaction on what is presented online. It allows others [users] to give their opinion on what is presented. We do not find this kind of feature on television and radio. Of course, all media do not allow a comment on each and every article they produce. They are selective. But our website does not have that interactive feature at this moment (personal interview conducted on June 10, 2014).

One of the editors of the Amharic version of EBC's Website also shares the Editor-in-chief's idea that the current website is not interactive at all. He starts by discussing interactivity in his own understanding first:

Interactivity makes you to be connected with your followers. They will give you a feedback and may ask you questions, and based on that, you will again provide them with organized information. If so, it will increase the number of your audience. It links you with the audience directly. I don't think our current website is interactive. First of all, the website is not suitable for interactivity. On top of that, it just disappears for long time and remains inaccessible by the audience and even by us. As it is now, it is one way just like that of television and radio (the Traditional Media). We are not doing anything different from the mainstream media. So, as it stands now, our website is not interactive at all (personal interview on June 13, 2014).

The other interviewees also tried to define interactivity in their own ways of understanding. For instance, this is how interviewee B understands interactivity. "For me it is making the script from Radio and Television suitable [for web] like that of the print" (Personal interview on June 13, 2014).

From what is discussed about interactivity in this study, one can easily understand that this interviewee does not seem to know much about interactivity as one of the significant features of the online news. Interviewee C seems to have a better idea of what interactivity is. The following is how this interviewee explained it:

Interactivity enables to communicate with the audience/users concerning the news posted. So, it enables to give continuous information even by being based on the feedback/information coming from the audience/users, (Personal interview on June 13, 2014).

Interview D has the following to say about interactivity: “Interactivity is what enables users of the new media to post their views and comments on the news and programs disseminated online, (personal interview on June 10, 2014).

Interviewees A, E and F have more or less similar theoretical understanding of interactivity as interviewees C and D. From this, one can see that all the interviewees except interviewee B have had some theoretical information concerning interactivity. Their idea of interactivity can be somehow traced to Functional Interactivity as discussed by Deuze (2003). According to him, this is the interactivity level that allows the user to participate to some extent in the production process of the site by interacting with other users or the producers of the particular page or site.

Regarding interactivity of EBC’s Website, all the interviewees agree that it is not interactive at all. Bekri Nasir, the Editor-in-chief of EBC website, also shares the fact that the current website is not operational in terms of interactivity. They all relate the interactivity problem with the quality of the website design, something EBC is working on to have a new website with a better interactive feature as they noted.

There are three interactive options applied by websites which Deuze (2003) classifies as Navigational, Functional and Adaptive interactivity. Navigational interactivity is the one that allows the user to navigate through the content of the site in a structured way. It guides with phrases like next page, back to top, etc. These navigational tools which are used to make movement of the user simple and comfortable are hardly found on the current EBC’s Website. The functional and adaptive interactivity that enable the user’s more involvement in the production process and control over content, respectively, are not being utilized by the current EBC website.

Bekri Nasir, the Editor-in-chief, along with one of the editors as quoted above, argues that interactivity problem of EBC's website is just related to the poor design of the current website and has nothing to do with EBC's unwillingness to interact with its website users. They both mention comments given by EBC's Facebook page followers as a case in point which they say is interactive.

The higher degree of interactivity is the heart of the issue when it comes to what makes the online medium different from the traditional media. As it move from navigational to functional and adaptive, interactivity allows more control over the content of what is produced to the users. Interactivity in its full sense is not just limited to commenting on a news item by the user as many of the interviewees seem to have understood in their response to what interactivity is. It is rather a paradigm shift from the way news has been flowing since its inception. The following is what karisson & Striback (2010:3-4) confirm regarding the change that has taken place as a result of interactivity.

Interactive features open up the possibility of having co-created content on news sites, hence, blurring the sender-receiver dichotomy. The implication is that interactive features result in new negotiations between 'Producers' and 'users' regarding the content of online news sites, partly replacing the old model of the media imposing the content on users whose only option is to consume or not to consume the news.

It can be true that a sub-standard website in its designing can hamper interactivity. But it also requires preparation in terms of skill on the part of those working on the website as well as change of attitude from the media house itself to exercise interactivity meaningfully which in turn determines the significance of the website to survive as mentioned in the Network Theory.

As it stands now, the practical exposure of the journalists working on EBC website to the demands of online news is very much limited.

4.6. Hypertext in EBC Website

Livingstone (2002:235) defines hypertext as “a structure composed of blocks of text connected by electronic links...”. It is through this electronic link that one can access news on a website by clicking on their headlines. Apart from a hyper linked headline through which every detail of any news is accessed, texts interconnected through links can refer internally or externally for various purposes (Deuze, 2003). It is with this concept of internal or external links within a text, a site or outside the website that hypertext in EBC’s Website is discussed in this study.

The two consecutive weeks of EBC’s website assessment that was undertaken from June 1, to 15, 2014 for this study purpose reveals that the website does not employ this significant feature of the online medium with its news. Each news item of EBC’s Website Amharic version news in the stated period was examined to find out whether a hypertext was used internally to refer to a detailed story within the website or externally to other websites that might have provided a better or more information concerning some topics/issues. The result, however, indicated that none of the news items in those two weeks of study showed hypertext was used with it. This does not include a related story’s link which appeared at the end of very few news in a separate place.

The interviewees were asked what a hypertext is and whether they were making use of it on EBC’s website to find out how familiar they were with this significant feature of online news. The following is what Bekri Nasir, the Editor-in-chief, has said when responding to the question on this issue.

A hypertext helps to get facts or detailed issues related to the news one is reading. EBC's Website does not have that system of categorizing the news systematically. But there is an alternative to link related issues manually (personal interview on June 10, 2014).

One of the editors of the Amharic website news discussed hypertext and how it was employed by EBC's Website as follows:

In my understanding a hypertext is a route that links to other information. For instance, if we take news from the BBC, we put the link of the source to increase the credibility or for more details. But we do not use a link for all the news that we take from outside sources, (Personal interview on June 13, 2014).

Both the Editor-in-chief and the Editor looked somehow familiar with the purpose of a hypertext although they were not using the feature on EBC's website. The Editor-in-chief blamed the quality of the design of the website for not enabling systematic categorization of past news and related stories that would enable systematic linking.

Other interviewees have said the following concerning hypertext and its use in the EBC's online department. Interviewee C said "I do not have any knowledge about a hypertext. So, I better jump it", (Personal Interview on June 13, 2014).

Interviewee F said "Hypertext is a technical term. As I am a reporter, I don't use it usually. Interviewee B also did not understand what a hypertext was. After explaining the idea of hypertexting to this interviewee, she said that they were not linking news to other relevant issues consistently. Interviewee D also confirmed that he had never used a hypertext with the news he produces.

The following is what interviewee E has said when asked whether he used hypertext in the news that he produced.

This [hypertext] is usually done by editors and website managers. We do not do anything in that level except writing the news and handing it to them. So, I think that this is a work carried out by editors and website managers (Personal interview on June 13, 2014)

Almost all the interviewees except the Editor and the Editor-in-chief had no idea about what a hypertext is and how it has to be used in online news.

Using a hypertext link in online news is another significant issue that characterizes online news. According to Deuze (2003:212), "The whole purpose of hypertext in fact is to open up and make available all kinds of documents (content) as much as possible." The current EBC's Website is by far behind the expectation of online news in this aspect of employing hypertext. EBC's website has to conform to the rules of the online network for its own sake of existence. Castles (2000) in his Network Theory states that a node in a network will phase out if it ceases to perform a useful function. The node in this case is EBC's Website which functions in the global network of web news.

4.7. Multimedia in EBC Website

Multimedia is a matter of leaving the audience or users with various choices of platforms in a converged media. Deuze (2003) sees multimedia as the combination of information made available in different formats produced in different sections includes the use of texts, audio, video, pictures, etc., online.

EBC's Website has a live-streaming of television, National Radio and FM 97.1. So, those who are interested in the live-streaming can hook to EBC's website to access EBC's news and programs. However, the poor internet connection of the nation usually disrupts watching EBC's television online through EBC's Website. The multimedia utilization, this study is more concerned with, is the one within or in accompany with the text news. Based on this parameter,

a two-week news of the stated period in June, 2014 was closely examined in terms of its multimedia usage. Each text news item was examined whether pictures, audios, videos and graphics have accompanied it. In addition, it was also checked whether these formats were utilized without text news on the Website.

In accordance with the aforementioned criteria, almost all the text news in the stated period were accompanied with one still picture each. The picture comes at the top of every text news. However, the quality and relevance of majority of the pictures used with text news were questionable. Most of the pictures were very low in quality and blurred to the extent that it is difficult to know the identity of the persons involved in some cases, particularly when the news were opened to be read.



The above blurred picture of Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and the United States Secretary of Energy, Dr. Ernest Moniz was taken from EBC Website dated June 3, 2014 and used with the news that says the US government wants to work in cooperation with Ethiopia in the energy sector. This is exactly how it appears on the website as well as when the news is clicked for reading. The picture was taken from ETV news while the news was broadcast as ETV's logo is visible at the top right corner of the picture. It is usually how the website is obtaining pictures/photographs for its news. It is obvious that this by itself affects the quality of the pictures used. The other problem that highly affects the quality of pictures used on EBC Website is the large size of the picture frame that is already set by its design. So, every picture that is used has to be enlarged to fit the frame size which stretches the picture and blurs it as a result. The pictures usually appear blurry when the news is accessed to be read in detail.



The above picture was taken from EBC's Website posted on June 7, 2014 with a news that reports a match between Ethiopian Women National Football Team known as Lucy and its Ghanaian counterpart.

The researcher has also observed that Google Image and other news websites are alternative sources of pictures for EBC's website news. When pictures are not taken directly from a news event by being present there, which is true in most cases, editors usually search for relevant pictures they can use in Google Image or other websites. This is done without giving credit to original copyright holders of the pictures. Such pictures can also be irrelevant at times with what is written as a text news.

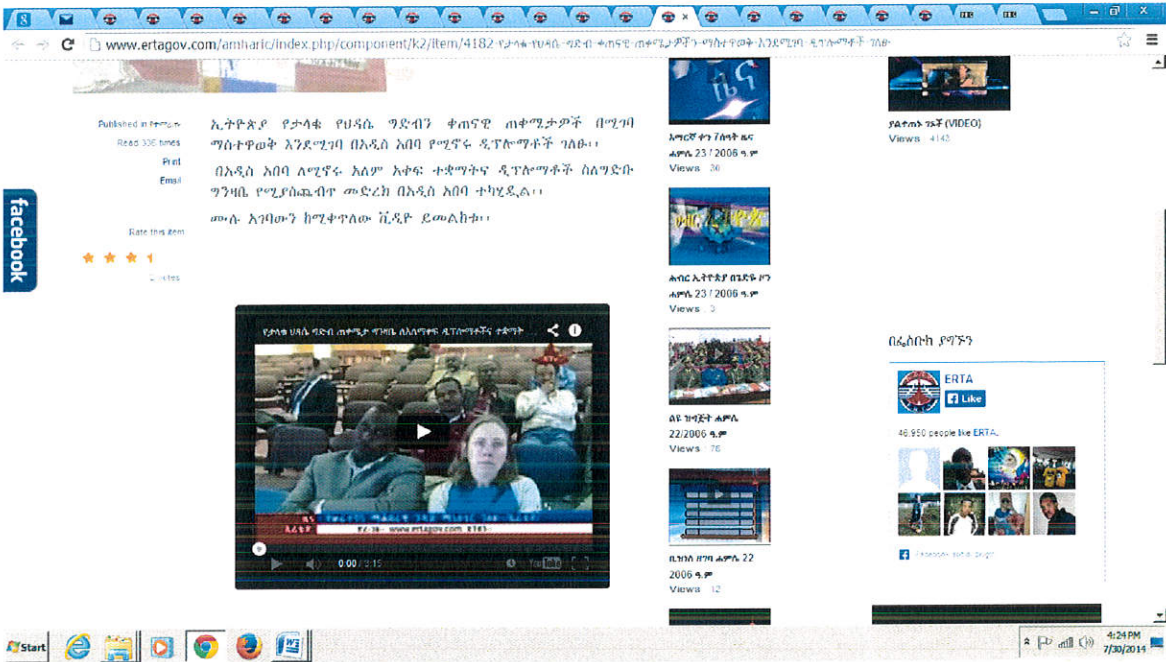
Pictures used with text news should not only be to the standard quality but have to be also relevant and have to add meaning to the news involved when used. Actions that are difficult to be expressed by words could be captured and used either to boost the authenticity of the text news or to tell stories by using the pictures alone. But in the case of the current EBC's Website, relevance and standard of pictures used with text news are questionable in the majority of the cases. The pictures taken by online staff reporters in few occasions were in a better quality when used with text news. However, the fact that the department has only one professional photo camera makes it impossible for the staff reporters to take pictures even in the news they attend personally.

Regarding the audio format, the assessment shows that there was no text news supported by an audio format. Neither was there any audio news uploaded on EBC website separately. Even though there is an icon that reads 'AUDIO NOW', it often is not functional. The only audio

format found on EBC's website was the one from the live-streaming national radio and FM 97.1 radio.

The Editor-in-chief of EBC's Website, Bekri Nasir in an interview on June 10, 2014, told the researcher that the current website is not compatible with audio format as a result of which the Organization is planning to redesign its website to make it up to the standard in all aspects.

The news in video format on EBC Website can be classified in to two. The first one is video news of ETV major news hours uploaded on website. Everyday news of 1:00 pm and 8:00 pm local time are uploaded under the tab (ERTA Tube) for those interested to watch EBC Television news at their own convenient time online. Recently, the department has started selecting news it believes should go online instead of uploading the whole EBC Television news at the stated time (Personal interview with Bekri Nasir, Editor-in-chief of EBC's websites on June 10, 2014). The second category of video news on EBC's Website is those uploaded separately by substituting text news. These video news are uploaded on the same place as text news and are introduced by a text headline and a lead that ushers into the details of the story by a reporter.



This is a video news link disseminated on June 12, 2014 saved through print screen from the website.

Out of 136 total news disseminated during the two-week under study, there were only eight such video news on EBC's website. Apart from this, there was no video support used within the text news as it is usually done by renowned international news websites. Documentary programs, special programs, interviews and entertainment videos were not included here as the study deals with the news part in particular.

The video format used by the current EBC's website, as the data shows, is highly focused on uploading major news hour news. This has no difference with having the traditional media onboard the online medium except reducing some news items as it currently stands. Of course, it can help those who want to watch EBC Television news at their own convenient time. It still has that linearity demand of the traditional media which is unbearable by the nature of online news.

The video format is usually supposed to support the text news in such a way that it shows things that are difficult to explain through texts. There are issues that are simply understood when they are shown than written. This is where the video has to come and can be used anywhere (Top, Middle or Bottom) within the text. Of course, other catchy video news used on television can be shoveled and made available online separately as it is usually done by other well-established online news media.

Graphics, as one format of multimedia, was not utilized with the news during those two weeks on EBC's Website. The web is suitable platform to accompany its text news by graphics. However, EBC lacks this format as the data has shown.

Interviewees were asked about multimedia and how they were using it on EBC's Website to assess their familiarity with the feature. The following is taken from what Bekri Nasir, the Editor-in-chief, has said regarding multimedia and how it was being utilized by EBC's website.

As the name implies multimedia is reaching the audience through various platforms such as video, audio, text and pictures online. Out of these, we are currently using the video, text and pictures in our daily work. The Audio format is not being used because of technical problems related to our website. We used to upload the whole ETV news [of selected news hours] until recently. But we have changed this way of doing things since the last three months. We now select some television news of the day and upload them. We even sometimes upload single video news based on its significance, (personal interview on June 10, 2014).

One of the two EBC's Website editors also had similar idea on multimedia and its practice on the website.

Multimedia usage is the possibility to have Audio, Video, and Text altogether on a website through the internet. Our website lacks the Audio

part. It only functions in text and Video. It is not compatible for graphics also. So, it is difficult to call it multimedia as we are only using text and Video. We have started a new way of uploading the Video recently. We now select some of the very important news (top stories of the day) and upload it instead of putting the whole news on the website. We sometimes use Video with text as well (personal interviews on June 13, 2014).

Both the Editor-in-chief and the Editor seem to have the understanding of what multimedia is from what they stated about it. They blamed the website for not compatible with some formats like audio and graphics, which hinders the multimedia to be complete. However, there seems to be a gap when it comes to how it should be used. The video and the text news themselves were not being used in such a way that they support one another on EBC website. The rare video news used with texts was one that came after a headline and the lead of the news. It is difficult to say that there is integration between the pictures, the text news and the video news used. The idea of selecting the top stories of the day and uploading it instead of the whole news as they have said seems interesting for the online users who are usually intolerant for linear longer news of the traditional media.

The other staff members of EBC's online department were also asked about multimedia. Majority of them had more or less similar understanding on the theoretical aspect of the word as discussed below.

Interviewee E did not understand the word multimedia at first. After clues from the interviewer, he said that EBC's website is operating in multimedia since it has the live streaming in radio and television.

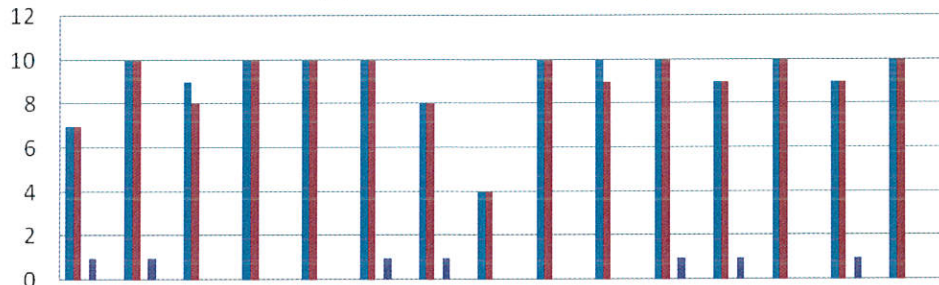
Interviewees B, C, D, E and F, more or less, understood multimedia as the use of audio, video and text on the website which they believed that the website is already using these features. Majority of the interviewees have described multimedia as using audio, video and text on the website. But multimedia is not limited to these three formats only. Still pictures, graphics and even animated pictures are part of multimedia that are not mentioned by majority of the interviewees. Moreover, none of the interviewees have said anything on how multimedia should be used and how the formats should be integrated.

Scholars advise to make use of appropriate platform as it suits the story under discussion. That is why it has to be understood in this sense by EBC's online staff to maximize the use of multimedia on the website. The following is what Opgenhaffen (2009:14) states concerning this issue:

...the news website that is used to publish and consume the online news is not only a channel through which the news is transmitted, but also a collection of codes, signs and principles mediating the news message.

This scholar argues the medium we choose for our news influences the decision concerning the formats that can be used to describe the news event (e.g., text alone, or a combination of text, pictures, sounds, and infographics), and whether internal or external hyperlinks can be used. He believes that the "formal and structural features of the online medium are somehow the compelling factors that influence the look and the perception of the content." According to Opgenhaffen (2009), the same message disseminated through different mediums does not mean the same thing and also differs in the way it is used or consumed. That is why the appropriate way of using multimedia should be equally catered for in the process of employing it in online news.

EBC's Website two-week news assessed in terms of multimedia, hypertext & interactivity



	1-Jun	2-Jun	3-Jun	4-Jun	5-Jun	6-Jun	7-Jun	8-Jun	9-Jun	10-Jun	11-Jun	12-Jun	13-Jun	14-Jun	15-Jun
No. of news posted	7	10	9	10	10	10	8	4	10	10	10	9	10	9	10
Pictures used with the news	7	10	8	10	10	10	8	4	10	9	10	9	10	9	10
Audio used with the news															
Video used with the news	1	1				1	1				1	1		1	
Hypertext used with the news															

4.8. Staff Training

Online journalism is a very recent phenomenon in Ethiopia. It is only five years since EBC itself launched its online operation formally. Therefore, the importance of trainings cannot be undermined to fill the gap in skill in this new area of journalism. In this regard, it is important to know the kind of preparation made by EBC in terms of training the online staff at and after the launching of the website. To this effect, former Online and Monitoring Deputy Editor- in-chief, Samrawit Sintayehu, who had been leading the department for three years since its launching was interviewed at her current office where she is working after resigning from EBC's Website. The following is what she has said concerning the preparations made and training issued at that time.

When I was posted to lead the department at its beginning, there was no staff yet, I was working as a television journalist at the time. I myself didn't have any training on online journalism. We started to select staff members for the online department based on interest mainly. Those who were thought to have a better skill in working with computer were also made to join the staff. But no one had any training on online writing and how things are done in online journalism. It was even difficult to find institutions to give us training at the time. There were not even materials such as photo cameras, enough computers and good internet connection needed for the department. It was in the process after the launching that things began to improve. Some months later, we got a week-long training by Internews Ethiopia. After that, the owner of Ethiopia First Website, Ben, had given us on job training by coming to our department for some time on how to produce news and uploading news online. It was later that, EBC's ICT department had given us a short training on how to edit and upload video, (Personal interview on July 25, 2014).

So, it is clear that EBC has not provided any training for the online staff before or even immediately after launching the website officially. No staff member was trained in online news writing or managing a website as part of the preparation to begin the online department; not even the one who was posted to lead the department. It was after some months that short introductory trainings were offered as she stated it here.

The short-term trainings found later might have helped to continue the editing and uploading of video news on EBC's website. However, online journalism is not all about video editing and uploading online. Texts, audios, pictures, graphics and animations are all significant in online journalism as part of multimedia. The skill and professional standard with which these formats should be used in an integrated and appropriate way is crucial for the website to remain effective and relevant in the global network where the competition is stiff. However, almost all the current online staff members stated that they have never taken any relevant training in relation to online journalism since they

joined the department more than a year ago. Almost all the current staff members are new.

The following is what interviewee C has said concerning the need for relevant training.

I have taken a general training on journalism with other new staff members when I joined EBC. The training center itself does not have organized training material on online media. No other training was given to us. We have been requesting for relevant training on the online medium but we have not yet got any. We were told that the online department would be reorganized and the demand of training would be addressed by the organization, (Personal interview on June 13, 2014).

Interviewee D also shares the lack of specific training on online media.

So far, I have never had any online media training specifically. I was given a general training on journalism when I joined EBC but not for online medium. We usually ask for relevant trainings but not yet given any in this area, (Personal interview on June 13, 2014).

All the other interviewees have similar idea on the lack of training on online journalism. The editor-in-chief of EBC's website, Bekri Nasir, saw lack of relevant training as one of the biggest challenges his department is facing.

I think this [lack of training] is the biggest challenge here in this department. It is only through reading that we are trying to do the online journalism. We [leaders and workers] are gathered here from various departments of the organization and we are not supported by relevant training. So, this issue of lack of training to upgrade our skill is a clear challenge that we have to address (Personal interview on June 10, 2014).

The editor-in-chief, Bekri Nasir, also spoke of how they usually recruit staffs for the online work.

At first, I think those [Journalists] who were believed to have a better knowledge in working with computer technology were picked from various departments of radio and television. Later, people were selected based on their competence through examination. The examination tries to focus on questions related to websites and internet. We cannot find Journalists trained specifically for this area. There is a tendency of mixing the journalism (Profession) with computer knowledge, (Personal interview on June 10, 2014).

To put it in a nutshell, all the staff members see lack of training as their challenge in delivering their assignments effectively. The fact that the current online staff of EBC has not received any training in their specific area of online journalism is reflected in the news that they produce on the website. Website news has its own feature with which it is characterized and preferred to the traditional media in the networked community. It is only when EBC's online staff is trained in this specific area and be familiar with appropriate usage of the key features of online news that it attracts more visitors and become effective in its work that the website would be meaningful in delivering news to its users.

In general, EBC has gone online through its website but with the mentality and practice of the traditional media. Every medium has its own unique nature that it needs to be conformed to accordingly for maximum effectiveness. There are factors that make radio preferred to television and vice versa. The same holds true when it comes to traditional media and the online medium.

EBC's Website does not seem to have recognized the significance of properly utilizing interactivity, hypertext and multimedia as key features of the online news. EBC is not even attempting to use interactivity and hypertext on its current website. The journalists are not familiar with these key features particularly when it comes to using it with their works practically. There is also no preparation in terms of skill for the journalists to employ these features properly because of lack of trainings on the issue. Among the multimedia formats, the

audio is not even functional. Although the attempt to employ the other multimedia formats is there, it still lacks integration with one another.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

An attempt has been made in the previous chapters to explore the practice and presentation format of EBC's Website news. In this chapter, the conclusions and recommendations would be presented based on what has been examined and found out. Accordingly, the conclusions and recommendations of the study are presented as follows:

5.2. Conclusions

Much has been changed in the way journalism is perceived and practiced since the introduction of online journalism through the World Wide Web in the early 1990s. Particularly, the change in the role of the audience is notable as it has resulted in change of paradigm on the way news is produced, disseminated and consumed online. This study attempts to examine what EBC's Website and the staff thereof look like in terms of coping up with this relatively new area of journalism. The study tries to closely look into EBC's Website in order to find out whether and how it utilizes some of the key features of online journalism namely: interactivity, hypertext and multimedia since these key features are agreed upon by scholars to characterize the online news.

In the review of related literature, an attempt has been made to discuss how the online journalism came into being in the early 1990s through the instrumentality of the prior innovation of the internet technology. The traditional media (radio, television and print) houses at first were not welcoming the online journalism as they saw it as a threat in many ways. Their established control over the audience and marketing related issues are among the major areas under question for the traditional media not to embrace the new way of journalism immediately. However,

media houses that have recognized the inevitability of the invading power of the online media have eventually taken steps to embrace online journalism and practicing it.

The infrastructure for the online media, the Internet, was equally available to news producers and receivers as opposed to radio or television station which are only controlled by the producers. This availability of the Internet brought about the empowerment of the audience to take active part in the production, dissemination and consumption of news. It has brought change in paradigm in the way news was understood and consumed previously. Scholars now agree that the difference between the sender and receiver existed in the traditional or classical media is blurring. Some scholars, such as Kaul (2003) describe this change introduced through digital technology as a revolutionary and fundamental. As website is functioning in the global internet network, the Network Theory of Manuel Castells is taken as a theoretical framework for this study. Castells describes a network as a set of interconnected nodes that have taken on a new life in the Information Age through information technology. A news website that can be taken as a node in the network has to function in accordance with what is expected of it to keep its relevance and continue effectively in the global network of information.

The wide practice of online journalism has gradually shaped its own distinct character from that of the traditional media. The potential for high interactivity that enabled maximum connectivity with the user is one of the major distinct characters of the online news. This feature is considered as a way of entertaining and catering for the users' view. It is also an indicative of the openness of the producers for accommodating various views and hence highly related to their democratic culture that goes beyond feedback and commenting.

The use of hypertext links as distinct feature of the online news has also been discussed as an instrument through which the user is provided with detailed and direct sources of issues under discussion. It also enables to lead the user to diverse views concerning the issue from within and outside the website.

Multimedia usage is also discussed as a unique feature of the online news. It is all about the combination of information made available in different formats such as audio, video, text and pictures. Scholars advise the use of appropriate platform as it suits the story while employing multimedia. So, it is in terms of these distinct and key features of the online news that this study has examined EBC's Website.

The qualitative research method has been employed to examine EBC's Website news status particularly in relation to the aforementioned key features. First, EBC's Website news of two weeks from June 1 – 15, 2014 were examined regarding how often they used these key features in each of the daily news. In addition, in-depth interviews were held with former and current head of EBC's Online and Monitoring department as well as journalists working on the website at the time of the study. This was instrumental in finding out the familiarity of those working on the website with the key issues of the online news as well as whether and how they are using the features.

The data collected and analyzed indicated that EBC's Website news is not interactive at all with its users. Even the interactive icons on the website are not functional. No user has been able to give any comment on the news that have been posted in those study period. This is also confirmed by the Editor-in-chief and all the other interviewees. The fact that EBC's Website news lacks interactivity makes it not to differ from the traditional media except it has been made

available on the internet. This affects its relevance and effectiveness as a node working in the global network where nodes could be knocked out when they are not relevant and effective in terms of what they are expected to deliver. Interactivity requires the culture of openness and accommodating diverse views to be effective than a mere entertaining of comments and feedbacks. No doubt that this in turn requires a fundamental change within EBC on the way journalism has been practiced since the beginning.

Employing a hypertext links within news is also not being practiced in EBC's Website. The two-week assessment of the Website's news indicated that this significant feature was neglected. So, EBC's Website news is almost devoid of links leading the user to important details either within or outside the website.

What is more, the multimedia utilization of the website is there but with limitations of its own. Here, the audio format of the multimedia is not functional. Pictures are used with almost all text news on the website. However, majority of the pictures used with text news lack the expected quality. In some of the text news blurry pictures make it difficult for the user to know the identity of persons involved. In some other cases, the relevance of pictures used with the text news is questionable. The video format news used within and outside the text is the other component of multimedia employed in EBC's Website. The one used within texts is very rare and lacks integration with the texts. Appropriateness of multimedia usage as per the nature of the story is not given attention in this regard.

All the aforementioned limitations have something to tell about the acquaintance of those working on EBC's Website with issues that matter to online journalism. That is why questions that have helped to know the familiarity of those working on the website with the key features of

online news were raised by the researcher. In this regard, the Editor-in-chief and one of the two editors seem to somehow understand these features of online news theoretically. There were some interviewees from the rest who had partial theoretical understanding and there were some who did not. In both cases, there was no practical utilization of most of the key features of online news. Lack of training in those areas is seen as the major problem for the journalists working in the online department.

5.3. Recommendations

The online journalism is relatively a recent phenomenon in the history of journalism. It is much more at its infancy in Ethiopia including in EBC. So, it is not too late for EBC's Website to adjust itself to the demands that characterize the online news in order to survive, be relevant and effective while working in the global network of information. The following recommendations are, therefore, forwarded:

- EBC's top management has to give due attention to its online media as a very significant medium just as television and radio. The online media is becoming a platform where agenda is set and opinion is hasped. So, the leadership of the media house has to wake up and cater for the ever growing online audience in its structure and capacity to reach them.
- The current EBC's Website has to be redesigned in such a way that it is user friendly, accommodates interactivity and suitable for all the key features of online journalism. The design work can be outsourced to capable organizations in this area by setting the criteria needed for state of the art website.
- Journalists working online should be equipped with materials necessary for them to deliver effectively. Laptop computers, photo and video cameras as well as e-videos with

high internet connection speed are vital for the online work. Those working online should not remain offline majority of their time.

- Media houses including EBC have to accept and live up to the paradigm shift that has come in news production, dissemination and consumption. The sender-receiver model monopoly over content that the traditional media used to enjoy is deteriorating in this new form of journalism. This new form of journalism is here to stay. That is why self adjustment is needed for open, accommodative and democratic culture in dealing with its online news users.
- Addis Ababa University School of Journalism and Communication and the likes have to give special attention to online journalism and work closely with media houses in the country to provide relevant training to journalists. This has to be done in a planned way for short, medium and long terms targeting skills needed in the online journalism. Journalists working online need to be equipped with working knowledge and skill in this area in order to engage with users, and for this to happen, schools of journalism and communication need to shoulder the responsibility in seeing to it that their students are well trained in this respect.

Bibliography

- Berg, Bruce L. (2001). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (4thed.) Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Castells, Manuel. (2000). Materials for an exploratory theory of the network society. *British Journal of Sociology*. 51(1). pp. 5–24.
- Castells, Manuel. (2001). *THE INTERNET GALAXY Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Castells, Manuel & Cardoso, Gustavo. Eds. (2005). *The Network Society: From Knowledge to Policy*. Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins Center for Transatlantic Relations.
- Castells, Manuel (2009). *Communication in the Digital Age*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dahlgren, Peter. (1996). Media Logic in Cyberspace: Repositioning Journalism and its Publics. *Javnost/The Public* 3(3): 59 – 71.
- Deuze, Mark. (2003). The Web and Its Journalism: considering the consequences of different types of news media online: *SAGE Publications*. 5(2): 203-230
- Erdal, Ivar J. (2007). Researching Media Convergence and Crossmedia News Production Mapping the Field: *Nordicom Review* 28 (2): 51-61
- Fenton, Natalie. Ed. (2010). *New Media Old News: Journalism, Democracy in the Digital Age*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Gebeyehu Bekele: (2011). Media and New Technology in Ethiopia - a study of an interface: A case study of the ERTA/ETV newsroom. MA thesis, Addis Ababa University.
- Green, Lelia. (2010) *THE INTERNET: An Introduction to New Media*. New York: Berg.
- Jenkins, Henry (2006) *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Karlsson, Michael & Stroömbaöck, Jesper. (2010). FREEZING THE FLOW OF ONLINE NEWS Exploring approaches to the study of the liquidity of online news. *Journalism Studies*. 11(1): 2-19
- Kaul, Vineet. (2013). Journalism in the Age of Digital Technology. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*. 3(1): 125-143.
- Lister, Martin et al. (2009). *New Media: a critical introduction* (2nd ed.) London & New York: Routledge.
- Livingstone, Sonia (2002). *Young people, new media: Childhood and the Changing Media Environment*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Noci, Javier D. (2013). A HISTORY OF JOURNALISM ON THE INTERNET: A state of the art and some methodological trends. *Revista internacional de Historia de la Comunicación*. 1(1): 253-272.
- Opgenhaffen, Michaël (2009). *Multimedia, Interactivity, and Hypertext in Online News: Effect on News Processing and Objective and Subjective Knowledge*. Leuven: Kath. Univ. Leuven, Fac. Sociale Wetenschappen.
- Quinn, Stephen & Filak, Vincent F. Ed. (2005). *Convergent Journalism: An Introduction*. Amsterdam: Focal Press.
- Rosa Machuco Antonio. (2012). From mass communication to new media: a network perspective. *Observatorio Journal*, 6 (3) 145-176.
- Skjerdal, Terje S. (2012). *Competing loyalties: Journalism culture in the Ethiopian state media*. Ph.D. thesis. Humanities University of Oslo.
- Tesfaye Alemayehu. (2013). *Social Media as an Alternative Political Forum in Ethiopia: the Case of Facebook*. MA thesis, Addis Ababa University.
- Van Der Haak, Bregtje et al. (2012). The Future of Journalism: Networked Journalism. *International Journal of Communication* 6: 2923–2938.

- Walther, J. B. (2011). *Theories of computer-mediated communication and interpersonal relations*. *The Sage handbook of interpersonal communication* (4th ed.): 443-479.
- Wimmer, Roger D. & Dominick, Joseph R. (2011) *Mass Media Research: An Introduction* (8th ed.). Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Winston, Brian. (1998). *Media Technology and Society: a History: from the Telegraph to the Internet*. London & New York: Routledge.

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university, and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Mulugeta Kussa -----

School of Journalism and Communication

November, 2014

Approved by -----

Advisor