



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & COMMUNICATION  
MA PROGRAM OF PUBLIC RELATIONS & STRATEGIC  
COMMUNICATION**

**THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONERS:  
THE CASE OF THE ETHIOPIAN MINISTRY OF PEACE**

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**JULY 2023  
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THE CASE OF THE ETHIOPIAN MINISTRY OF PEACE**

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**THIS THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM &  
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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Deme Banja Tolesa, Titled: the use of social media by Public Relations practitioners; the case of the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the awards of Master of Art degree in public relations and strategic communication, complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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## **Declaration**

I declare that the thesis in titled ‘the use of social media by public relations practitioners at the ministry of peace’ is my original work and has not been presented for any degree in this university or any other university or collages, as well as all sources of material, used for the thesis has been acknowledged.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Addis Ababa University, July 2023

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## **Abstract**

This study aimed to assess the use of social media by public relations practitioners in the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace. In the study, the roles of social media in public relations practitioners' communication and the ways information is exchanged through the ministry's social media platforms were assessed. In this study, the qualitative method was applied for detailed information regarding the objectives of the study. The study participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, based on their position and experience they have about the subject. Among the four models of Grunig and Hunt, 1984) the two-way symmetrical model was used to assess the use of social media by public relations practitioners in the ministry of peace. In the two-way symmetric model, public relations practitioners' goal is to achieve mutual understanding between organizations and their public (Charles & Singh, 2006 p.5), based on the data from the Ministry through in-depth interviews and content analysis, the following are the major findings of this study: public relations practitioner's communication on social media is following a one-way communication flow, the ministry uses only one social media platform for communication instead of using multiple platforms, the ministry's image and reputation is bad in the perception of the public, and there is a gap in the side of knowing the characteristics of media and in applying the public relations functions.

***Key words; Social Media, Public Relations***

## **List of Acronym**

MoP	Ministry of Peace
EBC	Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation
GC	Gregorian calendar
EC	Ethiopian Calendar
TV	Television
PRs	Public Relations
FBC	Fana Broadcasting Corporation
INSA	Information Network Security Agency

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# CHAPTER ONE

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Social media, a relatively new phenomenon has gained currency as a means to be used for communication as technology is rapidly changing too. There are multiple platforms offered in the dissemination of information, and technology is at the disposal of a highly demanding public. This media has changed the way in which information is produced, distributed, and displayed. Broom, (2009), observes that the Internet is a manifestation of an ever-present means of communication considering that all the new forms of media rely on the Internet. Among the principles of effective communication is two-way communication. Today, with the advent of social media, public relations practitioners must program communication activities that permit audience response or feedback (Darrell, et al. 2013).

Social media, according to Boyd and Ellison (2007), is a web-based application that enables users to (1) come up with a profile in a closed system, (2) form a collection of other users with similar ideas and connections, (3) look and go through their connections list and those created by others in the system previously in the 1980s, information channels could be split into two forms: mass communication and micro communication.

The notion of social media is associated with new digital media phenomena such as blogs, social networking sites, location-based services, microblogs, photo- and video-sharing sites, etc., in which ordinary users (i.e. not only media professionals) can communicate with each other and create and share content with others online through their personal networked computers and digital mobile devices (Bechmann and Lomborg, 2013, p. 767).

According to Paul, (2008), social media is giving rise to a new style of communication that is characterized by conversation and community. It is important to understand these new channels of communication in order to effectively utilize them as a means to communicate with the public as well as to know what implications they may have for the public relations practice. In order to implement these tactics effectively, it is equally important for journalism and public relations programs on college campuses to provide relevant curricula for future practitioners.

In the ministry of peace, the communication officers are using social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to addressing their internal and, external public. On that social networking, they post new information like news releases, features, video conferences, and new programs. Newsletters: the ministry's communication department produces newsletters for the internal public. They use it as a good way to communicate with their employee and keep them informed of new services of the organization and the most important information the employee has to know. It is published twice yearly (<https://www.facebook.com/PeaceMinistry.ETH>).

Press release: the press release is prepared to gate media coverage and work with media houses. According to them, they publish press releases when the event happened and if they have a new program they contact the media houses through their press release. After all, they write news by themselves and post it on their social media. Brochures and catalogs: they also publish brochures and catalogs it is helpful for external and internal publics and it can help keep customers thinking about new information released and services. In Peace minister Brochures and catalogs are used especially when an event is happening. Radio & Television: regarding public relations practice in the Peace minister radio and television are other means they communicate through giving interviews preparing news conferences and announcing new programs and services (<https://www.facebook.com/PeaceMinistry.ETH>).

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

The Ministry of Peace is established to guarantee peace, to apparatus a wave of ethnic violence, and to promote the values of peace and the rule of law in Ethiopia. The main problem in this country is the lack of peace. Communication is important in day-to-day life. Social media makes communication easier for public relations through social networking social media platforms the simplest way they can address and receive feedback from their target public within minutes. So, social media offer the opportunity for public relations of the minister to communicate without time bounded, at low cost, and with small space to ensure the rule of law, enforce national justice, to build peace and stability among the nations.

Social media provided multiple channels for public relations practitioners to engage their public directly without relying on traditional media. Public relations practitioners have opportunities to share real-time updates on the activities of their organizations and receive immediate feedback

from the public. Some of the practitioners have taken advantage of the opportunities offered by social media to improve their professional practices and build a global reputation for their organizations. On the other hand, there are some public relations practitioners who do not seem to consider social media as a serious communication channel that can be employed for the advancement of public relations programs.

Social media is one of public relations communication tool. And it is dramatically changing the way Public Relations are practicing. It has accelerated and intensified the way public relations practitioners communicate, and relate, their attitudes and tools/methods of practice. According to Bersunega (2019) suggests that the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace public relations use television as only means of mass media. According to Grunig and Hunt's (1984) two-way symmetrical public relation model, it's not effective communication. Using mainstream Media is only disseminating their communication. To make communication fear and equal it needs to give a chance for the receiver to state their feedback. This like communications can possible through social media. It has given them dynamic new ways to communicate in an interactive way and to make mutual understanding among the organization with many internal and external audiences.

Previously several researches were conducted in relation to the public relation practice generally as well digital public relations particularly. In 2019 Firesenbet Bersunegawas conducted research paper on "*Critical Examination of Communication Strategy of Ministry of Peace*" found that, the organization had experience communicating with different concerns and media outlets. But there are many gaps; the ministry has not conducted a complete strategic communication plan. There were deficits in the use of appropriate communication tools on the right side, in terms of selecting the right strategy. There was a problem with selecting the right procedure. There was a tendency to use the same channel that was TV (audio visual) as mass media only (Bersunega 2019). On the other Henok Birhanu conducted research on "The Use of Social Media as a Public Relations Tool Among Humanitarian Organizations in Ethiopia: The Case of Ethiopian Red Cross Society" point out that, there is a lack of technical capacity to fully exploit social media platforms, limited availability of equipment, limited attention and support from the management, lack of commitment, limited human resources, employee turnover, insufficient capacity building training programs, slow internet connection speed and lack of formal line of communication with the information providers are among the major challenges (Henok, 2021). Then on this paper the

researcher tries to assess the MoP's public relations practitioners in digital media to address the ministry's public by filling its empirical gaps.

Finally this study aims to assess the use of social media by the public relations practitioners of the ministry of peace. The study title was purposefully selected to assess the communication interactivity in the ministry. There is no research conducted on this title in the ministry, and the research is expected to answer the below research questions.

### **1.3. Objective of the study**

#### **1.3.1. General Objective the study**

The general objective of this research is to assess the use of social media by public relations practitioners in the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace

#### **1.3.2. Specific objectives of the study**

The specific objectives of this research are listed here under.

1. To assess the communication interactivity of public relations practitioners in the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace
2. To examine the modes of social media platforms used by public relations practitioners in the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace.
3. To examine the social media's role for public relations practitioners in promoting the company's objectives in the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace
4. To assess the consequences of social media on public relations practitioner's communication in the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace

### **1.4. Research questions**

1. How is public relations Practitioner's communication interactive in the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace?
2. What are the modes of social media platforms used by public relations Practitioners in the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace?
3. What is the role of social media for public relations practitioners in promoting the company's objectives in the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace?

4. What is the consequence of social media on public relations communication in the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace?

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

Social media is the new technological phenomena. It is helpful especially for public relations to interact and communication exchange with their public about an organization's objective in the easier and simplest way through their social networking sites. So, it makes understanding the advantage of social media for public relations. For the ministry, it facilitates checking and remodeling new techniques and systems to enhance the implementation of social media as the communication means in the ministry. Additionally, the research outcome may also benefit researchers, academicians, scientific societies, and policymakers as a source, and it might also encourage further studies in the area.

### **1.6. Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study is bounded to the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace's public relations department, specifically the use of social media by public relations practitioners. In applying social media platforms assessing the company's social sites and evaluating public relations communication in relation to social media the scope of this study is focused only on the Public Relations practitioners department to examine their connection with social media in their communication and interactivity of communication to make mutual understanding among the minister of public relations and the public.

### **1.7. Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five main chapters. Chapter One gives a general introduction to the study by discussing the general background, statement of the problem, general and specific objectives, research questions, and significance of the study. Chapter two discusses the theoretical framework, relevant literature to this research, and a review of empirical studies. Chapter three explains the research methods employed to conduct this study, followed by the research philosophy, research approach, research design, data collection method, and participants of the study in chapter four data analysis and presentation in chapter five summaries of findings, conclusion, and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2. Review of Related Literature**

#### **2.1. Public Relations**

Public relations helps to establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and the public; it informs the management of problems or issues, helps management to be kept informed on and responsive to public opinion, it defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest, helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends, and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools (Harlow, 1976, p.36).

Public relations as consisting of planned communication, outwards and inwards, between an organization and its public for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding. Public relations practitioners have traditionally used “old media” to communicate to the public but “new media”, a relatively new phenomenon, has gained currency as a tool to be used for communication in many organizations as technology is rapidly changing too (Jeikins, 1998, p.6).

Public relations practitioners are a communication facilitator’s sensitive listeners and information brokers. Communication facilitators serve as liaisons, interpreters, and mediums between an organization and its public. They maintain two-way communication and facilitate exchange by removing barriers in relationships and by keeping channels of communication open. The goal is to provide both management and the public with the information they need for making decisions of mutual interest (Broom, 2009, p.58).

#### **2.2. Practices of Public Relations**

Public relations functions are designed to build trust and credibility with groups that are important to the organization, Public Relations develops and implements program to meet the organization’s objectives: sustainable image, brings customer loyalty, and other relevant public including employees, suppliers, stockholders, governments, labor groups, citizens, action groups and the general public. Effective public relations functions can also promote the organization,

help communicate during a crisis or defend its reputation from attacks that people make on it in the media (Belch, 2004, p.95).

Different writers and scholars have listed the number of functions that might be considered as public relations practices. Some would prefer to split relatively huge tasks into smaller pieces and others opt to enumerate in a very summarized and inclusive way. According to (Seitel 2011, p. 44 & Jethwaney et.al., 2000), (CIPR, PRSA, & BIPR) the following are the major practices of public relations:

**Media Relations:** creating and disseminating newsworthy information to the media to attract and gain attention to the organization's products, or services. PRs also involve setting up and maintaining a professional and mutually beneficial working relationship with news gatherers and gatekeepers, in part by becoming known as a credible source and as a provider of factual, expert information whether or not that information results in media coverage. Preparing different events: having events in organizations fully encourages and develops the communications of Employees in different levels. It also helps to boost new ideas, possibilities, and knowledge and

**Corporate communication:** promote the understanding of the organizations and their products and services; they undertake external and internal communication. **Special event:** attract media attention by arranging newsworthy organizations. Special events are the backbones of service marketers. **Research:** the public relations practice desperately needs research the strategic plan itself cannot be prepared without research. It helps to understand the organization's overall activities.

**Strategic Planning:** Public relations practitioners, who operate at the top level, participate in the formulation of organizational missions, policies, and goals by doing effective plans. It must be done before the beginning of a new budget year. **Writing and Editing:** Writing is a very vital skill in public relations. Therefore you must learn not only to appreciate good writing but must also be able to write well. The beauty of writing is that it is a skill that can be learned. Good writers are in high demand in most organizations.

**Mass Production:** Practitioners of public relations engage in the writing of various messages for the purpose of communicating with the public. This is why the skill of writing is vital to public relations. Some of the messages that PR practitioners write are packaged as magazines and other

forms of publications, which require editing and production. Management: Public relations practitioners engage in management work. Public relation is a distinctive management function that helps to maintain mutual lines of communication between an organization and its public. PR practitioners manage people, communication, and, media, events, etc.

Corporate Counseling: Public relations practitioners advise management on matters concerning their organizations' relationships with their various publics. Speaking: To represent their organizations, public relations practitioners do engage in speaking assignments of different kinds for different publics. Coaching: public relations practitioners also engage in training, advising, and coaching top management staff on public speaking and press interviews.

### **2.3. Social media**

Social media, a relatively new phenomenon has gained currency as a means to be used for communication as technology is rapidly changing too. There are multiple platforms offered in the dissemination of information, and technology is at the disposal of a highly demanding public. This media has changed the way in which information is produced, distributed, and displayed. (Broom, 2009), observes that the Internet is a manifestation of an ever-present means of communication considering that all the new forms of media rely on the Internet. Among the principles of effective communication is two-way communication. Today, with the advent of social media, public relations practitioners must program communication activities that permit audience response or feedback (Darrell, et al. 2013).

Social media, according to Boyd and Ellison (2007), is a web-based application that enables users to (1) come up with a profile in a closed system, (2) form a collection of other users with similar ideas and connections, (3) look and go through their connections list and those created by others in the system. Previously in the 1980s, information channels could be split into two forms: mass communication and micro communication.

According to Phillips & Young, (2009) mass communication included newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and other information sources shared with large groups of people in an asymmetrical or unbalanced exchange. Micro-communication on the other hand tended to deal with exchanges between individual persons and thus, was more symmetrical in its exchange. In this current online space, public relations practice has become more transparent because

communication is handled in the spotlight (that is, on the internet where everyone has democratic access).

This has been facilitated by the emergence of social media (Breckenridge, 2012). As defined social media includes mobile and web-based technologies that construct highly engaging arenas by which individuals and communities share, create, dialogue, and adjust user-generated content (Kietzmann et al, 2011). Breckenridge (2012) notes that when social media meets PR, communication unites with technology social media causes content to be democratized, and demands a change of attitude to unite communications with collaborative technology. Lovejoy, Waters, and Saxton (2012) assert that social media or social networking, such as Facebook, has afforded organizations the opportunity of engaging their stakeholders in real-time communication and information exchange.

The notion of social media is associated with new digital media phenomena such as blogs, social networking sites, location-based services, microblogs, photo- and video-sharing sites, etc., in which ordinary users (i.e. not only media professionals) can communicate with each other and create and share content with others online through their personal networked computers and digital mobile devices (Bechmann and Lomborg, 2013, p. 767).

Public relations as consisting of planned communication, outwards and inwards, between an organization and its public for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding. Public relations practitioners have traditionally used “old media” to communicate to the public but “new media”, a relatively new phenomenon, has gained currency as a tool to be used for communication in many organizations as technology is rapidly changing (Jefkins 1998, p.6).

According to Gillin, (2008), social media is giving rise to a new style of communication that is characterized by conversation and community. It is important to understand these new channels of communication in order to effectively utilize them as a means to communicate with the public as well as to know what implications they may have for the public relations practice. In order to implement these tactics effectively, it is equally important for journalism and public relations programs on college campuses to provide relevant curricula for future practitioners.

According to scholarly publications indicate, Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content. Web 2.0 platforms such as blogs and wikis formed the base for social media by enabling all internet users to collaboratively and continuously modify content and applications. This new way of using the internet empowered the user to create and then share their own content online with others, changing communication from one-way publishing by single users to two-way conversations between multiple users (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

Social media has fundamentally shaped the way individuals and organizations communicate. The birth of Web 2.0 and social media enabled organizations to change from simply disseminating their information to engaging with their public by implementing two-way communication since its emergence in the late 1990s, social media has been increasingly incorporated by public relations practitioners worldwide. However, not all organizations seem to have used this unique opportunity to directly engage with their public (Mersham et al., 2009).

Austin et al. (2012) borrowed Wright & Hinson's (2009) definition and stated that social media are digital tools and applications that facilitate interactive communication and content exchange among and between audiences and organizations. For Austin et al. (2012) social media are not limited to the widely popular platforms of Facebook and Twitter, rather, social media includes a range of types relevant to the study of applied communication, such as blogs, micro-blogs, forums, photos and video sharing, Wikis, social bookmarking, and social networking.

Mangold & Faulds (2009) similarly stated that social media is a combination of various online platforms that allow communication between organizations and their customers and among individuals by creating an online dialog through commenting on blogs or pictures, as well as establishing networking relationships with the online community.

The invention of the internet, and subsequently social media, has effectively invalidated these characteristics Public Relations materials are no longer centralized and can be created by anyone, using technology and platforms that are accessible to all. This accessibility means that there is no longer a cost barrier surrounding the creation of Public Relations materials and mass media, and

the existence of social media has, of course, created a feedback loop for practitioners to utilize. Social media is now completely ingrained into the heart of public relations (Wilcox et al., 2015).

“Social media is now fully integrated as a major tactic in almost every public relations program or campaign. Public relations firms and departments are now hiring individuals who are specialists in social media and digital media management” (Wilcox et al., 2015).

Social media has afforded public relations practitioners the ability to respond quickly and efficiently to the public, specifically in times of crisis. (Kirat 2007, p. 167) says as much, stating public relations professionals can use “the wired global village for immediate, effective, and persuasive communications” One can refer to the model of crisis communication that was first laid to see how far public relations have come as an industry.

### **Types of Social Media**

For users with a wide range of interests, social media includes several distinct sorts of networks. Social media marketing and advertising are cost-efficient and successful, enabling to reach a larger audience. Understanding the most common social media platforms will enable to develop more precise, more focused marketing strategies. In this many forms of social media now in use as well as why they're useful for advertising company' brand and products or services According to (Foreman 2017), the different types of social media are listed below:

**Social networking:** platform facilitates interpersonal connections and provides a plethora of opportunities for various companies to draw customers. Users may curate information, submit photographs and videos, establish groups based on their interests, express their ideas, and take part in group conversations. With the correct targeting metrics, you may influence influential individuals and advertise to a wide range of audiences.

**Discussion forums:** Discussion boards empower users to discuss news, opinions, and answers to each other's inquiries. In order to get the best response, many of these social media platforms concentrate on asking questions. Public relations trust on the forum might rise if they respond to them truthfully and accurately. Visits to the company or product website may rise as a result of that respect and trustworthiness. By asking participants in discussion forums their opinions on

company's goods and brand, PRs may do market research as well. They may utilize this to produce marketing efforts that are more targeted. Example: Reddit, dig, & Quara.

**Image sharing networks:** People may exchange pictures and relevant material on these social media platforms. They provide a forum for generating ideas, encouraging innovation, enhancing the appeal of your products, and getting people to talk about your company. For instance, a clothing firm may offer a chance to win a gift card to anybody who uploads a photo of their stuff to the image-sharing website. A few instances of image-sharing websites: Instagram, photobucket, and flickr.

**Bookmarking Networks:** Users may save various thoughts, articles, blogs, and other stuff on bookmarking networks for later use. Links to internet resource lists are also frequently shared. These websites' objectives are to debate trends and find fresh material based on common interests. For instant: feedly, flipboard, and pocket.

**Blogging and Publishing Networks:** anyone may share their opinions on a variety of topics on these social media platforms, including their profession, current events, hobbies, and more. Many advantages of running they own blog are available to them even if their website doesn't host it. They may also draw in new readers from the group of users that come to the network in search of compelling material. To increase traffic to their account, think about publishing blog entries on inventive methods to use their product or posting news about their sector. Examples of publishing networks and blogs: medium, world press, and Facebook.

**Consumer Review Networks:** These websites showcase client feedback, providing readers with a thorough understanding of the kinds of services and goods provided as well as the general satisfaction level. Reviews from customers can help PRs see any issues that many people encounter often and provide them the opportunity to enhance their experiences over time. Making their company more well-known and increasing brand awareness may be done by promoting favorable reviews and managing negative ones with care. Consumer review networks, for instance: TripAdvisor, Yelp, and OpenTable.

**Interest-Based Networks:** Use these specialist networks to let people know about the interests and activities. It may network based on common interests by using websites and applications linked to sector. People could be able to discuss their favorite books and obtain suggestions for

what to read next on an interest-based website, for instance. Authors might set up profile pages to advertise their writing and respond to reader inquiries. Interest-based networking examples include: Strava, Peanut, Goodreaders.

**Sharing Economy Networks:** By encouraging people to exchange products and services, these websites enable access to resources, for instance, a pet-specific sharing economy website may assist a user in finding someone willing to look after their dog while they are away, it would be less expensive and more luxurious for the pet than a kennel. If your business offers pet supplies like food or toys, you might be able to attract more clients by running promotions for people to test out your goods or services. Examples of networks in the sharing economy: lending club, couch surfing, and Eatwith.

**Social Shopping Networks:** These networks assist users in identifying trends, sharing amazing findings, making purchases, and following their preferred businesses. They concentrate on online shopping, and the social component makes it interesting and fun. These social shopping platforms are excellent for increasing brand recognition and expanding your customer base. Many of them permit crafters, artists, and small business owners to sell their wares. Customers searching for distinctive, handcrafted goods can be found by sellers. In addition to providing material about home remodeling, several social shopping networks also provide things for the house. This makes them interest-based networks. For instance: Instagram, and Facebook.

**Video Hosting Networks:** Independent filmmakers, journalists, and other artists may stream films rapidly and simply thanks to platforms for hosting videos. Brands can shoot their own video content, encourage influencers to use and discuss their products, or utilize sponsored advertisements to attract new consumers. Several websites that host videos include: YouTube, Tick tock, and Snapchat.

### **2.3.1. Most Popular Social Media Platforms**

The contemporary social media landscape consists of a large variety of platforms and mobile applications. Not all can be discussed here. This research focuses on the few of these platforms and applications, such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram.

**Facebook:** Social networking sites like Facebook enable users to connect via individual online profiles and to share content with each other (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Since its launch as a private niche networking site for Harvard students in 2004 (Kietzmann et al., 2011), Facebook has grown into the world's biggest social media platform with 1.657 billion daily and 2.498 billion monthly active users (Facebook, 2019a).

The social networking site allows its users to connect with Facebook friends and to post and share content such as photos and videos or updates with each other. Facebook has constantly added new features such as the tagging of friends or the like button and copied the successful features of competitors such as the Live Feed similar to Twitter's stream, to attract the new public (Press, 2018).

Facebook is, by far, the social network that is used the most worldwide for reading the news the introduction of video-sharing and live video is another example of features that fuelled Facebook's popularity, despite various privacy and data scandals over the past years. (Reuters Institute, 2019).

**YouTube:** YouTube is the most popular video-sharing platform globally, with more than two billion monthly active users (Spangler, 2019), representing almost one-third of the internet (YouTube, n.d.). The platform is said to be the second most visited website after Google (Hootsuite & We Are Social, 2020a). Since its foundation in 2005, YouTube has transformed from a social networking site for exchanging user-generated videos into a mainstream media platform (Burgess & Green, 2018).

Kim (2012) described the platform as a convergence between TV broadcasting and the internet as it follows traditional media rules combining content and commercials while offering short-form and easily accessible video content. This has expanded to long-form formats, which are streamed on the platform or via 70 cable and broadcast channels bundled under YouTube TV, Google's US internet pay-tv service (Spangler, 2019).

According to Spangler (2019), YouTube reaches more American adults between 18 and 49 years than all cable TV channels combined. The Google-owned platform is said to have significantly increased the time YouTube is watched on television globally by almost 40%. As of March

2019, users worldwide watched 250 million hours of YouTube per day on their televisions. However, almost two-thirds of the overall YouTube screen time was still from mobile devices.

**Twitter:** Twitter is a micro-blogging platform where users can publish short posts called tweets, allowing real-time communication between its users (Evans et al., 2011). These tweets started with a length of up to 140 characters but were extended to 280 characters in 2017 to make tweeting easier for users (Rosen, 2017). The micro-blogging platform has shown constant growth since its start in 2006, reaching 153 million daily active users in 2019 globally (Lovejoy et al., 2012; Twitter, 2020).

However, despite its role in delivering real-time news (Fiegerman, 2016), Twitter's growth has stagnated since 2017 (Clement, 2019a). Harassment on the platform and struggles with finding the right growth strategy might be reasons for Twitter's stagnating popularity (Fiegerman, 2016).

**Instagram:** Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms worldwide, which has recently grown faster than other platforms like Facebook or Snapchat and has more than one billion monthly active users (Constine, 2018). The platform started as a mobile photo-sharing application in 2010 and quickly became popular as it combined instant photo-sharing with different filters (Riley-Smith, 2013).

The continuous introduction of new features like video uploads in 2013, Instagram Stories in 2016, and IGTV in 2018 (Instagram, 2016; Instagram 2018) successfully aimed at attracting new users to Instagram Stories, a feature that enables users to post photos and videos that disappear after 24 hours, has more than 500 million daily users worldwide (Facebook, 2019b).

### **2.3.2. Opportunities and Challenges of social media for Public Relations**

#### **Building Relationships via Conversations**

As social media is based on multi-directional conversations, it allows public relations practitioners the opportunity to fulfill the two-way symmetrical communication model (Grunig, 2009; Macnamara 2010a). Grunig (1992) advocated for this as an important part of excellent public relations.

Grunig (2009) stated that social media needs to be applied to its full potential as part of strategic public relations and criticized the organizations that simply used social media for disseminating information. A two-way symmetrical approach enables practitioners to apply effective communication and build relationships with various publics through direct engagement and listening to their conversations (Petrovici, 2014).

Scholars identified social media as facilitating relationship-building with the public. For instance, Motion et al. (2015) stated that social media enabled organizations to connect and converse with their public. Due to the “interactive, participatory characteristics of social media” (Motion et al., 2015, p. 4), the public becomes influential participants in social media communication rather than staying recipients of predetermined communication dominated by the organization.

Sutherland (2016) praised social media as a direct communication channel and tool to build these relationships with the organization’s public by bypassing traditional media. The application of two-way symmetrical principles in leading conversations on social media was considered beneficial for organizations.

### **Reputation-Building with Transparency**

According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), social media has a significant impact on the “reputation, sales, and even survival” (p. 241) of organizations. The inclusion of social media such as social networking sites like Facebook or micro-blogging services like Twitter into the public relations strategy is likely to enhance corporate transparency and authenticity by actively engaging the public online (Men & Tsai, 2014). Transparent communication by honestly answering the publics’ inquiries on social media adds to the organization’s reputation while authentic and ‘personable’ communication fosters sustainable relationships between the organization and its public. Therefore, social media may help organizations to build a positive reputation and stronger relationships with their public (Briones et al., 2011; Edosomwan et al., 2011).

### **Reduced Control over the Message**

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media also reduced the control that organizations have over their messages. They wrote that before social media became mainstream

public relations practitioners could better control the organization's message through press releases, for instance. Through the emergence of social media, conversations could take place outside the organization's sphere of influence. As Grunig (2009) pointed out, this a challenge for public relations professionals, who believed that social media would hinder them from asserting control over the organization's messages.

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

According to Wright & Hinson (2009), "The communications world is dramatically moving in a digital direction and those who understand this transformation will communicate much more effectively than those who do not." Public relations officers are in the business of communicating with the public and therefore they must understand this transformation in order to communicate effectively. However, due to the fast-paced growth of social media, it is difficult for these professionals, as well as the universities training future professionals, to keep current. Blogs, for example, are increasing in popularity because they give independence from traditional editors and media gatekeeping (Pavlik, 2007).

The use of blogs as a means to gather information is increasing as well as the posting of blogs to better position oneself in the eyes of the public. In the past, public relations practitioners were responsible for packaging content and then distributing it to the media in hopes of being published. Today, practitioners are still responsible for packaging the content; however, they are now able to publish the content themselves through blogs, social networks, and other online media outlets. Practitioners still send information to the traditional media, but they are now also able to talk directly to the public, view the public's responses, and act accordingly. For example, when a consumer tweets about a bad experience, the company can view these comments and respond immediately to provide more direct service to its customers (Pavlik, 2007).

#### **2.5. Models of public relations**

Public relations scholars have conducted extensive research on the extent to which organizations practice four models of public relations. Four typical ways of conceptualizing and conducting the communication function and to identify which of these models provides a normative framework for effective and ethical public relations. For this study the two-way symmetrical model is a

framework among the four models of public relations. Those models are originated by scholars named (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

The four models of public relations practice provide a picture of a set of methods and approaches that are used by practitioners, firms, institutions, colleges, universities, governments and etc. in managing and sustaining good working relationships with their public. To provide public relations practices, these models are conceptual representations of reality that provide a good insight into the nature of public relations practices commonly found in public relations management, it would be naïve to think that these models are capable and exhaustive enough to capture the diverse nature of public relations practices used by practitioners, governments, businesses, and non-governmental organizations all over the world (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

**Press agency (Publicity):** it is a relatively ancient form of the communication model. In this model, the focus of public relations efforts is on getting favorable coverage or publicity from the media (Seitel, 2011: 81); it is essentially a one-way communication where messages will be sent from a source to a receiver. It is marked by manipulation, exaggeration, and deception (one-sided argument) as its purpose. Accuracy, ethics, and truth are not seen as essential factors in this model only shameful deception was related to the assertion of public relations to achieve its goal under this model; there is little or no concern for research. This model follows one way of communication flow and organization centered than balanced among the two parties (Solomon, 1998).

**Public Information Model:** It is an early form of one-way communication designed not necessarily to persuade the public but rather to inform them. However, unlike the press agency/publicity model, it disseminates truthful and accurate information. Both this and the press agency's model have been linked to the common notion of public relations as propaganda Messages send from the sender to the receivers with no regard for response or feedback from the receiver (Seitel, 2011, p. 81).

AS Ojomo W., (2006, p.41-42) stated, in this model "the public relations professional acts much like a typical journalist or news reporter" in residence in the organization, and the information he or she disseminates is relatively objective. Indeed, the purpose of public information here is the dissemination of truthful information." When we compared it to the Press a-gentry model, the

public information model got a huge acceptance; as a result, it became the dominant form of public relations in many organizations (Solomon, 1998).

**Two-way Asymmetric:** Unlike the press a gentry and public information model, which promotes a one-way communication system, the asymmetric model recognizes that communication is a two-way approach between the sender and receiver. The basement of this model is scientific persuasion. It uses research to establish the nature of the public's attitude in order to develop a more effective public relations campaign to reveal how best to persuade the public towards the organization's point of view (Otubanjo, Amujo, and Melewar, 2010, p.3).

Here, the idea of two ways communication was introduced as a result of looking for feedback, the purpose of seeking feedback wasn't to change the position that has been seized by an organization, and instead, the feedback was to be used to introduce another form of persuasion so that the audience would accept the interest of the organization (Seitel, 2011), this third model of public relations is a period when some social science research such as opinion polling, random sampling, organized feedback, and the like were introduced to the public relations practice. It was also a period when an overseas mission of public relations was begun. The PR uses slogans that are catchy the official public relations that would persuade the public (Solomon, 1998).

**Two-way Symmetric:** According to Gruing, The two-way symmetrical model of public relations places a lot primarily on making sure that decisions made by the company and it create mutually beneficial between itself and its target audience. The goal of Grunig's symmetrical communication model is one that embraces negotiation between the organization and its public and one that also fosters mutual understanding. The symmetrical model of communication is a democratic framework for the Public Relations practitioner to follow, and one that can both be effective or detrimental, depending on the situation (Van Ruler, 2018 & Willacy, 2016).

“two-way symmetric model provides an organization with the tools and path needed to create a strong company reputation built upon solid, long-lasting relationships because both the organization and its audiences are provided with a voice in processes and developing issues or problems” The two-way symmetrical model for communication maintains both the organization's best interests and its audiences' best interests at the forefront in the fairest and balanced way possible. Through the use of this model, both the organization and its audiences

can collaborate together to both grow and strengthen an overall organization, leading it to greater success (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

In this model, public relations practitioners serve as mediators between organizations and their public. Their goal is to achieve mutual understanding between organizations and their public (Charles, 2006 & Singh p.5); According to Charles's statement, the symmetric model advocates for free and equal information flow between an organization and its public based on mutual understanding. Here Public Relations is a mediator between the organization and its public striving always at achieving mutual understanding rather than an adversarial relationship (Seitel, 2011, p.82); the study of this focal point, however, falls on the two-way symmetrical model, The role of the two-way symmetrical model is for practitioners to serve as the catalyst for conflict resolution and consensus" (Guth et al., 2005); their goal is to encourage two-way communication that leads to mutual understanding and cooperation. Social media sets a new landscape for two-way communication in public relations, which allows organizations to distribute information without relying solely on mainstream publications and communicating directly with the public, customers, and prospects (Flew, 2008).

According to Flew (2008) Web 2.0 (social media) is best described as a set of applications or websites that not only gives information but interacts with the person using it while it gives the information. This interaction can be as simple as allowing a person to comment on a specific article to as more complex as asking a person to recommend a movie based on the ratings of people with similar interests. By applying the social media aspect to Web 2.0 a person is provided with the ability to communicate in a two-way manner (Flew, 2008); Web 2.0 caught on because it has been embedded within a variety of features that have long been central to the Web as a communications infrastructure, i.e. participation, interactivity, collaborative learning, and social networking (also known as Web 2.0). Social media is best understood as a group of new kinds of online media, which share the following characteristics: Participation, Openness, Conversation, Community, and Connectedness.

## **2.6. Review of Empirical Studies**

They valued social media as an additional and cost-effective channel that enabled organizations to engage directly with their public. At the same time, they were concerned with the time and

budget demands of social media, echo chambers, and potential issues that might arise due to a lack of social media skills. And public relations practitioners still use social media predominantly as a one-way broadcasting channel, rather than engaging their public via conversations. The identified encroachment between public relations and other disciplines such as marketing might explain this prevalent focus on promotional messages (Stefanie Martens, 2020).

Awofadeju, and Peter Olayinka (May 2019) stated as, Social media has indeed had great impacts on the public relations practice as it has changed the way media organizations generally communicate, be it internally or externally. Public relations practitioners have the opportunity to reach their target audience remotely through the use of social media, unlike in the olden days when the only ways they could do so were through telephone, fax, and telegraph which were relatively expensive and unreliable, today instant messaging has made it possible to have live interactions thereby making it easy to receive response to one's inquiry without delays.

Aside from the ability to reach and interact with a very large number of people at once, it has also had an impact on how public relations practitioners acquire knowledge, enhanced good relationships with people, serves as a medium of obtaining information about the latest innovations on the tools and methods of public relations practice, and it has also helped shaped the attitude of those in public relations practice too.

Faith P. Joneya (October 2010) stated that Social media has made the practice more challenging for PR professionals because it requires a diverse and ever-expanding collection of skills and proficiency especially with the rise of new social media technologies every day increased knowledge that social media has forced PR professionals to have.

Practitioners mentioned being unable to keep up with the changing technologies as one of the major challenges this means if professionals haven't been educating themselves on the field then the challenges may catch up with them. Practitioners have to come up with content management strategies in the future. Responding to the demands of social media in a working environment where traditional media demands on public relations practice are not reducing significantly will be a major area of concern in the coming years.

According to Henok Birhanu (2021), the public relation department is actively using the social media platforms of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to communicate its messages. And that the

ERCS is not optimally using social media due to the major challenges of lack of technical capacity, limited availability of equipment, insufficient support from the top-level management, limited capacity building training programs, slow internet connection, and lack of formal social media content gathering system.

According to Wubareg Yitayew (June 2019), Social media is dramatically changing the way PR is practiced Social media has accelerated and intensified the way public relations practitioners communicate, relate, their attitudes, and tools/methods of practice. Social media have given them dynamic new ways to communicate with many internal and external audiences. Social media has tremendously enhanced the performance of PR in the organization. It offers a low-cost relationship building; it has changed the way an organization, mainly a PR organization communicates with its target audience.

Practitioners mentioned being unable to keep up with the changing technologies as one of the major challenges this means if professionals haven't been educating themselves on the field then the challenges may catch up with them. Practitioners have to come up with content management strategies in future. Responding to the demands of social media in a working environment where traditional media demands on public relations practice are not reducing significantly will be a major area of concern in coming years.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Philosophy

Crotty (1998: 4) suggests that when designing a research proposal, four main questions should be addressed: - What epistemology or what theory of knowledge informs the research? - What theoretical perspective or what philosophical stance (for example, objectivism, and subjectivism) underpins the methodology implemented in the research? What methodology or strategy links methods to outcomes? What methods or what techniques and procedures does the research propose to use (for example, quantitative and/or qualitative)?

According to Crotty (1998, p. 4), these four questions or four core elements of research influence each other, in that the theory of knowledge (epistemology) will inform the theoretical perspectives underlying the methodology, and these perspectives will determine the research methodology, thereby leading to the selection of the research methods. The research philosophy consists of what the researcher perceives to be truth, reality, and knowledge (Rayan, 2018).

According to Richards, (2003) Ontology represents, “The nature of our beliefs about reality” (p.33) Researchers have assumptions (sometimes implicit) about reality, how it exists, and what can be known about it. It is the ontological question that leads a researcher to inquire what kind of reality exists: “A singular, verifiable reality and truth or socially constructed multiple realities” (Patton, 2002, p. 134).

Epistemology is also the nature of knowledge and the process by which knowledge is acquired and validated” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 13) It is concerned with “the nature and forms of knowledge and how it can be acquired and how communicated to other human beings” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 7). It is the epistemological question that leads a researcher to debate: the possibility and desirability of objectivity, subjectivity, causality, validity, and generalizability (Patton, 2002, p. 134). Adhering to an ontological belief system (explicitly or implicitly) guides one to certain epistemological assumptions.

In the present study, the epistemological and ontological assumptions were derived from the researcher's own reflection on and understanding of the PR, and the phenomenon of adopting social media to create a two-way asymmetric/symmetric relationship with the public. The epistemological and ontological basis for selecting the data collection methods applied in this current study view the relationship between the human mind and reality (Grunig and Hunt, 1984: 21).

Crotty (1998) outlined two presumptions: 1. Humans interact with their reality and attempt to make sense of it based on their historical and social viewpoints. Thus, by physically visiting this location and acquiring information, qualitative researchers aim to comprehend the context or setting of the individuals. Additionally, they interpret what they discover using their personal experiences and educational background as a guide. 2. Humans create meaning as they interact with the environment they are interpreting. Open-ended questions are frequently used by qualitative researchers so that participants can express their opinions. We all are born into a world of meaning that is placed upon us by our culture. In order to assess the use of social media by public relations practitioners of the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace the researcher explored the application of social media by using an effective technique.

### **3.2. Research Approaches**

This study aimed to assess the use of social media by Public Relations Practitioners of the Ethiopian Peace Ministry. Moreover, to examine public relations engagement with social media in their communication what important experience does public relations of the organization have regarding applying interactive communication with social media Therefore, in order to study their activities and social media usage, the researcher deployed the appropriate approaches that would help to study about the knowledge of some targeted group of participants on the issue.

When the data could tell about how people feel and what they think, the researcher has to use qualitative methods; Qualitative methods are generally associated with the evaluation of social dimensions. It provides results that are usually rich and detailed, offering ideas and concepts to inform the study. Different scholars defined the qualitative research approach, as it is information-rich for in-depth research. It is concerned with the quality of information, attempts to acquire an understanding of the underlying causes and motivations for actions, and

demonstrates how people read their experiences and evaluations of the universe about them (Headlam, 2009).

Qualitative methods also provide insights into the context of a problem, generating ideas and/or theories. It generates data about human groups in social settings and allows meaning to be created from the eyes of the participants. It is considered as more flexible than quantitative research because it can adjust to the setting, (Jensen, 2004). A qualitative research strategy is chosen when a researcher wants a better understanding through real human experiences, truthful reporting, and actual conversations (Kvale, 2018).

Finally, the researcher believes in using the qualitative approach for this study would help smoothly to analyzing the use of social media by public relations in their communication and evaluate public relations engagement with social media. From the researcher's perspective, qualitative research was more relevant to assess this research title. Because qualitative research is particularly good at answering the 'why', 'what', or 'how' questions. Moreover, the study examines the use of social media by public relations practitioners of the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace as well as the roles of social media in public relations in applying two-way symmetric or communication interactive.

### **3.3. Sampling Method**

For this study, the researcher used the purposive sampling technique to identify the key research participants from a large population in the Ministry of Peace. According to Oliver (2012), purposive sampling is a kind of non-probability sampling in which decisions vis-à-vis the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may consist of specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research. The research purposively and selectively approaches those participants in the communication department. The major reasons for the selection of the study participants are the experience, and the skills they may have on digital communication and their work position.

According to the researcher's observation, there are eleven employees' workings in the ministry of peace communication department. Those are including: the head of the Public Relations department, digital communication officer, graphics officer, audiovisual officer, cameraman,

documentation officers, and communication officers. The interviews were conducted with six of them. The reason for only having six participants for the research was, to ensure that adequate time could be allocated to each of the participants to tell their story and for the researcher to be able to do the analysis. The selection criteria of the participants was based on individuals who have had knowledge or experience on social media use and who have been in charge of social media platforms in the ministry of peace.

### **3.4. Data collection methods**

#### **3.4.1. In-depth interview**

In-depth interview is one of the most common qualitative research methods. One reason for its popularity is that it is very effective in giving a human face to research problems. In addition, conducting and participating in interviews can be rewarding experiences for participants and interviewers alike. The in-depth interview is a means designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perception of the research questions, and also the research objectives. Such interviews follow a prepared questionnaire so that similar information is gathered from each person. The questions are generally open-ended, meaning that they require more than a "yes" or "no" answer (Nigussie, 2017, p.75).

When the duration of in-depth interviews, the person being interviewed was considered the expert in communication and the interviewer was considered a student. The researcher's interviewing ways were motivated by the desire to learn everything the participant can share about the research question. The researcher didn't lead participants according to any preconceived notions, nor do encourage participants to provide particular answers by expressing approval or disapproval of what participants said. To this effect, an in-depth interview was conducted face-to-face and involved one interviewer, the researcher, and one interviewee.

The interview questions followed a semi-structured design and the sequence of interview questions will adapt to each individual conversation. Open questions, which guided the interviews, were intended to invite practitioners to present their viewpoints extensively. For this study, to gather data, researcher employs personal in-depth interviews with a total of six participants of communication department workers, including: the digital communication officer, head of public relations and communication officers work in the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace.

The in-depth interview helps the researcher to get first-hand information about the use of social media by public relations in the Ministry of Peace. In a non-structured interview, the interviewer is allowed much greater freedom to ask, in case of need, supplementary questions.

The researcher of this work believes that semi-structured open-ended questions and follow-up questions to the close-ended ones help to gather clear and detailed information from identified respondents in the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace. The interview questions were prepared in the English language, and translated to Amharic. The interview was conducted in Amharic language based on the participant's willingness to avoid language constraints and to enable participant's better express their ideas. The in-depth interview with public relations practitioners was an important instrument to answer the research questions mentioned in the study (Brounéus, 2011)

### **3.4.2. Social media Content Analysis**

Qualitative content analysis was commonly used for analyzing qualitative data (Elo et al., 2014). Research using qualitative content analysis focuses on the characteristics of language as communication with attention to the content or contextual meaning of the text (Budd, Thorp, and Donohew, 1967, Lindkvist, 1981 ;) According to Kondracki et.al (2002) presented that text data might be in verbal, print, or electronic form and might have been obtained from narrative responses, open-ended survey questions, interviews, focus groups, observations, or print media such as articles, books, or manuals.

Mayring (2014) states that content analysis are not a standardized instrument that always remains the same; it must be fitted to suit the particular object or material in question and constructed especially for the issue at hand. For this study, qualitative content analysis was done to study the use of social media by public relations practitioners and the communication interaction they have with their public. The content was collected from their Facebook page.

The ministry's communication through social networking sites was assessed. Their entire social network sites were analyzed the analysis was focused on all social networking sites, but mainly Facebook. According to the participants of the study, the ministry was more actively using Facebook than other platforms. So, Facebook were selected for content analysis from January to April 2023. The content was analyzed by considering the headline, text, link, and reactions they

have with their followers and based on requirements of social media interactivity, multimodality, and hyper-textuality.

### **3.5. Data Analysis methods**

Data were collected based on six participants through a qualitative in-depth interview that needs to be analyzed and interpreted to give it meaning. This includes transcribing the verbal interview into text, synthesizing, categorizing, and summarizing the coded data, verifying the data is valid, and finally, reporting the results. The transcripts of interviews were read several times, according to what the participants said about their knowledge and experiences concerning the use of social media by public relations practitioners in the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace.

For this study, a process of thematic analysis was used, in which key themes and sub-themes relevant to the research questions of the study were derived inductively from the interview data. The thematic analysis offers an effective method for analyzing qualitative data (Stirling, A. 2001), these were used to structure the presentation of results from the interviews used to preserve the knowledge of the research participants on the issue.

### **3.6. Validity of the Study**

Validity is the ability of a research instrument to demonstrate that it was finding out what the researcher designed it, or the truthfulness of the study on the perspectives of participants. It can be understood as the extent to which the field presents the social phenomena it refers to (Kumer, 2011), for the purpose of this study, the researcher used an in-depth interview and content analysis as research instruments for data collection. The participants in the interview were selected by using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to choose a case because it was interesting. However, purposive sampling also required that the researcher thought critically about the parameters of the population targeted by the study and chooses the sample carefully on that basis (Silverman, 2010).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter is a data presentation and analysis of findings collected through the Qualitative study of the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace, to assess the use of social media by public relations practitioners. Data collection methods consisted of a face to face interviews and a content analysis of the organization's social networking pages. Purposive sampling was used to generate public relations practitioner's department works at the Ministry of Peace. The research participants consisted of a Public Relations head, digital communication officer, audiovisual officer, Graphic designer, and Communication officers.

#### **4.2. Background of the study participants**

The data were collected based on six participants, who were selected for their involvement in the use of social media in the MoP. The participant's experience from one to five years in the MoP participant position was: Digital Communication Officer (1 Participant), Communication Officers (2 Participant) Audio Visual (1 Participant), Graphics Design (1 Participant), and head of the department (1 Participant). The Education background of all the departments is first degree: languages (4), political science, (2) accounting and finance, (2) information system (1), and journalism and communication (2) field of studies. The in-depth interview was conducted with an average, of thirty minutes of audio-recorded data. The data was recorded in Amharic and was transcribed into thirty-two pages of Amharic text data. And these are again translated into a total of twenty-seven pages of English text data.

#### **4.3. The ways of public relations Interact with their Public**

The participants were asked this research question by the researcher the participants gave their own answers. Some of their answers did not match the research question, according to Grunig (1984) stated in models of public relations, "information is transmitted in a one-way direction, in the organization even if on their Social media", according to many participants; they never give a replay to followers comment on Facebook posts but they consider this as their weakness.

Respondent 2 answered this question said, “I prefer Social Media over mainstream media and I prefer Facebook over social media, to perform interactive communication and we mostly use it as our ministry (April 25, 2023), but according to scholars it’s better using multiple social media platforms, Paul (2011) argues that sticking to a certain type of medium to convey a nation’s message may not help strategic communication effective in achieving the objectives set. If nations say their messages louder and clearer on more channels, the public or audience will understand.

Participant 3 believed that their department was communicating one-way communication and we are trying to do two-way flow or interactive communication, the participant said. “it is obviously social media is preferable to perform communication interaction” this participant added and, said, “As our company we release information and we always try not to let it happen one-way communication, we are not the only ones to leave it, but we try to get the public to participate in it. To achieve this, there was a ‘participatory program’ every Friday Live stream. Titled ‘I care about my country’ but. It was stopped because the network was locked as a country on the live stream the guests are invited, they share and pass on their experiences and messages, and we also post and announce before Friday to "Participate and ask questions". (April 25, 2023).

Participants 4 gave the respective answers to the research questions according to them, when they receive comments on their posts, they said we do not respond to them from below on our Facebook, but for the comments that come frequently, we collect them and take them into a press conference. We do not respond to comments from below, which is our weakness.” Participant 6 answer compliment with the answer of respondent 4 said “Until now, we have not replied to the comments posted on our social media, (May 1, 2023)

The responses of participants 1 and 5 complement each other. They asked how about communication interactivity among the public relations and their public, they also, said that “when our publics give us a comment on our social media we don't reply on the spot, but when questions come Again and again from the public We are working to strengthen the interaction we talk to the relevant officials or our mister data’s, prepare the questions that come from the public and make them respond.” (April 25 & May 1, 2023)

According to Grunig's (1984) "the symmetric model is interactive, make dialogue and participatory on an organizational issues" but the both participants 1 and 5 falls of this scholar argument their communication rely on transmitting only.

Participant 6 also answered the question rose by the researcher on how they measure communication interaction saying; "we measure engagement interactivity through the comments they give us on our posts." According to this participant they use the idea of the public but they do not answer their questions. Social media were electronic tools that enabled users to communicate and exchange information and facilitate interactions among different users (Zerfass et al., 2011; Criado et al., 2013; Song and Lee, 2016).

Generally, all participants were asked which means they would choose to create communication interaction and they realized that it was 'Social Media' but, there are problems in its use. And communication interactivity is seen and measured in this way in their organization. In this regard, Austin et al. (2012) borrowed Wright & Hinson's (2009) definition and stated that social media are digital tools and applications that facilitate interactive communication and content exchange among and between audiences and organizations. So, social media is more than disseminating one-way information, it is the place where organizations and the public exchange meanings.

#### **4.4. The modes of social media platforms used by public relations Practitioners**

All participants of the study were asked which social media platforms they use and use most to communicate with the general public and also, they were asked why they often use most of these platforms instead of the other platforms. As to most of the participants, they use Facebook a lot and in addition to Twitter and YouTube, they also have telegrams which they use internally to communicate with employees and externally to exchange ideas with the wider community. But Facebook is a convenient tool to use because as they said, "especially in the age of Facebook networking, as our organization we use Facebook for work, and work only. Plus, Facebook is for social purposes like keeping in touch with external publics and internal publics. It is also useful for adding to it."

Participant 3, said, "The organization has Facebook, Twitter YouTube, and Telegram also but most likely it uses Facebook" This participant also adds, "Facebook has helped us to

communicate our company's information to our public in a quick and easy way. Because it is easy for the public to share their thoughts with us quickly,” (April 25, 2023) and Participants 6 and 4 had similar opinions on the question. They said, “We use Facebook mainly because our company has many followers from Facebook” (April 25 & May 1, 2023) but scholars suggest that organizations have to use multiple social media platforms instead of using the single one.

Paul (2011) argues that sticking to a certain type of medium to convey a nation’s message may not help strategic communication effective in achieving the objectives set. If nations say their messages louder and clearer on more channels, the public or audience will understand.

Participants 2 and 5 have similar answers to the questions posed to them by the researcher. According to them, there are Facebook Twitter, YouTube, and telegram pages used by practitioners but, they also said, “We use Facebook, most, because it helps us, to know what our follower's perception to have about our organization, based on the information we released on our social media.” In a similar way, Participant 5 also said “It is very useful and according to our company we use Facebook a lot, we improve our work based on their feedback. Because the opinions of our followers are our starting point to make a change in the ways of our communication, those things make Facebook preferable in our company and we will work on it. Those participants’ answers are somehow opposed to the other participants, according to them; they are using public comments.

As Stránská and Stříteský, (2015) mentioned in their research, “Facebook improves the speed for making an issue public and can receive a reply significantly quicker than through hotline. On Facebook, PR workers engage the audience by acting as a conversational brand, and they set up their own pages for the organizations, which helps to establish a strong audience base.” But this does not mean Facebook is the only platform for PRs

Mangold & Faulds (2009) similarly stated that social media is a combination of various online platforms that allow communication between organizations and their customers and among individuals by creating an online dialog through commenting on blogs or pictures, as well as establishing networking relationships with the online community.

Overall, the ideas raised by all the participants were mostly useful for Facebook in promoting news and information as well as their organization’s goals, such as sharing photos and videos

Adding, it's great for those who want news clips and events or quick news, they believe other media isn't very convenient. The use of professional social media can positively impact employee engagement (Oksa et al. Citation2021b, Citation2021c) so; Facebook is solely used in the organization instead of multiple platforms.

#### **4.5. The role of social media for public relations to promote the company's objectives**

The role of social media in communication is huge, of course, especially for public relations, to perform their functions, those maybe: to communicate easily, send press releases to the main media houses, strengthen their relationship with the public, and promote the company's objectives. The necessity of public relations for the company is obviously great. Concerning this the researcher expanded the above research questions and asked the participants and they answered what they thought would be the answer. The researcher asked them, whether the emergency of social media can change the way of PRs communicate, and they gave the following answers, Participant 1 said: "Yes, it change a lot, because it is wide when you look at it in terms of its Accessibility and reachability, know it is possible to communicate with the public in a simple way, in a short time, with a small budget. Before the emergence of social media, the public relations alternative was to call the mainstream Media and wait for them to come and give information." (April 25, 2023).

According to scholars 'Social media sets a new landscape for two-way communication in public relations, which allows organizations to distribute information without relying solely on mainstream publications and communicating directly with the public, customers, and prospects (Newsom et al, 2004; 13).

Participant 2 asked the research question, is social media support for public relations to achieve their functions, the participant answered said: "Social media is supportive in terms of simplifying the work for public relations, it helps to easily deliver the information I want to the public, and it also helps a lot in promoting about the organization to the internal and external public. In addition, it is one of the main public relations tools. Participant 4 opinions compliment participant 2 and she said; "the advantages of social media for public relations in our company are wider than the mainstream Media, so Social media has helped Public Relations to do its job

properly in a more streamlined way.” Participant 2 added the way social help to promote the organization's objective “Since we are mostly in using social media, we promote the organization's goals and programs by releasing short videos.” (April 25, 2023).

The scholar's research findings support the above arguments, by saying, “Social media is now fully integrated as a major tactic in almost every public relations program or campaign. Public relations firms and departments are now hiring individuals who are specialists in social media and digital media management” Wilcox et al (2015, p. 370).

Participant 3 also, asked the same question ‘how the emergence of social media changes the ways Public Relations communicates,’ answered: “Definitely it changes, social media is one form of communication that can change the way of communication for public relations because it is very fast it can be reached to many public at once.” according to this participant and others, social media should properly change the direction in which the public relations communicate in an organization. Participant 3 add to the question of ‘whether is social media supportive of public relations to achieving their functions said: “Yes, it support, by delivering timely and reliable information to the public, because the main task of public relations is to save time, money and manpower” (April 25, 2023).

Social media has afforded public relations practitioners the ability to respond quickly and efficiently to the public, specifically in times of crisis. Kirat (2007, p. 167) says as much, stating public relations professionals can use “the wired global village for immediate, effective, and persuasive communications” One can refer to the model of crisis communication that was first laid to see how far public relations have come as an industry.

Participant 4, asked about the role of social media in public relations and the way it promotes the company’s objectives participant said: “Our organization has an objective, which is ‘Seeking peace, brotherhood and national unity, and works to promote peace, nationalism, and develop a culture of coexistence. Its main goal is to strengthen harmony between peoples and establish peace. In order to implement this, we published it in our magazine which is published every two months. But more importantly, we use our social media or our Facebook page” (April 25, 2023), according to this participant PRs of the organization use social media for promoting the organization's objective which is establishing peace among the nations of the country.

Since the main function of public relations is to change public opinion towards the objectives of the organization, the researcher asked participants how they promote the objectives of the organization participant 6 said: “The role of social media is important in promoting the goals and programs of the organization. Anyone can choose the platform of the organization that suits them best and see about the vision, mission, values, goals, and programs of the organization. And social media helping us and we were in using social media more than anything else to promote our company’s objective and program.” (May 1, 2023) According to this participant, social media has a crucial role in promoting the organization's objectives.

Participant 6 also, added to the question raised of how social media support for Public Relations to achieve their functions said: “The main function of Public relations is communication this means Public Relations serve the organization and the public as a bridge; this is informing the public what the institution has done and identify the problems of the publics have.

Participant 5 the researcher asked about the advantage of social media for PRs and the participant answered these questions, saying “In our organization, we work on peace; the organization uses its public relations to calm down the public. For example; social media plays an important role in public relations work and communication in our organization it helped make the public understand peace easily, by posting what they preached about peace like Mother Teresa, and Martin Luther on our social media or Facebook” (May 1, 2023).

Participant 5 also explained and add on how the emergence of social media changes the ways PRs communicate, “social media makes us accessible quickly, social media change the way of communication of the public relations, for example; in our company when we have a press conference, various mainstream media stations are invited, but we are mainly accessible through social media because most of the people prefer social media over the mainstream media and we can access it easily, so it has a great contribution for communication professionals or public relations in our company.” (May 1, 2023) According to this participant, social media is more accessible than any other Media for public relations communication.

#### **4.6. The consequences social media has on public relation’s communication**

The answers from the participants to the question of the negative impact of social media on communications of public relations, factors negatively affect the use of social in the company,

the challenges of using social media, and the disadvantages of using social media. These questions were asked of the participants separately during data collection their answers were analyzed as follows:

Participant 1 asked what factors negatively affect the use of social in the company, and answered said, “I think it has a negative impact on the use of social media in this organization, it is the institution's acceptance. Because an organization is called the Minister of Peace, they think that peace should come now. They give bad comments, insulting and not reacting to the information we spread, I think it has damaged the use of social media in our office” (April 25, 2023). According to this participant, the company's name and reputation has affected or are in crisis. This is affected their social media usage, as PRs in the company. On this argument, scholars have an answer as follow. “PR professionals play/ or are expected to play in building and managing the reputation of an organization, especially in the digital age when there is an unprecedented high expectation on an organization’s openness, visibility, transparency, and authenticity” (Men 2013).

Valentini and Kruckeberg (2012, p. 11) argue that, “social media must be at the heart of public relations activities because social media can enhance organization relationships by increasing and improving community relations.” As, both stated, Social media has had a crucial role in Public relation functions.

Participant 2 of the study responded to the social media disadvantage question asked from the researcher said “I think the disadvantage is regarding the credibility, because anyone can stand up and write or post any idea they want on our company. In the mainstream media, however, you have an opportunity to question if someone misrepresents information. Therefore, the positive impact on public relations communication is greater than the negative impact.” according to this participant the biggest problem with social media is its lack of credibility, there are no limits with social media, so anyone can write whatever they want so, it mean a source of disinformation.

Participant 3 was asked what factors negatively affect the use of social in the company participant 3 answered as follow said, “As a general view, accountability and information reliability are flawed, and at our level, attempts are made to open similar pages, for example,

Facebook was opened in the name of our organization. Such reasons have a negative impact on the organization.” According to this participants identify two factors that affect the use of social media in the company, those factors accountability and reliability of the information. On social media those things are questionable because it’s accessible for all the users this is supportive of the idea of user-generating content (UGC).

Participant 4 gave an answer on the negative impact social media on communications of public relations said, “When we look at the side of damage or the negative is; recently social media account of INSA leaders was hacked. There is a situation where the institution has done what it has not done, and an attempt has been made to incite riots, and because of that, a lot of wrong information has been released.” According to this participant there is nothing to guaranteed social media not being hacked as example the leaders Facebook pages.

Participant 5 asked about factors that negatively affect the use of social in the company and answered said ”There are doubts among the public about our organization, because there is instability in the country, what does the minister of peace do in a peaceful country most of the public think like this, it has affected our use of social media, because the problems of the public responding to the messages we post are widespread, and the few responses we receive are insulting, even when we train and deploy volunteers. Defamation of authorities has had a negative impact on our use of social media.” This participant’s idea is somewhat similar to the participant’s and Participant 2 have similar thought on the same question said, “The comments given to us for a post on our website in this institution have a negative impact on the use of social media, for example; the so-called National Volunteers, as an institution, did not properly understand what that is doing, many people gave negative comments, so it happened that had an impact on social media usage.” the public having doubts about the organization’s name and reputation, according to this participant 5. The comments that the public gives on their posts seriously hurt the use of social media in this company are both ideas (May 1, 2023).

(Valentini, 2015), “A large number of followers on a social media platform indicate a brand’s popularity across the general public. Therefore, it is certain to assert that social media has impacted the face of marketing and public relations negatively.” According to this scholar, the large number of followers indicates the popularity of the organization.

Participant 6 was asked about the challenges of using social media gave answered said: “A challenge to use social media, especially at this time is; the locking of the internet, the non-boosting of the media, because the response of the followers was very less, for example; Out of two hundred thousand followers, we responded only fifty or sixty peoples and even if, we get a negative response from them is the more it becomes a challenge.” According to this participant, there are passive public they have, and the followers have less reaction to their posted information (May 1, 2023).

To generalize all participants’ arguments on a company’s reputation, finalized by Sharma et al. (2013) argument he suggests that “it is time for PR practitioners to take their rightful place in the building and promotion of a positive reputation of their organizations.” This means PRs of the company have responsibilities to protect the reputation and image of the company.

#### **4.7. Discussion of Social Media Content Analysis**

As Reddick and King (2001) online media can be functionally differentiated from other kinds of media by using its technological component as a determining factor in terms of (operational) definition. The online journalist has to make decisions on which media formats best tell a certain story (multimodality), has to allow room for options for the public to respond, interact or even customize certain stories (interactivity) and must consider ways to connect the story to other stories, archives, and resources and so on through hyperlinks (hypertextuality). This is the 'ideal-typical' form of online media, as professed by an increasing number of professionals and academics worldwide. From this point of view MoPs practice digital PRs to address the public.

Different views exist concerning which online PRs tools work best. Prescott (2021) said that the best tools for online PR are corporate websites, online services and multimedia, electronic mail, and the World Wide Web. Dumitru, Negricea, and Gogonea (2011), said online PR tools include websites, email, forums, banners, and newsletters. While Kisiółek, Kolmasiak, and Budzik,(2022) insisted that online PR tools are the www sites, electronic mail, email and discussion groups, Internet conference newsletters, and services sponsoring. In addition, Start said that online PR includes the Internet, the World Wide Web, email, chats, and instant messaging, Internet forums, intranets and extranets, content management systems and Wikis, blogs, feeds, and really simple syndication (RSS). As well, Ewing, Juba, and Garden, (2008)

asserted that blogs, e-newsletters, online media rooms, podcasts, webcasts, and wikis are the most popular online PR tools. Du Plessis (1994,) argued that the World Wide Web, corporate websites, email, and online services are the most important tools. Holtz pointed to e-mail, the World Wide Web, and Permission-Driven Communication were online PR tools. Furthermore, Kirat (2007) focused on electronic newspapers, newsrooms, online publications, press releases, and websites as essential online PR tools. Mops also use social media like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to address the public of the ministry.



**Figure 1: Peace Minister main Facebook page**

Subsequently, this research paper select social media posts from the Ministry of Peace Facebook account were used for content analysis to provide answers to the specific research question inquiring about the use of social media and messages conveyed through the Ministry of Peace Facebook page. Based on Qualitative content analysis The MoP created a Facebook account in 2019 G.C and gained 49,191 page Likes and 207,000 followers (the page checked every week, or at least twice weekly, access date May 10, 2023).



**Figure 2: The lowest reactions of their record among the posts from January to April 2023**

After the researcher highlights the general practice of digital media to address the public, then this paper deals with content analysis with respect to online media features. Deuse (2003) has isolated three dominant features that are fundamental to the possibility and vitality of online media.

- ✓ The first feature he identifies is **interactivity**, which he defines as the ability of readers or audiences of online content to react to or interact with and even adapt to news content presented to them. The comment section of online content is a key element of this attribute.
- ✓ The second feature is **multimodality**, which is the technical capability for news content to be delivered on multiple platforms - text video, audio, and animated graphics. Solely, static textual content would be regarded as deficient multimodality.
- ✓ The third feature that defines the exceptionality of online journalism is **hypertextuality**, which Dueze (2003) describes as the ability of news sites “to connect the story to other stories, archives, resources and so forth through hyperlinks” (Deuze 2003). Here, the presence of links that connect readers to related material within the same websites and/or that lead readers to external sites relevant to the content being presented constitutes the core of hypertextuality.

Based on Deuse (2003) dominant features of digital media here the researcher tries to analyze the Facebook production of MoP’s public relations practitioners. To begin with, the concept of interactivity as previously stated is all about how the public gives feedback for the shared message instantly. Although the peace minister has many followers on Facebook, few public participate inactively because the company does not have any tactics and strategies to attract followers according to scholars Strategies are Example: Spend more money on ads to improve your company’s messaging. Tactics are the specific public relations activities that will be completed in order to implement a strategy (Broom, G. M. (2009).

Only a few people reacted in comments, likes, and share on their posts and the comments given to them were most of the time negative or insulting. According to the researcher, this is the weakness of PRs they had to do research to know their real publics who they are, what they want, what their interests are, which media they use properly, who they listen to properly, are their religious leaders. Are they opinion leaders? Are they politicians? PRs of the company must identify these in research. To prove this statement as the researcher try to address previously the MoP’s has 207k followers however when we assess the uploaded content they are less interactive. The feedback given by the MoP’s publics is less as we see in the following photos.



**Figure 3: The highest reactions of their record from January to April 2023**

As clearly observe from the above figure the posted content get 463 likes, 47 comments and 26 shares.

When we rush to the next Deuze (2003) dominant features of digital media we get multimodality. The concept of multimodality mainly sticks to media convergence which means multi-platform publishing (in some parts of the world each medium is seen as a platform; thus we have the newspaper platform or the radio platform). Convergence comes in several forms. Then multimodality means the digital media production should provide text, audio/video, and photos to address the public systematically and target fully. With the concept of multimodality, the MoP's PR tries to provide include text and photos most of the time. However, they also tried to provide videos that support the text description as follows.



**Figure 4: The form of headline and video post on the ministry's Facebook page**

As the above figure clearly shows, the MoPs use text and video to address the public. However based on researcher observation during the selected time framework the MoP lacks providing several forms of message production like; photos, text, videos, info-graphics, etc. in combination to address its messages for its public through digital media.

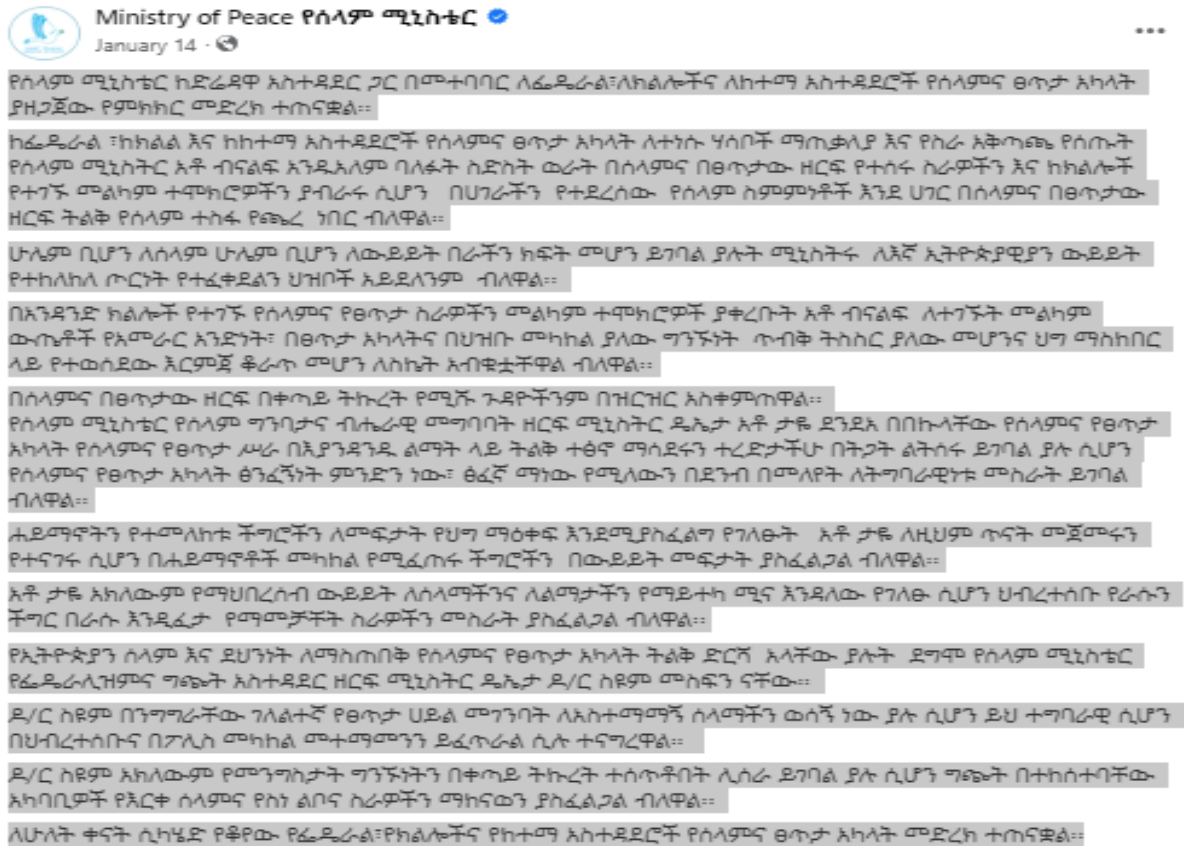
Even though hyperlinks can refer internally (to other texts within the text's domain) or externally (to texts located elsewhere on the Internet) the MoP was not employed throughout its message production. This indicates that the MoP is missing in applying the features of digital media during addressing its message to the public through its social media platforms.

Television news manager Scott Atkinson says his best advice is to write for the Internet as you would write an e-mail to a friend. "That doesn't mean you can misspell words, ignore story structure, or leave out context," he says. "What it does mean is you should write in the most intimate style you can muster." Because Web-based news sites tend to offer readers many choices, writers should avoid delayed or anecdotal leads that don't quickly indicate what a story is about. The lead should give the reader a good reason to continue reading; otherwise, he or she probably will click on another story. Stories online generally are shorter than newspaper stories. A good guideline is to limit an online story to about 800 words and to keep it all on one page. Studies have found that readers are willing to scroll through text online; there is no need to force them to click on additional pages for more of the same story. But to make the text easier to absorb, scholars suggest that online writers break the text into more blocks and use more subheads and bullet points to separate ideas than they would in print.

Research has been undertaken to understand the utilization of online PR. For example, Macnamara (1999) found that PRs units in organizations and consultancies are using social media (social networks, LinkedIn, Facebook, and YouTube) in approaches exploiting their interactive two-way communication capabilities and realizing best practices as dialogic models in ways that the excellence theory of PR has described. Kelleher and Sweetser (2011) agreed with Macnamara that the utilization of social media is essential to the practice of PR itself because of 2-way communication, interactivity, dialogue, and engagement. Ministry of Peace also uses social media to create two-way communications, but it lacks in applying professional online writing guidelines.

To prove this the researcher observes several social media products of the ministry. Most of the posts were designed as news and they lack appropriate framing of headlines, leads as well as limit of words that requires the digital media. As we see in the following figure the MoPs use more words mainly crafted as the traditional media requires. Even to begin with from the headline they use more elaborated sentences that counted over 20 words. Additionally, the

headline is also loaded with two and more ideas that don't address the core point of the message.



**Figure 5: The writing form on the ministry's Facebook page**

As we all know that public relations are a profession that uses communication and interaction to create and sustain a favorable image and reputation among its strategic stakeholders called the public. In other words, public relations establishes cordial and fruitful relationships between an organization and its public including employees, directors, customers, suppliers, bankers, creditors, shareholders, community leaders, media, top government officials, and agencies (Nwosu, 1996:23). Public relations use the tool of communication and the feedback mechanism.

According to research the average amount of time an online reader spends reading anything on the internet is two minutes, it will have hyperlinks, and People read electronic media differently than they do print. They scan and search for things that stand out, like bullet points and boldface phrases. Therefore, writers must arrange information so readers can absorb it quickly (<https://degree.astate.edu/articles/undergraduate-studies/writing-for-online-and-print.aspx> access date May 17, 2023).

According to (Broom, G. M. (2009) explained in the four processes of public relations - Research is the systematic gathering of information to describe and understand a situation; check assumptions about the public and perceptions, and check the public relations consequences. Research helps define the problem and the public. WHO do we want to reach? What do we want them to DO? WHAT messages do we want to communicate to each public that will: Encourage desired behavior? Increase knowledge? Change attitudes? According to this scholar, the PRs process is crucial to profitable communication through their social pages.

The text mode and the image mode are all the same most of the company publishes in Amharic which means it seems centered in Amharic speakers. Questions from followers are not answered on the company's Facebook page, which means that information is transmitted in one direction only. The company shares the information it has with followers but does not accept any feedback from the followers. The public believes that not responding to comments has made people hate the work of the organization.

Generally, this Facebook page has lack two ways flow of information, this gap comes from a lack of application of the public relations process: researching, action plan, communication, and evaluation. On the other hand, knowing the characteristics of new and old Medias are the other issue at risk. So, to create the appropriate message for the right target group through social media, they have to know the characteristics of new media. Knowing this is also helping them to perform the two-way flow of communication. The way the ministry's post is most likely the same and their posting approach is not attractive, as digital media requirements. Based on the reactions of the followers the ministry has a bad image and reputation in the perceptions of the public. A researcher of public relations(Olasky (2011), investigated public relations activities spontaneously evolving and not based on any professionalism in the 19th century to understand the developmental stages of international public relations; and pointed to the examples of practice which he defined as "voluntaristic public relations". The communication officers of the Ministry of Peace are considered volunteer public relations because most of their study backgrounds are in other fields of study but not PRs.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

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

#### **5.1. Summary of Analyzed Data**

Social media is preferable to mainstream media to perform interactive communication, while the Ministry of Peace communication department is still following a one-way flow of communication, but they are trying to do a two-way flow or interactive communication, PRs of the minister do not respond to comments from below on their social media posts, but rather collect them and take them into a press conference. The more participants argue that they have not replied to the comments posted on their social media, but prepare a live stream to question and answer on their Facebook page to make the communication participatory. Discussed communication interactivity between public relations and the public is the issue in the organization they prefer social media to create interaction, but there are problems in its use. They use followers' comments as input but don't reply or exchange ideas with followers in the organization.

The ministry's PRs use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Telegram to communicate their organization's information to the public but they use more Facebook because Facebook is a quick and easy way to use. According to the data, Facebook helps them to understand their followers' perceptions and improve their work based on their feedback. Overall, the ideas raised by all participants indicated that Facebook is most commonly used, in promoting their organization's goals to transmit news and information as well as, to share photos and videos.

Social media has had huge positive effects on PRs it changed the way PR communicates, and it makes it easier to communicate with the public in a simple way, in a short time, with a small budget. Social media is also, supportive in terms of simplifying the work for public relations; helping to easily deliver the information they want to the public, and promoting the organization to the internal and external public. Social media supported public relations in delivering timely and reliable information to the public, as the main task of public relations is to save time, money, and manpower. The role of social media in public relations is important in promoting the goals and programs and objectives of the organizations in addition to vision, mission, and values, goals and programs promoter.

Based on the major findings the Study identified three factors that negatively affect the use of social media in the ministry: its acceptance by the community, its lack of credibility, and the similar pages are an attempt to open by the ministry's name. based on the major findings the two factors that affect the use of social media in the ministry were identified: accountability and reliability of information, which is questionable due to its accessibility for all users, identified two factors that affect the use of social media in the company: accountability and reliability of the information.

The negative impact of social media on communications of public relations, such as social media can be hacked account, for example, the INSA leader's social network was hacked and the other is doubts among the public about the organization due to instability in the country, and Defamation of authorities has had a negative impact on the use of social media. And the comments were given to the institution's website, which had an impact on social media usage. The Peace Minister has many followers on Facebook, but few participate inactively due to a lack of tactics and strategies. The company publishes in Amharic and does not accept feedback from followers. PRs must research their real public to identify their interests, media use, and listeners. Social media followers just want something short, so public relations is expected to know what makes them effective.

## **5.2. Major Findings**

From the results of this study, the researcher concluded that Public Relation communication on social media still follows a one-way communication flow. In the communication department of the organization, they use social media or their Facebook page to disseminate information only. They were not ready yet to take feedback from the public or to react to the public's response on their networking sites to perform an interactive communication.

The majority of the respondents agreed that social media has had a great and significant impact on how public relations practitioners communicate and it can change, the way public relations communicate generally. But in the context of the Ministry of Peace, they are not so profitable in the use of social media. The researcher identified from the participants' responses and content analysis that, they use only one social media platform for communication instead of using multiple platforms, on the same way there is a serious gap in communicating information in a positive and attractive manner in the ways of social media followers want.

From the results of this study, the researcher concluded that Public Relations of the Ministry of Peace are unaware of the characteristics of social media, and post the same content information on both print and social media. The same content of the message is published in their magazine, and they also post it on the company's Facebook page. Similarly, the public relations of the company did not play their roles; they work without researching the public; what language it speaks, what its need and want, and what its strengths and weaknesses of them must be known before communicating. On the other hand, tactics, and strategies have not been developed by the PRs of the company to attract the target public.

From the results of this study, the researcher concluded that as many participants agreed with the idea, the factor that affects the use of social media by public relations in the Ministry of Peace is acceptance because the company's reputation is bad in the perception of the public. The communication staff of the minister not yet goes any process to repair the company's reputation. The communication staff/ public relations of the MoP are unaware of any PRs roles in an organization; it's that PRs needed in the company is to ensure the company's reputation and image. PRs have to work on the company's reputation repairing because the main function of Public Relations in an organization is building the image and reputation of the company.

### **5.3. Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to assess and analyze how social media are currently being used for Public Relations communication in the Ministry of Peace, and how the organization integrates social media into its Public Relations communication. The tools used to gather data for this study consisted of a qualitative interview and content analysis conducted with a sample of 6 participants from the Minister of Communication department, in order to determine their usage of the social media platforms: there is no cooperation of social media usage among social media platforms they almost using Facebook solely, for some extent they in using Twitter, YouTube, and Telegram in addition. But, they don't use this well except to hold their page, for example, Twitter has been updated for a year and YouTube has not been updated for two years, so they almost only use Facebook at this time. The face-to-face interview was conduct with six participants from the communication department of the Ministry of Peace.

Generally, the researcher concluded, this study based on the major findings, the communications department of the ministry is not playing the public relations role. Their works are not based on

public relations processes (RACE), such as research, action planning, communication, and evaluation. Those public relations processes are helpful to prepare communication strategy and tactic and, also make a profitable in a communication. The Public Relations of the ministry are considered as volunteer PRs. is not based on any professionalism. Therefore, without a profession it will be difficult to play the role, activity, and functions of Public relations.

#### **5.4. Recommendations**

As shown in the findings of this study, the use of social media can play an important role in public relations communication, but in this case, it is not more effective, therefore, the researcher recommended the following to improve the use of social media in the organization.

The Ministry's public relations should understand the characteristics of social media not only to disseminate information and answer general questions but also to know the context of the media, for example, in print media it's possible to publish long, in detail articles, but social media followers only want short articles.

The Ministry's public relations should make good use of multiple social media platforms because using more platforms make the company effective and gets enough public attention for the minister's affairs and the information they disseminate. Twitter and YouTube have been opened by the company, but Twitter has been updated a year ago and YouTube was updated five months ago from the time of this analysis.

The public relations of the Ministry should work on making the communication two-way and interactive as social media is conducive to correcting this, social media is designed to make it easier for users to exchange ideas, raise ideas, questions and get answers to their questions and ideas at the same time. So, facilitating this is the work of public relations

The public relations of the Ministry should apply the PRs process, it should have to start its work with Research and end with evaluation, to identify the problems, to know its target public; to know what the public likes and dislikes, know its strengths and weaknesses, and what information they deserve is determined by research.

The public relation Ministry should work hard on repairing the company's reputation to change the perceptions the public have about the Ministry because the public has had a bad image

regarding the company, this reputation is a serious issue for any organization so, if anyone can change this bad perception it is the public relations of the company.

Public relations of the Ministry should use social media properly, because it is suitable for multi modalities, on a social media platform anyone can post: text, images, and videos in one place in addition to this the company can promote other platforms by adding their links, instead of using text and images only on all its posts.

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## Appendix

### Guide of In-depth Interview Questions for Participants of the Study at the Ministry of Peace

A. Name? /Optional.

C. Education level?

B. Position?

D. Experience?

1. What, do you think, about social media and mainstream media? Which one do you prefer to communicate as communicator?
2. What are the advantages/disadvantages of using social media for PRs? And how does it affect their communication in the Ministry of Peace?
3. How do you measure the communication flow on social media in the Ministry of Peace?
4. Does the emergence of social media change the way of public relations communicate? How?
5. How do you compare the message/content posted on social media and transmitted on Mainstream Media?
6. What are the social media platforms that your organization currently using? And which do you using most? Why?
7. What factors are negatively affecting the use of social media at the Ministry of Peace?
8. How, do you think is social media supportive for public relations to achieve their functions? Why?
9. How do you control the communication addressed through the ministry's social networks?
10. What are the impacts of social media on public relations communications in the Ministry of Peace? How?
11. What are the challenges of using social media as a communication means in the Ministry of Peace?
12. Which communication means do you prefer to perform communication among new and old Medias? Why?
13. What are the roles of social media in promoting the company's objective and program at the Ministry of Peace?

**Amharic Version**

በሰላም ሚኒስቴር፣ የጥናት ተሳታፊዎች ጥልቅ የቃለ መጠይቅ ጥያቄዎች መመሪያ፤

ሀ. ስም? /አማራጭ

ሐ. የትምህርት ደረጃ?

ለ. የስራ ድርሻ?

መ. የስራ ልምድ?

1. ስለ ማህበራዊ ሚዲያ እና ዋናው ሚዲያ ምን ያስባሉ? እንደ ኮሙዩኒኬን ባላሙያ የትኛውን ይመርጣሉ?
2. ማህበራዊ ሚዲያ ለህዝብ ግንኙነት ያለው ጥቅም/ጉዳቱ ምንድን ነው? በሰላም ሚኒስቴር ውስጥ ያላቸውን ኮሙዩኒኬን ላይ እንዴት ተጽኖ ያደርጋል?
3. በሰላም ሚኒስቴር ውስጥ በማህበራዊ ሚዲያ ላይ ያለውን ኮሙዩኒኬን ፍሰት እንዴት ይለካሉ?
4. የማህበራዊ ሚዲያ መምጣት የህዝብ ግንኙነትን ኮሙዩኒኬን ይለውጠዋል? እንዴት?
5. በማህበራዊ ሚዲያ ላይ የተለጠፈውን እና በዋናው ሚዲያ ላይ የሚተላለፈውን መልእክት/ይዘት እንዴት ያወዳድራሉ?
6. ድርጅታችሁ በአሁኑ ጊዜ የሚጠቀሙባቸው የማህበራዊ ሚዲያ ፕላትፎርሞች ምን ምን ናቸው? እና የትኛውን ይበልጥ ይጠቀማሉ? ለምን?
7. በሰላም ሚኒስቴር በማህበራዊ ሚዲያ አጠቃቀም ላይ አሉታዊ ተጽዕኖ እያሳደሩ ያሉት ነገሮች ምንድን ናቸው?
8. ማህበራዊ ሚዲያ ለህዝብ ግንኙነት ተግባራቸውን ለማሳካት እንዴት ያግዛል ብለው ያስባሉ?
9. በሚኒስቴሩ ማህበራዊ ሚዲያ በኩል የሚቀርበውን ኮሙዩኒኬን እንዴት ይቆጣጠራሉ?
10. በሰላም ሚኒስቴር፣ ማህበራዊ ሚዲያ በየህዝብ ግንኙነት ኮሙዩኒኬሽን ላይ ምን ተጽእኖ እያሳደረ ነው? እንዴት?
11. በሰላም ሚኒስቴር ውስጥ፣ ማህበራዊ ሚዲያን እንደ ኮሙዩኒኬሽን የመጠቀም ተግዳሮቶች ምን ምን ናቸው?
12. ከማህበራዊ ሚዲያ እና ዋናው ሚዲያ መካከል ኮሙዩኒኬሽንን ለማከናወን የሚመርጡት የትኛውን መንገድ ነው? ለምን?
13. በየሰላም ሚኒስቴር የሚኒስቴር መስሪያ ቤቱን ዓላማና ፕሮግራም በማስተዋወቅ ረገድ የማህበራዊ ሚዲያ ሚናዎች ምን ምን ናቸው?