

2022-02

A STUDY ON THE PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF USING SOCIAL MEDIA AS A PUBLIC RELATION TOOL: THE CASE OF AMHARA NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE CULTURE AND TOURISM BUREAU

NURHUSSEIN, MOHAMMED

<http://ir.bdu.edu.et/handle/123456789/13887>

Downloaded from DSpace Repository, DSpace Institution's institutional repository

BAHIR DAR UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
POST GRADUATE PROGRAM OF
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

MA THESIS ON:

**A STUDY ON THE PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF USING
SOCIAL MEDIA AS A PUBLIC RELATION TOOL: THE CASE OF
AMHARA NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE CULTURE AND TOURISM
BUREAU**

BY: NURHUSSEIN MOHAMMED

ADVISOR: ZELALEM T (ASST PROF)

FEBRUARY, 2022

BAHIRDAR, ETHIOPIA

MA THESIS ON:

**A STUDY ON THE PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES OF USING
SOCIAL MEDIA AS A PUBLIC RELATION TOOL: THE CASE OF
AMHARA NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE CULTURE AND TOURISM
BUREAU**

BY: NURHUSSEIN MOHAMMED

ADVISOR: ZELALEM T (ASST PROF)

**A MA THESIS SUBMITTED TO BAHIR DAR UNIVERSITY SCHOOL
OF GRADUATE STUDIES FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, MEDIA AND
COMMUNICATION IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER'S ART IN MEDIA
AND COMMUNICATION**

FEBRUARY 2022

BAHIRDAR, ETHIOPIA

DECLARATION

This is to certify that the thesis is prepared By *Nurhussien Mohammed Adem Entitled “The Practice and Challenges of Using Social Media as a Public Relation Tool: The Case of Amhara National Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau”* is a record of my own work and all the sources that I have used is indicated in part of reference. The support I received during my study has been properly acknowledged.

Nurhussien Mohammed Adem ----- February, 2022, Bahir Dar

Candidate’s name

Signature

Date

Place

BAHIR DAR UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
POST GRADUATE PROGRAM OF
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Approval of thesis for defence

I confirm that I have seen, monitored, supervised, and evaluated this thesis entitled **“A Study On The Practices And Challenges Of Using Social Media As A Public Relation Tool: The Case Of Amhara National Regional State Culture And Tourism Bureau”** prepared By ***Nurhussien Mohammed Adem*** under my guidance. I recommend the thesis be given into for oral defence.

Advisor's name

Signature

Date

BAHIR DAR UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
POST GRADUATE PROGRAM OF
MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

This is to certify that the thesis is prepared By **“A Study on the Practices And Challenges of Using Social Media as a public relation Tool: The Case of Amhara National Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau”** submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of master’s of Arts in Media and communication, complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Members of the Examining Board

Advisor _____ Signature _____ Date _____

External Examiner _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Internal Examiner _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Chairperson _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Department Head _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Acknowledgments

I am truly grateful for the wonderful support, inspiration, and encouragement that I have received from many people in my educational pursuit. First, I would like to express my enormous gratitude to my advisor Mr. Zelalem T (Asst Prof) for his enthusiastic, constructive guidance, meaningful, and valuable support throughout preparing my research and for going extra mile for me to finish my degree.

My sincere gratitude goes to all participants that helped me in providing all the information specifically for the Amhara National Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau communication **experts**. They provided important information and raw data for the consumption of this research preparation.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	1
ABSTRACT.....	4
CHAPTER ONE.....	5
1. INTRODUCTION.....	5
1.1. Background of the study.....	5
1.2. Statement of the Problem.....	7
1.3. Objective of the study.....	12
1.3.1. Specific Objectives.....	12
1.4. Scope of the Study.....	13
1.5. Significance of the Study.....	13
CHAPTER TWO.....	15
2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES.....	15
2.0. Introduction.....	15
2.1. Conceptualization of Relations as a communication Tool.....	15
2.2. Public Relation and its role for organizations.....	18
2.3. Social Media.....	19
2.4. Social Media Platforms.....	21
2.5. The Ethiopian social media landscape.....	25
2.6. Social media use of Organizations.....	26
2.7. Social Media as a Public Relations Tool.....	27
2.8. Theoretical framework of the Study.....	29
2.8.1. Diffusion Of Innovation Theory.....	29
2.8.2. Affordance Theories.....	31
2.8.3. The Public Sphere Theory.....	34
CHAPTER THREE.....	37
3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	37
3.1. Research Approach.....	37
3.4. Research Design.....	38
3.5. Data Collection Method.....	40
3.5.1. In-depth Interview.....	40
3.5.2 Document Analysis.....	43

3.6. Data Source and Type.....	43
3.7. Data analysis and Interpretation.....	44
3.8. Ethical Considerations.....	45
CHAPTER FOUR.....	47
4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....	47
4.0. Introduction.....	47
4.1. The Practices of Social Media Usage as Public Relations Tool To Communicate With The Public.....	48
4.2. The social media platforms that are utilized by Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau. 55	
4.3. How social media is used as a PR tool in Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau.....	58
4.4. The opportunities and challenges of the social media usage as a PR tool in Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau.....	61
4.4.1.The Opportunities for Using Social Media as a Public Relations Tool in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau.....	62
4.4.2. The Challenges of Using Social Media as a PR Tool in the AmharaCulture and Tourism Bureau	67
CHAPTER FIVE.....	70
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	70
5.0. Introduction.....	70
5.1.Summary of the Major Findings.....	72
5.2. Conclusions	78
5.3. Recommendations.....	82
Appendix 1: Interview Guides.....	90
Appendix 2: Sample Transcription.....	91

ABSTRACT

The major objective of this study is to investigate the practices and challenges of using social media as a public relation tool in Culture and Tourism Bureau of Amhara National Regional state. The Public Sphere Theory was used as a theoretical framework of the study as it is appropriate to address the key objectives. To achieve this objective, qualitative descriptive research design was employed. In this study, data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. In addition, semi structured interview and content analysis was employed to collect necessary data for this study. Besides, the communications published by Amhara National Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau on social media were used as a supplemental source of data. The content analysis was carried out using these messages as input. Then, the data gathered through interview and document review were summarized and described qualitatively in the interpretation of the data. Based on the above the analyses of data the following conclusions were drawn. Regarding the usage of social media, the findings of this study revealed that top-level management recognizes social media as a valuable tool, is offering strategic counsel to social media operations, and is providing the necessary resources. According to the study, the PR officers at the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau use a variety of social media platforms such as Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, etc. However, it should be emphasized that Facebook is the most popular since it has a large number of users and is easily accessible. For example, 83,682 people are the followers of the Facebook of the Bureau. From the analysis of data it was deduced that that Amharic and English are the two most often used languages for social media conversations. Amharic is the most regularly used language to connect with the organization's local people, according to the PR expert respondents. The English language is also utilized by the Amhara National Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau's to communicate with international customers. The study noted that various problems were discovered in the usage of social media as a PR tool. Among the challenges, lack of technical ability and know-how in properly administering social media platforms is the most commonly highlighted difficulty by responders. According to the findings, the experts in charge of the social media outlets are not fully utilizing the available social media tools and lack advanced knowledge of the platforms. The other barrier in using social media is a lack of or scarcity of resources such as shortage of high-speed laptop computers and audio-visual assets. The data analysis found that one of the obstacles in using social media is misunderstanding of the bureau's messaging by the followers or viewers. . Finally, different recommendations were given to enhance the use of social media as a PR communication tool. Specifically, long and short-term training, as well as introducing best practices from other places and raising awareness of the use of social media as a communication medium, should be provided to the organization in order to fulfil organizational goals successfully. Furthermore, to accomplish organizational goals, the department in charge of social media should be filled with experienced employees and technology.

IMPORTANT TERMS AND ACRONYMS; PR: Public Relation; SM: Social Media; ANRS: Amhara National Regional State

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Public relations is an essential element of any organization, and it is the results of the public relations that establishes and maintains positive perception with multiple audiences such as the general public, government, sponsors, and the media. This being said, public relations create a two-way communication between an organization and its target customer. This type of communication has undergone significant changes in the past decade as the internet and social media have been developed and proliferated across societies (Shrivastava, 2013).

The development of the Internet has now transformed the way communication is being conducted. Prior to the internet communication was a one-way mechanism whereby information was “pushed” to the user. However; internet and the development of social media has completely changed the landscape transforming the “push” mechanism to a “pull” mechanism (McAllister and Taylor, 2007). This means audience are no longer passive users but rather active users. This shift is giving public relations practitioners a unique opportunity to collect information, monitor public opinion on issues, and engages in direct dialogue with their publics about a variety of issues (Shrivastava, 2013).

Social media has had a profound effect on society and continues to be one of the most powerful tools. Social media is now the leading online competitive service, replacing former outlets, as the number one use of the internet and an emerging communication channel for many. According to Gillin (2008), social media is giving rise to a new style of communication that is characterized by conversation and community.

This includes space for collaboration with others with similar, like minds or with those that have interest in the topic by providing the space to ask and answer questions, discuss, and share experience. This fosters the development of relationships through the exchange of ideas for personal and professional development. In addition, social media enhances communication with a wider and broader audience, that is to say it enables conversations and is not limited by geographical space or time (Gillin 2008).

In reference to the PR practice, the use of social media platforms by PR practitioner is now able to cut out the third party to deliver its messages and can directly be the source of news. This being said access to information, in a very fast, all-networked, and sometimes free, manner is revolutionising many aspects of public relations research and practices (Shrivastava, 2013).

In Ethiopia context, social media is the growing platform for a public communication tool. The penetration rate of Facebook users in Ethiopia was 1.0 percent as of December 31, 2012. This equates to 902, 440 users in the country (Internet World Stats, 2014). However, despite the issues with internet connectivity, the number of SMNs users is increasing as internet-connected phones enable this. In support of this, Simengesh (2015) claims that Facebook users in Ethiopia reached more than three million. According to Sileshie (2014), Facebook is operating as an alternative media platform to radio, newspaper, and television because much of the network's material is neglected by mainstream media.

Besides, it is noted that in Ethiopia, there are a few media organizations that use social media networks, although not on a regular basis. With this regard, in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau, the use of internet communication especially social media is increasing rapidly. This

office has sub-division department of public relation and communications that incorporates the communication and public relations activities. The public relation department runs Facebook, and it has more than 63,000 followers. The employees post current information, news and also upload photos so that their followers get up-to-date data regarding the office and its stakeholders. The offices official web site lacks an update (up-to-date information). The PR practitioners focus on updating posts in the social media, particularly Facebook. In addition to the social media, they upload documentaries and videos in YouTube. However, the practices and challenges of using social media as a public relation tool in Culture and Tourism Bureau is not yet studied. Accordingly, the present study investigated the usage of social media in the public relations practice by taking Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau as a case in point.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

As stated in the foregoing discussion, in Ethiopia social media is the growing platform for a public communication tool. Although corporate websites, chat-rooms, email customer response facilities and electronic news release distribution are now viewed as standard aspects of public relations practice (Galloway & Aido, 2005) many public relations practitioners are struggling with the impact of new media (internet), and especially the social media. Because social media is growing rapidly and getting a large number of customers every day, it is important to analyze the impact social media has on the overall public relations practices.

However, the mainstream media and its goods are generally disregarded and framed negatively in this new arena. As a result, a lack of democratic political culture, a trust gap, and polarized media sentiment on social media are obvious. In practice, there are a few mainstream media headlines that portray social media as spreading false information. Promisingly, it is simple to

witness news that makes its way to mainstream media (mostly pro-state), usually as a counter-attack, after social media users have digested it well and formed an opinion. This has the potential to undermine the credibility and democratic forum role of the media. However, internet users are multiplying, social media is flourishing, and activists and citizen journalists are on the rise. The professional or personal use of social media by journalists, for what and how they use it, how common is the use of social media among journalists, whether it has impacted their traditional role of journalism, what challenges they face, and media use of social media in Ethiopia are all uncharted territory. Thus, it is important to investigate the opportunities and challenges of using social media as a PR tool.

In Ethiopia, there are a few organizations that use social media networks, although not on a regular basis. At the same time, various media institutions' accounts are publicly visible on social media. They appear to be inactive in engaging citizens for the most part. PR Experts' use of social media is inconsistent as well. When major crises arise, some people stay away from social media, while others remain active on multiple accounts. There are times when a journalist is advised to stop blogging on social media about matters that contradict the station's goal. Some journalists share their media content and interact with citizens. Others, understandably, are preoccupied with small matters. With this regard, it is necessary to examine the challenges of using social media and suggest possible direction that could address the identified challenges.

The organisations' non-agile communication function has always been failing to make some unexpected changes, a natural fact of organizational life and adapt quickly to new markets, challenges and environments. The Amhara National Regional state Culture and Tourism Bureau's public relation practitioners actively use Facebook (where they have more than 63,000 followers), than any of the other social media platforms, like Instagram, Twitter, YouTube,

Telegram, etc... to address their audience (stakeholders). Thus, it is rationale to investigate the extent to which the PR practitioners at the Amhara National Regional State, Culture and Tourism Bureau are fully embracing/ utilizing the power of social media PR tool for their intended purposes.

As the implementation of social media grows in the public relations workforce, it is important to determine whether the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau is keeping pace with this ever-growing phenomenon and offering adequate information for its audience and stakeholders. Hence, this study investigated the practices and challenges of using social media as a public relation tool by taking Culture and Tourism Bureau as a case study

The other rationale of the study is the research gap observed in the area. With this regard, some social studies were conducted on the use of social media for different communicative purposes. For example, Ameyu Etana Kalo(2015) undertook a study entitled Social Media and Journalism: Journalists and Media Outlets' Use of Social Media Networks in Ethiopia. The findings of this study imply that the dialogic communication method used by the missions on social media may be improved. At the moment, it appears that Ethiopian missions are relying on social media rather than traditional media to create debate. As a result, the Communication Grid's tactics were appropriate to the missions' social media communication, but they were not fully utilized. The missions mostly employ social media for information and persuasive methods.

Abrehet Meharir (2017) noted that journalists use social media for various purposes, such as for getting a new idea, to stay connected to the world, for personal and professional development; however, journalists' use of the social media for professional purpose is marred with

challenges. Their participation in discussion on social media is not as much of and they have no demarcation for personal and professional use of social media. The infamous traditional problem of journalists – self censorship, has migrated to online with journalists due to the new discourse of fear – surveillance and censorship.

Besides, Wagari Kenea Angu(2018) assessed “the Impact of Social Media on News making Process at Oromia Broadcasting Network: Facebook in Focus” According to the study, Facebook has an impact on TV news making by either feeding current material or killing the news narrative; it provides a particular problem in terms of selecting the news angle. The traditional concepts of newsmaking process used in the mainstream media for presenting breaking news were thrown aside by social media, particularly Facebook. Furthermore, Facebook has a significant impact on news gathering and editorial decision-making, as well as questioning the notion of journalistic verification to determine the accuracy of a story.

Furthermore, Bitima Milkessa (2019) has researched on ‘The Perceived impact of Social Media on mainstream journalism professional practices: The case study of Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) and Fana Broadcasting Corporate (FBC). Journalists viewed Social Media as very significant in sourcing, processing, disseminating, and receiving feedback for local news, according to the findings from various sources of data. Similarly, social media has had a significant impact on mainstream journalistic practice, even to the point of spawning new ones. Journalists used social media platforms in their everyday workflows, but access to appropriate computing technologies remained a contentious issue within the media industry. Media companies were merging and progressively urging their staff to adopt social media in their

regular work practices and routines. In addition to mainstreaming through television and radio, both EBC and FBC directly linked to social media to broadcast online. This demonstrates the influence of internet technology on traditional media.

Dawit W/Eyesus(2019) also assessed the challenges of using social media among federal government organizations PR practitioners with specific reference to Addis Ababa City. The study showed that Lack of skilled manpower, less attention from top management, internet connection problems, false organizational pages, shortage of electric power, shortage of information or unworthy information, poor ICT infrastructure, deliberate internet connection, lack of skill to use media convergence, and lack of knowledge for boosting the page were found to be challenges of PR practitioners in federal government organizations.

The above review discussion shows that different local studies are conducted on the issue of social media for different communication purposes and associated challenges. Accordingly, the above national studies are very important to the present study as they provide contextual information about practices and challenges of using social media as a public relation tool.. Generally, as far as the researcher is reading of related literatures is concerned no research was conducts on the practices and challenges of using social media as a public relation tool. The observed research gap in the area is one the rationale that initiated the present study. Therefore, the present study will fill the felt gap by investigating the issues, which were not addresses by the previous researchers.

1.3. Objective of the study

The objective of this study is to investigate the practices and challenges of using social media as a public relation tool by taking ANRS Culture and Tourism Bureau as a case study.

1.3.1. Specific Objectives

1. To find how the ANRS Culture and Tourism Bureau PR professionals use social media as public relations tool to communicate with the public
2. To identify the social media platforms those are mostly utilized by ANRS Culture and Tourism Bureau
3. To investigate how do the ANRS Culture and Tourism Bureau use social media to communicate with the public
4. To point out the opportunities and challenges of the using of social media as a public relations tool in ANRS Culture and Tourism Bureau

1.3.2. Research Questions

1. How do the ANRS Culture and Tourism Bureau PR professionals use social media as public relations tool to communicate with the public?
2. What social media platforms are mostly utilized by ANRS Culture and Tourism Bureau?
3. How do the ANRS Culture and Tourism Bureau use social media to communicate with its publics?
4. What are the opportunities and challenges of the using of social media as a public relations tool in ANRS Culture and Tourism Bureau?

1.4. Scope of the Study

The present study investigated the practices and challenges of using social media as a public relation tool by taking ANRS National Regional state Culture and Tourism Bureau's public relation as a case study. Thus, the setting of the study was delimited Amhara National Regional state Culture and Tourism Bureau's public relation. There are different related organisations working on the issue of culture and tourism in general, however, this study is limited to this organisation only.

In connection to this, the reason for selecting this organization was that there is **very little** research, if any has been conducted, on the practices and challenges of using social media as a public relation tool **and not adequate** research work conducted in the stated on this research title as to the reading of the researcher. This would enable the researcher to collect original data and produce new findings by focusing on the un-researched settings.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The study's findings will have the following main significances. The findings will benefit management and the public relations department in understanding how Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau PR professionals use social media as a public relations tool to engage with the public. As a result, the study will inform the governing authorities on how the ANRS Culture and Tourism Bureau communicate with the public through social media. Besides, the study hoped to improve their awareness of the practices and challenges associated with the use of social information. In other words, the study will reveal update information subject under inquiry.

In addition, thus, the significance of performing this study is that it will add to a very seldom studied subject in the sense that it could serve as a springboard, particularly for those who would like to study social media and journalism in the future. As a result, one of the contributions of this study would be the numerous potential for future research. This study would also be useful for journalists, media managers, policymakers, researchers, internet specialists, and media critics in Ethiopia and elsewhere to gain a better understanding of the situation of social media as PR Tool.

Furthermore, the findings of this study can be used by other concerned bodies to assist in the formulation and development of frameworks to minimize the influential internal and external factors that affect the use of social media platforms. Understanding the barriers to using the various social media platforms in the sample organization will thus assist the organization's management and other stakeholders in developing an appropriate strategy that will actively encourage the use of social media as a PR tool. To address the challenges identified, this study suggests alternate social media actions.

For the academicians and researchers the study can possibly be in a position to adapt and use this study in a way it could be of importance to them and in broadening of this issue for a deeper understanding of the critical factors that can affect the use of social media as a PR tool.

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

2.0. Introduction

This study of the literature provides an overview and comprehension of how social media arose, became popular, and affected global communication elements in general, and public relations and communications operations of professional tourist organizations and teams in particular. Furthermore, this literature describes and seeks to comprehend how social media has altered public relations and communication operations.

2.1. Conceptualization of Public Relations as a communication Tool

Tench and Yeomans (2009) noted that Public Relations (PR) is used in a huge range of industries and each one requires different skills and competencies among practitioners. Similar to the concept of social media, as observed by the researcher, scholars from different stances provided definitions for the concept of PR, which mostly are descriptive. According to McKie and Sriramesh (2017), PR is better described than defined. And they proposed the following elaborated description of PR:

It is an applied professional practice and an academic field, and both offer communication centered and research-based ways to understand, inform and intervene to adjust relationships between ideas, individuals, groups, and societies. The practice seeks to influence the building, maintenance, and restoration (or, on occasion, destruction) of reputations and also to integrate different perspectives and groups, particularly through its enactment of activities such as issues management, crisis resolution, and risk communication. Because the field's major arena of social action is the public sphere, especially in media (online and offline), politics and public opinion, public relations activities can impact significantly on democracy.

The above description by Mckie and Sriramesh (2017) recognized PR as a profession and an academic field which is using research as a road map for guiding relationships. The description underlined the important role of PR in building, maintaining and restoring reputations as well as in integrating a diversity of views and groups that is leading to the proper implementation of democracy.

Tench and Yeomans (2009) stated that Harlow, among the pioneer scholars in PR, found 472 different definitions of PR coined between 1900 and 1976. Tench and Yeomans (2009) then presented the following definition built by Harlow:

Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; 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 ethical communication techniques as its principal tools (p.5).

In his definition, Harlow wanted to portray PR as a vital and independent management function assisting to create new and maintain existing two-way communication and understanding as well as acceptance and collaboration between the organization and its publics. The researcher also learned from the definition that PR can also play a role in managing problems or crises that might potentially damage the reputation of the organization.

The role of PR in assisting the management or decision-makers of the organization is additionally indicated in Harlow's definition. Accordingly, PR helps in three ways. First, it

reminds the management to understand and respond to the public opinion and interest. Second, it supports organizational change through exercising its coaching, training and consulting role. Third, by referring to previous experiences and developing possible scenarios, PR can help in systematically predicting the outcomes of management actions and possible reactions from their publics. It is important to note from the definition that PR uses research techniques to scientifically study its activities. Professional ethics is another important pillar while discharging PR duties.

Among the many competing definitions of public relations, Grunig and Hunt's is the most widely cited definition of PR that reads "PR is the management of communication between an organization and its publics." One reason this definition is so successful is its parsimony or using few words to convey much information (Schmitz, 2012). Schmitz (2012) not only presented Grunig and Hunt's definition of PR, he further dissected its component parts as follow:

- Management: The body of knowledge on how best to coordinate the activities of an enterprise to achieve effectiveness.
- Communication: Not only sending a message to a receiver but also understanding the messages of others through listening and dialogue.
- Organization: Any group organized with a common purpose; in most cases, it is a business, a corporation, a governmental agency, or a nonprofit group.
- Publics: Any group(s) of people held together by a common interest. They differ from audiences in that they often self-organize and do not have to attune to messages; the publics differ from stakeholders in that they do not necessarily have a financial stake tying them to

specific goals or consequences of the organization. Targeted audiences, on the other hand, are publics who receive a specifically targeted message that is tailored to their interests.

2.2. Public Relation and its role for organizations

Many academics have attempted to explain the roles of public relations for an organization. For example, Tench and Yeomans (2009) stated that Public relations is a distinct management function that assists in the establishment and maintenance of mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; assists management in staying informed about and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasizes management's responsibility to serve the public interest; and assists management in staying abreast of and effectively utilizing change. This shows that PR incorporates many activities which are vital in public relations. Therefore, it is possible to say that public relations practitioners need to perform activities like anticipating, analysing, interpreting, and planning to perform well.

In an organization, PR is expected to play several responsibilities. For example, government public relations are concerned with the relationship or interaction of the government with its constituents, governmental oversight bodies, and legislators. It differs from public affairs in that public affairs are concerned with how organizations connect with various government entities and engage in lobbying. According to Lee, Neeley & Stewart (2012, p.12)."government public relations assists to promote communication with constituencies and with governmental publics." (pp.159-160). Thus, in government offices and organization, public relations activities help government administrators realize the mission of their organization and fulfil responsibilities given to the government in democratic systems (Lee, Neeley, & Stewart,2012, p.12).

Government officials are regarded public servants and are expected to operate transparently. They should respond to media inquiries, needs, and investigations (Lee, et al.,2012 p.14). A governmental organization's customers are all citizens. As a result, government organizations are thought to be attentive to citizens' inquiries. They do not respond to citizen issues in the same way that nonprofit and for-profit organizations do.

Government public relations practitioners are supposed to monitor and identify emerging ethical issues in the government's contact with its constituents. Growing ethical public policy issues may emerge in most circumstances, and these difficulties must be detected early in order to build a strategy plan and adequately handle them. If ethical public policy issues arise, they have the potential to shift public opinion, which will make the public relations' activity of interacting with different stakeholders difficult. In this study, an attempt is made to investigate the practices and challenges of using PR as a PR tool in Amhara Culture and Tourism office.

2.3. Social Media

Early internet communication was limited to passive viewing of content on static pages. Companies and organizations created web pages, but they were more like digital brochures. Marketers and advertisers wrote and designed corporate websites that they planned would remain the same for the next several years. Interactivity was limited to email on a contact page. However, a shift in capability happened in the first few years of the twenty-first century that changed everything. This shift was so dramatic it was called Web 2.0, a term popularized in 2004 by open-source software advocate Tim O'Reilly and implying a comprehensive new software release of the World Wide Web, taking it from version 1.0 to version 2.0. (Malerk, 2012). Social media has changed the way individuals connect with each other, share information, express themselves, and socialize with others (Lin, Fan & Chau, 2014).

Furthermore, it has changed the way businesses interact with current and potential customers.

To develop highly participatory platforms for co-creating, sharing, debating, and altering user-generated material, social media relies on web-based technologies and, more recently, mobile technology. These global shifts have had a tremendous impact on how individuals, communities, and organizations interact (Malerk, 2012).

Since its inception in 1996, social media has managed to infiltrate half of the 7.7 billion people in the world. Social network platforms almost tripled their total user base in the last decade, from 970 million in 2010 to the number passing 3.81 billion users in 2020 (Brian, 2021).

To demonstrate the rate of growth, compare how long it took different media to achieve 50 million subscribers. Radio, for example, took 38 years to reach 50 million consumers. With the introduction of television, the pace intensified. It took thirteen years after the introduction of television in the 1950s to reach 50 million consumers. Nonetheless, the rate of adoption in social media is phenomenal nowadays. It only took three and a half years after Facebook's launch for 50 million people to create accounts (Quesenberry, 2016).

The current percentage of people using social media is 50.64%% of the world's total population. However, when we look into platform penetration rates from people in eligible audiences, 83.36% of 4.57 billion global internet users and 90.71% of 4.20 billion mobile internet users are on social media (Brian, 2021).

Social media also improves the effectiveness of traditional marketing, advertising, and public relations activities. Integrating a marketing, advertising, or public relations strategy with social media yields genuine commercial outcomes. According to a research published in the Journal of

Marketing Research, electronic word-of-mouth by consumers results in nearly twice as much customer acquisition as traditional marketing (Malerik, 2012).

2.4. Social Media Platforms

Social media tools are categorized based on their functionality, into various groups. These groups include blogs, message boards, podcasts, micro blogs, bookmarks, networks, communities, and wikis. Web 2.0 takes on many forms such as social networking sites, blogs, wikis, forums, photo- and video-sharing sites, collaborative tagging, social bookmarking, ratings, and reviews. Today Web 2.0 has even grown to include live streaming video on channels like Periscope, Facebook, and Instagram plus augmented reality experiences with Pokémon GO and 3D lenses developed for Snapchat (Malerik, 2012).

Gorbatch (2016), on the other hand, created four categories: social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+), micro blogging (Twitter, Tumblr), photo sharing (Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest), and video sharing (YouTube, Facebook Live, Periscope, Vimeo) and classified over 60 social media sites as active in these four categories.

Social Media is constructed from two different words; “Social” and “Media.” The word ‘social’ implies both the ‘needing of companionship’ (Oxford University Press, 2012) as well as activities in which people meet each other for pleasure’ (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Media is defined as ‘the main means of mass communication’ (Oxford University Press, 2012) and an ‘agency or means of doing something’ (Oxford University Press, 2012). A central point of the term ‘Social Media’ is thus it combines a human quality with that of a technology, thus entailing a duality, which is fundamental to its definition.

The definitions of the term focus primarily on its technological characteristics. 'Social Media' is the umbrella term for web-based software and services that allow users to come together online and exchange, discuss, communicate and participate in any form of social interaction' (Ryan and Jones, 2012, p. 153), whereas other definitions lay emphasis on the evolution in human socialization to which it lays ground; 'Social Media is the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers. It is the shift from a broadcast medium, one-to-many, to a many-to-many model, rooted in conversations between authors, people and peers' (Solis, 2010, p. 37).

Similarly, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) described Social Media as a collection of Internet-based apps that are founded on the conceptual and technological underpinnings of Web 2.0 and enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content (UGC). Hermida (2012) characterized social media as technologies with "participation, openness, dialogue, community, and connectedness."

Newman (2009) agree that Social Media refers to the use of two or more modes of computer-mediated communication that result in virtual community formation. This implies that Social Media is communication Platforms that is based on two-way Communication process.

According to the researcher's observations, social media come in a variety of forms and qualities. Similarly, several experts and sources advocate for various sorts of social media. Fraustino et al. (2012), for example, provided examples of social media such as blogs and micro-blogs (such as Blogger, Twitter, and WordPress), discussion forums (such as Quora and Reddit), digital content sharing platforms (such as Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest, and YouTube), social gaming sites, and social networking sites (such as Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, Mixi, and Orkut).

By considering their functions, Foreman (2017) on the other hand listed ten types of social media. This list will be discussed as follow: -

- Social networks: sometimes called “relationship networks,” help people and organizations (brands) connect online to share information and ideas. Examples are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.
- Media sharing networks: give people and brands a place to find and share media online, including photos, video, and live video. Examples are Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube.
- Discussion forums: are one of the oldest forms of social media for finding, debating, and sharing news, information, and ideas. These are the sites where people go to find out what everyone is talking about and weigh in—and users on these sites aren't afraid to share their ideas because the sites allow them to remain anonymous. Reddit, Quora, and Digg are a few examples.
- Networks for bookmarking and content curation: assist individuals in discovering, saving, sharing, and discussing new and popular material and media. For those looking for knowledge and ideas, these networks serve as a source of creativity and inspiration. Pinterest and Flipboard are two examples.
- Consumer review networks: give people a place to review and share brands, businesses, products, services, travel spots, and just about anything else. Examples are Yelp, Zomato and Trip Advisor.
- Blogging and publishing networks: give people and brands tools to publish content online in formats that encourage discovery, sharing, and commenting. These networks range from more traditional blogging platforms like WordPress and Blogger to micro blogging services like Tumblr and interactive social publishing platforms like Medium.

- Social shopping networks: make ecommerce engaging by adding a social element. People use them to spot trends, follow brands, share great finds and make purchases. Examples are Polyvore, Etsy and Fancy.
- Interest-based networks: take a more targeted approach than the big social networks do by focusing solely on a single subject, such as books, music or home design. They help people to connect with others around a shared interest or hobby. Examples are Goodreads, Houzz and Last.fm.
- ‘Sharing economy’ networks: also called “collaborative economy networks,” connect people online for the purpose of advertising, finding, sharing, buying, selling, and trading products and services. Examples are Airbnb, Uber and Taskrabbit.
- Anonymous social networks: While major social networks are making increasing efforts to hold users accountable for their social activity, these sites go the other way and allow users to post content anonymously. Examples are Whisper, Ask.fm and After School.

The researcher discovered from Foreman's (2017) and other researchers' lists of social media kinds that there is no clear-cut limit of purpose for any category. Foreman (2017) illustrated this scenario with two examples, among others. In the first scenario, he demonstrated how the distinctions between media sharing networks and social networks are becoming increasingly blurred as social connection networks such as Facebook and Twitter add live video, augmented reality, and other multimedia capabilities to their platforms.

In the second scenario, he demonstrated that components of e-commerce can be found in many different types of social networks, such as Pinterest, which has Buyable Pins, and Instagram, which has call-to-action buttons such as "purchase now" and "install now."

The researcher also noticed a discrepancy among experts when it came to classifying platforms as belonging to a certain category of social media. The Twitter platform is an excellent illustration of this. Twitter was identified as a micro-blog by Fraustino et al. (2012) and sources utilized by Houston et al. (2014) and Ameyu (2015). According to Foreman (2017) and Mullaney (2012), it is a social networking site. For the sake of this research, the author considers Twitter to be a social networking service.

2.5. The Ethiopian social media landscape

Data from Ethiopia show that the number of Internet users is expanding at a pace of 37% per year, while the number of active social media users is increasing at a rate of 20%, and data imply that the majority of Ethiopians use the Internet via a mobile device (Staff, 2018). In Ethiopia, social media is primarily associated with Facebook, which has 84 percent of social media users (as of February 2019). Other participants include Google's YouTube, Facebook's Instagram, and messaging apps Telegram and Facebook's WhatsApp. The primary online stakeholders in the social media market are essentially: platform providers who are accumulating data for sale to advertisers and intelligence gatherers (or as an investment for future use); registered users/audiences who are willing to give away their data and provide content; professional content providers such as news media and bloggers; advertisers who are diverting their funds from analogue platforms to reach an ever-growing, captive audience (Christer and Nigussu, 2019).

Facebook and Google, the world's largest internet technology and social media businesses, do not have an official presence in Ethiopia. This applies to both Facebook's Instagram and WhatsApp, as well as Google's YouTube. Surprisingly, Telegram is the most recent and widely used chat program. Telegram appears to be used mostly for commerce in Ethiopia, in addition to social purposes. Telegram is used by traders and businesspeople to sell and pay for their goods

and services. Another reason to utilize Telegram is that it enables for the unlawful download of software, movies, and music. Telegram, like Facebook Messenger, offers payment options in various areas (Christer, and Nigussu, 2019).

2.6. Social media use of Organizations

One of the available tools to build relationships with fans is social media, especially Facebook and Twitter. Social media can provide opportunities for organizations to interact directly with the public.

Organizations can use social media to promote dialogues and two-way conversations with the public (Mersham, Theunissen, & Peart, 2009). Organizations can use social media to involve their stakeholders and build a community under their mission and values (Lo & Waters, 2012). Worldwide 40% of all internet users utilize social media for work purposes, for instance 65% of Indonesians actively use social media in their jobs (Brian,2021)

Researchers have examined the social-media use of diverse organizations including community colleges (McAllister & Taylor, 2007), for-profit corporations (Park &Reber, 2008), and nonprofit organizations (Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003). The functions that social media served for nonprofits comprised three major types: information sources, community builders, and promoters and mobilizers (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012).

Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) stated that organizations could use social media to create an online community via bonding messages with their followers. Organizations' literature could also provide insights into community establishment. Social media is becoming more and more a part

of everyday business life and understanding the business functions that social media can provide to organizations is essential (Felix, Rauschnabel & Hinsch, 2017). Firms can more efficiently talk, listen, energize, support, and embrace their audiences and their ideas by integrating social media into their existing business activities.

In the study titled, 'It's a whole new ballgame' by Jimmy Sanderson, the author argued that there are often many challenges that arise due to social media, particularly managing the content information (Sanderson, 2011).

“Social media increased the chances of confidential data to be revealed. Its messages can be transmitted from any location where a person has Internet access, extending the possibility for information breaches well beyond the physical confines of the workplace” (Sanderson, 2011. p. 42).

2.7. Social Media as a Public Relations Tool

Internet and digitalization in a broader sense are changing the nature of PR like other functions of organizations. PR function in organizations is undergoing a huge change in terms of the tools it is using. Thanks to the internet, professionals of public relations do not depend on traditional media to communicate with the interest groups (Gulerman and Apaydin, 2017).

Annual reports and news releases, common tools of printed media, are replaced with digital tools such as websites and e-mails. Some academicians put forward that new tools such as social media have high potential to contribute to brand awareness, the reputation of the organizations and customer service (Gulerman and Apaydin, 2017).

Social media offers numerous opportunities for public relations practitioners to interact with the public while adopting new forms of technology and integrating them into their everyday lives.

These advances in technology have experienced widespread use among public relations practitioners and journalists (Curtis et al., 2010).

While discussing the purposes of using social media, Freberg et al. (2013) noted that social media can help to establish a virtual community, where individuals can share information and create a virtual dialog among organizations and individuals. Furthermore, social media can also serve as a tool for organizations to monitor and listen to what their key stakeholders are saying. In other words, if they are exploited to their full potential, social media can support organizational PR activity through sharing of information, feedback management and environment scanning or social media story monitoring relevant to the organization.

Waters et al. (2009) noted that social media provide a variety of ways for users to become involved with organizations. They discussed the findings of Waters to show how nonprofit organizations can use social media, including to streamline their management functions, interact with volunteers and donors and educate others about their programs and services. They added that through interactions with stakeholders on Facebook and other social media applications, organizations seek to develop relationships with important publics. Curtis et al. (2010) similarly forwarded their recommendation that as more forms of social media emerge, it is beneficial for PR practitioners to understand how to use these tools as they directly relate to their jobs.

For-profit organizations have used these sites to help launch products and strengthen their existing brands; however, little is known about how nonprofit organizations are taking advantage of the social networking popularity (Waters et al., 2009). This research work, therefore, aims to understand how humanitarian organizations in Ethiopia are using social media as a PR tool with a specific focus on the Amhara National Regional state, Culture and Tourism Office.

2.8. Theoretical framework of the Study

Concepts of information diffusion in social media networks will be examined in this part, and relevant literature will be reviewed. Because the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau's PR and communication operations on social media are solely focused on transmitting information to their intended audience; such as the media, athletes, and fans, emphasis has been placed on the diffusion theory.

2.8.1. Diffusion Of Innovation Theory

Diffusion is the process by which information is spread from one place to another through interactions. It is a field that encompasses techniques from a plethora of sciences and techniques from different fields such as sociology, epidemiology, and ethnography. The diffusion process involves three main elements as follows:

- **Sender.** A sender (or a group of senders) is responsible for initiating the diffusion process.
- **Medium.** This is the channel through which the diffusion information is sent from the sender to the receiver. This can be TV, newspaper, social media (e.g., a tweet on Twitter), social ties.
- **Receiver.** A receiver (or a group of receivers) receives the diffusion information from the sender. Commonly, the number of receivers is higher than the number of senders.

The Diffusion Theory, commonly known as the Diffusion of Innovations, describes how an idea or product spreads and is embraced by a group of people. It assesses fundamental features of people in a demographic and categorizes them into one of five adopter groups to find the most

successful strategy to reach that specific audience. Each category describes how a group of people perceives a new concept, behavior, or product, as well as the five-step process that each individual goes through when adopting anything new: awareness, curiosity, assessment, trial, and adoption (Molly, 2021).

The Diffusion of Innovations idea categorizes individuals into five distinct groups that determine how people are convinced and motivated to accept a new invention. These five groups are as follows: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. While the bulk of individuals lie in the middle of the bell curve, it is crucial to recognize the diversity of people in various audiences and groups of people (Molly,2021).

When considering social media as an invention, pre-existing factors such as historical behaviors, individual needs, innovativeness, and social system norms can also be related with social media usage. People are becoming increasingly curious about social media as a result of the massive spread of new media and the increasing opportunity to explore these new and fascinating platforms. As a result, people feel compelled to use social media as a means of communication and begin to learn about these online platforms (Gizem, Seçil, & Evrim, 2013). Without understanding your target audience, you may create a campaign that is utterly irrelevant to how the populace is persuaded to test a product or embrace an idea. A successful marketing begins with an understanding of how people digest information and make decisions.

With its different platforms and millions of users all over the world, social media, one of today's most stunning developments, has exceptionally quick and efficient dissemination power. According to the diffusion of innovation method, characteristics such as compatibility, complexity, observability, and relative benefit have an influence on the choice and, as a result, the innovation dissemination process. In this regard, it is evident that social media helps this

dispersion due to its dynamic, interactive, user-centered, and user-friendly character, as well as its opportunities that give individuals greater influence over the contents and allow users to become producers (Gizem, Seçil, & Evrim, 2013).

To understand how to most effectively convey and disseminate information, public relations specialists must spend hours upon hours researching a certain audience. As a result, the diffusion theory provides a chance for public relations professionals to understand about how decisions are made and deliver a relevant and effective campaign. This is why understanding the Diffusion of Innovations idea is critical.

2.8.2. Affordance Theories

Scholars working on affordance theory credited James Gibson for coining, developing, and conceiving the idea. According to Blewett and Hugo (2016), James Gibson coined the word "affordance" in 1977 in his paper "The Theory of Affordances," and it was further expanded on in his later writings, where he defined it as a "ecological approach" to perception.

Originally developed in ecological psychology (Hafezieh and Eshraghian, 2017), affordance theory was developed to explain how animals perceive their environment (Treem and Leonardi, 2012) and what the environment can offer relative to the animals' needs (water, food, shelter, and other specific needs of a specific type of animal) (Turano, 2017).

According to Turano (2017) and Yang (2017), who used Gibson's (1979) concept, affordances describe what a thing/environment/object and its features may provide, provide, or furnish to an individual/animal, whether good or bad/ill. According to Yang (2017), the environment's affordance is achieved through the interaction of the organism and the environment. It explores the complimentary interaction between an organism's talents and environmental factors. He

stressed the dynamic relationship between organisms and the environment when describing environmental affordance.

Gibson's affordance viewpoint, according to Siegert et al. (2020), is founded on the premise that people connect to inanimate things differently depending on their background, experiences, and surroundings. Objects are thus seen in terms of the possibilities for action they provide. In other words, an object's affordance and engagement with it are heavily influenced by the person's experience, context, recognised potential, and desired action or output.

Similarly, Treem and Leonardi (2012) stated that, while the qualities of an item are shared by everyone who comes into contact with it, the affordances of that artifact are not. They went on to say that affordances are specific to how an actor, or a group of actors, perceives and utilizes an item. Furthermore, because the material from which a thing is created might supply numerous affordances, a single object can yield multiple results.

Following on from this, in the 1990s Donald Norman repurposed the word [affordance] in the context of human-computer interaction (HCI) (Blewett and Hugo, 2016). In contrast to the idea of 'affordance,' Norman (1988) proposed the concept of 'perceived affordance,' claiming that it is the perceived affordances of an item that define its usefulness, not all of its possible affordances (Yang, 2017).

Despite Gibson's reference to man-made things or tools, Norman's work was the first to incorporate affordances into technology design by concentrating on ordinary objects. In contrast to Gibson's perspective, Norman's (1988) original view of the concept as the perceived [perceived affordances] and actual properties [real affordances] of objects (Hafezieh and Eshraghian, 2017). Norman defined actual affordances as the functions associated to a specific

item—what that thing may or may not afford. Perceived affordances, on the other hand, are features that are obvious to the user (Davis and Chouinard, 2017).

The affordances of an object, according to Norman, are decided by how an individual expects the object will be used, rather than how an object may really be used or how many ways it can be used (Yang, 2017). As the researcher understands Norman's stance, the perceived affordance, rather than the actual affordance, determines the utility of the thing.

Yang (2017) summarized the difference between Gibson and Norman's understanding of affordances as follow:

In general, the key difference between Gibson and Norman's understanding of affordances lies [lays] at if the "affordances" of an object can be perceived or not, i.e., in Gibson's definition, an affordance exist[s] regardless of an individuals'['s] capability to see it or not, it exists objectively; while, in Norman's definition, an affordance exists when an individual, based on his/her previous experience, education,...., which is subjectively existing.

Aside from its rising acceptance among the academic community, several researchers have critiqued affordance theory. Davis and Chouinard (2017) criticized Gibson's notion of artifacts, claiming that he gives artifacts much too much effectiveness. Others to whom Davis and Chouinard (2017) have referenced disagree with Norman's thesis, stating that objects only provide what individuals perceive them to afford. Critics also point out that the word is used in a variety of fields without any definition and/or without acknowledging the continuous definitional modifications (Davis and Chouinard, 2017).

2.8.3. The Public Sphere Theory

According to Habermas (1989), the term of public refers to a sphere that is open to everybody, such as a market or public venue. A public realm is the area where private individuals come together to form a public. As a result, both realms can be mutually inclusive rather than exclusive, with the public as the rightful influence to exercise power. Citizens act in this sphere as neither a business or professional person nor a member of the state, but rather as a public body in which they confer freely—that is, with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association, as well as the freedom to express and publish their opinions - on matters of general interest" (Habermas, 1974).

According to the proponents of this theory all residents having access to this area, opinions may be formed, and debates regarding norms governing relationships would take place. Furthermore, an individual has the freedom of assembly, expression, association, and publication of opinions. The public sphere is defined as "a disregard for a status, a space for common interest, and inclusion" (Habermas, 1989: 36-37). Political, literary, and representative spheres are the three categories of spheres. If the discussion focuses on the actions of the state, the realm is referred to as the political public sphere. The public sphere serves as a bridge between the state and society. Without a functional public sphere, democratic politics would be impossible. This is addressed to the media, the public sphere of today.

Curran, on the other hand, contends that, within the context of classical liberal theory, the public sphere is "the space between the government and society in which private individuals exercise formal and informal control over the state: formal control through government election and informal control through public opinion pressure" (1991:29). As a result, the role of the media is crucial, reminiscent of the nineteenth-century Fourth Estate. Because there was a feudal system

marked by representative publicity prior to the bourgeois sphere, economic processes had contributed to the evolution of the public sphere. The private and public realms were not separated at the period, and public power had little autonomy.

The public sphere of the eighteenth century, on the other hand, was distinguished by a distinct boundary between public and state and was founded on critical rational discourse. This debate takes place in salons and coffee shops among the bourgeois reading public. As a result, public opinion can be established. This is open to all and aids in the control and criticism of political authorities. As a result, Habermas believes that the public sphere is a product of democracy. He contends that the concept of public opinion, which he sees in the writings of Kant, Marx, Hegel, Mill, and Tocqueville, shapes one's understanding of the public sphere toward oneself. Habermas contends that the public sphere as we know it was formed when journalism became a public institution with the goal of encouraging open level discourse.

The rise of social media networks has empowered underprivileged populations to express their concerns and identify with others on the same platform. This is true for organizations that lack the ability to express themselves on their own media yet came to join the new network as well. As a result, social media has enabled users to communicate horizontally. In other words, social media networks contradict the up-down mass communication rhetoric (sender-receiver model) by demonstrating individuals' mass self-communication (Castells, 2007). This has made communication interactive and has resulted in a social revolution in addition to a technological one. This interactivity allows the balance of power to shift from non-interactive traditional media to social media users. As a result, everyone has become to own its own media to speak, share, argue and justify whatever with whoever he or she likes.

The Public Sphere Theory was used as a theoretical framework of the study as it is appropriate to address the key objectives. As stated in the preceding chapter the main objective of the study is to investigate the practices and challenges of using social media as a public relations tool in Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau. Thus, the theory helped the researcher how the social media is used as a PR tool to communicate with the public.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Approach

As far as theoretical issues are concerned, it is important to give a glimpse of the available perspectives before proposing one for the current study. This study is in harmony with the methodological orientation of qualitative research paradigm. This implies that, qualitative approach be used to investigate social media as a public relations tool by taking tourism office as a case. This is due to the basic reason that the researcher is mindful due to personal experience of the issue under investigation. In other word, the researcher interest is to understand the perception and practice of public relation tools from the point of view of those who live and work in it. Hence, deep and rich descriptions are the key strengths of qualitative approach, which is investigated in the current study (Creswell & Poth 2017).

The main objective of this study was to identify the public relations strategies of tourism office. The research approach in this study is qualitative in line with the objective of the study. According to Du Plooy (2001) and Neuman (2006) qualitative design comprises the collection of data in the form of words, pictures or objects. It has also been argued that qualitative research is inductive in the sense that researchers develop concepts, insights and understanding from patterns in the data and vice versa (Taylor and Bogdan 1984). The inherent nature of this study does not demand many participants as very few individuals know the public relations strategy of the office. The issue of sampling design is not a concern of the current study. This is because qualitative research methods see value in a small sample that not only provides rich data but also

sufficient to answer the research questions, making no claim to sample-population generalisability of results (Silverman 2017).

3.4. Research Design

A case study design is employed in the current study in line with the qualitative approach favoured to guide the methodology. Case study design is preferred for the following considerations. Firstly, a case study is appropriate to answer research questions of the type in this study. Yin (2013) urged that case study is appropriate for the “how and what” type of research questions. In line with this, the specific research questions of this study are designed with the same questions.

Secondly, the general objective of the study can be addressed through case study design. The main objective of the study was to assess the use of social media in the public relations practice of the selected office. Case study is a detailed and descriptive design that enables to collect detailed information across a wide range of dimensions about cases (Yin, 2013). In particular, a single case study design was employed in this study as the focus of this study was a one office.

Explanatory, descriptive and exploratory research are different types of research that are important in analysing problems in a case study. A researcher conducts exploratory research when he or she has just begun researching and wants to understand and explore the topic generally. A researcher may use explanatory research when he or she wants to explain why a certain phenomenon happens (Creswell 2014). The main difference between explanatory and exploratory research is that explanatory research explains why certain phenomena work in the

way that they do, whereas exploratory research explores and investigates a problem in a new context (Creswell 2014).

From the above types of research designs explanatory case study type of research design was employed to the realization of intended objective. The reason behind using explanatory research design was due to the fact that that the researcher was interested in exploring the existing situation, i.e., public relations practice and social media. Creswell (2014) has stated that the descriptive method of research is a technique of gathering information about the present existing condition. This research design is a fact-finding study with adequate and accurate interpretation of findings. Correspondingly, qualitative research approach was employed in this study.

From different types of research designs explanatory type of research design employed to the realization of intended objectives. The reason behind using descriptive research design is because the researcher is interested in describing the existing situation. Creswell (1994) has stated that the descriptive method of research is a technique of gathering information about the present existing condition. This research design is a fact-finding study with adequate and accurate interpretation of findings. Correspondingly, qualitative research approach is employed in this study as it helped to examine current practices in relation to social media usage of Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau and seeks to investigate recommended best practices to further enhance communication and promotional activities of Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau. Furthermore, it evaluates the perceived and actual barriers faced by Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau communication department, mainly concerning the use of social media.

In order to meet this target, the researcher followed an explanatory approach, which is mainly concerned with causes or “why” factor about some phenomenon. It does not involve comparison and factors of change.

In general the main objective of this study was to investigate social media use in Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau. The research approach in this study is intended to be qualitative. According to Du Plooy (2001) and Neuman (2006) qualitative design comprises the collection of data in the form of words, pictures or objects. It has also been argued that qualitative research is inductive in the sense that researchers develop concepts, insights and understanding from patterns in the data and vice versa (Taylor and Bogdan :1984). The inherent nature of this study does not demand many participants. The issue of sampling design is not a concern of the current study. This is because qualitative research methods see value in a small sample that not only provides rich data but also sufficient to answer the research questions, making no claim to sample-population generalisability of results (Silverman 2017).

3.5. Data Collection Method

3.5.1. In-depth Interview

Within qualitative approaches, in-depth interviews are a useful form of data collection because they allow for explanation of the perspectives and perceptions of various stakeholders (Creswell & Poth 2017). To answer the research questions of the present study, semi-structured thematic interview was selected. The purpose of semi structured in-depth interview as a method of data collection for the present study was twofold. First, the purpose of in-depth interview in the present study was to assess the practice of the use of social media as a public relations tool. Secondly, in-depth interview was conducted with the purpose of new experiences public relations in the era of new media.

The researcher used in-depth interview to understand the perspectives the public relations personnel to understand the public relations strategies being employed by the office. In addition to the above-mentioned reasons, face-to-face in-depth interviews as a data collection tool used in this study due to the following advantages. In-depth interviews are often regarded as an efficient and valid way of exploring attitudes, beliefs, values and perceptions (Silverman 2017). Understanding what the interviewee has the attitudes, beliefs, values and perceptions are the other advantages of in-depth interviews. Thus, in-depth interviews are important to gather rich and insightful information based on each participant's context and a chance to explain issues (Silverman 2017).

Accordingly, due to the explanatory nature of this study which tries to explore untapped areas, in-depth interview used gain rich and insightful ideas from participants. Structured and depth interviews was conducted with public relation officers of the of the office. A semi-structured interview was employed to collect the necessary data.

The hallmark of focus groups is an explicit use of group communication to produce insights (Silverman 2017). The strength of focus groups in this regard is the variety of perspectives and experiences that participants reveal during their interactive discussion. This is especially important in the twin processes of sharing and comparing, which create communication dynamics (Maison 2019). As sharing and comparing of data rather than exploration of variables is not the purpose of this study, the use of interview rather than focus groups sounds logical.

In sum, the researcher used interview to understand the perspectives the public relation strategies being employed by the organisation. Face-to-face in-depth interviews as a data collection tool used in this study due to the following advantages. In-depth interviews are often regarded as an efficient and valid way of exploring attitudes, beliefs, values and perceptions (Silverman 2017). Understanding why the interviewee has the attitudes, beliefs, values and perceptions are the other advantages of in-depth interviews. Thus, in-depth interviews are important to gather rich and insightful information based on each participant's context and a chance to explore untapped areas (Silverman 2017).

Accordingly, due to the explanatory nature of this study which tries to explain untapped areas, in-depth interview was used to gain rich and insightful ideas from participants. Additionally, Therefore, to explore this open-ended interview gives freedom and is more relevant than other methods such as questionnaire. Semi- Structured and depth interviews was conducted with employees of the organisation.

A semi- structured interview was employed to collect the necessary data through conversation like approach. To gather data, all interviews was conducted with nine individuals. Two are Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau 's Public relation personnel, Two of them being a communication professionals and two are IT experts. The one-to-one interviews was conducted in Amharic. The researcher made sure that the purpose of the research was clearly understood and all participants was briefed on their role and rights in terms of confidentiality and the format of the interview. The reason for only having limited participants for the given study was to ensure that information is collected from the main stakeholders.

3.5.2 Document Analysis

Document analysis is the other tool that was used to collect data relevant to the study from the selected sources of the office. Specifically, FB page and website of Amhara Culture and Tourism office was reviewed and analysed. In addition, office manuals, reports and circulars were analysed to get useful information which are appropriate for the study.

3.6. Data Source and Type

According to Zikmund (2003), the definition of population is identifiable total set of elements of interest being investigated by a researcher. The target population is defined as the entire group a researcher is interested in. The sources of data of the study were the public relation personnel of the organisation. The data collection period was selected as to the convenience of the researcher. Convenience sampling technique was employed in the study since the main subjects of the study are salespeople of the company, so it is difficult to prepare a sampling framework beforehand. Hence, the researcher applied convenient sampling.

Unlike quantitative study which need sample size definition in advance, qualitative study sample size cannot be defined in advance (Silverman 2017). The most common recommendation to define sample size is to seek 'saturation' in the data, so that further interviewees no longer provide any additional information (Creswell & Poth 2018). It is possible to say that data is saturated when the researcher predicts how the participants respond to almost any topic that gets raised during the interview (Maison 2019). Following this suggestion, the number of interviewees in this study was determined when the categories (or themes) saturated and when gathering fresh data did not spark new insights or new properties.

3.7. Data analysis and Interpretation

Data collection and analysis are inseparable in qualitative research. During data collection, following recommendations by Taylor and Bogdan (1984), the researcher kept a track of emerging themes, read through field notes and transcripts, and develop concepts and propositions to make sense of the data. As Mason (2018), advise the researcher analysed data by looking for themes when reading and rereading field notes and transcripts.

As the interview themes were based on the reviewed literature, also the collected empirical data was analysed based on the literature. In other words, although the starting point for the analysis is the collected data, they were analysed in an iterative process in interaction with the theories. Data analysis was started with transcribing and translating interview records followed by coding, and then by categorizing. The use of thematic analysis technique is advocated by the research problem and question of this study as well as by the employed research method (semi-structured, thematic interviews).

Once the data are categorized and coded through themes, it is vital to review the links and connections within the data using technique of typifying. Typifying is an analysis technique for determining patterns and relationships within the data and for grouping cases on the basis of certain characteristics they share. After establishing types with shared characteristics, their relationship to the reviewed literature was explored, and conclusions and interpretations was made by taking research questions into account. In general, the data collected from interviews was thematically converged in the analysis process than handled individually. This convergence adds strength to the findings as the various strands of data are braided together to promote a greater understanding of the case (Creswell 2014). Accordingly, the interview data was sorted into relevant topics based on the study's goals then described and discussed critically.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

Regarding case organisation, there was written approved informed consent from the organisation for access to data. Additionally, the decision to participate in this study depended upon the participants' willingness to share his/her experience. As a result, participants exercised their rights as autonomous persons to voluntarily accept or decline to participate in the study. Additionally, participants' rights were also considered.

This includes the right to be informed about the study, and the right to withdraw at any time. Also, participants had the right to ask questions and it in turn this helps to ensure interviewees comprehension. Once they agreed to participate, the study participants scheduled appointments for the in-depth interview. Then the in-depth interviews were undertaken in convenient places selected by the participants and the researcher.

Before the interview session with all informants, letter of introduction, the purpose, of the study and informed consent was explained for respondents. In the process the risks and advantages of involving in academic research was made clear. Protecting participants' identity and the confidentiality of information gathered was consisted in the letter of consent. Accordingly, the real name of each interviewee was confidential for the sake of protecting the participants' identity. In addition, respects for all research participants and privacy of members especially during the formal discussion was considered. Also, participants were requested before the tape record.

In sum, since the researcher collected data through qualitative interview format from employees of the organisation, permission was obtained from the staff. To maintain the confidentiality of the information provided by the respondents, the respondents was instructed not to mention their names on the interview and assured that the responses would be used only for academic purpose

and kept confidential. Brief description of the central objectives or purpose of the study and the potential benefit of the research outcome was presented to respondents. Finally, respondents did take part in the study based on their free will.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0. Introduction

Social Media is any electronic media that allows passive viewers to become active participants in the communication process by sharing, revising, responding to, or contributing new material (Mandiberg, 2012). The newest communication technology is combined with the world's oldest form of communication, word of mouth, through social media operations. Social media has had a significant impact on public relations, presenting companies with new opportunities and difficulties. It enables companies and consumers to interact in real time across a range of platforms, resulting in a higher requirement for brands to respond to customer enquiries swiftly and efficiently. Besides, depending on the scenario, social media may either assist or hinder public relations professionals in achieving their objectives. Creating and sustaining a favourable public image needs a delicate mix of interesting content and careful awareness of and response to public opinion. With this regard, the major objective of this study is to investigate the **practices** and challenges of using social media as a public relation tool in Culture and Tourism Bureau of Amhara National Regional state.

To achieve this objective, qualitative descriptive research design was employed. In this study, data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Besides, semi structured interview and content analysis was employed to collect necessary data for this study. Through in-depth interviews, primary data was qualitatively collected from the PR professionals in charge of the Bureau's social media sites. Besides, the communications published by Amhara Culture and

Tourism Bureau on social media were used as a supplemental source of data. The content analysis was carried out using these messages as input.

Then, the data gathered through interview and document review were summarized and described qualitatively in the interpretation of the data. The content of the collected qualitative data was analysed using inductive approach. Using this method, the researcher will be able to organize the data, break them into manageable units. This chapter deals with presentations, discussions and interpretations of the data. Therefore, this chapter deals with the presentation, analysis and discussion of the findings in a manner that is understandable. Hence, in this chapter the research questions are addressed in four main sections as follows:

4.1. The Practices of Social Media Usage as Public Relations Tool To Communicate With The Public

In this regard, one specific objective of this study is to investigate practices of social media usage as public relations tool to communicate with the public Bureau. To achieve this objective, pertinent data was collected from the participants using semi structure interview and document analysis. The analysis of the relevant data is presented as follows:

First the researcher assessed the regular processes and practices for using social media as a public relations instrument in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau. In this connection, one of the respondent replied that the top-level management has also recognized social media as a useful tool, and it is supplying the required resources. For example, Respondent 1 stressed the necessity of providing strategic advice to social media operations while discussing the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau's embrace of social media as a PR tool, saying:

Our PR department have already created different social media accounts. Hence, they are using Telegram and other social media platforms to do their business. This demonstrates a willingness to use social media, and it is critical that the required structures and standards be developed. As a result, we have already completed the social media policy, which will be authorized by the Society's management, and we aim to begin implementing the guidelines within short period of time.

The respondent added that to realize the use of social media as a PR tool the board of the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau is working to approve the communication strategy and policy, as well as the final draft of the social media guideline. The management also ordered the Information Technology department to develop a website and a social media plat forms of the Bureau. Similarly, the PR department has acknowledged and used social media as a public relations tool (Respondent 1.) According to this reply, the Bureau has been utilizing the social media as a PR tool for more than 10 years.

However, another respondent reported that in the Bureau the use of social media as PR receives relatively little attention. She said that conventional media coverage receives greater attention than social media visibility.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to reflect on the rationale behind using Social media as a PR tool. In response, each respondent thought on the circumstances that prompted the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau to adopt social media as a public relations strategy. For instance, respondent 1 listed top-level management directives, assessment results pointing toward modernizing the society's image building and visibility activities, and social media policies and directives put in place as the reasons forces for using social media. According to Respondent 2,

the in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau engages in a variety of activities, but these activities are not apparent to the general public. According to the respondent , social media technologies can reach a large number of individuals both locally and globally. As a result, social media is used as a tool to take advantage of the platforms' visible advantage. Respondent 3 added that *“Social media helped the practice of tourism marketing in different ways such as accessibility. You can access different individuals easily ‘’* Accessibility and easiness of communication are another rationale and purpose of using social media as communication tool in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau. Besides, it is argued to enhance the achievement of organizational goal. In connection to this, Respondent 5 also stated that

When utilized appropriately, social media may help organizations achieve their objectives. Both users and organizations benefit from the usage of social media. Our organization should improve the usage of social media to develop effective communication channels in order to achieve organizational objectives.

Respondent 3 identified three plausible explanations for the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau 's use of social media. For starters, traditional media/mainstream media cannot target all of the organization's publics. As a result, according to the responder, social media can assist them in contacting a large number of their target audiences. A second, social networking site provides the benefit of receiving feedback via comments, direct inbox messages, and other means. Third, social media is now accessible to a large number of individuals. This gives you the opportunity to speak with people of all ages and get direct feedback from the public. In support to this, respondent 3 stated:

“The Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau employed social media to contact internal and external users. We also employed several platforms based on the

nature of platforms that are acceptable for the content and user kinds. In terms of cost and time, using social media sites is efficient. Furthermore, it allows for the collection of criticism and opinions for remedial steps that the mainstream media may not be able to provide.

The above response suggests that the purpose of social media usage among respondents was another issue. Respondents reported that they used social media for all purposes including personal, professional as well as educational matters. In support to this, Respondent 4, stated the following;

We actively use Facebook, twiter and to some extent tiktok and Instagram. Facebook is dominant as it has many users as compared to others and easily accessible. The purpose we use media is for tourism marketing. Facebook is used to inform users about tourist attraction area in our region. The aim of using social media is to update or inform our audiences about events takes place in our region.

Acceptance and use of social media platforms are growing at the moment. It's simple to use; it's interactive, allowing for two-way dialogue and fast response. The respondents believe that it is difficult to overlook the benefits of social networking. With this regard, respondent 5 believes that the impact and ease of use of social media as a PR tool are the driving forces behind its use. The respondent emphasized the existing social media influences, and it was an understanding of these factors that led to the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau's engagement in social media. With this regard, respondent 2 had the following to say:

It is very important that some customers give us some messages as well as feedback. Sometimes they send packages and information. It helps to utilise our interactive

communication for further. There are many challenges in using social media. The first is skill gap to utilise the media. The other is technology gap. Most of the time use simple media for technology use such as cell phones.

As a result, social media has become the audience's "conversational human voice," opening up new possibilities for the old PR notion of not fully using social media's real-time and conversational character. In this connection, respondent 1 and 4 agreed that social media has changed the PR landscape in many ways, the most significant of which is the shift from one-way PR communication to two-way or multi-way communication. Consequently, the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau is now using social media channels to communicate with the public.

Currently the media outlets have changed the way they interact with their viewers as a result of the emergence of social media. This is because, according to research, social media isn't simply a trend. When media organizations decide to join social media, they establish rules and criteria for practicing journalism. The policy applies to their journalists as well as the media organization. As a result, a new job in media management, social media management, has evolved. In order to make information available on time and everywhere in this information era, social media editors who are active 24 hours a day, seven days a week are employed.

The social media is becoming effective to PR communication tool. In support to this, respondent 3 stated that, "Because the audience and their preferred routes of information have changed," said "the emergence of social media in PR has led press releases, articles, and events to become less successful than previously." Similarly, Respondent 1 added that Social media, has aided them in improving the source-reporter connection since they are able to engage with each other without any obstacles.

The participants of this study said that using social media had enhanced public service delivery, either by lowering the amount of in-person interaction required or by allowing the organization to respond to reported concerns more rapidly. All of the participants said that social media enables their company to respond quickly. Furthermore, they believe that social media reduces face-to-face and telephone contact because people trust what we post on social media. It has reduced the number of people who have come into contact with it.

Generally, it can be deducted that the major reasons why the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau for using social media as a communications tool are management directives, compatibility with other PR and communication tools, and a desire to reap the benefits of social media platforms such as visibility, feedback management, reachability, and growing acceptance/influence.

The other focus of this study is the source of information used to create social media content. The following is how Respondent 3 described their sources of information and the content collection process:

It is our responsibility to gather data and translate it into social media content.

We gather information on the ground. We get information from phone calls and emails and transform it into social media posts. We next compile the data and post it on the previously listed social media sites.

From these responses we can deduce that there are two sources of prospective social media material, as mentioned in the previous comment. The first is information obtained and delivered to the communication department by external sources. The second source is content gathered through field visits by communication department colleagues. This may indicate that the

department's endeavour to build a uniform content collection system with pertinent departments and zonal branches, employing data gathering tools such as a common information gathering template, was also detailed by the reply.

On the other hand, two respondents expressed reservations about the effective execution of this content collection mechanism and the continuous flow of data.

Regarding the information communicated in the social media, it was noted that the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau post different type of information on the several social media. For example, respondent 5 stated that:

In the organisation, when we post about tourism destinations, they comment on it and reply. On telegram, most of our officers' post message and picture freely in the group. Our main theme of message is promoting destinations and creating communication with customers. It is very relevant compared to others. It is all about giving fast and relevant information.

In support to this, the review of the documents revealed that different information are communicated. These includes World Heritage Sites National Parks and Community Protected Area, Lakes Hot Springs and Water falls, Religious Sites historical land marks that are found in the Amhara regional state. Besides, it describes the religious and cultural events practiced in the region. It seems that the messages are intended to attract the tourists to visit the region. Thus, it can be said that when used correctly, social media platforms are useful tools for conveying information, receiving news and events, sharing photographs and videos, and communicating with the public.

4.2. The social media platforms that are utilized by Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau

Social media enhance in the development of effective PR since it allows the public to interact directly with the company, resulting in increased trust and improved partnerships. The fast expansion of consumer-based media has been aided by the rising popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others.

In the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau, the PR experts utilize social media for various professional purposes. For example, Respondent I responded that he uses social media to find news and information about the offices with others. Besides, it was reported that social media is used in this target office to share information with others. Respondent 4 added that they use social media to track sources and keep up with news outlets are in the same boat. This may be observed in the way PR experts utilize social media to monitor what other media outlets are doing.

However, the PR personnel reported that in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau, the seldom utilize social media to solicit public comments, participate in dialogues with audiences or urge viewers to follow their programs or news. In fact, some of them stated that they utilize social media to see what people are talking about. This means that the PR experts are not using social media to better their relationships with their audiences, despite the fact that the platform is hailed for allowing journalists to connect with the people they serve, formerly known as the audience (Flew, 2009). Despite the fact that journalists are less inclined to interact with their viewers, they use social media to find out what people are talking about. This implies they are more interested in hearing what individuals have to say than in engaging with them. This is most likely to keep a clear line between oneself and the followers in the social media. In support to this, Respondent 4,

stated that “we actively use facebook, youtube, twiter and to some extent tiktok and Instagram. Facebook is dominant as it has many users as compared to others and easily accessible.” This response is also supported by the data obtained from document analysis.

According to statistics obtained from the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau’s social media channels, the most commonly utilized medium for communicating messages was Facebook, followed by the YouTube Channel and Twitter. The least is Instagram. The analysis of the content revealed that 63,000 people follow the Facebook page of the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau. This finding is confirmed by the local studies. For example, Ameyu (2015) conducted a study that aims at examining social media and journalism with particular focus on journalists’ and media outlets’ use of social media networks in the Ethiopian context. Then, he concluded that facebook is used by all journalists (24.7 percent). YouTube (21 percent) and Google+ (11 percent) come in second and third, respectively (16.4 percent). With 70 journalists, Wikipedia is in fourth position, accounting for over half of all journalists (12.6 percent). According to journalist usage, Twitter is on the fifth level (10.6 percent). Although other social media networks such as LinkedIn (5.4 percent), Blogs (4.5 percent), and others (2.2 percent) are popular among Ethiopian journalists, they are not as widely used as Facebook and YouTube. Others include WhatsApp, Messenger, WeChat, Livemocha, Tango, Tumblr, Badoo, and Tagged, among others.

Because of the enormous number of users in Ethiopia, all of the respondents agree that Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are mostly used as social media platforms. They're also thought to house the bulk of the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau target audience. In this support, respondents 1 and 4 also mentioned that they chose the platforms based on lessons learnt from sister organizations. Other reasons for adopting the three platforms were cited by respondent3. In

comparison with a variety of other platforms, these are experts' relative expertise and prior experience managing Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube profiles.

The PR manager also stated that all video footage on YouTube was posted directly by the channel administrator due to the nature of the site. The Facebook platform, on the other hand, allows users to create original material as well as share information from other Facebook users. According to the two sources' statistics, the Facebook messages were original content.

Furthermore, the PR professional responded that significant amount of information material has also been posted from the Facebook pages of selected regional media institutions. The two languages utilized to send social media communications are Amharic and English. According to the PR experts, Amharic is the most commonly utilized language to communicate with the organization's local population. The English language is also utilized by the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau's to communicate with international customers.

It seems that the use of social media in general in Ethiopia and particularly in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau similar with African countries and the rest of the globe. In connection to this, Kenyan journalists have been more active on Twitter and Facebook than on other social media platforms (Tomno, 2012). This can be linked to the widespread use of Facebook and Twitter throughout the world. I.e., Facebook is the most popular social networking site in the world, with billions of users. In some wealthy nations, such as the United States, journalists, professionals, and politicians prefer Twitter to Facebook. For example, the most popular social networking site among journalists in the United Kingdom is Twitter (75.1%), followed by Facebook (56.7%) and Google+ (41.2%). (Cision, 2015). Thus, it can be said that the use of social media varies throughout the world.

As a result, this study discovered that the platforms most commonly utilized by participants in the study were Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, and Instagram. Because of the instruments' ease of use, the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau is utilizing the stated social media to communicate with local population and international customers about the organizational goals and services.

4.3. How social media is used as a PR tool in Amhara Culture and Tourism

Bureau

People use social media to keep up with current events, learn about ways to improve their life, connect with news friends, and sell their products. The Facebook page review of the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau also revealed that the stories being shared on the platform revealed how the institutions were effective in achieving their goals. The fact that social media is an excellent communication tool was also a recurring topic in their comments. Many electrical items, including classic communication technology like mobile phones, include it. Our view of communication has changed as a result of our use of social media. When it comes to social connections, it has become the new norm. "It is kind of the status quo, it is what we do, it is what everyone does, and you do what everyone else does," one participant said of regarding the incorporation of social media into our everyday lives.

Besides, all of the respondents agreed that the communication department's social media efforts are included in the monthly, quarterly, and yearly plans as well as reports. The number of posts created, the kind of messages transmitted, the number of materials supplied to make posts, the number of views for posts, and the percentage of activities achieved compared to the initial plan are some of the reported elements cited by respondents. But this is not supported by the analysis of the social media.

Despite the fact that the experts' social media activities are recorded, four of the respondents, including the communication department's chief, confirmed that these activities are not explicitly reviewed or quantified as part of the workers' activity evaluation. Respondent 2, on the other hand, believes that social media activities are included as a criterion for evaluating individual performance.

Social media is predicted to be utilized on a regular basis during social encounters, according to the participants of this study. One respondent expressed the need to check social media on a regular basis: "I need to check Facebook all the time now, apparently this is how people and organization post their life events, and I seem to be missing out on these events because I don't go on Facebook." Furthermore, respondent 4 indicated that they use social networking sites as a resource when they are in need. When asked what they would do if they lost their phones, a few participants responded that they would "go to Twitter or Facebook to acquire someone's number." When one needs to communicate with others, it is now customary to use social networking sites. These websites function as a modern-day address book, storing phone numbers, email addresses, photos, current tailored news, and other information. Furthermore, these websites are user-friendly. Furthermore, these sites are available in a variety of formats. Because consumers can access social networking sites on a variety of different devices, including laptops, tablets, and other people's gadgets, losing one's phone no longer prevents them from talking with others.

According to the Facebook page evaluation, social media usage in with the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau is not regular. With the exception of some pages the majority of pages

maintained a regular posting schedule. Some of the information on the social media hadn't been updated in months, if not years.

Regarding the frequency of Facebook posts, Twitter tweets, and YouTube video uploads, all expert respondents stated that there is no set time or timetable for publishing updates. Rather, the availability of events, according to the respondents, determines when social media posts are made. Furthermore, Respondent 2 stated that owing to the overlap of other tasks, they may not be able to update their sites as regularly as they would want, and that this may take two or three weeks or even months for platforms like YouTube.

In general, respondents reported that they do not utilize social on a daily basis to communicate about the routine in their workplace of the organizational. They are somewhat successful on social media sites, but there are limitations. "In today's social networking era, we are not permitted to utilize social media on a regular basis for networking, job, and professional goals," several participants observed. That was said by one of the participants. "We have to be extremely careful with confidentiality and regulatory difficulties in what we do in the government offices.

The study discovered that social media allows individuals to interact freely without regard to geography, and that social media allows people to stay connected with others by just pressing a few buttons and having the message transmitted in the smallest amount of time. This is in line with the findings of Wright, Miller, et al (2016) who found out that social media reduces and eliminates time and geographical constraints.

This finding is also supported by another empirical research. For example, Ameyu Etana (2015) found out that journalists spend a lot of time on social media, many times a day (66.7 percent). This indicates that two-thirds of journalists use social media more than once a day. Twenty-eight

journalists (20.3%) use social media on a daily basis (at least once a day). Despite the frequency, 87 percent of Ethiopian journalists use social media on a regular basis. Others only use their social media account a few times per week (10.9 percent).Although there are a small number of journalists, many others do not utilize social media.

The research findings of Tadesse Hailu (2021) found out that, the majority of the respondents 38(45.8%) answered that they used social media for more than 5 hours. 11(13.3%) of them responded that they used social media for 1 hour in a week. And 9(10.8%) and 10(12.0%) of the respondents answered that they used 2 and 3 hours per week respectively. This depicts that almost half of the respondents 46(55.4%) 5 hours and more than five hours a week

Thus, it should be noted that apart from that, social media will be utilized as a strategic communication tool to acquire internal and external information about the company. The world of communications is rapidly shifting toward digital, and those who understand this revolution will communicate far more effectively than those who do not. Thus, the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau should use the social media to communicate about the issues of its concern.

4.4. The opportunities and challenges of the social media usage as a PR tool in Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau

The last specific objectives of this study are to describe the opportunities and challenges of the usage of social media as a public relations tool in Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau. To achieve these objectives, the respondents were asked various questions with this regard. Hence, the responses of the respondents on the potential and limitations of using social media as a PR

tool in the context of the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau will be presented in the following subsections.

4.4.1. The Opportunities for Using Social Media as a Public Relations Tool in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau

In this study, finding out what opportunities Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau face while utilizing social media as a PR tool is one of the research issues addressed in this study. In this connection, the researcher attempted to comprehend the possibilities of employing social media as a public relations instrument in the framework of the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau. All of the respondents believed that using social media as a PR strategy has several opportunities. In general, the following are some of the opportunities identified by Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau PR personnel.

The respondents reported that the main advantage of using social media as a PR tool is the availability of social media as a platform for disseminating information to the target audience, as well as the ability to gather information quickly from various pages created by various stakeholders and organizations. For example, respondent 3 had to say the following:

It assists us in disseminating information about various activities in and by the Bureau, as well as information on services, so that the community is informed before coming for any service."

Similarly, respondent 1 added that "*Our Facebook presence is vital since it provides a forum for exchanging information with our international customers and other members of society.*" The aforementioned interviewees stated that the advantages of utilizing social media is to speed up their activities by sharing information to their followers as well as to make their job more

effective. Besides, a social media become the place to share your ideas. According to a PR manager, the introduction of social media helps them to get feedback from the audiences. He stated that *“We used to be able to acquire input from audiences by phone or other research tools; now, thanks to social media networks, we can now get rapid response”* This indicates that the office use social media to gain a better understanding of their target consumers.

The other advantage of utilizing social media as a PR tool is to reach out to a wide range of target audiences all around the world. The following is how the respondent explained opportunity of using social media: *“Our presence on social media, particularly Facebook, has provided us with a platform and an opportunity to reach out and share information with a broader audience for all Ethiopians living in various parts of the world”* Thus, from this response, it can be deduced that one of the many advantages or opportunities that social media networks provide is a greater reach for media material than ever before. Even before the introduction of such media networks, it would not have been conceivable. With this regard, respondent 3 stated that *“Social media isn't bound by geography. We can get a person from anywhere in the globe that we wouldn't be able to obtain them via radio or television. They will give us feedback.”* This may mean that the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau social media output would reach the United States, Australia, Arab countries, and anywhere else in the world. This is a significant asset for a Diaspora seeking information from Ethiopia, specifically about the services and cites of the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau.

With the use of social media, it is possible to reach everyone without the presence of new media, which has provided an easy approach for a certain organization or institution to target multiple audiences in order to achieve its desired goal/s. In this connection, respondent 2 argued, for example, that using social media allowed him to reach out to all segments of society, including

the mainstream media. The prevalence of Wi-Fi and mobile phone technology, according to the responder, makes this even easier.

Besides, respondent 4 has stated the following regarding the advantages of using social media as a communication tool:

The opportunity of social media is to create information compared to mainstream media which do not allow content creation. In terms of expense, social media is cheap. Quick production of media content is the other opportunity. Feedback provision of media is the other important quality of social media.

Besides, another respondent agreed with the preceding assertion and added that the Society's usage of social media aided in getting both constructive and critical input on its operations.. On his part, respondent 3 emphasized social media's communication benefits and its position as a two-way communication medium. We don't know what people's perceptions are since we don't use social media, according to the reply. If you don't know what you're doing, it'll be difficult. You might be doing something when the general public expects something different. As a result, it is believed that one of the first and most important opportunities is its capacity to readily practice two-way communication. . In this regard, respondent 5, noted that *"It also allows for audience involvement and It makes it easier for me to communicate with all of the relevant stakeholders who are also online." Its function in delivering whatever information it is expressing is equally crucial."* From this response, it can be deduced that one of the benefits of using social media as a tool is that it allows for two-way connection and discussion with social media users/followers in order to sustain relationships and include them in the activities

The efficiency of social media in terms of cost and time to undertake the PR activity is the other potential opportunities mentioned by respondents. One of the respondents stated *"It is free and can reach a large portion of our target audience in a reasonably short amount of time when compared to other instruments we are employing."* It also enables for audience involvement and may be distributed." Similarly, respondent 4 stated that the bureau can get a large number of followers with little effort, allowing it to reach a large number of social media users online. However, the respondent also expressed reservations about the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau's proper utilization of this opportunity.

Currently, it is argued that one of the most rapidly increasing weapons tool for PR activity is social media. Social medial are effective to spread information, correct erroneous information, and get timely and up-to-date information on problems that one is concerned about. In this regard, respondent 5 stated his idea by saying that using social media has helped them deal with communication problems. The department's prior expertise in effectively managing communication crises by issuing remarks via the Society's social media platforms was noted by the respondent. According to the respondent , such social media initiatives aided the group in reaching out to the mainstream media and the general public in an efficient and timely manner.

In addition, respondent 4 stated that publishing on social media sites saves money. "Because social media is free to use, this will not cost us anything." As a result, it is cost-effective." The Bureau can save money by using less paper. Respondent 5 added that "Today, our printing machines are only utilized when absolutely essential, as everything can be transmitted by email or Telegram." "This is tremendously helping with cost reduction or optimization," In general, the respondents stated that social media has influenced their methods, particularly in terms of disseminating information to employees, stakeholders, and the general public. The interviewees

were optimistic that social media may significantly improve their organization's public relations efforts.

One of the hallmarks of social media interaction is that it is interactive. In this age of horizontal communication, social media has turned journalism into a debate forum. In this connection, responded 4 stated that *''Social media would increase participation. On traditional media, time is restricted, but on social media, space is limitless. As a result, journalism becomes more interactive''*. This response shows that social media creates interactive relationship between the organization and audiences as well. The audiences would comment on the services and product of the organization, thus there is a room for correction, appreciation, and engagement. This means that the conventional journalistic structure is evolving in tandem with the changing social structure. As a result, the public realm of media is experiencing a transformation. Thus, it can be said that the development and use of social media has resulted in a historic movement of the public sphere from the institutional domain to the new communication space.

The findings of this study are supported by the previous empirical studies. For example, the findings of Frey and Rudloff(2010) asserted that a social media channel is a cost-effective, straightforward, and quick way to connect with consumers and stakeholders. Furthermore, according to Burbules, (2016).social media may be useful in dealing with internal and external stakeholder interactions outside of work by increasing contact between the business and clients. In a later online word-of-mouth survey conducted in Denmark by Sorensen (2010:71-72) it was suggested that social network sites have changed the trend of communication from traditional (billboard advertisements, newspapers, and television advertising) to online advertising, which could reach a larger audience faster, with enhanced communication between individuals and other groups of people; the communication is bi-directional between consumers.

4.4.2. The Challenges of Using Social Media as a PR Tool in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau

The respondents were asked by the researcher about the challenges encountered while using social media as a PR tool in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau. In response, they forwarded different challenges in the use social media. Among the challenges, lack of technical ability and know-how in properly administering social media platforms is the most commonly highlighted difficulty by responders. This competence gap was acknowledged by all expert respondents. Their responses revealed that the professionals in charge of the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau 's social media outlets are not making full use of the available social media tools and lack advanced abilities in using the Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube platforms. Besides, lack of technological skill is the other challenge in the usage of social media. With this regard, respondent 2 responded *“There are many challenges in using social media. The first is skill gap to utilise the media. The other is technology gap.”*

Another challenge that is commonly noted is a lack of equipment. For information gathering and social media content preparation, respondents cited a shortage of high-speed laptop computers and audio-visual assets. The experts also stated that their laptop computers are unsuitable for their needs and are extremely sluggish when it comes to managing or monitoring social media sites. Thus, it can be said that the other challenge in the use of social media is lack or shortage of resources. This is also supported by the previous findings. For example, Feyisa(2011) found out that there are a limited number of PCs with internet connectivity. Aside from a poor internet connection, the number of computers to personnel ratio is lower.

Another challenge in the usage of social media as a communication too is the wrong attitude towards the usage of Social media. In this connection, the PR experts say that opinions about

social media use in the Amahara Culture bureau are less informed. If someone is on social media, it is assumed that they are conversing or are off duty. Likewise, respondent 3 believes that the institutions have a poor comprehension of social media. With this regard, respondent 1 mentioned *’I recently had an occasion when we were permitted to use the internet, but Facebook was restricted. This is a misinterpretation of social media usage.’* Thus, the misinterpretation of the messages posted by the bureau is one the challenges in the use of social media.’

In addition, the other challenge in using social media for PR tool is the presence of abusive and unrelated comments and posts by some followers. This is one of the problem in using social media. In connection to this, Respondent 1 stated: *“We haven’t faced a big challenge yet, however few uninformed audiences post their views) as a comment or post link (website) of opposition Media as a comment, but these are rare”*.

Moreover, limited management support, lack of focus, and biased assumptions about social media in particular and the communication team in general, lack of commitment in considering social media as a permanent assignment, limited human power, employee turnover, slow internet connection speed, limited information due to lack of formal information exchange structure, and limited provision of capacity building are among the remaining challenges mentioned by respondents.

The other challenges to the usage of social media as a PR communication tool are lack and fluctuations of internet connection. The respondents stated that *“it was too difficult to prepare and develop the right information at the right time when there is lack and fluctuation of the internet from its sources“*. These may be the results of a lack of attention to the development of

internet infrastructures. Often Social media posts uncontrolled, unfiltered information that may have negative effects.

Thus, it can be said that there exists obstacles that affect the offices from using social media networks. The lack of credibility of the information, as well as the fact that it is not commonly recognized to cite, are problems. Other problems include a lack of information about how to utilize it for professional purposes, spying, hate speech, hacking, social media attitudes, and internet access issues.

The findings of this study are supported by the previous local studies. For instance, according to Bucy and Newhagen (2004) there are four sequential hurdles to social media "internet" access, the first mental dimension is the loss of any virtual experience, which is created with the help of computer phobia, user exclusivity, or a premeditated avoidance of new technology. Are the material deliberations, such the absence of computer or network access, the same? The third, challenge to access involves digital skills, including the ability not only to operate computers and network connections but to search, select, and process information from the superabundance of sources. Fourthly, they expect usage chances to remain uneven for some time to come, where segments of the population systematically engage with and benefit from advanced information technology and more sophisticated applications and services. Other segments, on the other hand, rely solely on basic digital technology for simple applications, with a sizable portion devoted to entertainment.

The respondents were asked for suggestions on how to make better use of social media as a public relations tool in their particular situation. The respondents are confident that the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau's social media outlets will be able to help its PR efforts even more if

the aforementioned issues and gaps are solved by all parties involved at the top level of management or within the communication department.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. Introduction

Currently it is noted that technological advancements have had a significant impact in enhancing and changing how people utilize and communicate (Miller, et.a. 2016). As a consequence of technological advancements and new media technology advances, social media has a significant impact on how information is accessed and transmitted. People utilize media to meet their own wants, and they are satisfied when those needs are met. Users of media are actively involved in the choosing of the media they consume (Tomno, 2012).

Social media has recently become a dominating means of communication among people, the private sector, and the public sector, despite the fact that the public sector is a relative newcomer when compared to the private sector (Tomno, 2012). The use of social media has certainly risen and continues to do so in all age categories (Tess, 2013). Users can communicate with one another directly through social media.

Social media can be used in every industry from automobiles to airlines, from manufacturing to service, from marketing to finance, and from public sector to private. The potential use of social media is almost endless. It is up to the organization to determine how they want to benefit from this phenomenon (Naik, 2015). Social media provides millions of people to connect each other and gather information. They are becoming increasingly important for businesses. Individual relationships are strengthened, ideas are shaped, and collective social and political acts are facilitated by social media. Organizations may use social media to provide the appropriate material to the right people at the right time. Social media has evolved into a major worldwide phenomenon that is altering how people connect and communicate (Valentini, 2018). Social media is a relatively new idea for government offices and other public sector entities. With this regard, the major objective of this study is to describe the practices and challenges of the using of social media as a public relations tool in Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau. A qualitative descriptive research approach was used to attain this goal. Data was acquired from both primary and secondary sources for this investigation. I

The data acquired through interviews and document reviews was then summarized and qualitatively characterized in the data interpretation. The inductive technique was used to analyse the substance of the qualitative data acquired. The final chapter deals with summary, conclusion

and recommendations of the research topic. The possible suggestions for further research will also be discussed.

5.1. Summary of the Major Findings

Different findings were obtained from the analysis of data. The findings of the study were organized and grouped according to the objectives of the study. Thus, in this subsection, the summary of the major findings are presented according to the objectives of the study.

A. Major Findings related on how the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau PR professionals use social media as public relations tool to communicate with the public

- The study revealed that the top-level management has recognized social media as a useful tool, providing strategic advice to social media operations and it is supplying the required resources. To realize the use of social media as a PR tool the board of the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau is working to approve the communication strategy and policy, as well as the final draft of the social media guideline. The management also ordered the Information Technology department's to develop of a website and a social media plat forms of the Bureau.
- Similarly, the PR department has acknowledged and used social media as a public relations tool. But currently, Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau is not applying regular processes and practices for using social media as a public relations instrument to communicate with the public.
- The analysis of data divulged that there are various rationales behind using Social media as a PR tool by the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau. It was noted that social media technologies can reach a large number of individuals both locally and globally. As a result,

accessibility and easiness of communication are another rationale and purpose of using social media as communication tool in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau.

- The study also shows that the usage of social media is justified to enhance the achievement of organizational goal, assist them in contacting a large number of their target audience, provides the benefit of receiving feedback and social media is now accessible to a large number of individuals.
- The major reasons why the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau for using social media as a communications tool are management directives, compatibility with other PR and communication tools, and a desire to reap the benefits of social media platforms such as visibility, feedback management, reachability, and growing acceptance/influence.
- Regarding the information communicated in the social media, it was noted that the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau post different type of information on the several social media. Besides, the review of the documents revealed that different information is communicated. These includes World Heritage Sites National Parks and Community Protected Area, Lakes Hot Springs and Water falls, Religious Sites historical land marks that are found in the Amhara regional state. Besides, it describes the religious and cultural events practiced in the region. It seems that the messages are intended to attract the tourists to visit the region. Thus, it can be said that when used correctly, social media platforms are useful tools for conveying information, receiving news and events, sharing photographs and videos, and communicating with the public.

B. Results on the social media platforms that are mostly utilized by Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau

- Study found out that in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau, the PR experts utilize various types of social media. It was noted that the bureau actively use Facebook, twitter , youtube and to some extent tiktok and Instagram.
- Because of the enormous number of users in Ethiopia, all of the respondents agree that Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are mostly used as social media platforms. They're also thought to house the bulk of the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau target audience. However it should be noted that Facebook is dominant as it has many users as compared to others and easily accessible
- According to statistics obtained from the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau s social media channels, the most commonly utilized medium for communicating messages was Facebook, followed by the YouTube Channel and Twitter.
- The analysis of data showed that Amharic and English are the two languages utilized to send social media communications. According to the PR expert responders, Amharic is the most commonly utilized language to communicate with the organization's local population. The English language is also utilized by the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau's to communicate with international customers.
- As a result, this study discovered that the platforms most commonly utilized by participants in the study were Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, and Instagram. Because of the instruments' ease of use, the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau is utilizing the stated social media to communicate with local population and international customers about the organizational goals and services.
-

C. Findings on extent to which the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau use social media to communicate with its public

- Regarding the frequency of Facebook posts, Twitter tweets, and YouTube video uploads, all expert respondents stated that there is no set time or timetable for publishing updates. Rather, the availability of events, according to the respondents, determines when social media posts are made.
- It was revealed that owing to the overlap of other tasks, they may not be able to update their sites as regularly as they would want, and that this may take two or three weeks or even months for platforms like YouTube.
- According to the Facebook page review, social media usage in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau is not regular. With the exception of some pages the majority of pages maintained a regular posting schedule. Some of the information on the social media hadn't been updated in months, if not years.
- In general, respondents reported that they do not utilize social media on a daily basis to communicate about the routine in their workplace of the organization.

D. Major Findings related to the opportunities and challenges of the using of social media as a public relations tool in Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau

- The findings of the study revealed employing social media as a public relations instrument in the framework of the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau has several opportunities. It was reported that the main advantage of using social media as a PR tool is the availability of social media as a platform for disseminating information to the target audience, as well as the

ability to gather information quickly from various pages created by various stakeholders and organizations.

- The other opportunity of utilizing social media is to speed up their activities by sharing information to their followers as well as to make their job more effective. Besides, a social media become the place to share your ideas. According to a PR manager, the introduction of social media helps them to get feedback from the audiences. The other advantage of utilizing social media as a PR tool is to reach out to a wide range of target audiences all around the world.
- The respondents of the study stated that the most important opportunities is its capacity to readily practice two-way communication. Thus, it was noted that one of the benefits of using social media as a tool is that it allows for two-way connection and discussion with social media users/followers in order to sustain relationships and include them in the activities.
- The analysis of the collected data revealed that Social medial are effective to spread information, correct erroneous information, and get timely and up-to-date information on problems that one is concerned about.
- Regarding the challenges encountered while using social media as a PR tool in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau, the following findings were obtained:
- The study find out that different challenges were encountered in the use social media as PR tool. Among the challenges, lack of technical ability and know-how in properly administering social media platforms is the most commonly highlighted difficulty by responders.

- The study revealed that the professionals in charge of the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau 's social media outlets are not making full use of the available social media tools and lack advanced abilities in using the Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube platforms.
- Another challenge that is commonly noted is a lack of equipment. For information gathering and social media content preparation, respondents cited a shortage of high-speed laptop computers and audio-visual assets. The experts also stated that their laptop computers are unsuitable for their needs and are extremely sluggish when it comes to managing or monitoring social media sites. Thus, it can be said that the other challenge in the use of social media is lack or shortage of resources.
- The analysis of data revealed that the misinterpretation of the messages posted by the bureau is one the challenges in the use of social media.
- In addition, the other challenge in using social media for PR tool is the presence of abusive and unrelated comments and posts by some followers. Another challenge in the usage of social media as a communication tool is the wrong attitude towards the usage of Social media
- Other problems include a lack of information about how to utilize it for professional purposes, spying, hate speech, hacking, social media attitudes, and internet access issues. The other challenges to the usage of social media as a PR communication tool are lack and fluctuations of internet connection
- Moreover, lack of focus, and biased assumptions about social media in particular and the communication team in general, lack of commitment in considering social media as a permanent assignment, limited human power, employee turnover, slow internet connection speed, limited information due to lack of formal information exchange structure, and limited provision of capacity build are among the remaining challenges mentioned by respondents.

5.2. Conclusions

Based on the above major findings of the study the following conclusions were drawn:

Regarding the usage of social media, the findings of this study revealed that top-level management recognizes social media as a valuable tool, is offering strategic counsel to social media operations, and is providing the necessary resources. Likewise, the public relations department has recognized and utilized social media as a public relations instrument. Currently, the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau is following standard procedures and practices when it comes to using social media as a public relations tool. Data research revealed that the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau use social media as a public relations tool for a variety of reasons.

Social media technology, it was noted, can reach a vast number of people both locally and worldwide. As a result, another justification and goal for adopting social media as a communication tool in the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau is accessibility and ease of communication. The survey also found that using social media to help organizations achieve their goals, aid them in contacting a big number of their target audience, give the advantage of collecting feedback, and that social media is now available to a large number of people is justified. Besides, compatibility with other PR and communication tools, and a desire to reap the benefits of social media platforms such as visibility, feedback management, reachability, and growing acceptance/influence are the main reasons why the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau uses social media as a communications tool.

According to the study, the PR specialists at the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau use a variety of social media platforms. The bureau is known to utilize Facebook, Twitter, YouTube,

and, to a lesser extent, Tictok and Instagram. Because of Ethiopia's large population, all respondents think that Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are the most popular social media sites.

From the analysis of data it was deduced that that Amharic and English are the two most often used languages for social media conversations. Amharic is the most regularly used language to connect with the organization's local people, according to the PR expert respondents. The English language is also utilized by the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau's to communicate with international customers. As a result, this study discovered that Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, and Instagram were the most popular platforms among participants. The Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau is using the stated social media to connect with the local community and worldwide clients about the organization's aims and services due to the instruments' simplicity of use.

When it comes to the Facebook postings, Twitter tweets, and YouTube video uploads, all expert respondents agreed that there is no defined time or schedule for updating. According to the respondents, the availability of events influences when social media postings are published. It was stated that they may not be able to update their sites as frequently as they would want due to the overlap of other jobs, and that this may take two to three weeks or even months for platforms like YouTube. According to a Facebook page evaluation, the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau do not use social media on a regular basis. The majority of pages, with the exception of a few, maintained a regular publication schedule. Some social media information has not been updated in months, if not years. Thus, it was deduced that the PR department do not utilize social on a daily or regular basis to communicate about the routine in their workplace of the organizational.

The study's findings indicated that using social media as a public relations tool in the context of the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau offers a number of advantages. The availability of social media as a platform for conveying information to the target audience, as well as the capacity to swiftly aggregate information from multiple pages made by various stakeholders and organizations, was recognized as the key advantage of utilizing social media as a PR tool. Another advantage of using social media is that it allows them to speed up their operations by sharing information with their followers, as well as making their work more efficient. Aside from that, social media has evolved into a platform for sharing ideas. According to a public relations manager, using social media allows them to collect input from their target consumers and it allow them reach out to a wider audience.

It was concluded that another benefit of using social media is that it allows them to speed up their operations by sharing information with their followers, as well as making their work more efficient. Aside from that, social media has evolved into a platform for sharing ideas. According to a public relations manager, using social media allows them to collect input from their target consumers. Another benefit of using social media as a PR strategy is that it allows you to reach out to a diverse variety of target consumers all around the world. The ability to easily practice two-way communication is one of the most essential opportunities, according to the study's respondents. One of the advantages of adopting social media as a tool, it was stated, is that it enables for two-way communication and conversation with social media users/followers in order to maintain connections and incorporate them in activities.

Various problems were discovered in the usage of social media as a PR tool, according to the study. Among the challenges, lack of technical ability and know-how in properly administering social media platforms is the most commonly highlighted difficulty by responders. According to

the findings, the experts in charge of the Amhara Culture and Tourism Bureau's social media outlets are not fully utilizing the available social media tools and lack advanced knowledge of the Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube platforms.

Besides, another challenge that is frequently mentioned is a lack of equipment. Respondents cited a lack of high-speed laptop computers and audio-visual assets for information gathering and social media content preparation. Their laptop computers, according to the experts, are unsuited for their purposes and are particularly slow when it comes to maintaining or monitoring social networking sites. As a result, the other barrier in using social media is a lack of or scarcity of resources. The data analysis found that one of the obstacles in using social media is misunderstanding of the bureau's messaging. Furthermore, the other difficulty with using social media as a public relations tool is the prevalence of nasty and irrelevant comments and postings from certain followers. Another issue with using social media as a communication tool is having a negative attitude about it. Other challenges include a lack of knowledge about how to use it professionally, surveillance, hate speech, hacking, social media attitudes, and difficulty with internet connection. Other obstacles to using social media as a PR communication tool include a lack of and fluctuating internet connectivity.

5.3. Recommendations

To enhance the use of social media as a PR communication tool, the following recommendations are given:-

- In order to achieve organizational goals successfully, the organization should be offered long and short term training, as well as introducing best practices from other nations and raising awareness of the use of social media as a communication medium.

- Because social media is used by the majority of people and is quickly becoming a key source of information, the department in charge of social media should be staffed with skilled personnel and technology to meet organizational objectives.
- It is also the responsibility of organizations to employ certain social media platforms based on their unique features, security, and trustworthiness. It also necessitates follow-up, prompt action, and feedback monitoring. It's also important to draft policies and procedures.
- Establishing and using social media in a public sector company is a difficult process that needs a lot of money, technology, and expertise. As a result, coordination and integration with many stakeholders (both government and non-government) as well as the establishment of preventative and verification procedures are essential.
- Because social media platforms are dynamic and strong communication tools, the government bureau needs a "social media implementation guide" to assess performance and make adjustments.
- To avoid creating information gaps for rumour mongers to propagate negative information against their organization or office, PR practitioners should be in charge of social media sites and access them regularly, tweeting or posting updates.
- The Amhara culture Tourism Bureau should have a thorough understanding of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter's functions, which include not just disseminating information and responding to public inquiries, but also in fostering cooperation, participation, learning, sharing, and contributing to the debate.
- More study is needed to completely comprehend the good and negative effects of using social media platforms as a public relations tool in government agencies.. There is currently

no clear study on how to define and measure social media success in government ministries.

As a result, further study is needed to establish their usefulness.

REFERENCES

- Al-Taie M.Z., Kadry S. (2017) Information Diffusion in Social Networks. In: Python for Graph and Network Analysis. Advanced Information and Knowledge Processing. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-53004-8_8
- Ameyu Etana (2015) Social Media and Journalism: Journalists and Media Outlets' Use of Social Media Networks in Ethiopia. Addis Ababa University(Unpublished MA thesis)
- Blewett, C., and Hugo, W. (2016). "Actant affordances: a brief history of affordance theory and a Latourian extension for education technology research." *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning*, Vol. 4, Issue 1, pp. 55-73. DOI: 10.14426/cristal.v4i1.50.
- Bazeley, P., & Jackson, K. (2013) Qualitative data analysis with NVivo, London, UK: SAGE Publications Limited.
- Brian Dean, (2021), Social Network Usage and Growth Statistics: How many people use Social Media in 2021? <https://backlinko.com/social-media-users>
- Burbules, N. C. (2016). How we use and are used by social media in education. *Educational Theory*, 66(4), 551-565.
- Burbules, N. C. (2016). How we use and are used by social media in education. *Educational Theory*, 66(4), 551-565.
- Cision (2015).Social Journalism Study 2015: United Kingdom. Global Report by Cision & Canterbury Christ Church University (UK).
- Creswell, JW & Creswell, JD. 2018. Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach. 5th edition. United States of America: Sage publications.
- Creswell, JW & Plano Clark, VL. 2007. Designing and conducting mixed methods research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, JW & Poth, CN. 2018. Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches. United States of America: Sage publications.
- Curtis, L., Edwards, C., Fraser, K. L., Gudelsky, S., Holmquist, J., Thornton, K., and Sweetser, K. D. (2010). "Adoption of social media for public relations by nonprofit

organizations.’’ *Public Relations Review*, Vol.36, Issue 1, pp.90-92. DOI: 10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.10.003.

Davis, J. L., and Chouinard, J. B. (2017). ‘‘Theorizing Affordances: From Request to Refuse.’’ *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, Vol.00, Issue 00, pp.1–8. DOI: 10.1177/0270467617714944.

Fraustino, J. D., B.F. Liu, and Y. Jin. (2012). *Social media use during disasters: a review of the knowledge base and gaps*. Final Report to Human Factors/Behavioral Sciences Division, Science and Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security. National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), College Park, MD.

Feyisa Girma (2011). *New Media Technology as a Source of Foreign News in Oromiya Mass Media Organization: Challenges and Opportunities*. MA thesis, Addis Ababa University.

Flew, T. (2009). *Democracy, Participation and Convergent Media: Case Studies In Contemporary Online News Journalism in Australia*. *Communication, Politics & Culture*, 42, 2: 87-109.

Frey, B., & Rudloff, S. (2010). *Social media and the impact on marketing communication*.

Foreman, C. (2017). *10 Types of Social Media and How Each Can Benefit Your Business*. <https://blog.hootsuite.com/types-of-social-media/> (retrieved January 1, 2021).

Galloway, C. and Kwansah-Aidoo, K., 2005. *Public relations issues and crisis management*

Gillin, P., 2008. *New media, new influencers and implications for the public relations profession*. *Journal of new communications research*, 2(2), pp.1-10.

- Gulerman, N. I., and Apaydin, F. (2017). "Effectiveness of Digital Public Relations Tools on Various Customer Segments." *Journal of Management, Marketing and Logistics (JMML)*, Vol. 4, Issue. 3, pp. 259-270. DOI: 10.17261/Pressacademia.2017.488.
- Hafezieh, N., and Eshraghian, F. (2017). "Affordance Theory in Social Media Research: Systematic Review and Synthesis of the Literature." *Twenty-Fifth European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS), Guimarães, Portugal*.
- Houston, J. B., Hawthorne, J., Perreault, M. F., Park, E. H., Goldstein Hode, M., Halliwell, M. R., and Griffith, S. A. (2014). "Social media and disasters: a functional framework for social media use in disaster planning, response, and research." *Disasters*, Vol. 39, Issue 1, pp. 1-22. DOI:10.1111/disa.12092.
- Lee, M., Neeley, G., & Stewart, K. (2012). *The practice of Government Public*, Boca Raton London, New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Lin, H., Fan, W., & Chau, P.Y.(2014). Determinants of user continuance of social networking sites : A self- regulation perspective. *Information and management*, 51(5) 595-603.
- Mandiberg, M. (Ed.). (2012). *The social media reader*. Nyu Press.
- Malerk, David, 2012 "Understanding Social Media Use and Its Marketing Implications", 9-10
- McAllister, S.M., & Taylor, M. (2007). Community college Web sites as tools for fostering dialogue. *Public Relations Review*, 33(2), 230–232
- Mckie, D., and Sriramesh, K. (2017). *The International Encyclopedia of Organizational* . John Wiley and Sons, Inc. DOI: 10.1002/9781118955567.wbieoc171.
- McNabb David E., (2010), *Case Research in Public Management*, New York: Routledge Publication, p.29, cited by Jamia M.I, (2016) *Research Design*
- Mersham, G.M., Theunissen, P., & Peart, J. (2009). *Public relations and communication management: An Aotearoa/New Zealand perspective*. North Shore, NZ: Pearson.
- Miller, D., Sinanan, J., Wang, X., McDonald, T., Haynes, N., Costa, E., ... & Nicolescu, R. (2016). *How the world changed social media* (p. 286). UCL press.

- Miller, D., Sinanan, J., Wang, X., McDonald, T., Haynes, N., Costa, E., ... & Nicolescu, R. (2016). *How the world changed social media* (p. 286). UCL press.
- Mullaney, M. J. (2012). "Optimizing Social Media in Humanitarian Crisis Responses. *The Macalester Review*, Vol. 2, Issue 1, Article 3, pp.1-25. Available at: <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macreview/vol2/iss1/3> (retrieved on January 9, 2021).
- Newman N. 2009. *The Rise of Social Media and its Impact on Mainstream Journalism*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Department of Politics and International Relations.UK: University of Oxford; 2009
- Ryan, D., & Jones, C. (2012). *Understanding Digital Marketing - Marketing Strategies for Engaging the Digital Generation*. Kogan Page.
- Shrivastava, K.M., 2013. *Social Media*. Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
- Schmitz, A. (2012). *Public Relations v. 1.0*. Available at: <https://2012books.lardbucket.org/pdfs/public-relations.pdf> (retrieved January 8, 2021).
- Sileshie Semahagne (2014). Challenges and Opportunities of Facebook as a Media platform in Ethiopia. *Journal of media and communication studies*, Vol. 6(7), pp. 99-110.
- Simegnish Mengesha (2015). *Crawling To Death of Expression – Restricted Online Media In Ethiopia*. Accessed on April 09, 2015 from: <http://www.cima.ned.org/crawling-death-expression-restricted-online-media-ethiopia>
- Solis, B. (2010) *Defining Social Media: 2006 – 2010* [Blog] [Accessed: December 24, 2010] Available at <<http://www.briansolis.com/2010/01/defining-social-media-the-saga-continues/>> x
- Tadese Hailu (2021). *Social Media Use and Challenges in Public Sector Organizations: The Case of Federal Attorney General*. Addis Ababa University(Unpublished Ma Thesis).
- Tench, R. and Yeomans, L. (2009). *Exploring Public Relations* (2nd edition). Pearson Education Limited, Edinburgh Gate, Harlow.

- Treem, J. W., and Leonardi, P. M. (2012). “Social Media Use in Organizations: Exploring the Affordances of Visibility, Editability, Persistence, and Association.” *Communication Yearbook*, Vol. 36, pp. 143-189.
- Tomno, C. J. (2012). *Journalism and Social Media*. Nairobi, Kenya: Center for International Media Ethics.
- Turano, C. T. (2017). “Social Media as a Communication Tool to Support University Student - Services: Affordances, Limitations and Opportunities for Innovations.” *International Journal of Information and Communication Sciences*, Vol. 2, No. 5, pp. 75-85. DOI: 10.11648/j.ijics.20170205.14.
- Waters, R. D., Burnett, E., Lamm, A., and Lucas, J. (2009). “Engaging stakeholders through social networking: How nonprofit organizations are using Facebook.” *Public Relations Review*, Vol. 35, Issue 2, pp. 102-106. DOI: 10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.01.006.
- Yang, J. (2017). *Enacted Affordances of Social Media and Consumers’ Response to Advertising*. Unpublished PHD dissertation in Information and Media submitted to Michigan State University.

Appendix 1: Interview Guides

- A. What are the social media platforms used by your organisation? Why do you prefer these social media?
- B. For what purpose do you use such social media? Is it to inform, educate, entertain, commercial or what else?
- C. Do you think that the use of such media helps your communication or public relation effectiveness? How?
- D. What challenges and opportunities you have experienced in the use of such social media?
- E. What is the role of social media in the internal communication of this organisation?
- F. What are the themes that are communicated on social media to the members? How the themes or issues you post on social media are relevant to your audiences?
- G. How do you compare the opportunities of social media with that of mainstream media?
- H. How do the social media you use helps in the practice of public relations?

Appendix 2: Sample Transcription

Code: Respondent 1

Position: Tourism public relation officer

1. What are the social media platforms used by your organisations and why do you prefer?

We actively use facebook, twitter and to some extent tiktok and Instagram. Facebook is dominant as it has many users as compared to others and easily accessible. The purpose we use media is for tourism marketing. Facebook is used to inform users about tourist attraction area in our region. The aim of using social media is to update or inform our audiences about events takes place in our region.

It is very important that some customers give us some messages as well as feedback. Sometimes they send packages and information. It helps to utilise our interactive communication for further. There are many challenges in using social media. The first is skill gap to utilise the media. The other is technology gap. Most of the time use simple media for technology use such as cell phones.

Opportunities are we can freely create messages as well as post message. So, it is easy to contact customers easily compared to mainstream media.

In the organisation, when we post about tourism destinations, they comment on it and reply. On telegram, most of our officers' post message and picture freely in the group. Our main theme of message is promoting destinations and creating communication with customers. It is very relevant compared to others. It is all about giving fast and relevant information.

The opportunity of social media is to create information compared to mainstream media which do not allow content creation. In terms of expense, social media is cheap. Quick production of media content is the other opportunity. Feedback provision of media is the other important quality social media.

Social media helped the practice of tourism marketing in different ways such as accessibility. You can access different individuals easily.