

Framing Social Media uses towards Democratization Process in Tanzania

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Abstract:- Freedom of expression as among the fundamental human rights and democratization process has been a claim of supporters of free market of ideas under liberal democracy. With the development of new media technology, the voices of the voiceless have been given a wide girth and hence enjoying the fruits of new media which enables them to penetrate from the normative gate-keeping system. This study has assessed the uses and impacts of social networking sites and web-blogs (blogs) in spearheading open discussions as reflecting to *Public Opinion Theory* on matters pertaining to democratization and freedom of expression in particular, in Tanzania. Intensive literature review has been conducted using local and international publications to support the three-year content analysis study which used; *face book, twitter and instagram* – accounts of social media architects, *Zitto Kabwe Ruyagwa, Maria Sarungi-T'sehai, January Makamba and Mange Kimambi*, all due to their popularity in Tanzanian democratic arena; blogs; *Jamii Forums, Sauti Kubwa, Issa Michuzi, Swahili Times and Freddy Macha* and two political cartoonists' accounts – '*Wakudata*' and '*Kipanya*' were also surveyed in attempt to understand the extent of social media uses for democratisation process in Tanzania. Fair penetration of internet services has been seen with which has oiled democratization process in the country – witnessing hot discussions from people of all social classes. However, the social media uses and users have gone further allowing unethical posts and pose a great challenge to the voluntary and non-voluntary regulatory bodies in the country than ever before – the efforts which have yet been materialized, especially in striking the balance between rights to freedom of expression as among the fundamental pillars of democracy in one hand and protection of ethics and national tranquilly which are also a cornerstone for a civilized nation.

Keywords:- framing, social media, democratization process, netizens, freedom of expression, public opinion.

I. INTRODUCTION

Media is an important catalyst for democratization process in any society in the world as it poses a critical ingredient in the transition of society from authoritarianism to democracy through enhancing; free elections, majority rule, political freedom, political equality, minority rights, representative government and an independent judiciary for the public good. (Adu, 2018; Hayes and White, 2018; Marwa, 2018; Miazhevich, 2016; Rioba, 2012; Jurrat, 2011; Curan, 2011; Richardson et al. 2010; Baran and Davis, 2010; and Pappacharissi, 2001).

The new faces of media through the development of information and technology (ITU, 2012) have further catapulted the pace of integration and interaction of people from every corner of the world for paving the better environment for democratization process (Wright and Hinson, 2017; Newsome and Lengel, 2012). Moreover, Wright and Hinson (2017) show that online and traditional (mainstream) media have been used for searching information on the information trends in the United States and elsewhere in the world. Apart from internet based media users' escaping from traditional barriers, the search for information from internet seems to save money (Michaelsen, 2011).

The faces of media that bases on internet communication which involves blogging (Richardson, et al., 2010), chatting, tweeting and sharing video information and opened the arena for increase of social forums fostered by citizen journalism (Jurrat, 2011), has increased participation of people from different cadres in dialogues which are vital in democratic governance as observed by Sternberg (2014), and Pappacharissi, (2001). Countries with higher level of development of information and communication technology such as China, have attempted to control the use of new media like blogs by using special software as a gateway to information that should be used with the citizens. In the legal point of view, though different measures have been taken by different democracies in the world – including United Kingdom, IP Act of 2016 is an example - its nature is still a challenge for the regulating authorities, and the case is more challenging in developing countries like Tanzania (Marwa, 2018:2).

With the absence of technological capacity to control internet staff, internet users in developing countries like Tanzania are enjoying their freedom of expression by sometimes acting as sources of tips of news for mainstream media (Fitzpatrick, 2018; Fritz, 2007). However, with that kind of freedom, the new media users may sometimes cross the limits of other peoples' rights that necessitate the formation of a body to regulate it as a "necessary evil" to freedom of expression (McQuail, 2010, Richardson, et al., 2010). Measures have been suggested in considering the mighty powers of blogs and social media to avoid excessive use of freedom of expression that infringe other peoples' rights to privacy such as consideration of human rights, normative standards, as well as understanding the opportunities and dangers of the new media uses to their societies (Puddephatt, 2011).

Despite the challenges facing internet use in Tanzania such as limited access due to poor communications infrastructure as well as the level of income for most Tanzanians especially in the rural areas, social media platforms have been used as a tunnel of escaping from laws and policies which gags freedom of expressions (Global Voices, 2010; Muthee and Mhando, (2005:34). It is due to this challenge posed by new media regulatory bodies in Tanzania are rethinking to have online materials controlled as applied to traditional media such as newspapers, television and radio – the government already enacted Cyber Crime Act in 2015 as well as its sister – Media Services Act, 2016 in attempts to control *laissez faire* communication amplified by the advent of new media networking sites.

Moreover, even with the fact that globalization and the uses of social media and other digital media are well acknowledged and increased everywhere in the world in many fields (Jensen, Hussona & Baik, 2018; Wright & Hinson, 2017), the uses of these social media in catapulting freedom of expression in developing countries and Tanzania in particular has not been sufficiently addressed. This paper illuminates how users have been benefitting from the advent of these social media and other digital media in enhancing freedom of expression.

II. A BRIEF HISTORY OF MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY IN TANZANIA

Tanzania has witnessed the growth in terms of quantity and quality of some indicators of freedom of expression such as media, associations, political parties, forums, demonstrations, strikes etc. Some of the indicators like media have grown up in number. Freedom of the press in particular, has long been considered crucial to democracy, human rights and development since the news media provide a fundamental informational linkage between the government and the mass publics. For media consumers, freedom of the media is defined as freedom to consume information or entertainment from any source without government restrictions (MCT, 2014).

The history of media in Tanzania is very interesting. Scholars (MCT, 2014; Rioba, 2012; Sturmer, 2008) have divided the history of media and communication into four major phases with different philosophical orientations as; Communication as a way of life (up to 1880s): This is the time before coming of colonialists. There were no a single media outlet before, rather than traditional ways of communication such as drums beating, horn blowing, setting fire, siren, cave painting to mention but a few (MCT, 2014). However, there were several attempts to establish media outlets in 1820s where Sultan of Zanzibar signed a treaty with Salem (now Massachusetts) leaders for importing newspapers to Zanzibar. It was in 1875 when Sultan of Zanzibar bought a Printing Machine from UK and published the first legal dictionary "Qamus Shariah".

In the second phase, coined with a communication philosophy of "communication for civilization (1880s to 1960s)" witnessed the coming of colonialists in Tanzania where at first Tanganyika was given to Germany East Africa then to Britain after the Second World War while Zanzibar was left to Sultan but under close command of the United Kingdom. It was 1888 when the first newspaper (Msimulizi/The Story Teller) was established in Tanzania (Zanzibar) by the Anglican Universities' Mission for Central Africa (UMCA) published both in Swahili and English. The colonial governments published several newspapers in this era to act as a mouth-piece of the administrative messages to natives. However, native newspapers also started emerging and stirred nationalism movements after the Second World War. A decade before independence, Dar es Salaam Broadcasting Station and Sauti ya Unguja were established (Sturmer, 2008).

In the third-phase (1960s to 1990s) was characterized by nationalization of mass media following independence where media outlets were under the government control. The two radio stations were nationalized. The government clearly identified the role of radio during this era as a tool for development where radio broadcast was made part and parcel of national building strategies, enchanted by Arusha Declaration (Rioba, 2012). The Arusha Declaration was a policy document unveiled in February 1967 declaring that Tanzania was to follow Ujamaa and Self Reliance policy. The declaration was followed by nationalization of major means of production, including the mass media (Sturmer, 2008). The government improved both coverage and content in such a way that by 1980s about 85% of the country was well covered by RTD (Konde, 1984).

The fourth phase – Communication for democratization (from 1990s): This is the time where Tanzania witnessed a significant change in media and democracy where private ownership of media was allowed giving an opportunity of establishment of several broadcast and print media and hence allowing freedom of expression under liberalization policy. It was characterized with uses of internet and establishment of FM radio stations. Different voices were heard from different worlds as it was echoed in the MacBride's Commission Report (1980). However, following the further development of new media from 2010, the wind of freedom of expression started blowing harder

allowing more freedom of expression due to the social media. Citizens became netizens as described by Jurrat, (2011).

III. MEDIA REGULATION AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN TANZANIA

Since the time of traditional ways of communication, the selection of communication channel, time and the message were important in ensuring the intended message is shared (MCT 2014) to avoid communication distortion. Much censorship was then conducted by the colonial administration in an attempt to ensure media as a tool for civilization or rather colonization play its intended primary role. It was from such like measures the leader of TANU – Nyerere was sued for defamation in 1958 after expressing his discomforts with the colonial operations in his editorial page in the *Sauti ya TANU* newspaper. He missed by-inches being jailed after managing to pay the penalty (Konde, 1984). After independence, the government regained media regulation by establishing media laws such as Prison Act of 1967, National Security Act of 1970, Newspaper Act No. 3 of 1976, Film play and stages Act of 1976, Broadcasting Act of 1993, Terrorism Act of 2002, Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority Act of 2003, and the recently enacted Cyber Crime Act 2015 and the Media Services Act 2016. All these pieces of legislations have been established to control media freedom and freedom of expression considering the mighty power of communication in changing the community. Some critics (Ndumbaro, 2014; LHRC, 2013) were of the opinion that the laws gag the fundamental human rights of freedom of expression as enshrined in the Tanzanian Constitution, warning that the right to information *inter-alia* is curtailed by existing bureaucratic systems, legal systems, poverty, high level of ignorance and existing governance system (Ndumbaro, 2014). The government is also regulating the media industry through its Department of Information Services (MAELEZO) which responsible for regulating print media which is under the Ministry of Information, and Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA) – established in 2003 for broadcast media which is under the Ministry of Science and Technology.

IV. ESTABLISHMENT OF MEDIA COUNCIL OF TANZANIA (MCT) AND SELF-REGULATION

In attempt to respond to complaints from the media professionals and those who are agitating for freedom of expression provided that Tanzania has signed international legislations including those safeguarding freedom of expression – adopted from Article 19 of UDHR (1948), the government was in a move to establish the statutory media body that will control all media operations in the country. Smelling the threats on the media freedom and freedom of expression the media professionals in Tanzania immediately met, discuss their fate and resorted to establish the independent (non-statutory media body) that will deal with professional conducts of media profession. MCT was the outcome of the mentioned efforts (MCT, 2013). It developed professional guidelines and codes of conducts to all media stakeholders and has been working hand-in-hand

with government in ensuring professional ethics are adhered to.

Coining the role of MCT to democratization process, Rioba (2012:70) asserts that media practitioners in Tanzania are of the opinion that if media plays its responsibility well, it will enable the government to play transformative role, be responsive to the citizens' genuine needs and aspirations, enhancing citizens participation, promoting equity and social justice through equitable distribution of resources, protecting societal values and human dignity and community rights, including those of the marginalized, ensuring harmony and continuity as expectation of an ideal democracy – proposing a media regulatory framework for current situation that is; using minimum government regulation, self-regulation (professionalism, codes of ethics, media councils, media reviews, constant training); and conducive environment for other forms of community expression. Rioba (2014) adds - quoting Mak'Ochieng (2000) that the liberal democratic theory proposes that mass media should play a pivotal role in availing relevant information to the public and providing spaces for a full range of arguments and policy to be debated. Apart from being hailed for its success it is confronted by challenges than any time before – critics that it is a *toothless bulldog* and new media. Moreover, the government has already established Media Services Act of 2016 of which the Non Voluntary Media Profession body as it was expected before the establishment of MCT is in the pipeline. There has been a cry-off of the media professionals trying to muzzle the law with the mindset of *ex nihilo nihil fit* in vain, only procedures are under way to make it effective. The question is whether MCT will be able to handle its activities effectively with the existence of the sister regulatory body which will have legal powers.

V. FRAMING SOCIAL MEDIA USES IN DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS

According to Kaplan and Haenlin, (2010) as quoted by Duhe, (2012:6), Social media refers group of Internet-based applications that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 (currently developed to Web 3.0 and 4.0 respectively) and that allows for the creation and exchange of user-generated contents. Social media has facilitated to flow of information in both vertical and horizontal pathways in the democracies hence allowing free market of ideas which is actually health for democratization process as elaborated by Duhe, (2012:6).

One thing to note however is democratization processes differ among democracies. The modern pattern of press freedom shows considerable variations around the world, whereby, the most liberal media are found in the developed nations (Wright and Hinson, 2017; Noris, 2006:8). With the development of digital media, where citizens become involved in information seeking, processing, dissemination and even storage, the opportunity which poses a challenge to gate-keeping system as a foundation of a responsible media while greasing for the public sphere concept which targets on three basic elements namely; *accessibility, universality and rational/critical discussion* (Eid and Derek, 2012) in

Duhe, (135). The situation is the same in Tanzania, under multiparty democratic society, which uses liberal democracy - where citizens are freely engage in public discussions on matters of their concerns (Rioba, 2012:163).

With the widespread uses of digital media devices such as *smart phones*, tablets and computers connected to internet – especially after Tanzania being connected to Fibre Optic Cable, the uses of social media has been accolade. As per February, 2018, the internet penetration was reported to be healthier (TCRA 2018) where the number of internet users in the countries increased to 23 million, with the majority of those using their handsets to go online increasing internet penetration in the country. *Face book*, *Instagram*, *Twitter*, *You Tube* and blogs and the like gained popularity in different uses for different purposes –*Facebook* taking a lead in uses (TCRA, 2018) and nourishment of blogs such as *Jamii Forums* for example, with 1,227,695 threads; 47,594 members; and 28,968,762 posts which is active almost in every second (*Jamii Forums*, December, 2018). This study is interested to assess how the social media have given the Tanzania publics a wide girth to freedom of expression on various issues of their concerns in the public as to raise their concerns without threats posed by regulatory authorities.

VI. METHODOLOGY

The study has employed content analysis where the social media content have been surveyed in the period of three years from November. Both *manifest* and *latent* content analysis have been employed – manifest for detecting the number of messages for (unit of analysis) and latent for understanding underlined deeper meanings of the themes (Stacks, 2011:121). Also the author has used purposive sampling method in selecting samples for the study. The author opted to study “*Framing the uses of social media in democratization process in Tanzania*” targeting on users’ freedom of expression in response to Framing theory and Harbermas *Public Opinion* theory. The purposively selected social media are: social networking sites - *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *Instagram* due to their popularity, the selected individuals are public figures in Tanzania who

are very popular in the mainstream and social media discussions especially on political matters in the country. *Zitto Kabwe* is party leader (ACT – Wazalendo) and Member of Parliament for Kigoma-Ujiji Municipality; *Mange Kimambi* is a free speech activist, and living in Los Angeles, California (USA) - she once tried to convince Tanzanians to demonstrate against the government in the Union Day (April 26, 2018); *January Makamba*, is the Minister responsible for the Environment and the Union, MP for Bumbuli Constituency, Desmond Tutu fellow, and WEF Young Global Leader – he had also contested for Presidential Candidate nominee for his Party (CCM) in the 2015 General Elections; and *Maria Sarungi-T'sehai*, an activist and communication expert who is the founder of #Change Tanzania. The news blogs include; *Jamii Forums*, *Swahili Times*, *Sauti Kubwa*, *Freddy Macha*, a Tanzania journalist-cum-musician based in London - he has about 14,000 visitors per day from 162 countries in the world, and *Issa Michuzi*, run by Muhidin Issa Michuzi, a seasoned photographer - his blog had more than 1.3 million visitors and it was ranked in the top ten leading blog in Africa in 2010; and political cartoonists – *Said Michael*, *Masoud Kipanya* who disseminate their works both in mainstream media and in social media. The duos are famous political cartoonists in Tanzania. The social media content analysis on what have been discussed and how the discussions have been handled has been taken from November, 2015 to October, 2018 – a three-year analysis. This has given a light to how social media platforms on how are they been used in fostering democratic processes by giving more girth to freedom of expression.

VII. FINDINGS

A. Social networking sites and their uses

Discussions from the selected profiles observe that social media frames in public discourse mostly are mostly initiated by the elite individuals or groups (architects) which aroused free marketing of ideas as echoed in Mikashavidze (2015) and Curtin and Gaither (2007:11).

S/N	Name	SNS	Posts	Following/Likes
1.	Zitto Kabwe Ruyagwa	<i>Face book</i>	-	324K (51.2%)
		<i>Twitter</i>	67K (15%)	797K (43.8%)
		<i>Instagram</i>	884 (19.2%)	608K (18.6%)
2.	Maria Sarungi-T'sehai	<i>Face book</i>	-	16K (2.5%)
		<i>Twitter</i>	332K (79%)	562K (37%)
		<i>Instagram</i>	2,655 (57.7%)	123K (3.7%)
3.	January Makamba	<i>Face book</i>	-	280K (44.3%)
		<i>Twitter</i>	18.4K (4.3%)	409K (22.5%)
		<i>Instagram</i>	366 (7.9%)	154K (4.7%)
4.	Mange Kimambi	<i>Face book</i>	-	12K (1.8%)
		<i>Twitter</i>	3.5K (0.8%)	47.6K (2.6%)
		<i>Instagram</i>	694 (15%)	2,300K (70.6%)

Table 1: Profiles of selected SNS Accounts

Source: Researcher, 2018

From the *table 1* (above) *Mange Kimambi* has emerged with many likes/followers with *Instagram*, while *Zitto Ruyagwa Kabwe* had many followers in *Face book* and

Twitter. Generally, everyone had good number of followers and posts in *Face book* followed by *Twitter*.

S/N	Name	SNS	Posts		
			Political	Non-political	Total
1.	Zitto Kabwe Ruyagwa	Face book	353 (95.9%)	15 (4.1%)	368
		Twitter	494 (98.8%)	6 (1.2%)	500
		Instagram	479 (95.8%)	21 (4.2%)	500
2.	Maria Sarungi-T'sehai	Face book	723 (86.7%)	110 (13.3%)	833
		Twitter	198 (99%)	2 (1%)	200
		Instagram	378 (94.5%)	22 (5.5%)	400
3.	January Makamba	Face book	86 (74.7%)	29 (23.3%)	115
		Twitter	102 (52%)	98 (48%)	200
		Instagram	10 (12.5%)	70 (87.5%)	80
4.	Mange Kimambi	Face book	190 (95%)	10 (5%)	200
		Twitter	196 (98%)	4 (2%)	200
		Instagram	237 (59.2%)	163 (40.8%)	400
Total			3,446 (86.2%)	550 (13.8%)	3,996

Table 2: Messages (posts) from the SNS Accounts

Source: Researcher, December (2018)

From all three SNS, the architects have shown differences in the number of messages posted for discussions witnessing: *Maria Sarungi-T'sehai* taking the lead by having the large chunk of all posts in *Face book*; *Zitto Kabwe Ruyagwa* leading in *Twitter* and *Instagram*; Moreover, on the orientation of the messages (posts) – political issues or non-political issues, *Zitto Kabwe Ruyagwa* had emerged with the most messages on politics generally in all the three social networking sites followed by *Maria Sarungi-T'sehai*. *Mange Kimambi* had most of posts in politics in *Instagram* than other architects. The situation was different to *January Makamba* who had the least messages (posts) on politics (*see the table 2 above*).

Scanning all the surveyed SNS, it is evident that discussions on day-to-day activities in the country have been engulfed by the lust to reach to a more democratic society by cherishing free flow of ideas from both horizontal and vertical pathways. With the aid of social media, people have been given the opportunity argue, criticize, appreciate, debate sometimes with anonymity. The most raised and covered issues are good governance, freedom expression and entertainment.

B. News Blogs (Web-blogs)

All the surveyed blogs have shown their messages framed towards political issues by allowing open discussions on democratization process.

S/N	Name	Political		Non-political
		+ve	-ve	
1.	<i>Jamii Forums</i>	162	792	146
2.	<i>Sauti Kubwa</i>	0	23	2
3.	<i>Swahili Times</i>	15	20	15
	<i>Freddy Macha</i>	10	16	14
4.	<i>Issa Michuzi</i>	121	2	77
Total (1,385 posts)		308	853	274

Table 3: Analysis of messages and their orientation through the surveyed blogs

Source: Researcher, 2018

As it can be seen from the *table 3* above, *Jamii Forums* has been very interactive than all other blogs where more critical argumentations on politics have been discussed while *Issa Michuzi*, who is a public servant allowed limited number of critics to the government and other government authorities.

C. Cartoonists

Most of their total posts (cartoons) surveyed (*sampled Instagram pages only*) from both political cartoonists, were framed on politics leaving very few on other discussions, such as sports and entertainment. Although their number of cartoons (posts) was limited, its impact was felt in arousing discussions on the same.

S/N	Name	Cartoon name	Posts	Politics			
				+ve	-ve	Others	
1.	Said Michael	<i>Wakudata</i>	20 (25%)	16 (80%)	11	5	4 (20%)
2.	Masoud Kipanya	<i>Kipanya</i>	60 (75%)	52 (86.6%)	45	7	8 (13.4%)
Total			80 (100%)	68 (85%)	56	12	12 (15%)

Table 4: Analysis of posts (cartoons) from selected cartoonists

Source: Researcher, 2018.

VIII. CHALLENGES FACING DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS

Despite being argued, tarnished, debated, criticized, hailed, and discussed as echoed by different stakeholders from international to local, leaders to normal citizens, politicians to academicians, the state of democratization of activities in the Tanzania is in a promising state, especially, as uses of new media is concerned in stimulating free marketing of ideas (Nyabuga and Ugangu, 2018; Loader and Mercea, 2012; Shivji, 2006; Norris, 2006). However, it is evident that there are some important areas to be observed as challenges as discussed by Shapiro and Page (2002). First, technologically - the professionals are still not capable of handling mass trainings to users at least to abide to some basic principles of respecting others' human rights while exercising their freedom of expression in the social media, since some cases have been observed on the development of extremism. There should not be the right to freedom of expression without observing social responsibility as aptly discussed by MCT (2010), Rioba (2008), and Pech, (2006). Secondly, the pieces of legislations available and those which are in pipeline to regulate freedom of expression through new media should be friendly to users after sharing with them on their essence as well as having a close look on the grey areas which may allow unnecessary and unwise discretionary powers from those who will be interpreting and implementing them. Level-playing field for internal and external *netizens* should be nurtured since under new media age geographical boundaries have been blurred (Dwivedi, et al., 2018). Thirdly, albeit the fair penetration of internet services, still its strength is not adequate for effective uses of social media for democratization. More investment can be attracted to this area to exploit the potential – in rural areas internet services in still in limbo.

IX. CONCLUSION

Uses of social media is growing everyday with the growing penetration of new media gadgets and services – spearheaded by improvement in the speed and efficacy of internet in most of developing countries like Tanzania. Back from the traditional communication - where communication was regarded as a way of life, to the multiparty democracy era, people had been lusting for more inclusive decision making in different matters pertaining their daily lives. It is observed that as among fundamental principles of human rights and a democratic society, free marketing of ideas has been living in the bloods and minds of every individual but the social structure has been framing them to abide to the agreed system. Under the digital era, where social media uses is not seen as a luxury but important means of communication, democratic processes have been taken into

heights without waiting for representatives of people to initiate discussions for them. Social media platforms such as *Jamii Forums* (the founder has been hailed in the AU meeting, November, 2018) have been breaking the normative gate-keeping system in communication – in accessing, processing, and disseminating information, the phenomenon which challenges the regulation process. This in fact is a blessing to the Public Opinion Theory as well as the oiling for democratization process. Due to the importance of information regulation, the government has been using different mechanism at least to slow the swift pace of the uses of new media in an attempt to control its negative effects to its people through establishing new pieces legislations and coercive measures through its organs without reaching the desired goals.

It is from this juncture, the authorities have been nabbing some abusers of social media uses and announce that the victims should be examples to shape others, the situation which seems to be not effective as expected provided the proper mechanism the handle the situation has not come in light yet. Moreover, some of citizens who are living abroad have been freer in exercising their freedom of expression than those who are within the country. *Sauti Kubwa* blogger – *Ansbert Ngurumo*, for example, who claimed to flee the country due to threats from the authorities, has been criticizing the government and government officers in the way that he could have not done so if he would have been in the country. The same is echoed by *Mange Kimambi*. The self-regulation system pioneered by MCT has been toothless to social media users as well, which in fact, raises concerns on the fate of media professionalism with the highly growth of *netizens* as coined by Jurrat, (2011).

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