The Impact of Tribal Politics on Public Passion to Digital Trade in Current Ethiopia

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Abstract

Ethiopia, a country once denoted as the cradle of mankind with a civilization of over 3000 years (Williams, 1997), is now at the threshold of disintegration (Leta, 1999). Since the prejudiced exclusionary tribal political ideology, which was authored and delivered by TPLF (Tigray Liberation Front), has come to the show in 1991 (Hagman, 2013), the country has jolted into recurrent political turmoil and instability (Abbink, 2011). Following this, the passion and agility of citizens to digital trade has been distressed, paving the way to the threat of a potential digital divide. This article examines the impact of the practice of this political ideology on public passion for digital trade, and if this impact leads to the prevalence of digital divide in the country. To this end, a comprehensive analysis is made on the data gathered thru a questionnaire from a sample size that contains 45 informants. GPower and SPSS have been used to determine the sample size population and analyze the data gathered therefrom. The finding exhibits that the xenophobic tribal political ideology has a significant impact the craving public passion to digital trade, signifying the imminent of the manifestation of digital divide.

Key words – Digital marketing, digital divide, and a xenophobic exclusionary political ideology.

I. Introduction

African countries have already observed the act of politically mobilizing the public on the basis of ethnicity as a somber threat (Lovise, 2011). Hence, the use of ethnic differences as an explicit basis for political representation has been overruled by the bulk of these countries (Deng, 1997). Nonetheless, Ethiopia, since 1991, has imposed a system of ethnic-based federalism that offers each ethnic group the right of self-determination (Turton, 2005). The current political canon, in the country, has put in place a legal framework in the form of constitution that fragmented the country into ten regional states on the basis of the ethnic sketches of the residents (Mamdani, 2019).

This research examines whether the practice of such political creed impacts public passion for digital trade likely paving the way for the prevalence of digital divide. The finding designates that this top-down imposed political creed which is still underway in Ethiopia has caused a significant impact on public passion towards digital trade, which in turn is clearing the scrub for digital rift splitting the country from the rest of the world. The research is sorted out into five parts. First, we have a brief overview of the study covering the statement of the problem, the purpose, hypothesis, significance, scope and limitation of the study. The second part reviews pertinent literatures around the research topic. Then, the third part reflects on the methodology used to conduct the study. The fourth and the fifth parts, on the other hand, discuss and conclude the findings of the study, respectively.

1.1. Statement of the problem

Some researchers underscore the fact that, prejudiced exclusionary tribal political ideology has led Ethiopia into autochthonous socioeconomic disputes which sharpened the inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic divides (Aden, 2012) and (Turton, 2005). Ensuing the practice of such a political creed, round of protests have been blowing

up in the country at various times and places (Abdu, 2019). Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, have been expansively used in inciting, agitating and galvanizing citizens to contest the system (Feigenbaum, 2018). Thus, the government took social media utterly as a fostering factory of the chaos, and therefore, it started the practice of shutting down the internet (Ethiopia: Communications Shutdown Takes Heavy Toll, 2020), sternly upsetting the public passion for digital trade.

What's more, the régime neither gives the impression to invest any better on the expansion of ICT in a sufficient manner, nor does it permit the private sector to put hands in the field (Latif, 2017). Instead, it persistently continued to suppress the sector and become politically hostile to internet users (Ambaye, 2019), (Ademo, 2012), and (Abdu, 2019). Internet shutdowns and turning anti-terror laws against internet users has become a routine government practice (Mumo, 2019). This, in consequence, has suggestively clutched the public passion to do online business on the internet, flagging digital divide down the road.

1.2. Purpose of the research

The purpose of this is to find out the impact of the said political ideology on public passion for digital trade. It also looks into the possibility of the prevalence of digital divide due to the impact. The finding is hoped to help concerned stakeholders to take educated decisions in due time before things sail away out of hands.

1.3. Hypothesis of the research

Given the political situation of the current Ethiopia, this research assumes that the practice of prejudiced exclusionary tribal political ideology, imposed top-down by politicians, would extensively impede public passion towards digital trade, and down the road, it subjects the country to the risk of digital divide.

1.4. Significance of the research

The ability to access computers and the internet has become increasingly important to completely immerse oneself in the economic, political, and social aspects of life (Digital Divide, 2020). Yet, the degree to which people have access to the internet is causing major apartheid and segregation across the world (WADDELL, 2016). Analysis of ICT use among countries depicts enormous variation displaying the pivotal role of the internet in everyday life (Rrostcki, 2020). As (Warshauer, 2019), (Cisler, 2001) and (Schmutzer, 2001) have indicated, most of the researches that have been conducted on factors that could lead to the birth of the digital divide, differences in income and literacy are identified as the most significant contributors.

Apart from explaining the effect of the racial insights on access to the internet, at least to the knowledge of the researcher, there is no scientific study that explains how xenophobic exclusionary tribal political ideology affect the public passion to digital trade paving the way to the threat of digital divide. The paucity of precise studies in the area by itself would mark the significance of the research great. Also, as an eye opener, it might trigger others to do a more comprehensive research in the area. Moreover, by sending a signal about the danger of running such a top-down imposed exclusionary political tribal ideology to the future of the Ethiopia, the research would be of a great importance locally to the political party currently in the office and all other active parties in the country.

1.5. Scope and limitation of the research

Digital divide is quite an all-embracing kind of a subject matter (Subramony, 2007). It clinches various topics and perspectives. Hence, it can be studied from various perceptions and versions (Srinuan, 2011) and (Chen, 2010). For instance, some researches such as (Kasusse, 2005), (Klecun, 2008), and (James, 2004) have intensely devoted themselves to the observation of the divide on the basis of the physical access that people may have to personal computers and the internet among demographical categories. Other researcher are more interested on displaying the growing gaps of access between people with high and low income (McSorley, 2003).

Some viewed the issue from the gap that was created as a result of the prospect different people have towards modern education (Norris, 2001). Still are some who gave due focus on the motivational admittance people have to use the internet. According to them certain group of society don't want to use internet simply because of their preferences and predispositions (Jadrić, 2009). The scope of this particular study, however, is limited

only to the digital divide which could occur as an aftermath of the xenophobic exclusionary political tribal ideology imposed on the citizens of Ethiopia affecting their passion to digital trade.

II. Review of related literature

Digital divide is conceivably a profound equivocal term (Gunkel, 2003). Based on the idea it might designate, quite a range of implications. At times, it could suggest a plain border between two patently divided groups with a sound gap among them (KUMAR, 2019), a gap that has to do with skills caused by passions to ICT, cultural perspectives, and/or other social dogmas which includes but not limited to political ideologies and perspectives (Park, 2018). It could also indicate a sort of generational divide in digital awareness (Akl, 2014). According to (Klein, 2014) technological innovation is reshaping the world and putting new tools in the hands of people everywhere. Nonetheless, technology for some older demographics is a source of fear and insecurity (SMITH, 2014). They seem to be late adopters to the world of technology compared to their younger compatriots, at times even getting cut off from the arena (RAINIE, 2018).

What's more, digital divide could also signify the difference between individuals with and without access to technology (Suzuki, 2015), a sort of absolute inequalities. According to (van Dijk, 2002) most of such inequalities in the access to digital technology are more of a relative kind and can easily be worked out if there is the will to reverse it. However, in all cases people that do not use digital technology are missing many opportunities (Lentz, 2002). If proper attention is not given to them before it is too late to fill the gap, they even might be totally excluded from future society (van Dijk, 2002). In fact, it still has to be demonstrated that such people cannot live as normal citizens in current modern society without using digital technology (ABELOW, 2020).

According to (Dijk, 2018) digital divide could occur due to a sort of segregating, partial and prejudicial political ideologies. The current Ethiopia is one of the countries which exercises such political creeds as a directorial principle (Amanda Onion, 1991), ever since the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to office after toppling the Derg military junta in 1991 (Getachew, 2019). The regime has distorted the stable centralized government into nine fragmented federal states (Taye, 2019). It did this by introducing jingoistic exclusive political thought and dichotomizing citizens according to their respective ethnic profiles (Gebreluel, 2019). In other words, as in the Soviet Union, every piece of land in Ethiopia was inscribed as the ethnic homeland of a particular group, constitutionally dividing the population into a permanent majority alongside permanent minorities with little stake in the system.

The advent of ethnic federalism that politicized tribal identity has produced both intended and unintended outcomes. While arguably easing large-scale ethnic conflicts, it has led to local socioeconomic disputes and to sharper inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic divides, often to the disadvantage of historically marginalized groups (Lovise, The politics of ethnicity in Ethiopia: Actors. power and mobilisation under ethnic federalism, 2011). Hence, in reaction to the outcome of such an identity based exclusive politics round of protests have started erupting here and there all over the nation (Abdu, 2019). Using certain social media such as Twitter and Facebook political activists from around the world callously persisted inciting and galvanizing protestors to upheaval the rule (Kelecha, 2018). Such media lived beyond the country's restrictive censorship and were instrumental to changing the country's political tyranny (Feigenbaum, 2018).

Bay and large, violence and protest started to break out everywhere remonstrating against the ruling party demanding social justice, political reforms, and the rule of law (LAROK, 2019). Using social media, political activists from around the world callously persisted inciting and galvanizing protestors to upheaval the rule (Kelecha, 2018). In return, the regime state has singled out social media as being a key factor in driving the unrest now gripping the country (Paul S. , 2016), (Ethiopia imposes state of emergency as unrest intensifies, 2016) and (Diffrent, 2017). To slow down the political turmoil, media was being cut off by the sitting regime (Feigenbaum, 2018). What's more, it persistently blocked internet across the nation (Ambaye, 2019), (Ademo, 2012), and (Abdu, 2019).

Thus, the government doesn't seem to give the impression to invest any better on the expansion of internet and digitalization across the nation (Latif, 2017) and (Economics, 2019). According to some sources, it

doesn't either allocate adequate budget in the field (Evans, 2012), or inspire private investors to get into the area. Instead, it keeps them away from investing in ICT by discouraging them with shortage of hard currency and too much taxation (ESAT, 2017). On the top of all these, implementation of a continuous internet shutdowns by the government (Admin, 2019), and the state monopoly of the ICT industry (Aden, 2012) might drive the country to vanish into the sands of digital divide.

III. Methodology

Research is a systematic investigation into a problem, where the intention is to identify facts that will assist in solving the problem (Wineman, 2018). To this end, sufficient data has been collected from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia thru a questionnaire. The sample size was determined using a t-test for means difference form consistent (one sample case) on GPower with a default effect size d of 0.5, error probability of 0.05, and a power of 0.95. As shown in Chart 3.1. below, the sampling distribution denoted by a dotted blue line, while the population distribution by a solid red line. A red shaded area delineating the probability of a type 1 error, a blue area the type 2 error, and a pair of green lines demarcating the critical points t are evidently marked.

Chart 3.1: Sample size

To test the hypothesis of this research at the default none certainty parameter of 3.3541020, circuit t of 1.6802300, Df of 44, significance level of 0.05, and actual power of 0.9512400, GPower endorsed a total sample size of 45 informants. Though, these informants were designated randomly, in order to achieve a quality data, certain qualifying criteria were set for them to join the research. First, they had to be 25 to 65 years of age. Second, they must have at least first degree in any field of study from locally recognized college or university. Finally, they should have average or more passion for digital trade.

Altogether, there are a total of 15 questions in the questionnaire. The first eight questions are meant to collect basic demographic information about informants such as age, gender, religion, occupation, and level of education. The following question is about passions of the informants for digital trade. Then, we have some more questions asking about the impact of the tribal political ideology on public passion for digital trade. The last few questions focus on the prospects of the prevalence of digital divide in the country. Apart from the questionnaire, focused group discussions have also been conducted with the some of the informants selected on a random basis. The outcome has helped the research to better understand the intents and thoughts of the informants and draw inferences that comprehends same.

For the purpose of analyzing the data which includes the process of filtering, organizing, and interpreting of data to discover useful statistics (Khan, 2019), GPower and SPSS have been used. As a matter of fact, both Kendall's tau-b (τ_b) and Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient used to find out the significance of the data collected and make inferences about the finding of the study.

What's more one-sample chi square test is used to confirm what the informants think with regard to the potential occurrence of digital divide resulting from depressed public passion to digital trade. Finally, based on the analysis of the data, findings have been conferred using pertinent and valid discourses in due details.

IV. Discussion and finding

Two key topics are enclosed under this section. First, there is an ephemeral analysis on the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample population. Next, we have a sort of assessment that deliberates on the impact of xenophobic exclusionary tribal political ideology on public passion to digital trade. Last of all, we have a brief discussion that unveils if digital divide is foreseeable threat to Ethiopia, given the current political atmosphere continues to prevail.

4.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of sample population

Socio-demographic data helps to understand the characteristics of a population (Shelat, 2013). It is imperative to find out the representativeness of the sample size (Singh, 2019). The sample population size suggested by GPower for this particular study is 45. The size defines a total of 24 female 24 (53.3%) and 21 (45.7%) male informants. The mean, median and mode of the age of the informants are 39.51, 36.00, and 36, in order. The minimum age is 25 while the max is 64. The standard deviation, which computes to be 11.612, indicates the fact that most of the informants are between the age of 29 -39.

Religious affiliation is one of the important factor shaping the social landscape of any given country (SMITH A. C., 2016). Though, there are people who tend not to be religious at all, or believe in certain rituals, or practices, according to the UNHCR 2007 report, Muslims and Christians make the great majority of the Ethiopia population (2007 Report on International Religious Freedom - Ethiopia, 2007). In this particular sample size, 55.6% of the population represent Muslims while the outstanding 44.4% are Christians. As a matter of fact, there is no any other informant signifying afflation to other religion, ritual or social practice, participating in this research.

Marital status has also been found to influence social recognition and acceptance. Some research indicate the fact that married people are more accepted and regarded in a society than other people with any other marital status, such as single, divorced, or widowed (Gjonça, 2007). This particular research, however, consists of people from four categories of marital status, 12 (26.7%) singles, 24 (53.3%) married, 8 (17.8%) divorced, and 1 (2.2%) widowed. The fact that the number of the married couples outnumber all combined, is a matter of coincidence. It was not made deliberately to get hold of socially sound people in terms of marital status.

Often, there are a sort of differences in opinion between respondents with diverse educational levels. As a matter of fact, all of the informants in this research are graduates from locally recognized universities. The total number of informants that have first degree is 21 (46.7%). Second and third degree holders, on the other hand, are 18 (40%), and 6 (13.3%), respectively. Coming to occupation, 2 (4.4%) and 10 (22.2%) are students and self-employed, while 12 (26.7%) work for the private sector. The remaining 16 (35.6%) and 5 (11.1%) people work for the government and non-government organizations, correspondingly. The sheer size of the government workforce might tell a little about the prejudicial nature of the régime and the depth and size of its bureaucracy. The bloated federal payrolls doesn't seem to be a good indication for the predominance of economic justice among stakeholder.

4.2. Impact of exclusionary tribal politics on public passion to digital trade

The digital world has already become a crucial component of contemporary politics (Howard, 2005). In some developed countries such as USA politicians use the digital technologies to raise money, organize volunteers, and do opposition research. On the contrary, in certain developing countries, such as Ethiopia the digital prospective seems to be under a recurrent embargo (Tronvoll, 2019), which, in turn, has resumed paving the gate for digital divide by suppressing public passion towards practicing digital trade.

To find out if the association between public passion to digital trade and the impact of tribal politics, a nonparametric Kendall's tau-b (τ_b) correlation coefficient has been applied using SPSS. As can be seen below the Kendall's tau-b correlation coefficient, τ_b , is 0.095, and that this is statistically significant ($p = 0.484$).

To double check the outcome of the research, Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient has also been executed. As can be seen below, the correlations are replicated. In this finding, we can see that Spearman's correlation coefficient, r_s , is 0.107, and that this is statistically significant ($p = .484$).

Table 4.1. Correlations

			Your passion for digital trade.	Impact of ethnic politics.
Kendall's tau_b	Your passion for digital trade.	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.095
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.484
		N	45	45
	Impact of ethnic politics.	Correlation Coefficient	.095	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.484	.
		N	45	45
Spearman's rho	Your passion for digital trade.	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.107
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.486
		N	45	45
	Impact of ethnic politics.	Correlation Coefficient	.107	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.486	.
		N	45	45

4.3. Is digital divide inevitable?

A question was asked to get hold of the thoughts of the informants on whether or not digital divide would be a perspective threat to Ethiopia given the tribal politics would remain in force as much as it has been thus far. As seen below in the output of the SPSS form one sample chi-square test of a single population, the Observed response for "Yes" is 29 while for "No" and "Not Sure" were, 11 and 5, respectively. The Expected return of each one of the categories was 15. What's more, asymptotic significance are displayed. The significance level is 0.05.

4.2. One-sample Chi-Square test

	Given the ethnic based politics would continue, will digital divide be a threat?
Chi-Square	20.800 ^a
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 15.0.

The value of the chi-square is 20.800^a. The probability of getting that chi-square if the null hypothesis was true is 0. This underscore the fact that, this data is well far from incidental happening. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and by so doing, the probability for the prevalence of digital divide seems to be foreseeable.

5. Conclusion and recommendation

Both Kendall's tau-b (τ_b) and Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient display a positive correlation between public passion to digital trade and impact of exclusionary tribal politics, which was statistically significant ($\tau_b = .095$, $p = .484$), and ($r_s(8) = .669$, $p = .035$), respectively.

The one-sample chi square test also confirms the fact that 29 (64.44%) of the informants think the fact that digital divide is a matter of time unless otherwise, the government reverse the gears of its politics to include all impartially honoring the rights of the individual as a citizen while equally acknowledging and respecting all other rights.

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