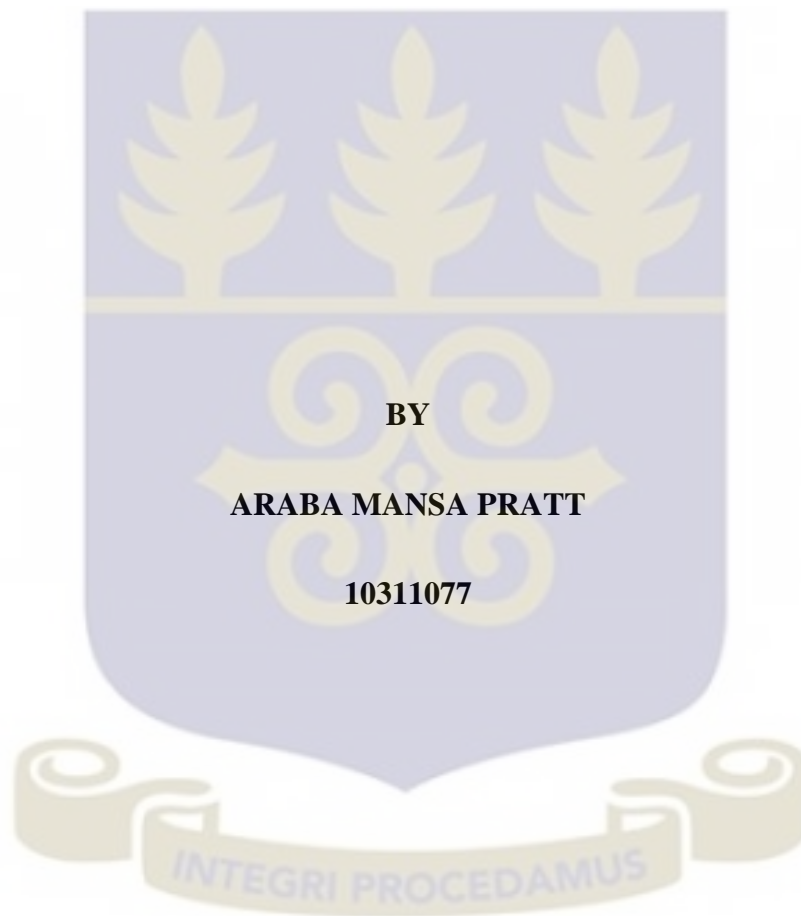


**SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL ACTIVISM: A STUDY OF THE “OCCUPY  
FLAGSTAFF HOUSE MOVEMENT” (OFSHM)**



**BY**

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**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN  
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A  
MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES DEGREE**

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## DECLARATION

With the exception of the quoted references and acknowledged sources, I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own work conducted at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon. The research was written under the supervision of Dr. Gilbert Tietaah.



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Date.....

Date.....

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to the almighty God and to my wonderful family especially my parents.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

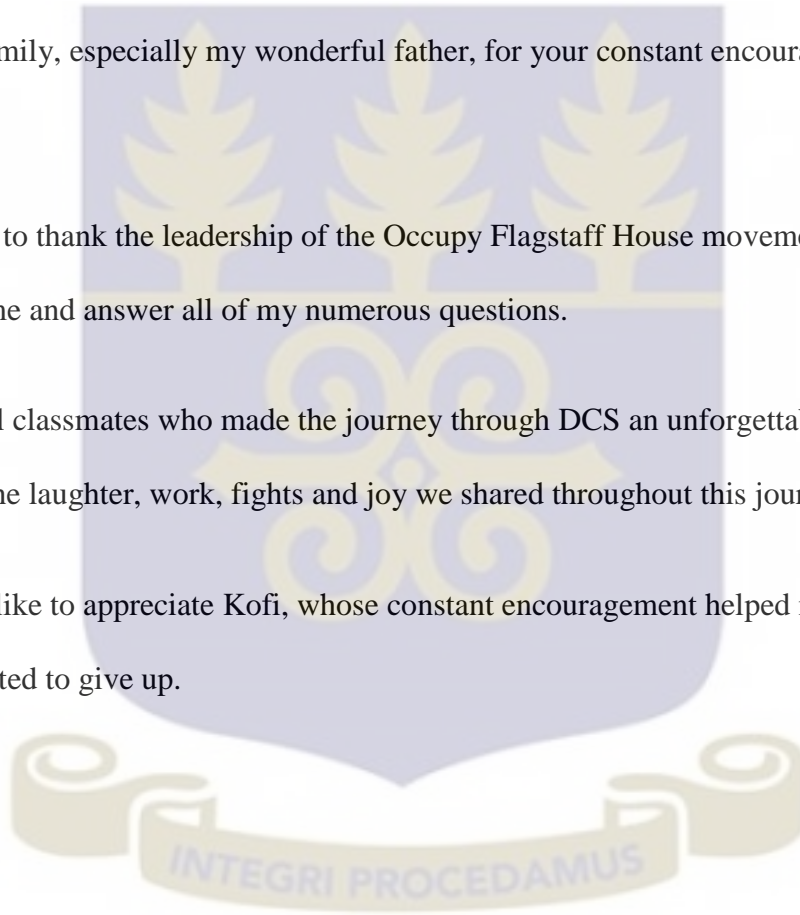
To God be the glory great things he has done! I am grateful to the almighty God for his grace which enabled me complete this programme successfully.

Also my heartfelt gratitude goes to Dr Etse Sikanku, whose guidance helped me in the realisation of this study. May the good Lord replenish every virtue that has gone out of you. I am forever grateful to my family, especially my wonderful father, for your constant encouragement, prayers and support.

I would also like to thank the leadership of the Occupy Flagstaff House movement for taking the time to sit with me and answer all of my numerous questions.

To my wonderful classmates who made the journey through DCS an unforgettable one. I will forever cherish the laughter, work, fights and joy we shared throughout this journey.

Finally, I would like to appreciate Kofi, whose constant encouragement helped me stay on track even when I wanted to give up.



## ABSTRACT

This study examined how social media is used as a tool for social activism by the Occupy Flagstaff House Movement. Underpinned by the theories of technological determinism and the social network theory, the researcher interviewed three members of the leadership of Occupy Flagstaff House Movement and conducted a quantitative content analysis of the messages sent out by the movement on the social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter.

The study established that the primary reasons why Occupy Flagstaff House Movement used social media were its effectiveness and efficiency, relatively low costs, and the ability of social media to help them reach and interact with their target audiences. The study also found out that internet connectivity and duplication of their pages were some challenges the movement faced in using social media platforms.

The study found out that the predominant function of the messages sent out by the leadership of Occupy Flagstaff House on their Facebook page was mobilisation, followed by information. Conversation and coordination were the least predominant functions of the posts. For their Twitter account, conversation was the most predominant function performed by the messages Occupy Flagstaff House Movement sent out followed by information. Mobilisation and coordination were the least predominant functions of the posts on Twitter.

This study will contribute to the understanding of social media and activism in an emerging democracy such as Ghana.

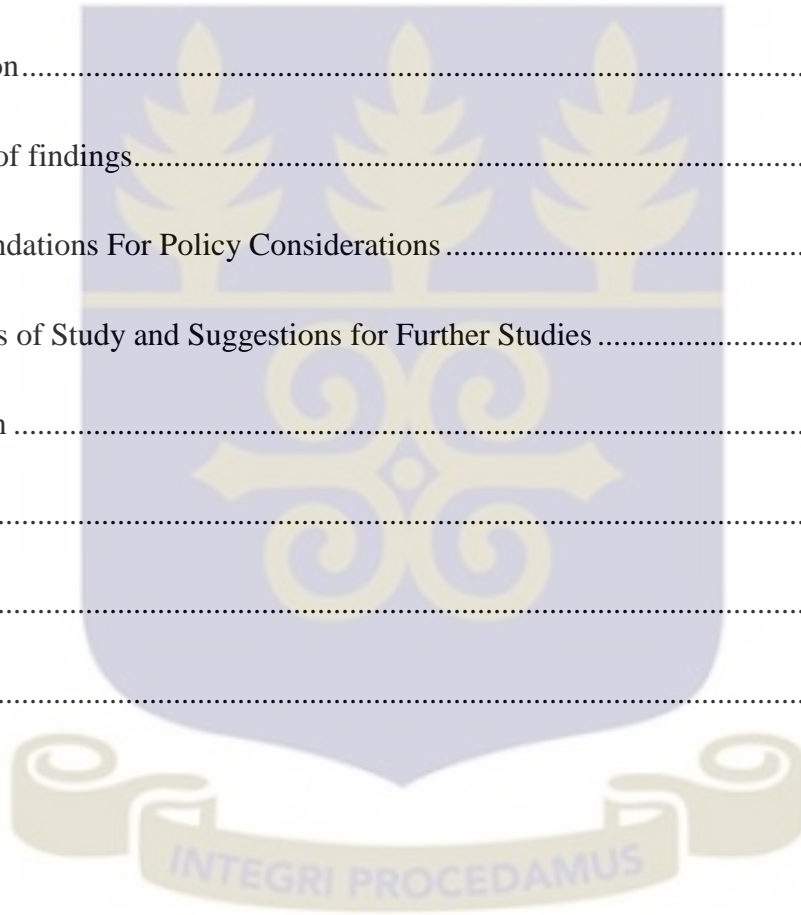
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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0 Background of study

This study seeks to investigate social media use as a tool for social activism. It investigates why using social media is a vital part of Occupy Flagstaff House Movement's communications during their campaigns and the functions of messages sent out by their social media platforms. This chapter serves as an introduction and presents a research background, research problem, purpose of research, objectives of the study, research questions, research significance, and the organization of the study.

Social media has emerged as one of the most recent tools reshaping activism globally (Sheedy, 2011). The subject of social media, democratic participation and activism has continued to be a subject of increasing importance within democracies worldwide (Small, 2011).

According to Antony Mayfield (2008), social media is a group of recent kinds of online media which have similar characteristics such as participation, openness, conversation, community and connectedness. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) also refer to social media as a collection of internet-based applications which started from the conceptual and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that grant the creation and exchange of user generated content. According to Mayfield (2008), there are six main types of social media: social networks for example Facebook and My Space; blogs; wikis for example Wikipedia; podcasts, for example Apple iTunes; forums; content communities for example Flickr and YouTube; micro blogging for example Twitter.

Social media has emerged as the fastest-growing part of the media sector (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). The most common uses of social media according to Nielsen (2012) are, ‘catching up with friends or family’, photo or video sharing, finding information on news and current affairs, coordinating shared activities. Other uses include, research products or services and following brands and businesses. Technological advancements throughout the years have changed and continue to change how certain activities are carried out, including social and political activism (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014).

Social media a trend which is changing the face of activism the world over (Sheedy, 2011). According to the Nielsen Social Media Report (2012), about fifty-nine thousand people log into their blogs, about one hundred and fifty three thousand people access their Facebook accounts, and over thirty-eight thousand people log in to twitter on a daily basis in the United States of America. The 2014 report of an annual survey of how individuals and organisations in Australia use social media channels found that 69% of Australians were using social media. On the average, over one hundred million videos were watched on YouTube daily and there were over one hundred and twenty-five million users of the popular social networking site, Facebook, which maintained its dominance of the social media terrain, with 95% of social media users on the platform (Yellow Social Media Report 2014). This has the potential to increase opportunities for expression and participation especially in governance. According to Ugandan political scientist George Okiror (2011), one of the key elements of a democratic government is the participation of its citizens in the processes of government. For instance the Ministry of Interior for the government of Ghana has an official Facebook page where disseminates information about the ministry’s activities and interacts with citizens. Globally social media affords the public the opportunity to participate in public discourse and deliberation through the power of technology.

Citizen participation and political protests have long been a major feature of democratic societies and this dissertation afforded the opportunity to investigate how a growing technological medium is working within a growing democracy such as Ghana's.

### **1.1 Internet and Social media use in Africa**

In Africa, as of 30th June 2014, 297,885,898 people used the internet on a daily basis representing 26.5% of the entire population of Africa. Additionally, as of 31st December 2012, 51,612,460 people had active Facebook accounts, representing 9.8% of the internet users in Africa, ([www.internetworldstats.com](http://www.internetworldstats.com)).

In Ghana, as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2000, there were about 30,000 people using the internet actively. However, this number has increased significantly as 5,171,993 people are actively using the internet as of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014 ([www.internetworldstats.com](http://www.internetworldstats.com)). The number of active Facebook users has also risen to 1,630,420 as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012. According to the 2013 Alexa Index Report, Facebook is ranked as the most visited website in Ghana with Twitter in the top 20.

With the introduction of smart phones and other devices, plummeting costs of computers and data charges, more people are connecting to social media via the internet for their media needs (Tarrow, 2005). As more people become technologically savvy and intensify their use of social media, several applications of social media emerge.

Social media sites have become more popular and have been used to share information on topical issues or being used to organise people for a particular purpose. A major use of social media sites is social networking which Li and Bernoff (2012, p. 4) describe as a “social trend in which people use technologies to get the things they need from each other, rather than from traditional

institutions like corporations.” Due to the surge in social media usage, social activists have increasingly become aware of the potential of social media to raise awareness about certain issues, mobilise people to take action for a particular cause and have devised various means to harness its potential to advance their respective causes. In Ghana, social activists have introduced online activism via social media as a means of galvanising support for their causes.

## 1.2 Activism

According to Keck and Sikkink (2014), activism is perceived as an assembly of people coming together to achieve a common goal. Margaret Mead as cited in Jamison and Eyerman (1994, p. 68) said, “Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Activism can take many forms and can occur in numerous economic, political, social and work situations. According to Bennett et al. (2004) activism can take the form of direct action undertaking civil disobedience, protests, occupations, campaigning, boycotts and demonstrations through to more conventional activism such as lobbying, writing letters, internet activism, petitions and attending meetings. Another example which comes readily to mind is the use of Facebook and twitter to mobilise people in the Arab Spring which led to significant political and social changes (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014).

### 1.2.1 Occupy Movement.

The Occupy Movement started in September 2011 as a protest against economic injustice, drawing participants and attention through word-of-mouth, mainstream media, live-streaming, social networking services, websites, and wikis (Costanza-Chock, 2012). According to Gamson and Sifry (2013) the initial call to action came from the Canadian alternative magazine *Adbusters*. The first Occupy protest to obtain extensive reportage was the Occupy Wall Street in New York City’s

Zuccotti Park. The protests which began on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2011 and continued till 9<sup>th</sup> October, sparked off several other protests in over 951 cities in over 82 countries across the world (Adam, 2011). There was scarcely mainstream media reportage of the initial protests and it was only after the first cities began reporting on how their occupations were continuing that mainstream media coverage increased (Gamson & Sifry, 2013). According to Massey and Snyder (2012) participants imitated tactics from Quaker meetings, prevalent Latin American assemblies, Spanish acampados and other manners of protest and political organisation. They also introduced a new concept to the western democratic tradition which was forming a polity as a group of speaking bodies gathered in a central public place.

### 1.2.2 Social Activism and Social Media

Various protest movements such as the Occupy Wall Street in the United States of America, the Indignados movement in Spain and the Aganaktismenoi in Greece have employed the use of social media in communicating with and mobilising people for protest activities (Theocharisa, Loweb, Dethc, & García, 2015). A mutual underlying theme in these mobilisations has been the use of digital media to communicate, organise and coordinate protest activities among individuals, groups and societies (Theocharisa et al., 2015). Various scholars have highlighted the role of information technologies for social change, particularly, its ability to facilitate democratic governance (Sheedy, 2011). According to Tremlett (2012) as cited in (Theocharisa et al., 2015) protestors in the indignados movement engaged in door knocking, canvassing, organizing local initiatives whiles smaller groups set up co-operatives and stopped banks from repossessing homes.

According to Tsaliki (2010) the Greek Aganaktismenoi movement invited everyone to open deliberations and argued that they advocated direct democracy methods in an ‘ancient agora’ fashion in the capital’s central square.

The Arab Spring is another example of social activism which employed the use of social media. According to Tufekci and Wilson (2012) the internet in Egypt was used for opposition by dissention by those opposed to the Mubarak regime. The political sphere started in the beginning in the form of blogs and personal sites then later on social networking sites as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. The emergence of Facebook in Arabic augmented the dissension process as citizen journalists and online activists increased political content online by revealing poverty, corruption and human right abuses. (ibid).

Throughout the protests, a small but technologically savvy group of protestors generated information on the happenings at Tahrir Square in real time and disseminated information and videos via social networking sites (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012).

There was initially a disseminated campaign then later a protest date was set and an invitation was posted on a popular Facebook page “ We Are All Khaled Saed”(Khamis & Vaughn, 2011).

In Ghana, a social activist group that is using social media to coordinate its activities and generate awareness is The Concerned Ghanaians for Responsible Governance a non-partisan group which organised a movement known as the Occupy Flagstaff House Movement. This is a protest in Ghana which began on the social networking platforms, Facebook and Twitter with the hash tags as *#occupyflagstaffhouse* or *#occupyflagstaff*, and took to the streets on July 1, 2014 at the Efua Sutherland Children’s Park in Accra where a demonstration was staged by some Ghanaians to

make known their complaints. Protesters walked to The Flagstaff House which is the seat of governance, to present their petition to Ghana's president John Dramani Mahama. Their request was to ask the government to resolve corruption, infrastructure decay, deteriorating economy, and the declining economic conditions in the country. This research will seek to investigate how the organisers of Occupy Flagstaff house used social media to advocate for change and create the awareness that citizens have a right to demand better governance from their elected leaders.

### **1.3 Occupy Flagstaff House Movement**

#### 1.3.1 History Of the Occupy Flagstaff House Movement

The Occupy Flagstaff House Movement is a movement which was initially started by the Concerned Ghanaians for Responsible Governance group. This group is non-partisan and was initially made up of six young Ghanaians who were friends on Facebook who came together to petition the government of Ghana to alleviate the worsening economic situation in Ghana. The initial six thought to organise a protest to petition the president of Ghana, Mr John Dramani Mahama, to solve the challenges of corruption and the deteriorating economic conditions of the country. According to Rodney Longdon, a founding member of the Occupy Flagstaff House Movement when interviewed by the researcher on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August 2015 said,

“It was a bunch of people complaining about, the Ghana we live in today, the uselessness of the president and his government, so people independently saying their own thing lamenting every day and then it gets to a point and then we ask ourselves why do we wake up in the morning and get on Facebook or Twitter and make all that noise and then after that we close our phones and laptops after that

and go back to bed and the following day we wake up and continue again? We need to move it from that space to the physical space itself.

The group of friends then formed a group known as the ‘Concerned Ghanaians for Responsible Governance’ and then decided to take action and move the conversations and protests from the virtual world of social media to the physical space and organise a protest to petition the president of Ghana.

The leadership of the movement organised a peaceful protest on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 2014, after a few misgivings by the Ghana police and conveyed with their supporters at the Efua Sutherland Park in the heart of Accra, the capital city of Ghana. They marched through some principal streets of Accra to the Flagstaff House which is the seat of governance and serves as the residence and office of the president of Ghana. According to Rodney Longdon, after the successful organisation of the Occupy Flagstaff House protest, several other people joined the group which then metamorphosed into Occupy Ghana. However some of the ideals of the new group were not in conformity with some of the initial members and most of them decided to break away to form a different group which is known as the Citizen Ghana Movement.

### 1.3.2 Changes The Group Has Undergone.

The Occupy Flagstaff House Movement was organised by the Concerned Ghanaians for Responsible Governance group. This group, after the protest on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2014, reorganised itself into the Occupy Ghana Group to cater for some changes in the ideology of the group and the introduction of some new key members. The rebranded group was more political in nature, engaged in more activities such as lobbying and organising public forums and had more officers

than the initial group which organised the Occupy Flagstaff Movement. These changes however did not sit well with some of the initial founders of the group and five of the initial six founding members on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2014 broke away to form a new group which is known as the Citizen Ghana Movement.

### 1.3.3 Citizen Ghana Movement (CGM)

CGM previously known as the Occupy Flagstaff House Movement is a socio-political, non-partisan, system of citizens who are passionate and concerned about promoting good governance in Ghana. They believe that the interest of the country should be paramount in all situations and membership of the group is open to all Ghanaians of various backgrounds and political affiliations according to the “about us” section of the group on the social media platform Facebook.

CGM is dedicated to holding themselves, communities, government and all public institutions and officials answerable and are also prepared to work diligently to uncover and combat corruption in the society. Citizen Ghana is concerned with changing mindsets and developing new attitudes focused on justice for all and a strong passion to see Ghana achieve its full potential.

According to an informational flyer about the group, some of their principles and ideals include patriotism, citizen-oriented, non-partisan, social justice and accountability and advocacy for good governance. CGM acknowledges that governance is a social contract between the ruler and the ruled and that democracy is pointless unless it positively influences the lives of people.

Ways through which CGM achieves their goals are by rallying citizens for national development, supporting the rule of law and human rights, encouraging civic engagement towards re-awakening

a national awareness and educating citizens on their civic responsibility to challenge the status quo, to take action in the national interest.

They also engage in public discussions and active media engagement. Courtroom advocacy and exercising their constitutional Right of Assembly (protests, picketing, demonstrations) are other methods.

#### **1.4 Statement of Problem**

Technological advancements have caused an increase in the use of social media among people in general (Ibrahim, 2013). In Ghana, advancements in broadband services, infrastructural improvement and the falling cost of data have contributed to more people being able to access social media sites (biztechafrica.com).

This increase in the patronage of social media has led to an increase in social activism with many people realising that they can connect with other like-minded individuals to bring about positive change in their lives. Social activists having realised the potential of social media platforms to reach larger audiences to propagate their messages and request people to join or support their cause are engaging in online activism (Lim, 2012).

However because social media usage is a recent phenomenon in Ghana, not much research has been done in this field to ascertain the efficacy of political activism via social media sites.

In recent times, a number of protests and activities have taken place in Ghana in which the organisers have utilized social media platforms to generate interest in the causes. An example of

such a protest is the “Dumsor must stop” protest organised by popular Ghanaian actress, Yvonne Nelson to protest the erratic power supply in the country.

Researchers have debated on usefulness of social media as a means of social and political activism with some, notably Badger (2011: 16), arguing that the use of social media may be encouraging a form of “slacktivism” or “clicktivism” instead of activism, and it does a little more than endorse “weak ties,” which can cause a million people to ‘like’ a Facebook but fail to mobilize a thousand people in the street to actually effect change. However, some researchers have also lauded social media as an important tool for citizens to engage in political activism and may even argue that it is changing the face of political activism (Yang 2009). Considering the lack of consensus therefore, and given that there was no parallel empirical evidence on Ghana, this research sought to explore these contentions in the Ghanaian context.

Despite this increasing use of social media for social activism, there is limited research on this phenomenon in the Ghanaian context. This research fills an important gap in the literature by aiming to provide an insight to how social media is used for social activism in the Ghanaian context.

### **1.5 Objectives**

The general objective of the research is to explore how the Occupy Flagstaff House Movement used social media platforms as tools for social activism.

The specific objectives include the following:

1. To determine why Occupy Flagstaff House Movement employed the use of social media platforms.
2. To explore the functions of the messages posted by Occupy Flagstaff House Movement on their social media platforms.
3. To discover the opportunities and challenges faced by Occupy Flagstaff House Movement using social media during their campaigns.

### **1.6 Research Questions**

The study investigated the following questions:

1. Why does OFSHM employ the use of social media platforms in their campaigns?
2. What are the functions of the messages posted by OFSHM on the social media platforms?
3. What kinds of people do OFSHM target in the use of social media in their campaigns?

### **1.7 Significance of Research**

Social media reaches an extensive populace and its usage is fast increasing in the Ghanaian society. The growing number of people on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter has given social activists an alternative means to communicate with their targets .Several studies have highlighted the importance of social media in activism and how particular activists in other countries utilized it. However, there is little research in the Ghanaian context. The goal of this research is to add to the expanding number of studies on social media and activism by exploring the issue within a developing democracy such as Ghana.

By investigating how Occupy Flagstaff House Movement uses social media and their reasons for usage, this study will enrich the current discourse on social media for social activism by providing the Ghanaian perspective in addition to supplementing the growing academic literature on social media use in Ghana.

### **1.8 Definition of Terms**

**Social media** –Refers to new online media which the leadership of the OFSHM used to disseminate information to their followers and interact with them.

**Social Activism-** Using various means to draw attention to social issues which were faced by Ghanaians before the period of the protests.

**Occupy Flagstaff House Movement-** A protest by some middle-income Ghanaians on the worsening economic and political situation in Ghana.

**Tweet-** A 140 word message sent by the social media platform Twitter.

### **1.9 Structure of the Research**

This is a five chapter dissertation consisting of an introduction, literature review presenting relevant theory, presentation of the research methods, establishing the context of study, the methodological approaches used, data presentation, analysis and discussion of empirical findings, a summary, conclusions and recommendations.

The first chapter of this study which is the introduction comprised of a research background, research problem, research purpose, objectives of the study, research questions, research significance, limitations of research and the organization of the study.

The second chapter of the study strictly focused on an in – depth review of relevant literature. Also, a detailed description of the theoretical grounding of the study was presented. This will included an analysis of the theory and its concepts and the relevance of the theory to the study.

Chapter three of this study dealt with the methodological approach which highlighted on the following areas; source and study population, sampling techniques and sample size. Also the data collection instrument, data processing, analysis, and the context of this study will be discussed in this chapter.

The fourth chapter consisted of data presentation and an analysis of the findings of the research taking into considerations the research questions and purpose.

Finally, chapter five comprises of the discussion, summary, conclusions and recommendations for future research based on the limitations and limitations of this study. The chapter reviewed the research questions and discussed how they have been addressed in this study. The chapter also entails a detailed outline of the significance of this study by presenting this research contribution to practice, research and policy.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter examines the theory that underpinned the study and gives a review of relevant literature. The origins of the theories are also discussed, their general tenets and how they fit into this study. The chapter also examines studies done by other scholars which relate to this study.

#### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011, p. 13) “a theory is defined as a set of related propositions that present a systematic view of a phenomenon by specifying relationships among concepts”.(W. J. Severin & Tankard, 2010, p. 11) also define theories as “general statements that summarise our understanding of the way the world works”. They defined four precise goals of mass communication theory as follows: to explicate the effects of mass communication; to elucidate the practises to which people put mass communication; to expound on learning from mass media; and to describe the role that mass media plays in influencing people’s values and views (W. Severin & Tankard, 2001).

Two theories that were deemed relevant for this study are the Social Network Theory and the Technological Determinism Theory.

## 2.2 Social Network Theory

Social Network Theory is a theory which social scientists usually use to explore relationships among individuals, groups, organisations or even entire societies (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). It is also used in media and communication research to determine relationships. It can be utilised for a multiplicity of levels of analysis from small groups to whole world-wide systems. It simply concentrates on recognising how patterns of relationships linking individual people, groups or organizations create prospects and frameworks for human behaviour (Kadusin, 2004).

The growth of social media has introduced a new area of research which has sought to discover the impact it has had on human relations.

A network “as a set of relationships. More formally, a network contains a set of objects (in mathematical terms, nodes) and a mapping or description of relations between the objects or nodes” (Kadusin, 2004, p. 3). This is indicative of the relationship which exists between people on various social media platforms.

Social network analysis developed from the scholarly works of Emile Durkheim in 1893 and Ferdinand Tönnies in 1887 in their theories and exploration of social groups and relations. While (Tönnies 1887) argued that social groups can happen as personal and direct social ties that either connect individuals who share values and belief or impersonal, formal, and influential social links, (Durkheim 1893) opined that social phenomena arise when networking individuals establish a reality that can no longer be explained in terms of the characteristics of individual actors. According to Kadushin (2004), social scientists have investigated three kinds of networks, namely: ego-centric networks, social-centric networks and open systems network.

Kadushin (2004) defines ego-centric networks as those networks that are connected with a single node or individual, for example, all my good friends, or, all the companies that do business with the University of Ghana. To be considered networks these connections must not only be lists of people or organizations, but information must be available about the connections between these people or organizations. Otherwise, there is no network to analyze. In popular discourse, especially when social support is discussed, any list is considered to be a network. A person with a large number of good friends whom he or she can count on is said to have a large “network.” This network cannot be discussed in social network terms, however, unless we know whether and how these people are connected with one another (Kadushin, 2004). This network is not suitable for this study because the phenomenon being studied is social media sites whose networks are connected with more than one single node or individual. According to Kadushin (2004), socio-centric networks are networks in a box. Connections between children in a classroom, between executives or workers in an organization are closed system networks and the ones most often studied in terms of the fine points of network structure. For the purpose of this study, socio-centric networks was not considered as social media sites have networks which are open-ended and would not fit in the criteria for socio-centric networks. For the purpose of this research, therefore, only the open system network was examined.

**Open system networks** are systems whose confines are not clearly laid out or defined. They are that multifaceted type of association that occurs among corporations, nations, global bodies and on the web. It typically occurs from the embracing of fresh ideas and is mainly connected to Everett Rogers’s ‘Diffusion of Innovation Theory’. They are also the most difficult to study. Relationships that exist among people on social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, perfectly illustrate this type of network. The membership of OFSHM can fit into this network in the sense

that there are so many factors which came into play when people decide to become members of OFSHM and since the relationships between the membership and leadership is open ended, the open system network is used for the study. Some may join because the ideology of the group resonates with them, others may join because it is the latest thing happening in town which they want to be a part of, or simply because some of their friends are members. This kind of relationships exceeds the boundaries of nations and also extends beyond family ties and the society thus making it open ended. It is a facilitated relationship and in the instance of online associations, the social networking sites facilitate them.

With the popularity of social media attaining exceedingly large number of users, it is imperative that researchers carry out research in this field to ascertain how these platforms function and what impacts they actually have.

### **Propinquity**

From the elucidations of the kinds of networks, the question of geographical distance highlights this relationship strongly. Kadushin (2004) refers to it as “Propinquity”. This conception highlights the fact that individuals are more probable to be friends if they are geographically near (Feld and Carter, 1998). “At all levels of analysis, nodes are more likely to be linked to one another, other conditions being equal, if they are geographically near to one another (Kadushin, 2004)”. However, social media has enabled people who are geographically distant to become friends, and has also connected people who are geographically close. This principle is worth exploring or examining to find out if the messages on the social media platforms were used by people geographically closer or those further apart.

### **Homophily**

Social networks function on the ideologies of common attributes or characteristics. It is termed 'homophily'. Homophily is said to be having one or more common social attributes, such as the same social class. More theoretically, pairs can be said to be homophilous if their characteristics match in a quantity more than anticipated in the populace from which they are drawn or the network of which they are a part (Verbrugge, 1977 cited in Kadushin, 2004). There is also the concept of mutuality, which implies first, the extent to which relations are mutual, that is, it encompasses a give and take amongst the two parties; and second, the amount of power or irregularity in the relationship. Applied to social media, one can explain that the social media ideologies of participation, openness and interaction flawlessly fit the ideals of social network theory. To the extent that individuals belonging to one social group still associate to the group by liking and commenting on their posts, following them on the various platforms and retweeting their posts implies that principle of homophily is displayed on social media platforms as well. The theory of social network is very vital that most social media sites are thought of as Social Networking sites, due to their abilities in enhancing online relationships. This study sought to ascertain whether the concept of homophily plays a role in the primary targets of OFSHM via their social media platforms

### **Social Circle**

Another concept which is applicable to this study is the concept of 'Social Circle' as promulgated by Simmel (1955) in the study of social network theory. Social circles are typical of modern mass society and they assist the amalgamation of seemingly detached primary groups within larger societies. According to Simmel (1955) cited in Kadushin (2004), "the multiplicity of circles implies that the ideals of collectivism and individualism. Thus the creation of circles and associations in which any number of people can come together on the basis of their interest in a

common purpose, compensates for that isolation of the personality which develops out of breaking away from the narrow confines of earlier circumstances (p.130-135)".

The concept of social circle is mostly revealed on social media, where people form groups or follow, like and add people which belong to same organization, school or club. This connection is enabled by the formation of the organisation's group page on the social networking sites and assists individuals to find other who belong or have links to that particular organisation. An example is the University of Ghana Facebook page which allows alumni of the university who normally would not interact, to meet and reminisce about their school days. This study sought to find out if a majority of the members of OFSM were members of the groups' social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter and whether the members of the group used social networking sites to find other like-minded individuals to join the cause or use the platform to try and 'convert' people who had opposing views to the group's ideology.

### **2.3 Technological Determinism**

The technological determinism theory is another theory that can be applied to this study. Technological determinists understand technology more specifically, communications technologies as the basis of society in the past, present and even the future (Logan, 2010). They hypothesise that technologies which have an impact for example television or the printing press have been 'modified' In its most excessive form, the whole of society is being defined by technological improvements: new technologies transform society at every level, including institutions, social interaction and individuals (Chandler, 1995) At the least a wide range of social and cultural phenomena are seen as shaped by technology. 'Human factors' and social

arrangements are seen as secondary (Chandler, 1995). The theory relates to the work in the sense that because of the emerging technologies such as social media, it is shaping and transforming how activists interact with their target audiences (McLuhan, Gordon, Lamberti, & Scheffel-Dunand, 2011).

A basic tenet of this theory which relates to this study is the concept of the degree of “hotness” or “coolness” of a particular media for communicative purposes. This temperature-based metaphor applies to the level of audience/user interactivity with a given medium. Hot media are the forms of media which people find very difficult to interact with, and coming into contact with them makes a user more passive in the approach to the medium (N. Bingham, 1996) Television and film are the most forms of media which fall effortlessly into this category. Other forms of media such as animation and video games are “cooler” in nature as it allows some interactivity between the user and the content of the messages and requires the user to use their imagination to bridge the gap between what is being sent out and reality. Relating this percept to the study, social media has characteristics which allows its users to interact with the messages and each other. It also enables users not only to receive information, but then gives them the ability to send to other people in their networks, fostering participation and interactivity. Additionally, social media can encompass more than one medium of communication, such as communication via text, images or videos. The features such as like on Facebook and retweet on Twitter too fosters interactivity.

## **2.4 Related Studies**

There have been a number of studies in recent times on social media due to its fast rate of development and its ability to foster communication between people in different countries. This

section reviews related literature to this study. Based on the research questions stated in chapter one, the researcher reviewed the following literature.

To begin with, a study done by Sandoval-Almazan, Gil-Garci (2014) was a key research done in this area. The authors sought to identify the key characteristics of political activism and what could be classified as cyber activism 1.0 and 2.0 based on their operationalisation of the terms, and proposed a stage-based model to help in the understanding of social movements and political activism using social media tools. The researchers also sought to understand the relationship between information technologies and social and political activism. The research employed both quantitative and qualitative methods and combined traditional data collection with online data collection. The main source of data was documents; including news reports, documented cases, and websites on the three past social protests they were studying. The researchers then used content analyse and context data analysis methods to evaluate the quantitative data and then used case study strategies as a qualitative approach to gain further insights into the phenomenon being studied. The researchers found out that social media tools were catalysts to produce real-life changes and that the systematic model they introduced to help understand the different aspects of social movements and political activism was used successfully in their case studies. However a limitation of the study was that it focused mainly on the use of Facebook and Twitter without exploring newer platforms like WhatsApp, Viber and Foursquare. Additionally, their study did not take into account the various governmental institutions' responses to the protests or concerns raised. Therefore the findings could not be used to established consequential relations. The present study, similarly, also sought to understand the relationship between information technologies and political activism.

Theocharis, Lowe, van Deth, and García-Albacete (2015) sought to understand the extent to which three protest movements in Spain, Greece and the United States which were the Indignados, Aganaktismenoi and Occupy Wall Street movements used social media in their campaigns for organization, mobilisation and political communication. Their central objective was to understand whether content exchanged between Twitter users formed the foundation for mobilisation, organization, conversation, distribution of information or logistical coordination. They conducted a comparative content analysis of tweets sent during the peak periods of the campaigns.

They initially grouped the data into 16 categories and then further grouped it into four main areas which were mobilisation (when the tweet has an explicit call for action or distributes information about a future event), coordination (when the tweet referred to organizational/ logistical issues or included ‘live action reporting’) information, (reporting news or an article about the movement’s causes, or distributing information about the crisis), and conversation (political statements and other conversations). They also included an ‘other’ category for the data which did not fit into any of the other categories. This study will also employ the same categorisation to content analysis the messages sent out by OFSHM via social media platforms.

They found out that posts on Twitter were mostly used for political discussion and to communicate protest information, and that calls for participation were not major. They further discovered that only a small number of tweets mentioned protest organisation and coordination issues. Differences and similarities in the twitter information among the three different movements was also explained by the different national contexts.

Small (2011) investigated the intersection of microblogging sites and Canadian politics. The study was explanatory in nature as she sought to discover the users of political hashtags, the nature of tagged tweets and the extent to which Twitter allows for political conversation and participation. The study utilized a content analysis of a non-random sample of tweets from a popular Canadian political hashtag #cdnpoli during the week of 26-30 April.

Overall, she sampled 1617 tweets and related content from the hashtag #cdnpoli which represented 21.5% of the tweets of the monthly average of the tweets on #cdnpoli in 2010. She found out that media organisations, bloggers, journalists, interest groups and individuals used the hashtag #cdnpoli with individuals polling the highest usage. Another finding was that people who contributed to the hashtag used it to search the internet for relevant online information on Canadian politics and used #cdnpoli as a dissemination feed.

She also discovered that the primary function of the posts of Twitter were for informing and commentary. Conversations were also another function of the posts and reporting and status updating polling the least functions of the posts. This finding is similar to the one by Theocharisa et al. (2015) who also discovered that the primary functions of the tweets used by three protest movements were for political discussion and communication of protest information. This study will also seek to discover the functions of the posts of OFSHM on social media platforms.

Anduiza, Cristancho, and Sabucedo (2014) conducted a study to find out the dominant mobilisation channels of the 15M demonstration which was the origin of the indignados movement in Spain. They collected data from participants and organisations who took part in nine demonstrations in Spain between 2010 and 2011. They discovered that the main mobilisation

channels used were online social networks and personal contact. They also discovered that the participants were younger, more educated and less politically involved.

Gaby and Caren (2012) attempted to find out what attracted supporters of the Occupy Wall Street movement to the movement's Facebook pages. They used a database of 1500 Facebook Occupy group pages and analysed the types of posts which recruited new users. They drew a sample of the top 100 posts on the movement's pages from the time it was formed to the 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2011. They categorised the posts into six main groups which were confrontational posts, posts representing elite support for the movement, informal polling of movement members, personal narratives, media inaccuracies and solidarity.

They discovered that the success of recruiting over 400000 users to Facebook was driven by user-created content which was enhanced by the characteristics of Facebook to connect potential supporters. They also discovered that the posts which were most successful at recruiting active Facebook engagement were posts which used current forms of communication such as status updates and sharing pictures. Posts which utilized confrontational and solidarity messages appeared most often in the top posts. The study revealed that online social networking tools such as Facebook provided a powerful tool for protest movements to quickly spread messages and reach broad audiences.

In another study by Borrero, Yousafzai, Javed, and Page (2014), the authors investigated how people's beliefs about social networking sites (SNS) impacted their usage for socio-political expression. The researchers found out that social influence was an important forecaster of behavioural intention, which proposed that users who felt more anxiety from others to use SNS for expressive participation were more likely to intend to engage in its use. Contrary to the authors'

prediction, facilitating conditions did not emerge as a significant predictor of intentions. They also found out that a user's technology readiness and sex significantly moderate social and psychological factors.

Based on the research findings, the authors suggested that internet social movements' organizers could focus on interpersonal features and the use benefits for the groups. The authors could have considered using controls in their research (e.g., alternative social behaviours displayed on SNS sites, alternative forms of 'offline' collective action) for comparison purposes to make their data richer.

In another study by Tufekci and Wilson (2012), the researchers sought to determine that social media in general, and Facebook in particular, provided new sources of information the regime in Egypt could not easily control and were crucial in shaping how Egyptians made individual decisions about participating in protests, the logistics of protest, and the likelihood of success. They demonstrated that people learned about the protests primarily through interpersonal communication using Facebook, phone contact, or face-to-face conversation. The main research questions asked by the researchers were whether social media use shaped how the participants learned about the protests, how the protesters planned their involvement using social media and how the participants themselves documented their involvement. There was no obvious theoretical framework as the research took a more descriptive approach.

The authors found out the protestors included in their sample ranged in age from 18 to 67, averaging just 29 overall. They also found out that nearly half (48.4%) of those in the sample

reported that they had first heard about the Tahrir Square demonstrations through face-to-face communication. Interpersonally oriented media such as Facebook (28.3%) and telephone (13.1%) was the next most common first sources. Thus, traditional mass media were far less important for information people about the protest than were more interpersonal means of communication for example face-to-face, telephone, or Facebook. The results of the study underscored the central role that social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, played in the protests leading up to the resignation of Egyptian President Mubarak in February, 2011. The authors also found out that although it only became available in Arabic in 2009, more than a quarter of the protestors they sampled had first heard of the protests on Facebook and, in addition a quarter used Facebook to disseminate pictures and videos they had produced. Twitter, along with blogs, was used by protestors to communicate about the demonstrations as they unfolded. Participation in protests was associated with particular patterns of media use.

In a related study by Valenzuela (2013) the researcher sought to find out how using social media translated into increased political activity. He examined three explanations of how using social media increased citizens' political activity which were: 'social media as a source of news', 'opinion expressing' which is using social media to express political opinions and 'activism' which he conceptualised as joining causes and finding mobilizing information through social media to test for protest activity, respondents were asked if they had engaged in any protest activities such as attending public demonstrations, signing petitions to authorities, participating in meetings with authorities and sending letters to the media. From the responses, a protest index was created for the respondents based on the number of positive responses to each of the items.

To measure social media use, the participants were asked how often they used social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Google Plus. The frequency of use of each social media platform was then combined into an additive scale of general social media use for each respondent. The data was analysed using SPSS and the results were that using social media frequently was positively and significantly related to protest activities. However, the researchers found out that social media use did not seem to be equally important for all types of protest activities considered. It was more strongly predictive of attending street demonstrations and contacting news media.

The researcher's findings are consistent with the ones by Bond et al., 2012 and Kroh & Neiss, 2012 who found out that social media platforms were a tool for political action rather than a cause of it. The study also suggested that social media are not so much creating new forms of protest but strengthening traditional forms of protest, such as street demonstrations. Some limitations of the study were that by using survey data, it limited itself to self-reports of protest activity and social media use, which may have yielded inaccurate measures resulting from social desirability bias..

Another limitation was that the categories of the themes were not mutually exclusive. An example used was a political video which when shared on Facebook could be a form of information, opinion expression, or activism. The study adopted Dalton et al.'s (2009) approach, which was from a classic work on protest behaviour by Barnes and Kaase (1979).

Another study by Hopkins and Todd (2014) sought to analyse how young people across the United Kingdom protested against government proposals to change the ways in which higher education is funded. The study focused on students at the Newcastle University space when they occupied a Fine Art Lecture Theatre in the university for 17 days to demand that the Vice-Chancellor of the University give a public statement of his opposition to the increment of the tuition fees by the government.

The study explored the processes that the students put in place to create a 'dialogically managed space' and the internal structures in the Occupation that were the instruments of dialogism. The students created an intentionally dialogic space in a number of ways, including how they organised the 'occupation', how they used social media and the internet, the actions they participated in and the ways in which they engaged with the government or political leaders. The research was a qualitative study and adopted a more participatory approach as the researchers were regular visitors to the occupation, taking food to the students, attending meetings and one of the researchers even delivered a lecture as part of the alternative education in the occupation and they participated in the public march. Their involvement gave the researchers a chance to see how the Occupation worked in more detail, and made it possible for them to be given permission to interview the students. This gave them both insider perspective as participants and outside perspectives as members of academic staff who were considered outsiders to the lives of the students.

The researchers interviewed 27 young people involved in the Newcastle Occupation and the interviews were supported by photographs taken by the researchers and by the students, and diary

notes taken by the researchers during the Occupation. Of the sample they recruited, 10% of the students were in their first year, 23% in second year, 26% in third year and 10% in fourth (or Masters year) year at the Newcastle University, and an additional 32% of the participants belonged to other universities, colleges, and secondary schools. All the interviews were fully transcribed, then coded and analysed by theme. Where students were quoted, the researchers used pseudonyms in order to protect their anonymity.

The researchers discovered that in organising the occupation, there were a number of deliberate practices to create the community within the Occupation in relation to a number of values. There was also a deliberate maintenance of a non-hierarchical structure of decision-making and a rejection of both a core management group.

Additionally, the student activists involved in the Newcastle Occupation contributed to the creation of an intentionally dialogic space through their extensive engagement with different types of social media and their use of the internet. The students set up a blog (<http://ncluniocc.blogspot.co.uk/>), a Facebook page and were actively using Twitter, email and any other forms of electronic communication that was available to them. The students, however, still used the traditional forms of activism such as the use of leaflets, contacting the media (they had interviews with the Guardian and Times and BBC ITV news) and participating in direct action. The use of social media and the internet was a highly significant component of their approach. The students also used social media to engage with other Occupations, to communicate their message to a wider public, and to generate ideas for advancing their cause. It was interesting to review this study to discover how another group which was protesting the government's proposals for change used social media to help them achieve their aim of petitioning the government for changes to be made. This is similar to what the

group studied in this research also did, which was using social media to rise awareness and petition the government for change.

Another research done in this field was by Lee and Chan (2015). The researchers sought to examine the impact of digital media on political participation by investigating if digital media could influence individuals to participate in offline protests or not, and whether people would take up the role of participation leaders in such protests. The researchers used the annual rally in Hong Kong commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen movement in China as a case study and utilized participants' usage of Facebook, microblogging services, and online alternative media to check their levels of social media usage.

The researchers conducted a survey of the participants in the 2014 June 4 commemoration rally in Victoria Park in Hong Kong. They could not follow a probability sampling approach on the protest site due to the lack of a sampling frame. They however, positioned more than 70 interviewers systematically at different entrances of the park and at various places within the rally venue and asked the interviewers to follow a designated procedure in selecting interviewees to obtain a representative sample of the people at the rally. The survey had 626 respondents and a response rate of 85.9%.

The researchers tested five hypothesis which were: Protestors using Facebook more frequently engage in online political communication to larger extents than their counterparts; Protestors using microblogging services more frequently engage in online political communication to larger extents than their counterparts; Protestors using online alternative media sites more frequently engage in

online political communication to larger extents; Protestors who engage in online political communication to larger extents tend to be initiators of co-participation and make an earlier decision to participate; Uses of Facebook, microblogs, and online alternative media have an indirect effect on participation leadership through engagement in online political communication.

The survey asked the respondents how frequently they used Facebook, Twitter, 'Weibo,' Inmedia, (an activist alternative media site) and The House News (a progressive alternative news site in operation at the time of the survey). The answers ranged from never to very often. For online political communication activities, the survey asked the respondents how frequently they: communicated with others online about public affairs, expressed views about public affairs in forums or social media, participated in social media groups related to public affairs, participated in online petition, and participated in other online actions related to public affairs. Answers were registered with the same five-point scale ranging from 1 = never to 5 = very often. To check participation leadership, the survey asked the respondents if they were participating in the rally alone or with others. Those who were participating with others were then asked the question "who initiated the idea of joining the rally." The answering categories included "I initiated," "hard to say as we came up with the idea simultaneously," and "others initiated."

Among the 423 respondents who participated in the rally with others, 26.5% indicated that they were the initiator, 13.2% indicated that others initiated, and 60.3% chose the middle option. Other variables in the analysis included four demographics: sex, age, education, and self-reported social class.

The researchers found out that most of the rally participants were active on Facebook with more than 60% reported using Facebook “often” or “very often.” In contrast, the participants used Twitter or Weibo much less frequently. Younger participants and better educated participants reported higher levels of usage of Facebook and many of the rally participants were also quite active in online political communication and expression. Only about 17.1% expressed views about public affairs in forums or social media often or very often, yet there were also 25.7% who did that occasionally. Therefore, the researchers concluded that digital media usage could lead more people to participate in collective actions partly because they could facilitate a more vibrant and effective mobilization process. However, I believe there could have been other mediating factors for the researcher’s findings. In their research design, I did not see control for extraneous variables such as participation in the rally as a result of information gathered from traditional media sources.

Another related study by Caroline Sheedy (2011) looked at the use of social media in several recent cases that received worldwide attention which were the 2008 attacks in Mumbai, the 2009 Green Revolution in Iran, and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, and presented a case study of the use of social media in the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The researcher outlined how social media was used to plan the protests, how it was used during the protests, and what happened after the Internet was shut during the protests. She also examined how the use of social media during the protests compared to past social media use and whether the use of social media in the Egyptian riots invoked not just awareness, but action. She also explored the future of social media as an agent for social change.

A theory underpinning the research was the theory of ties which states that, “weak ties are loose acquaintances that can help a friend generate creative ideas, find a job, and transfer knowledge, while strong ties are trusted friends and family who can affect emotional health and often join together to lead organizations through times of crisis” (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1365). From the case

study, she drew some conclusions about the current use of social media for social change which were that there were people behind the social media tools that are used for social change.

A common trend which she realised was that credit had been given to the tools used for social change and not the people behind them for example, Iran's "Twitter Revolution". She also realised that social media could be used as a tool to raise awareness, raise money, and join people together, but just hailing these tools is an underestimate of the time, resources, and risks that activists and citizens sacrificed for the social change. Another conclusion she drew was that social media tools allowed users to help each other, regardless of their location. Social media use during the Mumbai attacks helped people to get help to those in need and get information to family members. During the Egyptian revolution, protesters used social media to share information about dangers and help each other get supplies and medical attention. Other people helped the activists by setting up proxies, hacking into government sites, and spreading the word about the cause. Another conclusion she drew was that social media use for social change was dangerous. She drew this conclusion because some of the social media platforms have policies which do not favour activists such as the real name policy by Facebook and that there was the danger of governments using social media to spy on, misinform, or incriminate activists.

These reviewed related studies emphasised the role social media played in social activism in different contexts and examined the functions of the messages sent out by various social activists or groups. This study examined the opportunities and challenges using social media presented OFSHM, the reasons for the use of social media and the functions of the messages employed by OFSHM.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the method used in undertaking this research. It also discusses the specific research design used, sample selection techniques, instruments employed in the data gathering and data analysis. The methods used which were content analysis and in-depth interviews were informed by the research questions and objectives of the study.

The study employed the mixed- method approach which is using both in-depth interviews and content analysis to describe the communication of Occupy Flagstaff House Movement using social media sites, Facebook and Twitter. It also sought to find out the reasons the leadership chose to use social media platforms by using in-depth interviews.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

According to Creswell (2003), research designs are plans and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. Research design also addresses the planning of scientific inquiry or designing a strategy for finding out something (Babbie, 1992). The qualitative aspect of this research was based on the study's explanatory nature, specifically the need to explain and understand why the movement uses social media and find out the opportunities and challenges faced by the movement. The quantitative

aspect allowed the study to also observe and account for the presence of certain aspects of communicative content in systematic, descriptive and quantitative terms. In other words, the study was explanatory in nature and adopted the mixed method approach which involved collecting data both quantitatively and qualitatively.

### 3.1.1 Qualitative Research Design: In-depth Interviews

Qualitative research is a type of research where researchers seek to unearth and analyse the situated form, content, and experience of social action rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations, (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). Qualitative research enables social science researchers to ask “why” questions while seeking to explain and interpret phenomena from the subjects world view. This ensures validity or trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010; Patton, 1990).

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2010, p. 170), “the qualitative interview is an event in which one person (the interviewer) encourages others to freely articulate their interests and experiences’. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) also defined an in-depth interview as an extensive one-on-one personal interaction in which much more information can be obtained while W. Bingham, Moore, and Gustad (1959) simply described qualitative interviewing as “a conversation with a purpose.”

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) the qualitative research interview attempts to make meaning of the world from the subjects’ points of view and to unfold the meaning of their experiences. Tufekci and Wilson (2012) In their study to find out how social media contributed to how citizens made decisions about participating in protests used in-depth interviews. This approach also helped the researcher to collect rich data.

For this dissertation, interviews were selected as the appropriate method because it permits the researcher to gather data from the informants' perspective while explaining the organization's experiences with social media.

### 3.1.2 Population and Sampling of Qualitative Research

Population for a study according to Babbie (2005), is a group, usually of people, about whom conclusions are drawn in research. The population of the qualitative portion of this study was all the members of the leadership of OFSHM. They were six in number and included George Anti, Rodney Longdon, Nana Akwasi Awuah, Cassandra Nana Yaa Tawiah, Nana Sarpong Agyeman Badu and James Yaw Addo.

For the in-depth interviews, purposive sampling technique was employed to identify respondents who could give the needed information. The type of purposive sampling used was intensity sampling. According to Patton (1990), an intensity sample consists of information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely (but not extremely). With intensity sampling, one selects participants who are experiential experts and who are authorities on a particular experience. Using the logic of intensity sampling, the researcher seeks "excellent or rich examples of the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 1990). In the case of this study, George Anti, Rodney Longdon and Nana Sarpong were interviewed because they were in charge of managing the group's social media sites, the administrators of the sites and used Facebook and Twitter to share information on the group's activities.

The interviews were used to explore the views, experiences and challenges of the individual respondents on using social media for social activism. The face to face in – depth interviews

prompted open ended responses to determine the reasons for social media usage and the challenges and opportunities it presented the leadership of OFSHM.

In-depth interviews were conducted with three members of the leadership of OFSHM who were deemed most suitable for the study. They were the Public Relations Officer of the group, the Officer in charge of posting content on the social media platforms and another official who assisted in updating the social media platforms. All these officials were administrators of the Facebook and Twitter accounts of OFSHM. The interviews were to determine why OFSHM uses social media platforms and to discover the opportunities and challenges faced by OFSHM using social media in their campaigns.

### 3.1.3 Data Collection

The study utilized primary data sources which incorporated data collected from the respondents through the in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted with a semi-structured question guide in order to allow for more flexibility and freedom to explore the topic in detail. The participants for the study were selected by intensity sampling as explained earlier and each interview lasted about 30 minutes.

All the interviews were conducted between the 20<sup>th</sup> of August and the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, 2015. An audio tape recorder was used to record responses from all the interviews after which the interviews were transcribed. Notes were also taken during the interviews. All the interviews were conducted in English. A sample of the interview guide is attached as appendix B.

#### 3.1.4 Data Collection Instrument

An interview guide was developed to collect data from the selected sample. It included questions such as, “What are the relative advantages in the social media platforms you used that made you prefer them?” The researcher also occasionally asked the respondents follow up questions before proceeding to the next question.

#### 3.1.5 Data Analysis

The data was collected through in-depth interviews and after the interviews were transcribed, the data was analysed thematically to meet the objectives of the study. The themes centered on reasons for social media usage and challenges and opportunities faced in the usage of social media. After the analysis of the data, the findings were discussed in relation to the theories underpinning the study and the related studies discussed in the previous chapter.

#### 3.1.6 Reliability and Validity of Data Collected

There are several benchmarks for ensuring reliability and validity in qualitative research. The researcher employed the member checking method which was suggested by (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) as a way of building credibility in qualitative research. The researcher asked each respondent to read transcriptions and notes from their individual interviews to identify whether all the latter said was precisely recorded and quoted. The researcher also employed Creswell’s (1998) debriefing method to aid verification. Debriefing gave participants a chance

“to interact further with the researcher, to ask questions and to hear further explanations”  
(Daymon & Holloway, 2010).

### 3.2.1 Quantitative Research Design: Content Analysis

A content analysis of the posts made by the leadership of Occupy Flagstaff House Movement on the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter was made. Kerlinger (2000, p.156) describes content analysis as “a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables”.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011) content analysis is the detailed and systematic analysis of the contents of a specific body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes or biases. In this study, content analysis is the best choice for analysing messages by OFSHM to help generalise how they use social media to generate support for their causes. It was employed in order to capture the functions of the Facebook and Twitter posts made by the leadership of Occupy Flagstaff House.

Anderson and Kanuka (2003, p. 174) point out that content analysis is an appropriate method for e-research, though it is often associated with the analysis of text documents and in e-research text documents are often e-mail, chats or computer conferencing transcripts.

Within media research, content analysis has been used as a scholarly way of analysing communication content in many forms including social media messages.(Riff, Lacy, & Fico, 2014) For example, Theocharis et al. (2015) in their study, content analysed tweets sent out by three different campaigns for social change and this study did the same.

Content analysis is typically carried out on forms of human communication which helps describe the communication content. It also has the ability to establish the amount of content generated by the social media accounts of Occupy Flagstaff House Movement. The researcher carried out a quantitative content analysis of the messages sent out by the leadership of OFSHM on the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. These were selected because they are deemed to be the most popular social media platforms in Ghana. ("Internet Statics Usage for Africa," 2015).

### 3.2.1 Strengths of Content Analysis

To begin with, content analysis is very distinct. Thus, content analysis allows the researcher to analyse social interactions based on texts or transcripts (Crossman, 2011). The subject is unaware that the analyst is examining his or her messages, therefore the subject does not have a chance to change their behaviour or in the case of this study, modify the contents of their pages. It is also inconspicuous and it does not require contact with people. This strength enhanced the researcher's ability to obtain unedited data from the sites and helped to paint a realistic picture of the data. Content analysis helped the researcher gather data from both Facebook and Twitter easily.

Secondly, it is easy to update; once the study is set up, it is fairly easy to add additional transcripts into the database. One can learn much about a group's policies, target audience, politics, and financial support. Content analysis becomes a more powerful tool when combined with other research methods such as interviews, observation, and use of archival records.

It is very useful for analysing historical material, especially for documenting trends over time (Anderson & Taylor, 2009). That is why the study combined content analysis with in-depth interviews to arrive at accurate findings.

Establishing reliability is easy and straightforward. Of all the research methods, content analysis scores highest with regard to ease of replication. Usually the materials can be made available for others to use. Therefore, it can be concluded that content analysis would provide this study with accurate reliable data for analysis.

An analysis of the posts on Facebook and Twitter helped the researcher to observe trends in the functions of the posts on the social media platforms and helped answer the research question two, namely: what are the functions of messages posted by OFSHM on social media platforms?

### 3.2.2 Population and Sampling of Quantitative Research Design

The posts on the official Facebook and Twitter pages of OFSHM from the start of the creation of the pages till the 1st of September 2015 was the population for the study. Wimmer and Dominick (2011, p. 87) define a sample as “a subset of a population that is representative of the entire population”. For this study, the probability sampling was used for the content analysis of the Twitter page.

For the content analysis of the Twitter page, systematic sampling was used to generate the sample from the social media platforms. Wimmer and Dominick (2011, p. 97) define systematic random sampling as “a procedure in which every  $n$ th subject, unit or element is selected from a population”. The researcher randomly selected a starting point (which was the number 2) and used a sampling interval of four to select the sample. So from the second post which was on the Twitter pages of OFSHM, the researcher then selected every 4<sup>th</sup> post which followed after that, till the researcher

obtained a sample of 200 posts. The researcher adopted this method because according to (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011), systematic samples are frequently used in mass media research and they are more cost effective and time saving when compared to simple random sampling.

For the Facebook page, the researcher also used a systematic random approach for the sampling, however a sampling interval of 2 was used to obtain the sample of 200 posts. This was due to the fact that the Facebook page had a lesser number of posts than the Twitter page. The sample size 200 was selected because it provided an appropriate sample for the study.

### 3.2.3 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for the quantitative part of the study was posts by OFSHM on their official Facebook and Twitter pages.

### 3.2.4 Data Collection

The study used primary source of data which was the posts by OFSHM on their official Facebook and Twitter pages. The data was collected and coded according to an adapted coding guide developed by (Theocharisa et al., 2015). That is, to define the content categories used, this study depended on previous scholarly categorization for functions of messages posted on social media which were mobilisation, coordination, information, and conversation.

### 3.2.5 Data Collection Instrument

A code sheet was used to collect the data. The coding scheme for the study operationalised the content categories as follows:

**Mobilisation:** When the message has an explicit call for action or distributes information about a future event.

**Coordination:** When the post referred to organizational/ logistical issues or included ‘live action reporting’.

**Information:** Reporting news or an article about the movement’s causes, or distributing information about the crisis.

**Conversation:** Political statements and other conversations.

**Other:** When the post did not fall into any of the above categories.

### 3.2.6 Data Analysis

As done in social science research and suitable for analyzing data obtained by content analysis, the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data. The data was analysed via frequency distribution tables and charts in order to properly respond to the research questions.

### 3.2.7 Reliability of data

The reliability of the data collected was ensured by using a code book to collect the data. This ensured that all the data collected followed the same pattern.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the methodological underpinnings of this study. It discussed the research design and gave a justification for the mixed method approach. The population, sample, sampling techniques, and instruments employed in the data gathering process were also discussed. As stated earlier in chapter one, the study is about the use of social media as a tool for social activism, using the Occupy Flagstaff House Movement as a study. This chapter presents findings from primary research conducted on the social media platforms of OFSHM, Facebook and Twitter. The data was obtained through in-depth interviews with three of the leadership of OFSHM as well as a content analysis of Facebook and Twitter pages of OFSHM.

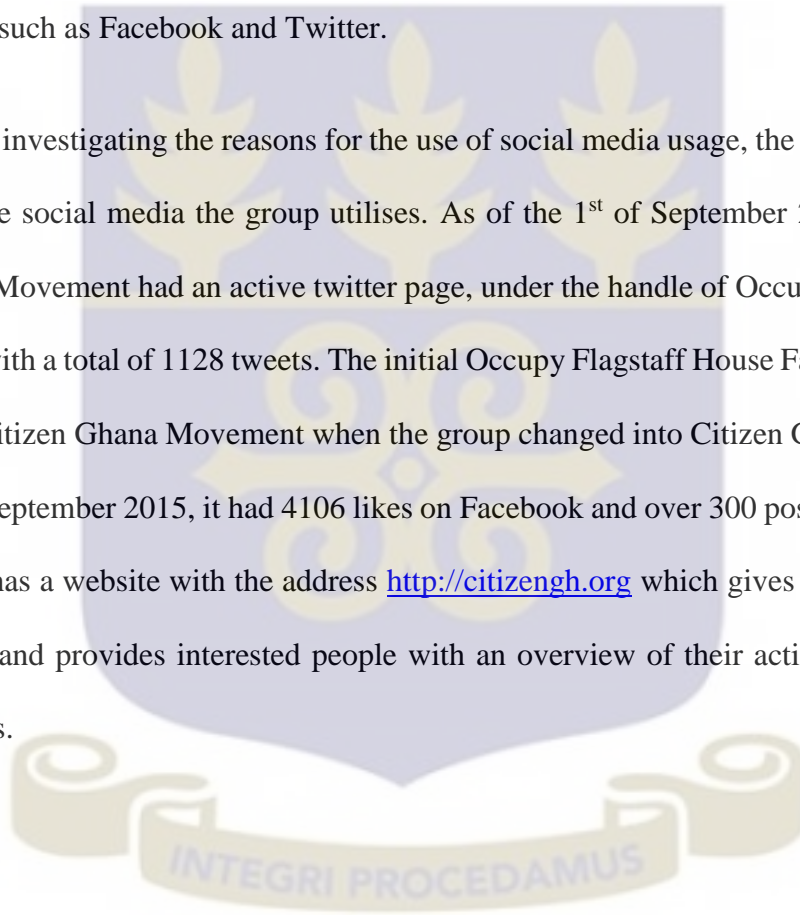
#### 4.1 Presentation of Findings

This research sought to find out why the leadership of Occupy Flagstaff House Movement uses social media as a tool for social activism. It also sought to uncover the functions of the messages sent out by OFSHM on social media platforms and discover the opportunities and challenges they faced in their usage of social media. The findings are reported according to the objectives of the study.

#### 4.3 Findings for Research Objective One.

The first research objective was to determine why OFSHM employed the use of social media platforms. To answer this objective, in-depth interviews were conducted with three members of the leadership of OFSHM. The researcher discovered that the movement utilizes several social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

However, before investigating the reasons for the use of social media usage, the researcher probed to find out all the social media the group utilises. As of the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2015, the Occupy Flagstaff House Movement had an active twitter page, under the handle of Occupy Flagstaff, with 2987 followers with a total of 1128 tweets. The initial Occupy Flagstaff House Facebook page was rebranded into Citizen Ghana Movement when the group changed into Citizen Ghana Movement. As of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2015, it had 4106 likes on Facebook and over 300 posts. Citizen Ghana Movement also has a website with the address <http://citizengh.org> which gives more information about the group and provides interested people with an overview of their activities and how to become members.



##### 4.3.1 Reasons for social media usage.

The interview established that the leading members of the group highly regard the role of social media in their activities. Occupy Flagstaff House Movement employed social media because of

its effectiveness and efficiency, the reduced costs involved in using it, and its ability to reach and allow them to interact with their intended targets.

A key reason why OFSHM used social media was because of its effectiveness and efficiency. This finding was confirmed by all the three respondents who were interviewed for this study. While respondent one argued that their reason for using social media was a result of the ease with which people are mobilized and connected via the web 2.0 platform, respondents two and three unequivocally emphasized that they used social media due to its “effectiveness and efficiency” in terms of generating support for their campaigns. All the interviewees said that almost all the leading members of OFSHM are very active users of social media, hence it was very expedient for them to share ideas and organize themselves. The quote below represents the major concerns of the leadership which respondent A articulated as:

For us, social media is a routine affair, where we send friend requests and follow individuals whom we feel like associating with. We post messages and issues of national interest on our various individual social media spaces. People comment – some agree with the posts, others express their disagreements. So, with time, those of us who were like minded began to actively use social media to advance our opinions on major topic issues affecting the nation. One of the most popularly discussed issues on social media was corruption, and the apparent lack of willpower on the part of the government to address this canker. So it became obvious that we can use social media to come together and stage a protest to register our displeasure. You will realize that social media came in very handy because the very beginning of this group was borne out of social media relationships.

They indicated that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter were effective in the sense that the platforms enabled them get their messages across relatively easier than the more traditional forms of media.

Furthermore, cost was a motivating factor for the use of social media for the leadership of OFSHM. The reductions in communication costs using social media has enabled the quicker and relatively easier distribution of movement information, and has enabled individuals to stay in touch with more people communities, and diverse causes.(Theocharisa et al., 2015). Additionally, the falling costs of computers and high-speed internet has made using social media relatively cheaper compared to the more tradition media (Anthony Mayfield, 2008). All the interviewees stated that the only cost they incurred whilst using social media was the cost of the internet data they bought to enable them access the social media platforms and this cost was cheaper as compared to placing an ad in a newspaper or radio.

Respondent C indicated that;

“It came at very little or no cost. For movements that are in the budding stage, finance is usually a big challenge so you’re always looking at a cost effective platform and social media offers you that”.

Another important reason which led to the use of social media platforms was its ability to reach their intended targets within a relatively short time. The interviewees said that social media platforms enabled them to reach their intended targets more quickly due to the ability of the platforms to send messages instantly to those in their networks. Respondent A stated that,

“The people the movement were looking at or focusing on is the youth and you have a large proportion of the youth in Ghana on one social media platform or the other, so our audience was on social media so we used social media”.

Additionally, social media platforms assisted OFSHM to interact with their target audiences. Key characteristics of social media platforms are their abilities to encourage participation, conversation and connectedness among people of diverse backgrounds.(Anthony Mayfield, 2008). The interviewees stated that they made use of social media to engage Ghanaians to discuss pertinent issues and also to inform them about the group’s activities. Respondent B said that:

“Whenever we launch a new campaign or want to engage Ghanaians to discuss issues affecting the country, we post on social media so we can interact with them and inform them of ongoing campaigns. This helps to keep them updated on the group’s activities. With social media, we felt it was effective in the sense that it has a wide reach so if you want to disseminate information or you want to send out a rallying call it’s one of the best platforms you can use”.

The findings from the study show that the organizers of the demonstration resorted to social media for a plethora of reasons. Some of the reasons include – the effectiveness of social media in helping them get their messages across to their target audiences, the cost effectiveness of the medium, the ability of the social media platforms in enabling them interact with their targets audiences and the larger populace. Social media offers a more effective platform for organisations to be able to get their messages across to their targets relatively easier. This finding affirms the study results of Bimber (2000) and Bimber et al (2005) who also found out that digital media and social media can reduce the cost of connecting and coordinating people, and may dissolve some of the obstacles once thought to only be surmountable through bureaucratic social movement organizations. This finding is also corroborated by Gaby and Caren (2012) that social media enhances participation in various kinds of activism without much cost.

Mayfield (2008) suggests five characteristics of social media, its participatory nature, openness, conversation, community and connectedness. These characteristics made the use of Facebook and Twitter by OFSHM more effective, especially during the periods of protest. This finding is also similar to Hopkins and Todd (2014) who discovered in their study that the use of social media was a significant component of communication by the group they studied and that they used it to communicate their message to a wider public and generate ideas for advancing their cause. Social media is able to engage people using their interactive features (Borrero et al., 2014)

#### 4.4 Findings for research objective two.

##### Functions of the posts

Several studies have highlighted the use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter for communicating information during protests and mobilising people during social movements (Small, 2011).

The study sought to find out the functions of the posts sent out by OFSHM via the social media platforms, Twitter and Facebook. The categories used for this study were adopted from a code sheet developed by (Theocharisa et al., 2015) for their research as mentioned in the previous chapter.. The categories included, (1) mobilisation (when the post has an explicit call for action or distributes information about a future event), (2) coordination (when the tweet referred to organizational/logistical issues or included 'live action reporting'), (3) information (reporting news or an article about the movement, reporting news about the movement's causes, or distributing information about the crisis), and (4) conversation (political statements and other

conversations). There was also a final ‘other’ category to cater for posts which did not fall into any of the previous categories.

The study found out the main functions of the tweets sent by OFSHM via the social media platform Twitter was conversation. Out of a total of 200 tweets coded, 51 of the tweets were for conversational purposes representing 25.5% of the data. The next major function of the tweets were for informational purposes pooling 45 tweets out of the 200 coded, representing 22.5% of the data. The third highest function of the tweets was for mobilisation purposes which had 43 out of the 200 sampled representing 21.5% of the data. Coordination and other pooled the least functions of the tweets with 31 tweets for coordination purposes representing 15.5% of the data and 15 tweets falling in the category of other functions representing 15% of the total data.

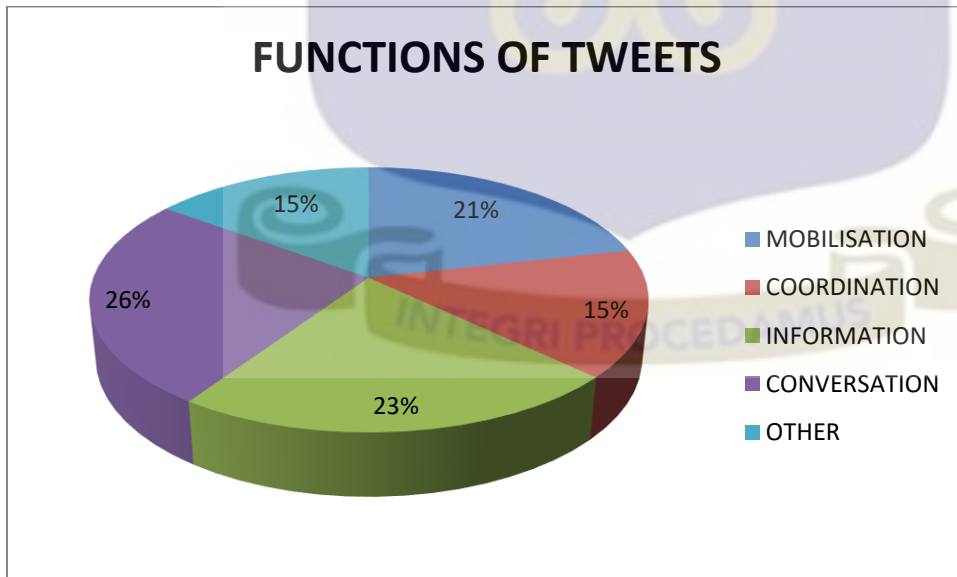
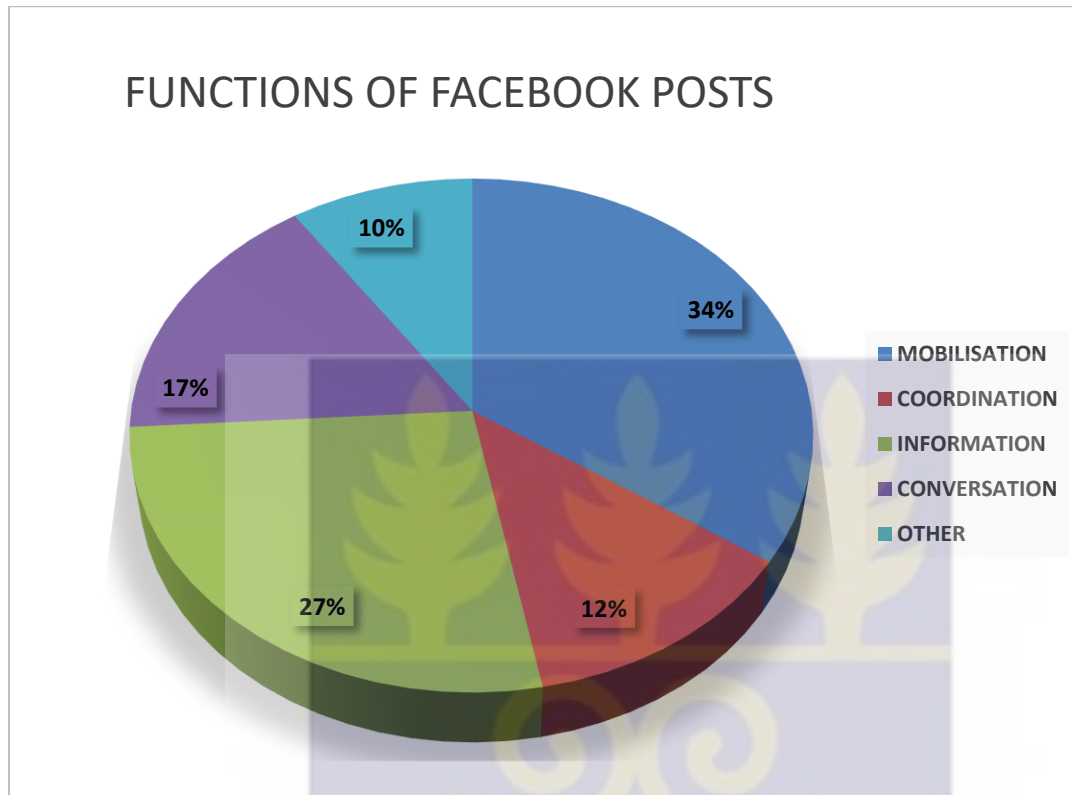


Figure 1: Functions of Tweets

The study also discovered that the primary function of the posts on Facebook was for mobilisation purposes with it assembling 69 out of the 200 posts sampled, representing 34.5%. The next function with 54 out of the 200 posts was information, representing 27%. Conversation was the next highest function of the posts pooling 33 out of the 200 posts representing 16.5%. Coordination and other polled 25 and 19 posts representing 12.5% and 9.5% respectively.

*Table 1: Functions of Posts on Facebook*

<b>Functions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Mobilisation	69	34.5
Coordination	25	12.5
Information	54	27
Conversation	33	16.5
Other	19	9.5
Total	200	100

*Figure 2: Functions of Facebook post*

The content analysis established that, in terms of social activism, messages posted on social media play certain functions. From the data gathered by this study, the most dominant function performed by social media messages is mobilization of people. In addition, social media messages serve as sources of information for the general public, especially those who want to obtain more information about the activities of OFSHM. The other functions are social media messages enable conversation among members of the group and also they aid in effective coordination of the group members for the protest. Twitter was most effective for ensuring conversation about social activism while Facebook was used mainly to inform people about the demonstrations and its related activities.

Several studies have highlighted the use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter for communicating information during protests and mobilising people during social movements (Theocharisa, Loweb, Dethc, & García, 2015; Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014; Small, 2011). The current study findings are in line with the preceding findings by the above-mentioned.

#### 4.0 Findings for research objective three.

##### Opportunities and Challenges offered by social media

The third research objective was to discover the opportunities and challenges faced by OFSHM using social media during their campaigns. This objective was addressed using in-depth interviews.

##### 4.1 Opportunities Social Media Offers OFSHM

The respondents stated that social media was very helpful to them in their campaigns and was a huge part of their activities. One of the respondents said,

“Social media is always the pivot on which our operations run. I would say it played a very major role that is not to say that traditional media doesn’t play any role but on a scale of one to ten, I would say, social media is at about 7 and traditional media 3”.

Another respondent said that social media offered them the opportunity to get their message across to a lot of people including some international news agencies.

“I mean the success of what we did was social media. Having started from individuals just talking and lamenting every day to six of them converging at a point and trying to bring everyone around them and then moving it from that virtual space into the physical space. I mean the turnout, the media hype, not just the local media

but for me it was outstanding the international hype, Washington post, Aljazeera, Reuters, BBC, CNN, SABC, New York Times during the occupy flagstaff house protest. They all did features and wrote articles on what we did and for me that was what was major about it”.

This finding is deeply rooted in the literature reviewed for the study. The study realized that social media plays a major role in organizing social movement causes. It confirms the literature, which sought to explain that throughout the years, communication technologies have been vital to the communication, organisation and coordination of protest activities.(Theocharisa et al., 2015). Similarly, the opportunities social media presents has compelled many scholars, such as Howard & Hussain (2011), to assert that the rise of online social networks has enabled ICTs to play an increasing role in the formation of social movements. The current study associates its findings with the above study. Also, this finding confirms the position of Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia (2014) that social media applications, particularly web 2.0 tools, have helped citizens in influencing government policies by providing a platform for their views to be heard.

#### 4.2 Challenges Faced By OFSHM

On the whole, the leadership of OFSHM face very few challenges in their use of social media for social activism. Some of the challenges they faced was the networks crashing during periods of high activity. One of the respondents said,

“I mean the only challenge we had was that a particular point the networks were jammed. But that’s normal because obviously when you have too much activity on your data it’s likely your systems will crash at a point”.

Another challenge they reported having was people duplicating their pages and sending out messages as the group. One of the interviewees said,

“Some of those challenges were that for platforms like Facebook, creating pages is not a difficult thing. Someone can create a page in under one minute so we had people creating copies of our page and using our logos and since we were not administrators of those pages, we had challenges in trying to control the content they posted”.

#### 4.3 Targets

To answer the third research question which was, ‘what kinds of people do OFSHM target in the use of social media in their campaigns?’ in-depth interviews was conducted with three of the leadership of OFSHM.

The leadership of OFSHM is open to participation from everyone who is interested in their causes and who their messages resonates with. However, their primary targets using social media was the middle class in society. One of the respondents said,

“The middle class because in essence I would say for social change to be effective, you must get a reaction not from the top to the bottom, not from the bottom to the top but from the middle out so as a movement which believes in social change and good governance we hold that the critical mass is the middle class. Those who are going to change Ghana can be found in the middle class and so that was the target group and that group can be found on social media”.

#### 4.4 Findings in Relation to Theoretical Underpinnings

The findings validate the technological determinism theory assertion that communication technologies are the major determinants of human activities, and for the purposes of this study, social activism. Hitherto, organizers of protests used the mainstream media (radio, television and newspapers), which were more complex and costly, to publicize their activities. However, with the

advent of social media, the organization and mobilization of people for social activism causes have tremendously changed.

Additionally for the concept of the degree of ‘hotness’ or ‘coolness’ of a particular media for communicative purposes, it was discovered from the in-depth interviews with the leadership of OFSHM that social media offered a ‘cooler’ medium for communicative purposes therefore offered OSFHM more interaction with their intended publics.

For the social network theory, it was discovered that the Facebook and Twitter pages of OFSHM were examples of open systems with various levels of relationships facilitating them. From the in-depth interviews with the leadership of OFSHM it was discovered that members of the Facebook page and Twitter account came from different countries and political divides. One of the respondents said,

“Membership of our social media pages is very diverse. We have people from the United States, Britain, and Congo to mention a few. Even some members both main political parties are on the page. You will find that there are children, students, young people, people from corporate Ghana, people from civil service organisations then the everyday Kwame on the street all on our Facebook page”.

For the principle of propinquity, OFSHM stated that most of the people who took part in their activities were geographically close to their base of operations which is Accra. However, a few people who live in others parts of Ghana also travelled to take part in the 1<sup>st</sup> July protests.

Homophily can be appreciated in the intended targets of OFSHM via their social media platforms. The group sought to reach the middle class and young people in their messages

via social media platforms. Middle class citizens of Ghana have common attributes or shared characteristics and the group took into account these attributes in order to craft their messages for their social media platforms.

Another concept of the social network theory applicable to this study is the social circle. In the course of the in-depth interviews, the researcher discovered from the leadership of OFSHM that they encouraged members to join their social media platforms in order to have access to information on the group's activities. When groups of people with a shared or common interest come together, a social circle is formed. The leadership of OFSHM took advantage of this circle on their social media platforms to share information and update their members on the group's policies.

Although this study sought to examine whether social media played a key role in mobilising citizens to protest, it could not establish causality between using social media sites and the number of people who came out to protest at the Efua Sutherland Park. The leadership believed though that social play played an important part in the protest action.

#### 4.5 Summary

The reasons why OFSHM used social media were that it was effective, the costs associated with its usage were minimal, it had the ability to reach their intended targets within a short time and helped them interact with them.

For the functions of messages sent out via social media platforms, the researcher found out that for Facebook, the leadership of OFSHM used messages for mobilisation purposes the most and

for other purposes the least. For their Twitter account, the function with the highest number of posts was conversation and the function with the least was other.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This research was conducted to find out why OFSHM use social media platforms in their campaigns and discover the opportunities and challenges they faced in their usage of social media platforms. The study also sought to find out the functions of the messages sent out by OFSHM. This chapter summarises the entire research, presenting an account of the findings, limitations and recommendations for further research into social media for social activism.

#### 5.1 Summary of findings

The reasons why OFSHM used social media were that it was effective, the costs associated with its usage were minimal, it had the ability to reach their intended targets within a short time and helped them interact with them.

For the functions of messages sent out via social media platforms, the researcher found out that for Facebook, the leadership of OFSHM used messages for mobilisation purposes the most and for other purposes the least. For their Twitter account, the function with the highest number of posts was conversation and the function with the least was other.

## 5.2 Recommendations For Policy Considerations

Social media has become part of humans' activities, and as this study has established, activism, movements and protests are heavily influenced by these communication technologies. Howard (2010) This study will therefore, advance the position that cyber laws must be enacted to regulate the conduct of people on social media.

Since the medium has proven to be a major tool for fostering demonstration, its usage in this regard must be done with utmost caution. Thus, social media users must avoid abusive and insulting languages on their personal social media space, in their bid to use the platform for the purposes of activism.

Without proper and constant supply of internet, the use of social media for activism will be ineffective and at worst, impossible. Poor internet connectivity was identified as a major constraint to the OFSHM's use of social media for activism. To bring this situation under control, there is the need for internet service providers and the telecommunication companies to invest the quality of the internet, and also expand their internet services to most parts of the county.

Regulatory bodies such as the National Communications Authority (NCA) must develop a database for social media activities in Ghana. For instance, the research uncovered that the authority only publishes a monthly report which contains figures on the internet penetration rate in the country. This study recommends that the NCA must, as a matter of urgency, develop a system which will help them measure accurately the number of Ghanaians on certain social media platforms. This will give a more organized framework for assessing the extent of social media usage in the country. In addition, that data will be useful for researchers in both private and

academic institutions. Policy implementers will also find the data important, as it will enrich them with reliable data for the formulation of effective policies.

### 5.3 Limitations of Study and Suggestions for Further Studies

The study was faced with some challenges. This section discusses them and provides suggestions for future researches into this subject matter.

Firstly, this study was highly constrained by the inadequacy of similar studies that have been conducted in the country. This compelled the researcher to draw on research studies that have been conducted in other countries, as the literature.

Future scholars must begin to show interest into the use of social media and social activism in Ghana. This area is a new phenomenon, hence more studies should be directed to it. This will help expand the focus of the issues pertaining to the subject matter and enhance knowledge in this area.

Secondly, this study was limited to only content analysis and in-depth interviews. As much as this helped in gathering adequate data for this study, it is the opinion of this researcher that further studies must be conducted to identify the ways in which social media has made social activism more attractive for the populace. At best, a survey can be undertaken to establish this.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

This study was undertaken with the aim of unearthing the role social media plays in the activities of the Occupy Flagstaff House Movement. In setting forth the conceptual or theoretical foundations of this study, previous literature show that it is important for social movements to engage the citizenry in their quest to bring about social change. OFSHM sought to do this by engaging their target audiences on social media platforms. These platforms have characteristics such as interconnectedness, participation, conversation to mention a few and provided the leadership of OFSHM a means to do so.

The current research demonstrates the spread and importance of social media as an alternative form of protests and activism. It highlights the growth of Facebook as a medium for opening up the space for participation while reaching a wider audience. Clearly, Facebook contributed to growing the movement nationally and getting the concerns of the OFSHM in the public domain for discussion and action. This is consistent with the findings of (Hopkins & Todd, 2014; Sheedy, 2011).

It also showed the relevance of the movement in affording people the opportunity to actively voice out their concerns online through Facebook. This is similar to the findings of (Ibrahim, 2013; Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014)

The study reveals the ability for Facebook to connect different people during public and social protests. It also showed that the online communication and offline protests were enhanced through the interactions that went on Facebook. Facebook discussions were significant in motivating people to take part in the protest and hold government accountable for its governance.

For a developing democracy like Ghana, it shows that the rapid growth of the internet and social media such as Facebook and Twitter has provided increased spaces for conversations in the public sphere. These conversations also help to enhance offline protest activities. Activists are better able to coordinate protest activities and get their targets involved.



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**APPENDIX A**

Social media platform

Code Sheet

Number

Date of post

Number of characters/words in post

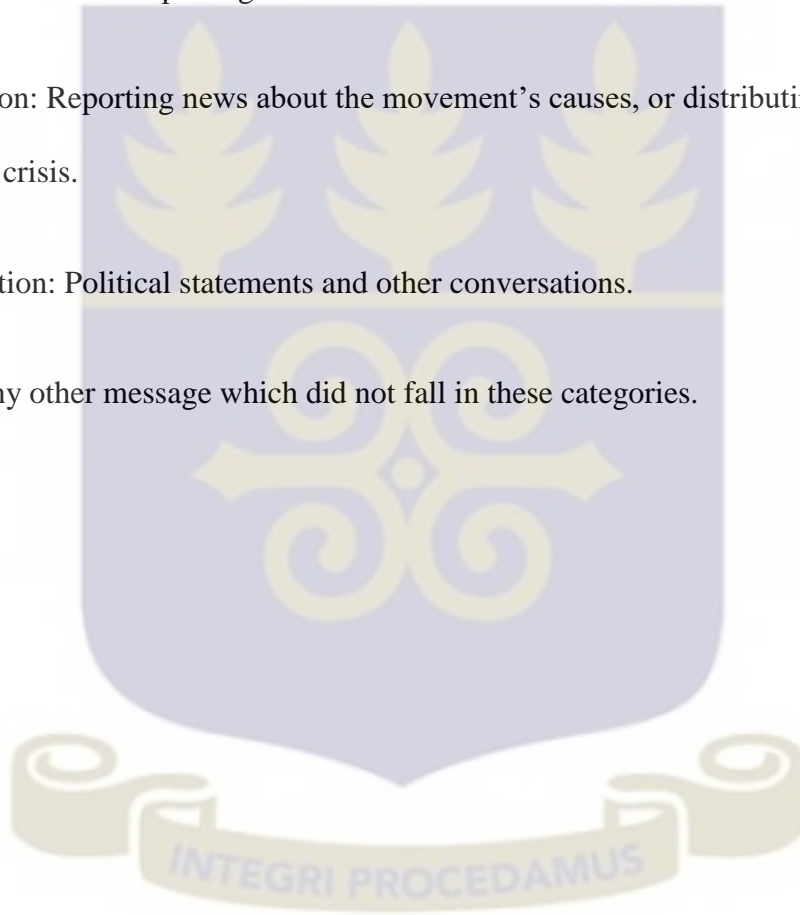
Time post was made

Type of post

Functions of post	
mobilization	
Coordination	
Information	
conversation	
Other	

## Operationalization of codes

1. Mobilization: When the tweet/post has an explicit call for action or distributes information about a future event.
2. Coordination: When the tweet/post referred to organizational or logistical issues or included live action reporting.
3. Information: Reporting news about the movement's causes, or distributing information about the crisis.
4. Conversation: Political statements and other conversations.
5. Other: Any other message which did not fall in these categories.



## APPENDIX B

1. Why did your organisation use social media platforms during your campaign period?
2. What are the reasons which led to the use of social media platforms in your campaign?
3. Which social media platform did you use the most?
4. What are the relative advantages in the social media platforms you used that made you prefer them?
5. Who did you intend to reach via the social media platforms and why?
6. Did you encounter any challenges in your use of social media during your campaign?
7. How would you assess the role social media played in enabling you achieve your objectives.

