THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE CASE OF "KONY 2012"

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ABSTRACT:

The development and popularity of internet and social networking sites have significantly changed the idea of citizen participation, activism and engagement in the political processes. Social networking websites such as Facebook and twitter have given new meanings to participation and have reinvented social activism. New generation is more inclined towards modern communication technologies to spread their voice and there is an increase in their disengagement with the traditional ways and trends of political participation.

This work aims to understand the effect of social media networks and its use as a tool for the activists to spread information to achieve a certain goal; also it explores patterns of social activism via social media, discussing both the positive and negative results of it.

For this purpose, a case study of the campaign Kony 2012 is carried out using data from internet and interviews. It used the concepts and theoretical frameworks linked with civic engagement, such as public sphere, civic cultures and others to look at social media functions as a communicative public sphere. Furthermore concepts related to social media activism and political communication on the internet are also used to understand their application in the context of activism and participation on the social media and how they can be applied to the case of 'Kony 2012'.

Keywords: public sphere, civic engagement, participation, online activism, Internet, social media activism, Facebook, civic cultures.

INDEX:

1. **INTRODUCTION**:

In today's globalized world, internet is a crucial and significant part of our social, economic and cultural lives. It is now embedded in our everyday life to the extent that we are not able to complete many of the daily tasks without it. Social media networking is the most popular feature offered by the internet which has massive socio-cultural effects on today's society. This thesis deals with the trend of social movements and awareness campaigns on social media networks with a main focus on Facebook, as it the most popular social networking website among the young group of people. Internet and the popularity of social networking websites have given a powerful tool to the activist movements that can be used to reach and mobilize masses in very short period of time. Questions are constantly raised on the effectiveness of online activism and it is often known as a type of activism which is online and requires minimal personal effort from the people.

Moreover, a video supported campaign "Kony 2012" is considered as a case study which was initiated by the organization "Invisible children" on 5th march 2012 on different social media networks and blogging networks including Facebook, twitter ,tumbler etc. This video went viral on YouTube immediately and spread all over the world through internet within few days. Thousands of people worldwide shared the post and took pledge which is focusing on the cause to create awareness about a war criminal Joseph Kony, in order to take part in this campaign as virtual human rights activist.

This paper also looks into the spread of this campaign and analyzes the role of social media in this regard. Also it tries to analyze responses, contributions and attitudes of people about this campaign and to see that to what extent, public took part in this campaign through social media.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do people respond to, and participate with the Kony 2012 campaign?

2. What are their attitudes and opinion regarding this campaign, the organization (Invisible Children) and the criticism?

3. How do people define and understand Kony 2012 as social activism?

4. How significant are the moral and emotional issues connected with this campaign, the organization and how do people respond to it?

5. To what extent, social media has acted as a catalyst to promote civic engagement and social activism in Kony2012 case?

3. Conceptual Framework:

The use of internet and social media networks to persuade and mobilize people is an important tool of many social movements and campaigns today. There are very successful campaigns and movements that used social media as a major tool to spread awareness and mobilized people .The movements like Arab spring can be given as the best examples to prove the power of the social media and the internet. However, there are strong critiques and arguments against such participation as well.

The use of different type of media as tools and the development of people's political participation /activism on the internet and social media can be studied through many theoretical concepts related to media and sociology. The most relevant concepts for this case are related to social media activism and its skeptics, public sphere, civic cultures, convergence culture, weak ties, and some other theories linked with social activism in the digital age.

3.1 The Public Sphere:

The well-known concept of public sphere is related with citizenship and participation of people. The idea of public sphere is often used to study media, democracy and public participation. Rheingold cites the idea of public sphere given by Jürgen Habermas who explained the concept of public sphere as

 "A domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed; Access to the public sphere is open in principle to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere is constituted

in every conversation in which private persons come together to form a public" (Rheingold, 2008, p.101).

Habermas pointed at the close connection between free and informal personal communication and the foundations of a democratic society. In the public sphere, citizen operates as public without being subject to any coercion, when they deal with affairs of general interest or express their opinion freely. Furthermore, the essential element of public sphere in a large society is the communication media and the ways citizen is allowed to use them. (Rheingold, 2008, p.101)

He also feared that in the mass media era, the public sphere has already been corrupted by paid fake communication or discourse (Rheingold, 2008, p.101-102)

According to Dahlgren "The political public sphere is normatively seen as comprised of the institutional communicative spaces, universally accessible that facilitate the formation of discussion and public opinion, via the unfettered flow of relevant information and ideas" (Dahlgren,2009,p72)

Habermas develops a two-track concept of political deliberation. There are 'strong' public spheres linked to formal decision making and there are other weak informal settings that allow flow of ideas and lead to public opinion and discussion. (Dahlgren 2009, p.72)

Moreover, Coleman and Ross argue that the concept of the public sphere by Habermas places the public as a homogenous unit and does not represent disruptive social elements such as foreigners, dissidents, and deviants, who do not settle with the normative characteristics of well governed citizens. (Coleman and Ross, 2010, p.29)

Chadwick writes that Habermas claimed that public sphere was a historical phase and not just a tool to judge all communication but his idea has been used more in the latter sense. This concept and model was adapted by many scholars to take into account of possibility of "multiple public spheres" (Chadwick, 2006, p88).

On the whole, "Most scholars have deserted Habermas's empirical claims altogether and used the public sphere as a normative ideal which may be used to judge the existing communication structures of contemporary societies." (Chadwick, 2006, p.88)

The idea of public sphere is also linked with concepts of communicative rationality, civil society, and deliberative democracy. (Dahlgren, 2009, p.5) where talk is viewed as constitutive of public and is essential for democracy, both functionally and normatively. The model of deliberative democracy is related to the idea of public sphere and become extended with Habermas research

into communicative rationality in which he started developing his project to recreate the legacy of historical materialism and shifting focus from labour to communication to understand societal self-creation (Dahlgren, 2009, p.87).

Despite the critique on the public sphere and difficulties in adoption of its basic model today ,the main concept is still applicable to study the citizen political participation even if this participation have taken new shift and is inclined more towards new technologies offered by the internet. Spaces offered by internet like social media networks and content sharing websites such as YouTube can be considered as virtual public spheres where citizen can share and discuss all types of socio-cultural issues freely .In this regard, the Public sphere concept can be used to understand the mass spread and involvement of people in Kony2012 project.

3.2 Citizenship and Participation:

The role of the citizen in terms of participation in the political sphere is very important in a democratic society. Where According to Carpentier (2011, p. 16):

> The meaning of the concept of democracy is complicated by three elements: the variety of democratic manifestations and variants; the distinction between formal democracy and democratic cultures and practices; and the distinction between the narrow-political system ('politics') and the broad-political dimensions of the social (the 'political').

Democracy is an important element of participation as it concerns with the involvement and inclusion of citizens in political decision making processes (Carpentier, 2011, p 16).

Bennett(2008,p1) discusses the patterns of civic engagement and says that it is alarming that the youth have disengaged themselves from conventional politics and government in huge numbers, this pattern of dissatisfaction and political disengagement is not only valid for USA but also present in other democracies such as United kingdom ,Sweden and Germany .It has been observed that youth tend to be more engaged as citizen in political activity which is related to life style concerns and is outside of realm of government .There are notable signs of civic engagement in nongovernmental areas which increase community development work and consumer activism as well as engagement of young people in social causes from economics injustice to the environment (Bennett,2008,p2)

Moreover, Carpentier states that political participation is another side of democratic balance which takes place when citizens participate in institutionalized politics (Carpentier, 2011, p.16.)

According to Corner and Pels (2003, p7)

> The proliferation of differences within institutions (such as political parties) and social categories (such as class) spills over and tends to blur the boundaries between them, while individual themselves travel more freely across these institutional and classificatory boundaries.

In this regard, Young Citizens tend to be more inclined to participate outside the boundaries of political institutions, governments and parties. Though citizenship is usually related to institutions, it is also observed that a lot of participation occurs outside institutions as well and has its own significance in the socio-political issues.

> According to Carpentier (2011, p.351)
>
> The history of the democratic revolution is characterized by an constant struggle to attempt to increase the levels of participation (first) through establishment and reconstruction of voting systems, (later) through increased political activity (in the more strict sense) outside institutionalized politics, and the increase in the interconnections between institutionalized politics and these other societal realms (e.g., via new social movements or other civil society structures).

Furthermore, Bennett (2008, p2) explores the different views of what shapes civic engagement of youth online and offline. There are two different paradigms that categorize young citizen as active or engaged or relatively passive and disengaged. The engaged youth model emphasizes the changes in social identity that caused increasing significance of peer network and online communities. It also focuses on the empowerment of youth as expressive citizen who are free to make their own choices. The engaged youth paradigm relieves people from the responsibility to participate in traditional government based activities. On the other hand, the disengaged model may recognize the increase in more independent type of expression such as consumer politics and occasional my space protests while focusing on the generational refusal or decline in connections to government such as voting patterns and general civic involvement as dangerous risks to the wellbeing of democracy. (Bennett, 2008, p 3)

The new form of public sphere that comprises of online communities, social networks and blogs have made participation and civic engagement and action easier and it allows the youth to make their own choices outside the government boundaries.

Furthermore, the disengaged youth perspective's supporters are often concerned about the privatization and personalization of the political sphere while their focus is on how to encourage public actions that associate to the government as the core of democratic politics, and to other institutions and groups as foundations of civic life. (Bennett, 2008, p3)

It is important to understand the basic concept of citizenship and participation in the context of the case Kony 2012 as engagement of youth in the public sphere is the main aspect of the case.

3.3 <u>CIVIC CULTURES:</u>

Citizen's participation and the ways of engagement in political process can also be discussed through the framework of civic cultures presented by Peter Dahlgren. The frame of the civic culture is quite related to the aim of this research paper and its objective as it uses citizen as the foundation.

"Civic culture is a framework intended to help analyze the condition that are necessary for-that promote or hinder- civic engagement" (Dahlgren, 2009, p.103).

In this regard, Dahlgren describes that cultures consist of communication patterns, practices and meaning; they give taken for granted orientations that are factual and normative along with the other resources of communal or collective life. They exist in our heads as it were, leading and informing action, speech and understanding. (Dahlgren, 2009, p.103)

According to Dahlgren: "The idea of civic cultures takes as its starting point the notion of citizens as social agents, and it asks what are the cultural factors that can impinge on the action and communication in their roles as (multifarious)citizens" (Dahlgren, 2003, p.152.)

Moreover, the idea of Civic cultures indicates to the patterns of culture in which the citizenship identities and the foundations of civic agency are embedded. Also it is better to speak of civic cultures in the plural because this argument is based on the supposition that in the late modern world, there are a lot of ways in which civic agency can be accomplished and performed. (Dahlgren, 2009, p.103)

Civic cultures are shaped by a range of different factors among which family and school are the most important and influential. Moreover, other factors are the group settings, economics, social structure, legal system and organizational possibilities. (Dahlgren, 2009, p.105)

Along with many other factors that can possibly affect civic cultures, Media is a very important both traditional and new interactive media have their impact on the characteristics of civic

cultures through their content, form, modes of use and logics. To understand the participation in public sphere, the private sphere is very important as the nonpublic processes also impact on civic cultures by preparing people to act as citizens as the use of media is a common activity within the private sphere. (Dahlgren, 2009, p.105) This emphasis on media as factor of influencing civic cultures by Dahlgren makes this concept more related and significant for this research project.

Civic cultures are both strong and weak in terms of viability. They can shape and empower citizens and in turn, they can also influence the character of civic cultures through their practices. Civic cultures can develop even in the circumstances which may seem doubtful and unlikely on the surface while on the other hand, the weakness or lack of civic cultures is disempowering and unfavorable circumstances can result in suppressed civic cultures. (Dahlgren, 2009, p.106)

Dahlgren argues that strong civic cultures are basic prerequisites for feasible public spheres and for functioning democracy .civic cultures has a normative base yet they can be empirical and can be analyzed and observed while the empirical key is to insist on the processes and contexts. (Dahlgren, 2009, p.106)

In addition, civic cultures do not presuppose homogeneity among their citizens but suggests minimal shared commitments to the procedures of democracy which require a capacity to see beyond the direct interest of one's own group. (Dahlgren, 2009, p.106)

According to Dahlgren (2009, p 106):

> The plural character of civic cultures should not be interpreted as suggesting that there exist rigid boundaries between the civic cultures of different groups. Rather, different groups may give differing inflections and emphasis, which can be mapped out along the lines of the six dimensions. For example, the civic culture that might characterize a group of community activist in an immigrant neighborhood will no doubt differ considerably from that of a national anti-abortion group.

Moreover, the circuit of civic cultures will be further discussed in the analytical section of this paper. As this concept gives more significance to the citizen and the cultural factors that influence it; hence it can be used to try to understand citizen participation in the Kony 2012 project.

3.4 <u>Convergence Culture</u>

The People's social activism and political participation using new interactive media can be seen through a lens of the concept of convergence culture.

The theory of convergence culture is given by Henry Jenkins. Jenkins explains the ways in which this cultural convergence may affect the social and entertainment features of society and discusses new cultures in social networks.

According to Jenkins(2006,p2)Convergence mean the flow on content across different platforms of media, the cooperation among media industries as well as the wandering behavior of the audience who will go anywhere to search for the entertainment content they like. Depending on who is talking about what, the word convergence describes social, technological, industrial and cultural changes. Every story gets told and every brand gets sold in the world of media convergence and user gets courted across many different platforms of media (Jenkins, 2006, p3)

The word "participatory culture" does not match with the older concepts of passive media spectatorship, media consumers and producer do not have separate roles and we can see them as participants that interact with each other following a new set of roles. (Jenkins, 2006, p3)

Moreover, Jenkins mentions that new political culture is like pop culture and it pulls two different systems of media where one is broadcast and commercial and other is grassroots and narrowcast. New ideas and will emerge in the digital world but the content and circulation of these channels will be monitored by main stream media (Jenkins, 2006, p 211)

He argues that convergence promote participation and collective intelligence, he gives examples that it happens when people can both consume and produce media .when they group their information and insights and mobilize to promote common interests and act as grassroots mediators, making sure that important message and content circulate more broadly (Jenkins,2006, p245) In the analysis of Kony 2012 case this concept of convergence culture will also help to understand and answer of research questions.

3.5 <u>Strength of Weak Ties</u>:

Another concept which can be related to this research objective and to its aspect of social communications patterns is the study of weak ties.

According to Mark Granovetter, an American sociologist, Strength of the tie is:
 "A (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie" (Granovetter 1974,

p1361) He argues the study of processes in interpersonal communication provide a micro-macro bridge small scale interactions transform into large scale pattern through these networks and then feedback to small groups (Granovetter, 1973, p.1360)

According to Nicolás M. Somma (2009):

> "Granovetter's well-known argument is that weak ties operate as bridges that facilitate the diffusion of ideas, information, and behaviors (including collective action) across individuals occupying otherwise distant positions in a social network. This logic can be applied to protest recruitment situations."(Somma, 2009, p.291)

Somma discusses Granovetter's ideas that protesting usually needs the getting hold of factual information about the presence of the event or campaign, its characteristics, rules, places, and agendas. This proposes that weak ties should be more efficient and successful to generate a positive answer to the protest calls. (Somma, 2009, p291)

The weak ties which are present in all social networks facilitates and allow people to use relationships with acquaintances or strangers to achieve specific goals, this logic can be applied in the case of social media activism to see how people shared and diffused information came to them through their contacts or acquaintances on network in order to help in the context of our case of Kony 2012 here.

3.6 <u>Social Movements, NGOs and media and communication:</u>

Harlow cites a definition of activism by Cammaerts et all, according to which, "'Activism' is the actions of a group of like-minded individuals coming together to change the status quo, advocating for a cause, whether local or global, and whether progressive or not" (Harlow, 2012, p.228)

> Activism can encompass social movements and moments of collective action. Social movements involve a prolonged contestation of authority with interactions between the challengers and power holders (Tarrow, 1998; Tilly, 1978), with the end goal of ultimately achieving some kind of social change. Collective action,which Tilly defined as 'joint action in pursuit of common ends' (1978: 84), such as a protest or petition campaign, can be employed as part of a social movement, or it can be a one-time event. (Harlow, 2012, p.228)

Communication of social movements is mainly based on the direct interaction of physically present people but this direct interaction, over two centuries, has been complemented by various

type of media including such as leaflets, newsletters etc. to target a big number of people inside and outside the movements, later telephones, TV, radio and all sort of other media started to be used in the movement activities. (Donk et al, 2004, p1)

As, activism and social movement are linked with each other it can be said that social movement includes interaction and engagement that can lead to a social change. Moreover, Internet's role in social movement is two sided as it can facilitate offline activism by upgrading movements existing range through email ,campaigns ,petitions and other methods .On the other hand, it can develop new forms of activism and struggle. Internet allows for fast, easy and cheap actions as a support technique for a social movement, as it is not limited by time and space (Harlow, 2012, p.229) Current information and communication technologies, called ICTs, providing easy access to information through the computers, internet and mobile devices, citizen groups and social movements like many organizations have various ways through which they communicate, mobilize, inform, lobby, and campaign (Ibid, p1)

Social movements need to get highly motivated people to ignite mobilization to get more participants and resources but in social networking website, this requires a mouse click for participant to be engage globally. (Harlow, 2012, p.229)

In addition, now days, the movements and the campaigns started by nonprofit organizations also are using internet and social media to facilitate the causes. It has always been done with different type of media available to the Ngos.

Kony 2012 is initiated by a nonprofit organization which uses internet and social media as its basic technique to gather support but an insight on the organizations and their use of media in traditional context; outside of internet and social media, is also important to study.Thomas Tufte (2009) highlights the development in media technologies and mobilization of youth by discussing civil society in Africa and how over the past years it has gained significant experience in the struggle against HIV and AIDS and identifies active use of media and communication technologies as one of the main characteristic for this pro-social development (Tufte et al: 2009, p 155)

In some countries large and visible media platform has been formed by Ngos which are giving these institutes a visibility in the public, political blow and stronger role as agents of change that can mobilize youth, promote their causes and persuade decision makers and leaders. These civil society driven platforms are essential to enhance participatory governance. (ibid, p 156)

These civil society driven platforms are now main actors in the promotion of public debate; some of them are developing into very powerful actors apparently leading in two ways, upwards by mediated dialogues with opinion leaders and by influencing policy development and downwards by spreading information, facilitating social networking, increasing social mobilization and also by giving a space to public to voice their issues and participate in the process of development. (ibid, p 156)

Tufte studies the case of a Tanzanian Ngo "Femina HIP" which has grown to become one of the largest Ngo because of its mediated visibility and reach to youth. This organization uses entertainment-education as its main strategy for communication to involve young people in development programs like HIV/Aids, youth unemployment etc. The basic media tool of this NGO includes two large print color magazines in English and Kiswahili. The target group of one magazine is secondary schools in Tanzania while the other targets rural and semi- literate youth of ages 15 to 30.Along with magazines, the other media platforms used by this organization is, a TV talk show, a co-production of radio soap opera, a website and a network of Femina clubs.(Tufte et al,2009,160) The main aspect of Femina HIP's approach is "interactive participatory production process", a way where the audience can participate and interact in many ways such as writing letters, email, text messages to the organization with expectation to be published in the magazines or being invited for talk show.(Ibid).

Tufte studied the letters and responses to this organization's media platforms and tries to find out the degree of involvement of young people in civil society driven initiatives to reduce development challenges and concludes that the increase in the letters which Femina receives from youth indicates the growing enthusiasm among youth to participate in public sphere, the organization succeeds in their effort to reach out to the young people all over the country. (Ibid, 167)

The above case is discussed to highlight the importance of media platforms and tools to get the people to participate and involve in the process of social and political development. With time, the traditional tools such as magazines and other media platforms are also modified and now internet and social media is taking over in this regard. The use of documentaries, interactive websites and social media networks by Ngos to reach and motivate its target audience is very effective these days and the case for this paper, "Invisible children" organization is also using the

documentaries, website and social media as their tool to reach youth for their awareness campaigns.

3.7 <u>Internet and social activism:</u>

As discussed above, internet is a major media platform in today's world and in this regard, Cyberactivism is a term that can be used to categorize online activist movements and campaigns that are using internet as a tool to reach masses. According to Martha McCaughey and Michael D. Ayers: "Cyberactivism crosses disciplines, mixes theories with practical activist approaches, and represents a broad range of online activist strategies, from online awareness campaigns to Internet-transmitted laser-projected messaging. "(McCaughey, Ayers, 2003, p.2.)

The concept of Cyberactivism is very broad and includes almost all types of awareness activities, social activism, and political participation and protests online; Sandor Vegh presents some significant classifications. Vegh defines online activism as political movements which rely on the internet. He categorizes online activists strategies as either internet enhanced or internet based. Where internet enhanced strategies are used to enhance the usual advocacy and support techniques, while internet based strategies are only possible online, like an online protest or hacking into target web sites (Vegh in McCaughey and Ayers, 2003, p.71)

Vegh further categorizes Cyberactivism or online activism into three separate areas that are awareness/advocacy, organization/mobilization and action/reaction.

However, In this regard, Shayne Pepper (2009), writes about one of invisible children's past project and argues that even though these categories portray the Invisible Children project quite well, these categories are also problematic so far because the Invisible Children is both Internet-enhanced and Internet-based and it arguably mixes all three of Vegh's categories.

3.8 Social media and Facebook:

"Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content". (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p 61)

In the early 2000's when costs of computers, software and internet access decreased, it allowed the individuals to have the same tools of production that were used only by professional before.

New media forms such as blogs and social networking websites have focused fully on audience participation which uprooted the link between media producer and consumer and the line between media producers and media consumer was faded. (Mandiberg, 2012, p1)

These new forms of media and easy access to the tools allowed the people to produce and publicize their own media, those who were formerly acted as passive media consumer. New technological frameworks such as message boards, audience driven review sites, comment systems and blog and photo and video sharing website social networks etc have enabled this media creation (Mandiberg, 2012, p1)

Furthermore, a social media strategist, Lon Safko presents "The social media trinity" in which he places "Blogs" as trinity number one where Blogs are an essential component of social media marketing and they can help you and you company to create trusted following and also automatically gets you and your brand in front of public. (Safko, 2010, p 687)The trinity number two is "Microblogging (Twitter)" where Microblogging includes facility to send text messages, files, audio and video. Micro blogging allows the users to do a wide range of stuff which include making friends, get or give advice, get directions, review books or services, get updated news and many more.(Safko,2010,p 257)Twitter is both Microblogging and social network.

The third trinity given by Safko is "Social networks" among which Facebook is on the top. According to him "Social media is the media we use to be social" (Safko, 2010, p3)

A trusted network is a group of people who gather together at a common place to share the personal information and also their thoughts and ideas (Safko, 2010, p 21) Facebook is the most popular social networking website.

However, these websites are meaningless without audience participation and without media production from audiences; these sites will not be successful. In spite of extensive participant engagement and intellectual interest in this trend, there is no specific name to this practice. Scholars gave these phenomenon different names such as web 2.0, user-generated content, convergence culture, participatory media or peer production while all these terms refer to different aspect of this phenomenon (Mandiberg , 2012,p.1-2) The common feature among social media websites is that they are free of cost and thus, are widely available to different socioeconomic classes. Everyone can create a Facebook or Twitter account, upload their videos on YouTube or write a Word Press blog without any charge; However the internet access is main

requirement to be able to use social media which is everywhere in the western world while comparatively less available in the developing world. (Joseph, 2012p.149)

With respect to this, a brief description of Facebook is important, Mark Zuckerberg ,a Harvard student founded a free social networking website called "Facebook" which was launched in 2004.This ground breaking website allowed user to create and participate in a new social world where they can interact ,share photos and videos, play social games and be friends with anyone. It gave a whole new meaning to the social life of people.

Facebook had overtaken Google to become the most visited site on the internet by the sixth year of its existence. In 2010, the Facebook had over 500 million active users according to company's statistics. (Miller, 2010)

Facebook has a huge number of uses from personal to public; it can be used in uncountable ways from dating and promoting new business to being an activist by supporting social movements.

Facebook is a platform for the consumer to connect with acquaintances, friends, colleagues, family. It encourages communication within social networks through a customizable user interface and a number of applications to personalize this experience. (Safko, 2010, p 450)

Facebook is used in business for networking, intercompany contacts, locating business lead, organizing and tracking business events and many more. It can be used to promote certain products and services by spreading the word through Facebook friends. Furthermore, Facebook can be used to improve course communication, managing school events and extracurricular activities in an academic setting. (Safko, 2010, p 450)

Moreover, Daniel miller presents an anthropological consideration of Facebook focusing on Facebook in Trinidad which is a Caribbean island. He notes the uses and popularity of Facebook in Trinidad focusing on the cultural idioms and patterns and the localization of Facebook as "Fasbook" there. The idea is captured by the local terms of Fasbook or Maco book where Fas means to try quickly and get to know another person and Maco means to be nosy. There is a natural similarity between tendency within the structure of Facebook and cultural inclination of Trinidadians, as these terms can be fully related to particular characteristics of Trinidadian behavior (Miller: 2011:159)

According to Miller

"The word Facebook stands for the social networking facility developed in the US. But what any given population actually uses, based on that facility, quickly develops its own local cultural genre and expectations, which will differ from others" (Miller, 2011, p158)

In addition, there are a number of social networking website (SNS) that internet offers today The most popular SNS is Facebook, followed by Twitter and LinkedIn ,other popular SNS are My space, Orkut, Google plus and many more. Furthermore, introduction of mobile social media is an important development .Mobile phones with Internet capabilities are spread widely and mobile phone usage is far more common than usage of personal computers in the developing world. (Joseph, 2012, p149)

3.9 SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM:

The power of social media as a tool of political and social activism is debatable ,some scholars believe in the influence of social media in this regard while some are skeptical of it .Here, two different arguments on this phenomenon by Clay Shirky and Malcolm Gladwell are presented.

Clay Shirky, New York University media professor considers social media as an improvement and upgrade for the promotion of social and political. He presents several examples where social media played significant role for the socio political change.

According to him, social media have become an organizing tool for almost all of the world's political movements; as many of the world's dictatorial governments and also are trying to limit free public access to it. In response, the U.S. State Department has committed itself to "Internet freedom"(Shirky, 2011, p2)

"Social media have become a fact of life for civil society worldwide, involving many actors – regular citizens, activists, nongovernmental organizations, telecommunications firms, software providers, governments." (Shirky, 2011, p1)

He gives several successful examples when social media acted as a significant factor of political change, like the role of it in organizing protest to force out Moldova's government. The Communist government in Moldova which came after a fraudulent election was dismissed in 2009 because of protests that were harmonized by social media such as text messages, Facebook, and Twitter. However, there are few examples of failed campaigns as well (Shirky, 2011, p1-2)

On the other hand there are arguments against this idea. Malcolm Gladwell is an important skeptic of social media and social change, in an article published in The New Yorker October

2010; he argues that Social media cannot provide what social change has always needed and it only support weak ties and low risk activism.

Social change can be brought through high-risk meaningful activism. He supports this argument by giving examples from the successful protests and campaigns from the past such as the 1960s protesting sit-ins by black college students in Greensboro, civil rights movement and other examples from the times when there were no conveniences of e-mail, texting, or social media. Moreover, Activists were once used to be defined by their causes where now they are defined by their tools. (Gladwell, 2010)

According to Gladwell " Facebook activism succeeds not by motivating people to make a real sacrifice but by motivating them to do the things that people do when they are not motivated enough to make a real sacrifice". (Gladwell: 2010)

He does not agree with Shirky's thought of this activism as an improvement and upgrade but he claims that it is just a form of organizing which diverts us and shifts our focus from organizations which encourage strategic action to the ones which support resilience and adaptability. "It makes it easier for activists to express themselves, and harder for that expression to have any impact." (Gladwell: 2010)

Moreover, he points that social activism requires strategic hierarchies and the networks are not controlled by a single fundamental authority unlike hierarchies. Also the ties binding those people are loose. The civil rights movement was strategic and high risk activism that became a challenge for the establishment and that grew with discipline, accuracy and leadership. (Gladwell: 2010) Gladwell claims that the sort of activism linked with social media is not strong and the platforms of social media are fabricated around weak ties. On Twitter you can follow people you never met in real life and also can be followed by some strangers while Facebook is just a tool for managing your contacts and links in a better way and for keeping up with the people you might not are able to stay in touch with. Hence, on Facebook you can have thousands of friends which is not possible in real life. (Gladwell: 2010)

Accordingly, Sarah Joseph, an Australian human rights scholar examines the role of social media in progressive political change in the context of the Arab Spring revolution. When, in early 2011,

ground-breaking enthusiasm spread across the Arab world. Unarmed, peaceful uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt put an end to long-standing dictators and also exceptional protests arose in most of the other Arab States. Moreover, aggressive protests erupted in Libya, igniting a civil war between the government and armed rebels and these rebels brought down Libyan dictator Colonel Muammar Gaddafi in August 2011, along with the help of international alliance. (Joseph, 2012, p145)

Joseph (2012) discusses Gladwell's work and says:

> "Gladwell notes that Al Qaeda, which engages in a very extreme form of activism, "was most dangerous when it was a unified hierarchy," rather than a loosely affiliated network of cells. He claims that social media is a conservative force—that it distracts people from "real" activism by deluding them into thinking that they are effecting change when in reality they are not."(Joseph, 2012, p 151)

Joseph states that Gladwell remains an unrepentant skeptic regardless of the noticeable contributions of social media to the Arab Spring and asks the supporters of social media activism to prove that before social media, the movements and uprisings would not have been possible. Gladwell's disbelief in the revolutionary potential of social media may be right with regard to the developed world where social media is an addition on the information and conversation and it may slow down the progressive social activism(Joseph,2012,p185-186)

> Gladwell too readily ignores the value of social media in States that efficiently suppress information and conversation, and in developing States, where long-voiceless people are suddenly connected to each other and to the outside world. It is in the developing world—Moldova, Iran, and now the Arab States—that it has had the most revolutionary impact, though watchful eyes must be kept on Greece, Spain and the #occupy movement. (Joseph, 2012, p186)

Most of the campaigns and movements started on the internet are all over the social media network to get more support and Facebook tops when it comes to spread the message from one person to hundreds of others. The use of Facebook as a platform of social movements and campaign had been very significant in a number of successful social movements. so all campaigns and movements that are launched on internet also use the power of Facebook for the achievement of their objective.

Miller points at the trend of Facebook activism and says that we have reached a new brave public sphere which represents the mass and authentic politics and we should be cautious about it.

There has been much keenness for more constant potential for Facebook activism and the protest movement in opposition to the expected aluminum smelter in Trinidad can be present as an example. (Miller, 2011, p 188)

However, he also observed through some other projects in Trinidad, that generally most of the Trinidadians have less interest in politics and political action while their major interest in Facebook was regarding personal relationships which means that the fact that the activist's use of Facebook as a tool does not also prove that Facebook turns more citizens into activists (Miller, 2011, p189)

In this regard, Miller's study about particular Trinidadian behavior on Facebook can be applied to some other countries as it has been noticed that current youth have less interest in politics and they rarely tend to do something for a political purposes, the same was observed by miller on the Facebook politics was not the priority of the youth when they are online but their focus was personal relationships etc. However, it has been observed in this research that people are very likely to be motivated and share the message across their circles, if the campaign or movement is supported by a video and has an emotional factor in it. The project Kony can be presented as an example to this practice of getting emotional attention to increase interest in the cause.

Moreover Facebook can become just on additional medium for facilitating and assisting political action rather than a tool for the ground-breaking revolution of politics. (Miller, 2011p.189)

In addition, Evgeny Morozov is a visiting scholar at Stanford University and is also a major critic and skeptic of internet activism. Morozov (2011, p75) argues that "if anything, the Internet makes it harder, not easier, to get people to care, if only because the alternatives to political action are so much more pleasant and risk-free" and there is a need to find ways to replace the encouragement of a freer internet but with strategies that can engage people in socio-political life (Morozov, 2011, p75)

According to Morozov (2011, p180):

> The success of online political and social causes is hard to predict, let alone engineer. Policy makers therefore should not pay much attention to Facebook-based activism. While Facebook based mobilization will occasionally lead to genuine social and political change, this is mostly accidental, a statistical certainty rather than a genuine achievement.

Western policy makers and donors who prioritize Facebook-based activism are placing a wild bet as it is difficult to calculate which causes will succeed and which will not. (Morozov, 2011, p180)The growth of activism on social networks can also be assess in more optimistic way by looking at the speed and ease with which Facebook groups can go viral and grow in a small amount of time so when communication costs are low the groups can easily bounce in to action.(Morozov, 2011, p180)

Sarah Joseph (2012p.152) writes:

> "Morozov notes the danger that the sheer volume of information available through social media—coupled with its increased general availability via the Internet and 24/7 news cycles—creates shorter attention spans in which important news is quickly supplanted by new developments elsewhere. For example, the "Twitterverse" flocked to read and retweet news of the ultimately unsuccessful Iranian uprising of June 2009. Yet the story was swiftly cast aside upon the death of pop megastar Michael Jackson. (Joseph, 2012, p152)

Social media can create faster and louder discussion, however those conversations are more likely to be shallow and short while they can always be easily replaced by the next big thing (Joseph, 2012, p 152)

This pattern is observed in the hype of Kony project when in March the movement received millions of young supporters who signed the petitions to make Kony famous and took their part to spread the message on social media but later after some negative press debate and with passage of time, people started to disengage themselves from the campaign and now suddenly no one talks about it anymore on Facebook and other social media.

4. METHODOLOGY:

4.1 Studying the Internet:

As the main aspect of the case Kony 2012 is the people's political participation using the internet and social media, it is important to study the impact of internet in this case to answer the research questions.

According to Christine Hine (2005, p.1)

"The coming of the Internet has posed a significant challenge for our Understanding of research methods. Across the social sciences and humanities people have found themselves wanting to explore the new social formations that arise when people communicate and organize themselves via email, web sites, mobile phones and

the rest of the increasingly common place mediated forms of communication.

Such communication is apparently quite effective .They are significant part of today's common interaction patterns which have their effect on the society as a whole so the need of research method which can analyze such communication and its effects is crucial.

According to Hine, There is a need to research and understand technologically mediated interactions as they are important medium of social interaction and social life today .However, there is unease about how well and accurate the traditional and tested research methods will work for technologically mediated online. The development in new media seem to propose new and broad ways to research different subject areas but there is anxiety in this regard. (Hine, 2005, p.1)

According to Hine (2005, p. 1)"Methodological solutions gain much of their authority through precedent, and it is not clear as yet just how methodology applies to new media and what gaps in our understanding are still to be exposed".

However, though the researcher has difficulty to study online content and interactions due to somewhat blurred methodological ways to research social networks or communities, however, in this case, the observation to analyze social interactions on social media regarding this case can probably be placed under the label of virtual ethnography.

Evans (2010, p2) describes ethnography citing different authors as:

"In more exact terms, ethnography may be defined as both a qualitative research process and method (one conducts an ethnography) and product (the outcome of this process is an ethnography) whose aim is cultural interpretation (Geertz, 1973: 3); Maanen (1998: 3) states that ethnography is "the written representation of culture". Ethnography strives to create descriptions of individual or collective subjectivities for the purpose of understanding different cultures (Rybas and Gajjala, 2007)"

Hine (2000) developed principles for virtual ethnography in which she says ethnography can be used for research and study the patterns in which internet become socially meaningful and significant. Moreover, interactive media proposes a challenge and an opportunity for ethnography and internet based interactive media can be understood culture as well as cultural artifact. (Hine ,2000)

To be able to understand the influence of internet and youths participation, a brief look at the contents of the website and posts on Facebook is done through distanced virtual ethnography. Collection of data from internet and social media along with semi structured interviews is done to have a better understanding of the case study. Hence, most of the Information regarding this case will be collected by studying the internet; from the official website of the organization, the Facebook.

4.2 <u>Semi Structured Interviews:</u>

Interviews conversations allow the researcher to find out how the people see and understand their world. The qualitative research interview tends to understand the world from the point of view of their subjects and interpret their experiences. (Kvale, 1996, p.1)

I used semi structured qualitative interviews one of the research method for this paper because there is a chance for the subjects to elaborate or clarify more while they answer the questions. "This type of interview enables people to answer more on their own terms, while at the same time still providing a structure for further compatibility" (May, 2011, p. 135).

Semi structured interviews use techniques from both focused and structured methods. Questions are specified normally, but the interviewer can seek elaboration and investigate beyond answers by starting a dialogue with the subject (May, 2011, p.134) It was observed during the interviews ,that interviewees brought up some more interesting aspects on the case during my informal discussion with them.

Eighteen international students in Sweden between the ages of 20 to 35 are interviewed for this research. The reason to choose this group as a sample was the cultural diversity of the participants and the advantage to be able to do face to face interview. These international students in Sweden are from different countries and cultures and it allowed me to find out the reactions and participation of youth of various national and cultural backgrounds in the project Kony 2012. Snow ball technique was used to identify more interviewees as May (2011) explains,

that it is a technique where small groups of people who were initially interviewed are requested to suggest their friends and acquaintances who then are also included in the research as interviewees (May, 2011, p.145).Therefore, my first respondents were found through personal connections, Lund university international student groups and networks, Malmo based Facebook group of Kony 2012 and later new subjects were found through acquaintances of those respondents who have previously participated in the interview.

4.3 <u>Case Study:</u>

The aim of case studies is the particular description or reconstruction of a case .The broad term of case can be understood as persons, families, social communities, organizations and institutions as the subject of analysis in a study. (Flick, 2009, p 134)

According to Berg (2007, p.283) case study is:

> A method involving systematically gathering enough information
> about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit
> the researcher to effectively understand how the subject operates
> or functions.

This definition of case study method makes it more appropriate for the study of Invisible children's project Kony to understand process and progress of the campaign in sociopolitical context and the role of social media in the project.

The case study method can help to understand the context of Kony 2012, as it is an organized project with a background, aim and goals. Yin (1994, p.7) states "if you need to know "how" or "why" the program had worked (or not), you would lean toward either a case study or a field experiment." How and why questions are explanatory and as research strategies, they are likely to guide towards the use case studies, experiments and histories. (Yin, 1994, p.6)

According to Yin (1994, p8) "The case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated".

The method of case studies has been criticized by researchers and is viewed as less popular form of inquiry as compared to other surveys and experiment .The main concern about case study method is the lack of rigor and that they provide little basis for scientific generalization .In this regard ,Yin(1994,p10) argues that:

Case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a "sample," and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization).

Moreover the case study has the strong point that it is able to deal with a verity of evidence such as documents, artifacts, Interviews and observations (Yin, 1994, p8) This method can be used in this paper as the aim of this work is to study the how and why questions regarding Invisible children's Kony 2012 project, like how do people engage with the project? In addition, at the time of study this campaign is still ongoing and in progress, so it is obvious that this study is aiming to understand the sociopolitical perspective of this project; use of social media and people's response to it .Hence, this study is not directed to study the outcome of the campaign but to understand different sociopolitical aspects related to it.

One of the objectives of this study is to understand the role of social media, so in the Kony 2012 campaign, the website of Invisible Children organization regarding Kony project (www.kony2012.com) and Facebook is also used to collect information. In addition Semi structured interviews are conducted to understand the young people's response and involvement with this project.

According to Yin (1994, p.103) There are two kinds of analysis techniques. First and more preferred is "relying on theoretical propositions that led to the case study" where "The original objectives and design of the case study presumably were based on such propositions, which in turn reflected a set of research questions, reviews of the literature, and new insights". On the other hand, "developing a case description" is the second strategy to develop a descriptive frame for organizing the case study. This study aims to look at the response of citizen and the use of social media in the campaign Kony 2012, hence all the information collected through different methods for this case study can be analyzed using the theories related to the case that are discussed in theoretical section of this paper to answer research questions.

4.4 <u>Limitations:</u>

This study is done at the same time when the project Kony is still in process though the involvement of youth and the social media hype is now lessen to a greater level after the backlash as compared to the earlier stages of the project. So, this paper doesn't aim to study the

result of the project but it will focus on the structure of the program and how it can be related to theories on internet and social media activism and civic engagement. Moreover limitations regarding interviews were that the sample group of study was limited to only international university students in Sweden, hence the study might not be fully representative. However, the aim of my research is investigative and it should help to give information on different viewpoints and motives of the young people from different parts of the world studying in Sweden, on the Kony 2012 campaign.

5. CASE STUDY: Kony 2012

5.1. Context:

The case here is campaign "Kony 2012" which is a part of the mission of a youth based nonprofit organization called "Invisible children". The journey of the organization started when three young filmmakers traveled to Africa on a film making adventure and they discovered children in Uganda who were the victims of a conflict, living the lives under deep threat of being abducted and forced to work for LRA (Lord's resistance army) lead by a war criminal Joseph Kony. These filmmakers produced a documentary film named "Invisible Children: The Rough Cut", about the continuous civil war and child soldiers concept in northern Uganda. This documentary about the stories of the child soldiers of Uganda was showed in America which ignited a youth based grass roots movement seeking activism on this issue.

Looking at the patterns how this organization uses documentaries and social networking websites as a tool to generate charity and support, the Kony 2012 project can be presented as an example of online activism through social media. Invisible Children as an organization have used the documentary and other web based video content to get support and social networks to spread the message. It is debatable that Invisible Children's project is the most effective method of helping with the complex situation in Uganda, and there have been a number of critiques about the content of the most recent video. This thesis tries to find out the motivations and the intentions of people who shared it on their social media specifically on Facebook.

The Invisible Children became an official non-profit organization in 2006. (Invisible children, online) but the first amateur documentary "Invisible children" was screened in 2004 and sparked an online social movement and headed for huge amounts of money as well as attention towards the issue of former child soldiers in northern Uganda. The film which generated a huge, youth

based humanitarian effort was an attempt of these young filmmakers from California who discovered a number of children of Uganda who travel miles daily from their villages to spend nights on the floor of buildings in the comparatively safe city in order to save themselves from being abducted and forced to serve the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).(Pepper,2009,p40)The documentary featured interviews of the children who shared their shocking stories when they were abducted to serve guerrilla-warrior Joseph Kony's army and forced to murder people haphazardly. (Pepper: 2009:40).

The Invisible Children movement is a center part of the organization's mission. From global community of young people to bring a permanent end to LRA violence and as stated on their web page, this is to be done through mass awareness campaigns and strategic advocacy efforts (Invisible children, online)

5.2 THE CAMPAIGN "KONY 2012": This movement was initiated by the "Invisible children" on the internet and the video was uploaded on video sharing website "Vimeo" February 20, 2012 and then on the most popular content sharing website "YouTube" on 5th march 2012 from where it actually sparked. The movement started to spread on different social media networks and blogging networks including Facebook, twitter, tumblr etc and the documentary video went viral on YouTube immediately and spread among millions of internet and social media consumers all over the world within few days.

In order to participate at the initial level, people needed to take pledges and spread the word by any possible means, especially via social media to make him and his crimes famous, to

flood the twitter, Facebook and the office desks of the influential culture makers and politicians with letters, emails, tweets, links, and messages regarding Kony issue.

People were moved by the video and motivated by the cause; they shared the posts and video on the social media and took pledges on the website which was focusing on the cause to create awareness about war criminal Joseph Kony and to make more and more people all over the world to aware of him. The campaign .however received heavy criticisms for apparent lack of transparency and over-simplifying of a very complex issue.

5.3 The Documentary, Campaign On Social Media and the Backlash:

The documentary is the most important part of the Kony 2012 movement and it has received massive appreciation as well as strong critique after the release. The critical analysis of the video

by Heather McIntosh and an analysis of the campaign done by Pew in American context are presented here to give the reader more insight of the different aspects of the campaign.

On March 15, ten days after the video release, Pew research center issued a report according to which:

> "Special polling and social media content analysis by the Pew Research Center tracks how the "Kony 2012" video and information about it reached so many Americans in a relatively short period of time, and the critical role social media played, especially for adults under age 30."(PEW, 2012, p, 1)

Moreover, an investigation by the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism revealed that there were about 5 million tweets about the video within seven days after it was posted online on March 5. The video shows warlord Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army as a cruel force that abducts children and force them to become soldiers. The narrator, Jason Russell demands the audience to participate in the movement by contacting politicians, giving money and putting up posters. (PEW, 2012, p, 2)

The video Kony 2012 was criticized and praised at the same time as general people think of it as a master piece and brilliant work while others objected on the factor of its emotional stimulation of viewer and over generalization. In the internet chatter about this video, a word *"Emotional Porn"* can also be seen frequently to refer the video kony2012.

Some points from Heather McIntosh's critical analysis of the video are briefly reviewed to see the detailed aspects of the video. McIntosh writes that the aim of the 30-minute video is a very precise call to action, to make LRA leader Joseph Kony renowned in order to end his violence. This goal of making Kony famous is meant to attract the attention of two general audiences. The goal was to draw attention of 2 general audiences ;first is the U.S. government which already in October 2011 sent 100 troops to Uganda, while second is the more general one who is ready to put on bracelets, put up posters, share the word on Facebook and open wallets.(McIntosh,2012)

Kony 2012 is labeled as a documentary but "It attempts to go for the heart strings and not just tickle them but instead rip them out and stomp on them. The emotional appeals throughout this piece often overwhelm, and they run the risk of alienating a more questioning audience". (McIntosh, 2012)

Moreover in the video, Jason Russell, explains through the narration that the motivation of his mission was the story of a Ugandan boy, Jacob Acaye, who he met in 2003, Jacob had survived from LRA and sadly had seen his own brother murdered by them. Later footage illustrates devastated Jacob, expressing his wish to die. Between these sequences Russell promises to stop those terrors from happening and then clips of Russell giving speeches, leading rallies and recording video to establish his efforts are shown. "So with the voiceover, the footage, and the promise, this piece quickly becomes more about Russell than about Acaye" (McIntosh, 2012)

One way that Russell tries to force people's identification with him is through his son, Gavin. The footage shows the video of Gavin's birth, pictures and videos of him growing up, acting, and making his own videos. "We get the point — Gavin's a cute kid" writes (McIntosh, 2012)

In the video Russell asks Gavin about his father's profession, and Gavin replies, "You stop the bad guys from being mean." It continues with questions about identifying the bad guys, with reference to Star Wars and with Russell explaining who Kony is but this entire thing seems to be building up Russell's role rather than explaining the importance and terrors behind the situation. (McIntosh, 2012)

According to an article in Newyork times:

> Mr. Russell, a co-founder of Invisible Children, acknowledges that he has not made the most nuanced or academic of films. The video charts his personal odyssey to tell the world about Mr. Kony's reign of terror and bring it to an end. He may have boiled down the issues, but that is what it takes to captivate so many people, he contends. "No one wants a boring documentary on Africa," he said. "Maybe we have to make it pop, and we have to make it cool." (Kron, Goodman ,2012)

Moreover, the use of all-inclusive statements(Use of We) by Russell were also problematic as a sense of belonging and recognition is key to mobilization and that use of "we" also can emphasize who belongs and who does not. Another problem is over generalization throughout the video, another way of generalization is witnessed also when it comes to the "almighty" Facebook. Showing some sequences with Facebook interactions (likes and shares), the video advocates that new media is helping to shift the equilibrium of power back to the public. (McIntosh, 2012)

"Recent stats put Facebook at around 750 million users, but are all those users looking to change the world or are their intentions more toward connecting with friends and playing Farmville?" (McIntosh, 2012)

McIntosh argues that with all of this overgeneralization and melodrama, it suggests a rather innovative solution to the problem but this solution is an immature and a misguided one.

The video shows the organization is building schools and employing people in Uganda so Instead of spending huge money on this film making, why not direct funds towards development which benefits victims like Acaye? Why not assist in health care, build more schools Instead of plastering the world with posters. (McIntosh, 2012)

In addition, the study by Pew presents data in time frame of 5-12 march regarding the campaign and is published on 15 March 2012 .The means how people learned the story was also revealed in this study that 27% of young adults first heard about this video on social media such as Facebook or Twitter while other 8% learned about it through other internet sources. In addition, the importance of internet was more than three times higher as news- learning place for young adults than traditional media and about 10% of young adults first found out about the video via traditional media (PEW, 2012, p, 1)

According to the report (PEW, 2012, p, 1) the organization made a successful effort to promote the video through social media as one of its goals was to capture people's attention through campaigning in social media and encouraging celebrity social media users to post about it. In this regard, Oprah Winfrey, Ryan Seacrest, Justin Bieber, Alec Baldwin and Taylor Swift tweeted about the campaign and the campaign was saluted by White House Press Secretary Jay Carney, who informed that "President Obama offered his congratulations for calling attention to the campaign to stop Kony and his army."(Pew, 2012)

Interestingly, a major amount of the awareness about the video can be traced to Oprah Winfrey as after her tweets about the film directing to her 9.6 million fan followers on March 6, the amount of attention to the campaign increased immediately and massively. The video got about 66,000 views on the first day but the next day, when Oprah started to promote and publicize the effort, it received over nine million views. (PEW, 2012, p, 3)

Moreover, this report also studied the social media response to the campaign before 15 March which shows that 66% of the Twitter conversation from March 5-12 supported the anti-Kony

campaign while 17% was skeptical of it. Moreover, 16% was neutral (mostly including people questioning that what was going on) (PEW, 2012, p, 3)

> "The first two days after the video was online, when attention on Twitter was relatively modest, 77% of the Twitter conversation was supportive compared with only 7% that was skeptical or negative. Since March 7, when the response picked up dramatically, the percentage of tweets reflecting skepticism or criticism rose to 17%." (PEW, 2012, p, 3)

The Ugandan response was an important point for the critics and many of the skeptical posts on social media mentioned that Ugandan people reject this story and have different understanding of the conflict .Pew report mentioned a Ugandan journalist and blogger Rosebell Kagumire who posted a video online saying that, "I think we need to have a kind of sound intelligent campaign geared toward real policy shifts, rather than an adverse sensationalized story that is out to make just one person cry."(Pew, 2012, 4)

Furthermore, An unfortunate event happened to the campaign and organization was the capture of Jason Russell on 16th march, the news that Russell was detained by police for stripping off his clothes and vandalizing cars on the streets on San Diego, was highlighted in press as well as boomed on the internet with the video. It was an event that made all the skeptics of the campaign to celebrate while putting the supporters to shame.

Consequently, "Cover the Night" was a participatory event that was supposed to happen on April 20, where people were asked to go out on streets on their cities in their Kony T-shirts all around the world and plaster the cities with posters of Kony campaign. However the event apparently failed almost everywhere and the campaign failed to get people to do some real action.

In this regard, the internet activism skeptic Evegeny Morozov, whose arguments were discussed in the conceptual framework tweeted on his twitter account after the failure of cover the night event as: "Kony 2012 Cover the Night fails to move from the internet to the streets. Somewhere Malcolm Gladwell is celebrating!"(Twitter).In the interviews conducted for this paper, it appeared that, to some extent, the news of Russell's breakdown hurt many people's enthusiasm and they separated themselves from the movement while others thought that their act of sharing the video online was the maximum they could do for the cause and they were never mobilized enough to hit streets. However, the cause was never about Russell then how come his individual action had a massive negative effect on public's enthusiasm for the cause?

Invisible children's financial outline was given by charity navigator.org according to which the overall score is 53.53 out of 70, financial score was 62.39(4-star rating) while accountability & transparency was 48.00 out of 70 with a 2/4 star rating. The reviews section of Charitynavigator.org shows a number of people complaining in comments about the credibility of organization as they donated to Kony 2012 campaign by purchasing stuff from them and kept waiting for their action kits, T- shirts or bracelets which never arrived.

According to a post on data blog of the guardian.uk:

> "An online backlash and that difficult second video, Invisible Children's follow-up Kony 2012: Part II – Beyond Famous, though still one of the top 25 non-profit campaigns ever, has amassed 1.8m views, 50 clips and 70 comments. In its first week it received just 1% of the views its predecessor gained; 1.6 million versus 112 million."(Kanczula, 2012)

It shows that by the time kony part 2 came, the interest of people was already very less because of the criticisms.

5.4 <u>The Campaign in the News:</u>

Few days after the campaign started, the press also got involved in the hype and followed the rise and falls of the movement, as according to this report:

> The mainstream media also picked up on the video, and the reaction to it, with coverage on all three evening network newscasts on March 8. That was followed by a page one March 9 New York Times story headlined; "Online, a Distant Conflict Soars to Topic No. 1." And some reporters and commentators began to raise questions about the film. (Pew, 2012, 4)

This report published in The Newyork times on 8th march had covered quite a lot about the campaign ,the social media, the celebrity effect ,the video and the critic on over simplification and financial issues so later the question started to raise with more intensity about this campaign. "YouTube said the popularity was driven by viewers in the United States and those younger than 25" (Kron, Goodman, 2012,)

In Newyork times, an article by Noam Cohen was published on 11th march 2012; some main points of the article are about the simplifying nature of the video. It says that the video was

tailored to reach the sense of right or wrong of a 5 year old and was an attempt to bring attention to Joseph Kony .There are many basis for objecting the video as some critics pointed out the deep misrepresentation of the current situation while Mr. Kony has mostly been crushed and is hiding. Some focused at the unspoken "white man's burden" note of the video that only outsider from west can solve the problem while others object to the simplification of a complex situation and telling a story of a "bad guy" whose detain would magically bring back harmony to a conflicted area (Cohen,2012, 11th march)

This article also discussed Evengy Morozov's citric towards the case that that the video is just another example of a kind of low-impact anxiety he calls as slacktivism. Furthermore, Cohen writes that the criticisms overlook the point that the Occupiers, similar to Apple's critics or the team behind "Kony 2012," are arguing for the right to keep it simple and in nearly 30-minute Kony video, you will see that not so much of it is about Mr. Kony, but about the viewer focusing on the unused power of the people. (Cohen, 2012, 11th march)

Moreover, it informed that the millions of people who watched the "Kony 2012" video and donated or participated individually and naively, might together force some big political decisions as already efforts by Invisible Children before the video stimulated the US government to send 100 advisers to help arrest Kony. We are entering an era when the shallow political influence of the public will more and more assist to shape our policy debates. (Cohen, 2012,11[th] march)

In addition, The column in USA today on 14 march ,discusses Kony 2012 project regarding its influence but also acknowledging its weaknesses .Wickham discusses that Jason Russell says that the Kony 2012 video which got more than 70 million hits within seven days aims to make this guerrilla famous and he wants to use this documentary to achieve this goal.(Wickham,2012)

This article further informs the reader about the past progress that has been done over this matter, it says that Kony has abducted thousands of children over past two decades, the boys are forced to join his army while girls become sex slaves. Moreover in 2005, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Kony while the African Union labeled his group as a terrorist organization last year. "Shortly before leaving office, President George W. Bush sent 17 counter terrorism advisers to help capture Kony, who was hiding in a Congo national park. He got

away." (Wickham,2012)This article informed more about the efforts of Obama administration in this regard that in October, it ordered 100 U. S. armed forces advisers into central Africa to coach the forces there who are trying to hunt Kony. (Wickham,2012)Wickham writes that Russell's plan to stop LRA is simplistic if not naïve. Russell persuaded millions of viewers to send messages to culture makers and policy makers believing that people can pressure the Obama administration to keep the military advisors in Africa until Kony is detained while among Russell's list of "culture makers" include people like Oprah Winfrey, Bill O'reilly, Taylor Swift and Rush Limbaugh. (Wickham,2012)

In this regard, the webpage of kony2012 showed the pictures of culture makers that should be reached through twitter or Facebook by the general public (Annex 1)

In this article Wickham discussed view point of Charles Stith ,a former U. S. ambassador to Tanzania whose argued that as all conventional media organizations the video's focal point is also about what is wrong with Africa and less on the changes taking place in Africa that have facilitated in making Kony a pariah.Changes like the increase of democratically elected leaders of African countries are tightening the rope around Kony's neck but these things about Africa are largely ignored. (Wickham, 2012)

Despite all this criticism, Kony campaign was still moving until the news of the nervous breakdown of the CEO of invisible children Jason Russell and of its consequences came out. During the interviews for this paper it was repeatedly mentioned by some participants that how this news made them separate and disengage themselves from the movement.

"Kony 2012 campaigner Jason Russell detained for public rampage". This news is taken from The guardian, 17 march 2012 which says:

> "Jason Russell, 33, was picked up by police in San Diego at around 11.30am on Thursday after they received numerous calls from the public about a man vandalising cars, being apparently under the influence of a substance and making sexual gestures." (Harris, 2012)

The team of invisible children said in response to question asked about Russell's detention, that "being at the center of a massive media storm may have taken its toll. "Russell was hospitalized for exhaustion, dehydration and malnutrition. (Harris, 2012)

This unfortunate event has also a video showing Russell on the streets on San Diego, this news was also spread like fire and damaged the credibility and image of the organization to a major level.

In this regard, The Guardian published a news story on 21 April 2012 about this very important stage of the campaign that was 'cover the night' event. Rory Carroll, a US West Coast Correspondent based in Los Angeles wrote in guardian that Kony 2012 cover the night event raised question when activists failed to cover the cities with posters of Joseph Kony. Locations across North America, Europe and Australia left cities largely unplastered and the movement's reliability damaged. (Caroll, 2012)The movement's extraordinary success in mobilizing youth online collapsed while trying to turn that success into real world actions. An interesting interaction on social media showing the typical behavior of youth was presented in this article which quotes as. "What happened to all the fuss about Kony?" and another replied *"Kony is so last month."* News reports that the very few campaigners, who were found doing something on cover the night by painting the mural, said they were the only ones all day that showed up (Caroll, 2012)

Moreover, Anneke Van Woudenberg, a senior researcher at Human Rights Watch published an article in Salon on 9th march some points from that are presented here. Woudenberg questions that whether all this public awareness will help to lead to Kony's arrest and whether it can jumpstart international action to stop the LRA's violence and defend civilians living in dangerous areas. People in remote areas must have an early-warning system to spread word of LRA attacks in order to get a rapid involvement from UN peacekeepers. In this regard, Invisible Children has helped to establish a radio system in northern Congo but a cell phone tower network would be even more helpful and effective. "The US government has committed to building such towers but implementation has been extremely slow" (Woudenberg, 2012)

On the other hand, In an article published in 'The Newyork times' on 19 march, Josh Kron writes that Uganda is trying to claim its moment in an unfortunate attention brought by Kony

2012.The Ugandan perspective on the matter is presented in this article. According to it, Uganda is reacting and are anxious that the campaign could hurt the country's investment climate and are and also conscious that it could present an important opportunity. (Kron, 2012)

In Uganda's video response, Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi who noted the Lonely Planet good gratings for Uganda said "We do not need a slick video on YouTube,", and further added that "Uganda is a modern, developing country." He further said that "Come and see Uganda for yourself: you will find a very different place to that portrayed by Invisible Children." (Kron, 2012) The article mentions that some well-known Ugandans have shown support of the "Kony 2012" campaign; however an official close to the prime minister's office informed that most of Ugandan leadership secretly found the video "neocolonial." Kony 2012 has made Uganda known now around the world but Ugandans believe that their own voices have been drown out. (Josh Kron, 2012)

According to the article:

> "Uganda, an American ally with significant regional influence, has tried to make the most out of the situation. One priority is raising awareness for investment and tourism opportunities. It is also emphasizing the Lord's Resistance Army's transnational threat and Uganda's current military role — bolstered by 100 American soldiers — in fighting the rebels across borders. Not to mention investment and tourism opportunities." (Kron, 2012)

There are a lot of press debates over the issue but very brief news summaries are presented above to illustrate the word in press about the campaign with its development, because the main focus of the paper is the people's participation in this campaign.

5.5 Website and social media:

To be able to understand the influence of internet and youths participation, a brief analysis of the contents of the website and posts on Facebook is done through distanced virtual ethnography. However in this case, the campaign's outlets and groups on social media and debates about it in the social media are more influential and important, this can be observed by looking at how the

website uses links to direct the visitors to connect the with their social media to be able to follow and share the progress of the campaign.

On the main page of the website, under the mission statement, there are options to like and share the website content on the Facebook or twitter etc. Keeping the Invisible children's focus on social media in mind, an observation of the posts on Facebook regarding this movement is carried out. The publically open posts in the Kony related groups as well as in general topic groups are observed as well as the statuses and posts regarding it on public profiles (within personal network of researcher) are also observed.

Furthermore, Evans(2010) mentions that participant observation still is the critical factor of the ethnographic process while the role of researcher is somehow different than traditional one but the role of the researcher is he further refers to Miller and Slater (2000) according to them , the engagement in a particular case, the indication to a specific locality and participant observation (e.g. in chat rooms) are still the foundations of ethnographic research, even if the internet is used as a research environment. However, the idea of the field itself is totally altered as the field is now text on a screen and the participants of the community can be present anywhere in the world in physical geography but are sharing the same space. Conventionally the researcher has been embedded within the public that is to be researched while it is not a necessity in research which uses internet as the location of the public to be studied. (Evans, 2010, p3)

Evans also refers to Morton (2001) who states that there are two possible ways of doing virtual ethnography which are distanced or involved. Distanced investigation might be done by the assessment of sources such as texts, images, or emoticons and the observation of social interactions in virtual spaces, without participation of researcher. On the other hand discursive involves the active contribution of the researcher in the research environment. (Evans, 2010,p3) In this case, the analysis of the posts on Facebook is done as distanced investigation where researcher was not participating but observing the events of social interaction in the virtual environment. Snapshots of the posts and conversation are taken but only of the posts that were publically open while the posts observed through the private network of the researcher were not captured.

A part from the official group of Kony 2012, there are numerous open or closed groups, communities and fan pages on Facebook started by individuals, some of which classified themselves with countries and even cities, like Kony 2012 Sweden.

The observation included the chatter on these pages as well as how the private contacts were talking about it. There were different nature of the comments and discussion for instance, In the earlier stages of the campaign, it was observed that majority of people were the ones who thought of Kony 2012 message as very important issue and wanted to make all their contact see it as well, also there were skeptical posts which were just arguing with people who are supporting the campaign. Moreover, People who just saw the hype and were unaware about it, posted statuses and comments questioning about this whole thing. Interestingly, there were also posts that were highly ignorant and who didn't even watched movie or searched for Kony and assumed that it is important personality and randomly said something on their profiles showing total misunderstanding of the topic.

It was observed that approximately until one week after 7th march the chatter on Facebook groups was in support and people were excited about the whole thing and then started the negative posts where people started sharing criticizing articles, blog and videos bashing invisible children which made the communities like war zones. A number or arguments were observed on the skeptical posts from the supporters and from the skeptics on the posts sharing Kony video.

The language used in these arguments posts was usually the common language of young people involved in pop culture and curse words were frequently used towards other commenting participants, Kony, American government and invisible children organization.

Furthermore, there was a number of funny and sarcastic Internet memes (a current trend on social media), floating all over Facebook about Kony while most of them were making fun of Kony campaign and of its followers. Memes are so popular that even there are individual Facebook groups for funny memes that are dedicated to Kony, Russell or IC itself only for example "Kony memes". People also posted them a lot on their pages for fun purposes and a lot of activity and arguments were seen under these meme posts between supporters and the people against it.

In addition, entertainment groups that have nothing to do with political or humanitarian issues also didn't remain silent at the matter and also posted pictures and videos to their fans and public about the campaign. For example a group which basically shares romantic pictures and love quotes was sharing Kony2012 banners and pictures and asking fans to share the word and participate. Here some of the groups also acted as individuals because the information shared on

the groups also comes from the moderator or admin of the page whose perception towards the case will demonstrate in his posts on the group he runs.

People posted links to take the pledge on their friends pages via Facebook causes with messages like "He has to be stopped", "take pledge help us all take action against Kony", "We can stop this , please forward the message" or "guys, you have got to see this, must watch"

In addition, when someone read blogs or newspaper articles via Facebook, it shows on their pages like this for instance; "Sara read an article on 'The guardian' " and then there is a link to that article which often is followed by the friends also reading the article and starting a debate in comments section; a lot of such activity was observed after 7th march.

People shared pages and posts that were negative about Kony to all their friends who were once supporting the campaign but still the most number of likes, comment and shares were on the posts from the Facebook groups of Kony 2012.

On 17th march, Posts of Russell's arrest was passed around Facebook like a hot cake and the comments on these posts were very ridiculing and making fun of organization and supporters

However it was noticed that the number of posts was gradually decreased on Facebook after 15 of March.

The website regularly communicates to the public who took pledge and are supporting them. This is done via e mail newsletters from IC about the progress and the issues of the campaign which are summarize below to give an idea of the interaction between the website producers and the consumers of information.

Additionally, On this first page of Kony2012 recently updated website ,there is "Speak Up" message for the people which encourages people to pick up their phones and call the leaders .there are two options after this message one is for US citizens while other is for international audience. These links take the audience to another page where their country is asked and after entering country (Zip code if US citizen),the address and phone numbers and all contact details of the political leaders of the country with a message on the left which says call your leader and say that you want to "urge your Head of State to meet with other world leaders on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly this September, specifically to discuss how international governments can work together to end LRA violence and bring Kony to justice." This changed approach of website persuading to call the policy makers is similar to the earlier one which focused on tweeting the policy and culture makers ,it just now upgraded to a different method.

This above statement is given on the main page under" Here is you mission" as well. Below that there is form to pledge so the new visitors on the website can pledge with them .The website gives two links on the main page which direct to Kony 2012 video and its second part Kony 2012: beyond famous.(Annex.2).

Moreover, website communicates with people and encourages serving their community, saying that of people worldwide served their local communities on April 20th while campaigning for international justice. This message follows pictures of April 20 giving people examples and ideas to serve the community on regular basis .The pictures show people preparing bagged lunches for refugee kids, young people doing beach cleanup in Dublin, making get well cards for hospitalized children in brazil, young children wearing Kony t shirts giving free car washes in Netherlands, a girl wearing Kony T shirt giving free hugs in NYC and blood drive at highland HS ,it also asks people to submit photos of their work on twitter or email them to IC.(Kony,2012)

In addition, the email newsletter by the website are of importance as they do the important work of keeping the user updated with the developments regarding the case, some of these email are summarized to have an insight of the updates coming from the IC to the public. After taking the pledge somewhere in march, the first email from IC received was regarding "cover the night "with the logo and video regarding cover the night in bold red color telling user the Mission #1 which was Support the KONY 2012 Pledge.

Later informing user that cover the Night is on Friday, April 20th, but we are doing a week of global support by rolling out new missions every day that will support the international effort for this cause. Email further tells the receiver that they have already signed the KONY 2012 pledge but as the UN will meet to discuss their strategy to end LRA violence in June and all the signatures will be delivered there; therefore there is a need to show leaders how widespread this cause is. So the mission given in this mail was simply to share the pledge with their friends while links to "sign the pledge" and "share the pledge were given at the end (IC, email newsletter, April 17, 2012) Similarly the next email gave the mission to Encourage the leaders of the African Union and United Nations to follow through quickly and responsibly on their policy regarding arrest of Joseph Kony and rehabilitation. This email by IC suggested of doing it, by asking user to Tweet about it at Jean Ping, the chairperson of the African Union Commission and

UN Secretary General Ban ki-Moon while the language used in the email was again using inclusive words like "We" and "our". (IC, email newsletter)

Another newsletter received on May 16, 2012 informs the user about a development with the heading "LRA top commander captured alive" followed by a picture. This email simply informed the user about the capture of three LRA commanders and mainly of Caesar Achellam.

In very recent context, the newsletters from IC have shared a different approach which is also on the website, as now they are asking people to personally call the policy makers and leave their messages but this details will not be discussed as this paper is discussing the project in the earlier stages basically focusing on its spread, critics, motivations and participation of people regarding it.

This discussion is done to see the communication patterns of the organization with their supporters and the discussion from Facebook to analyze the people's perception and involvement in the case and how they discuss it in the spaces provided by social media.

INTERVIEWS:

The eighteen respondents of age group 20 to 35 were interviewed, among which, eight were male and ten were females. The intended number of respondents was 20 but two participants didn't respond for some reasons and couldn't be reached even though they had agreed to be a part of the research earlier. The interviews are conducted upon the agreement that the names and personal information of the respondents will not be used and there will be no reference to their personality. Hence below, I will be using characteristics such as age, gender and sometimes nationalities to identify the participants.

Flick (2009) recommends that a semi-structured interview is set apart by introducing "topical areas" so the questions used in the interviews were focused on the themes regarding people's responses and motivation, contribution, social media, civic engagement and online activism. The interviews were structured in the following segments:

- Subject's Personal information
- Individual reaction, responses and contribution to the campaign and its criticism.
- Questions about social media and civic engagement/activism.

The general interview data is categorized in to these blocks; response and reaction, contribution, response to criticism and social media activism, which are used to analyze and present data. response is interpreted and is quoted in the words of the respondents sometimes as well. Later in

the paper, when combined with case study, this data will be analyzed through different theoretical concepts of this paper.

Response And Reactions:

During this research, the role of Facebook appeared to be highly influential in the project Kony 2012 as seventeen out of eighteen respondents informed that they first time found this video link on their Facebook page and their friends shared it .Only one respondent informed that she found it on "Tumblr" which is also a Microblogging platform and social networking website like Facebook and twitter.

In addition, the initial responses and reactions towards the Kony 2012 video were strikingly similar among all the participants of the interviews. The emotional factor of the video had hit every single person who has participated in this study and the respondents used very similar phrases to describe their immediate feelings and reactions like "I was highly touched and even cried" (F,26), "I felt really bad for those children" (M,27),"It was a terrible thing to watch" (F,30).About all participants used words like tragic, terrible, cruel, devastating and disturbing while describing their feeling and stated that their reaction of posting the same link on Facebook pages was a result of the emotions they felt. Moreover unawareness regarding this issue was also a matter of concern as no one among the participants was aware of this issue before Kony project. An international student from Trinidad and Tobago said:

> "It was deeply moving video and the fact that I never heard about it before was terrible, coming from Caribbean you might not really know much about what is going on in Europe unless you are tuned in to it, while about Africa, we tend to hear a lot more… but I never heard about this man Kony in my life. I knew about Congo child soldiers and other conflicts in Africa but not about this man" (F 26)

Moreover, a very similar design was present in the answers related to the response, reaction action and feelings about the campaign. This pattern follows the steps of watching the video, feeling bad for the children in the conflict, immediate emotions taking over, feeling highly enthusiastic about the campaign to stop Kony by means suggested in the video, feeling of empowerment (to be able to influence political decisions as youth as presented in the video)

Contribution / Participation:

Regarding the discussion on their contribution in this campaign, it came into sight that all eighteen participants shared the original video link on the social media networks especially on Facebook while two posted along with negative criticism so that people can judge and decide their action on their own.

Interestingly, people related their previous knowledge to understand and relate to the documentary which, according to interviews, appeared to be very less about this case. This knowledge can be driven by any means; for example A Male respondent said "I watched the video and immediately I shared and liked it. A reason to do that was the movie ' Blood diamond' which I watched three years ago, It was related to the diamonds extraction from Africa and Child soldiers and armies were shown in it so as I had some background of such kind of sensitive issue I felt committed".(M 33)

Sixteen out of eighteen participants claimed the suffering of children and violence in the emotional video and the youth power/enthusiasm shown in it was the motivation to share the video. They saw this act as their part to help the cause; while two claimed their motivation to share it was to generate debate and analyze different point of view on this issue.

Most of the participants recognized their act of sharing the video, taking pledge and discussing about it on their social media as their contribution to the campaign and none of the respondents for this study bought anything such as 30$ action kits, t shirts, posters for the campaign (see annex 3).

One respondent informed when asked about her contribution to the campaign:

> "I just shared it on my Facebook and even informed my friends in different countries who are business oriented people and do not know much about what's going on around the world, like my friends in Moscow…. but through my posts about Kony, they also got to know the issue and they also started discussing it. So I guess, I made more people aware of it and then the cycle continued as they also shared the link from my post".

Moreover, none of the participants took part in cover the night event while six participants did not even know about it as they stopped following the campaign after sharing the video while some claimed their pull back from campaign was a result of criticism and mostly Jason Russell's break down news.

David Campbel (2012) refers to a study done by civic Paths research group at the University of Southern California about invisible children and their projects which claims that the Kony 2012 video did not went viral, but its flow was depended on thousands of young people who already felt associated to the organization and its aims because of their contribution in school based clubs and grassroots campaigns for more than ten years. Moreover, these young people were the first to receive the video and passed it all over their social networks resulting in a process which eventually got the attention of millions worldwide and many of them have already participated in the movement by giving time and money (David Campbel, March 16, 2012).On the contrary, the interviews conducted for this paper showed that among all eighteen respondents, no one was aware of the organization or its goals before the Kony video went viral. However the above study can possibly be factual as it is done in the US and also the main target audience for the campaign is also American youth, nevertheless three interviewees for this paper are also US citizens but they are in their twenties, so maybe that is why the findings is different. The idea of pre-existing network of activists before it went viral might be true in American context but did not appeared in the interviews conducted with international students for this study.

Response to criticisms:

In an overall context, negative criticism on the movement seemed to have affected the people on a major level .however; it appeared in the cases where people kept following the campaign and news about it. There are some participants who informed that after watching the video and sharing it, they did not follow the campaign so they are unaware of the developments and criticism regarding this issue.

One participant informed who was aware of the press debate and internet backlash about Kony 2012 informed; "It is very American based and some of the criticisms seem to be true .Their target audience is American youth and they are focusing too much on American citizen and involving American government into this issue". (F 24)

A participant (F, 26), in response to the questions regarding negative news about the campaign informed in a disappointed manner that:

> I did not go on cover the night because nothing happened…(pause) because it came down after a video on TMZ which is an American gossip page; they showed video of Leader of this campaign running around naked on the street. So after that ,a lot of people pulled

back ..But the organization was under a lot of pressure and it was very hard to maintain a clean slate. It's tragic as I can understand how the nervous breakdown can actually occur. But still I posted on Malmo Kony 2012 Facebook page, "are we doing anything?", "Is anything happening? Coz I think his nervous breakdown should not be a reason to stop supporting the bigger cause, but no one responded on these posts (hmm) It just shows how fickle people became as a result as of this news. As far as I know nothing happened at least in Malmo, I didn't see any poster or anything anywhere .If it had happened I would definitely go to support; it just died after the scandal. (F, 26)

I used direct quote here because this respondent was the only one among eighteen, who still supports the organization and seem to be very passionate about the campaign even after the scandal and debates. However, this respondent also didn't buy anything for the campaign and just wanted to participate with personal efforts and participation in the campaign.

An interesting thing became visible during the interviews that after the backlash and criticism some participants felt guilt for eating up the emotional material and sharing the posts regarding Kony or taking pledge. They thought of themselves being stupid or naïve for not doing some research and not thinking over it critically before being a part of it while on the other hand some of the participants claimed to have not affected by the criticism that much because they support the cause and not the organization.

Some participants informed that accusation against IC such as charity misdealing and other objections made them do some research on the topic and they now feel that some of the blames might be true ,for example; some thought that this all is a conspiracy for US in Uganda for natural resources. Consequently, some participants who are effected by the negativity among the campaign even went back on their Facebook timelines and deleted the links and post they posted regarding Kony 2012.In this regard, as a participant said (M, 27) "I felt very stupid and went back on my Facebook and deleted the link because I did not want people to think that I was also a dumb target of the video". (M, 27)

<u>Social media activism</u>:

Most of the respondents used the phrase "social awareness" rather than social activism when asked questions regarding their understanding of the campaign as social activism. However, all

of them think that the use of social media as a tool to spread the word was a brilliant idea and it totally works in terms of spreading the information as the friend circle and interest groups on social media such as Facebook play really important part in young people's daily life. Moreover some participants said that the internet participation of people in Kony 2012 can be said as a 'Type' of social activism as they participated and did what the campaign required them to do.

As a participant (F,28) expressed that: "activism is an activity which is very different from putting a like and one have to get engaged somehow but then what can we do if something happening so far in Africa..!! so to me, this is the least we can do in order to participate either by spreading the word or raising money to help them".

Overall, the participants considered the participation done by sharing the video as a type of social activism but more referred it as a practice of 'social awareness'.

6. ANALYSIS

Internet now is largely been used for political purposes and the sense of political engagement offline or in physical world is declining. The ease and the opportunities provided by the internet are changing the traditional meaning of activism and civic engagement among youth.

The case for this paper is also a campaign ignited on the social media so the research questions of this paper are more focused towards the responses, reactions and participation of people, their understanding of this campaign as an act of social activism, the emotional factors of this campaign and people's response and mainly the significance of social media to promote participation and activism. All these points are discussed in case study and in analysis, a combination of data from the case study ,the observation of Facebook chatter and the interview will be considered analyze the case in regards of development, strategies and people's perspective and response to it, while using the theoretical concepts used in this paper connected to that topic.

6.1 Kony 2012: Responses and reactions:

The responses and reactions to the campaign Kony 2012 are discussed in the case study section which demonstrates that the common response to the call was to use internet and social media to spread the message. This act of participation can be analyzed by the help of theories discussed earlier for example public sphere, civic cultures and convergence culture. As mentioned before

that the role of Facebook appeared to be highly influential in the project Kony 2012 as the people found the video first on their Facebook pages where some of their friends shared and called others to join in. In this regard, as mentioned in the theoretical section of the paper that citizen operates as public without any fear in the public sphere, when discussing matters of general interest and are able to express their opinion.

> According to Dahlgren "The political public sphere is normatively seen as comprised of the institutional communicative spaces, universally accessible that facilitate the formation of discussion and public opinion, via the unfettered flow of relevant information and ideas" (Dahlgren,2009,p72)

In the case of Kony 2012, the internet and social media has functioned as a public sphere as it ignited and encouraged public opinion and free discussion regarding the issue of Kony2012.Facebook has acted as a public sphere where discussions on the posts related Kony showed a number of different opinions regarding the matter and also showed the importance of networks for information flow .In addition, the initial responses and reactions towards the Kony 2012 video were found extremely similar through the interviews. I appeared that no one among the participants was aware of this issue before Kony project.

Moreover, a very similar design was present in the answers related to the response, reaction action and feelings about the campaign. This pattern included the steps where participant watched the video, felt sad and sorry for the children in the conflict, felt emotional, felt enthusiastic about the campaign to stop Kony by means suggested in the video, share the video and felt empowered as an individual who can influence political decisions as if acted collectively as shown in the video.

Though the social media acted as a public sphere in this regard and allowed a free discussion and flow of information about the initiative, the campaigns and movement which are ignited on internet usually fail to fit in the traditional structures of social movements as it has less real efforts or physical effort as compared to a campaign on the ground.

6.2 Kony 2012: Contribution in campaign and attitudes towards the criticisms:

It seems that most of the people counted their act of sharing the video and taking pledge online as their contribution to the campaign.

As mentioned earlier, the idea of citizenship is traditionally being associated with institutionalized politics as Carpentier writes that political participation takes place when citizens participate in institutionalized politics (Carpentier, 2011, p.16.)

(Bennett, 2008, p2) observed the disengagement of youth from traditional politics and says that youth is more likely to be engaged as citizen in political activity which is outside of realm of government and there is an increase in civic engagement in nongovernmental areas which increase community development work and consumer activism as well as engagement of young people in social causes from economics injustice to the environment. It seems that shows how citizenship and participation are not only restricted to the institutionalized politics. While the youth is already disconnected with the traditional politics, internet and Social media has shown a number of different ways in which citizen can participate outside of institution and more nongovernmental areas. In the case of Kony 2012, it was more of a cause where people can participate socially in hope to raise their voice up to the political and decision making level.

Furthermore, the two paradigms of online and offline civic engagement discussed by Bennett (2008, p2) categorize young citizen as active or engaged or relatively passive and disengaged. Where, the engaged youth model focuses on the changes in social identity that caused increasing importance of peer networks and online communities. Its other main focus is on the empowerment of youth as communicative citizen who are free to make their own choices. The engaged youth paradigm relieves people from the responsibility to participate in traditional government based activities. However institutionalized politics have their own influence and significance but the developing new paradigm is also playing its part.

The campaign Kony 2012 was also generated from a nonprofit organization encouraging internet and social media to participate in the movement and not suggesting the real life efforts in its earlier stages which is of course different to the traditional or political protest where people hit the streets and protest for the cause. In kony2012 case, the citizen participation in protests was virtual, giving user the alternative way to be part of a cause while putting minimum effort However, Kony 2012 project was working outside the traditional grounds but focusing in politics as it is empowering citizen to join for the cause and affect the political decision making by taking part using alternative media.

On the other hand, after analyzing the overall results of the interviews and other data, it seems negative criticism about Kony 2012 have affected the people understanding of the campaign and

damaged the credibility. However, there were some people who did not follow that campaign after sharing it and were un aware of the press debates and criticism .only one participant appeared to be unaffected by the criticisms and still supports the organization. The news, the internet discussions and the interviews showed that the negative criticism is also one of a significant reason behind the failure of cover the night campaign.

After the backlash ,a number of participants seems to have effected and their enthusiasm for the campaign was no more present, while some claimed that they still support the cause because the issue is important regardless of the deeds of organization or the individuals .A notion of guilt was also seen among people during the interviews for being uncritical and following the campaign blindly while after the backlash they did research and disappointed, they deleted their posts on Facebook regarding Kony to disengage themselves from the campaign.

6.3 Kony2012: Response to the emotional issues with the campaign:

The moral and emotional issues with this campaign have affected the overall reputation of the organization and also resulted in disengagement of people who were formerly supporting them. These issues are discussed in the case study section where it appeared that the most significant critic was on the emotional factor of the video according to which this video is designed to manipulate the emotions of public to get to their goal.

This emotional factor of the video has been felt by anyone who watched the video, the respondents used similar phrases to describe their first feeling when they watched it such as, tragic, terrible, cruel, devastating and disturbing. They said that they were highly touched by the video and that is basically what that made them share the message to inform their circles on social media. Looking at that, it appears that the criticism regarding the emotional manipulation about the video is true. The critical analysis of the video presented in case study section by Mcintosh in which the points like the use of violent images, presentation of Russell as the main focus, unnecessary use of his own child and use of all inclusive comments are noted as problematic.

In addition, The news discussed earlier about Jason Russell's nervous breakdown turned out to be a disaster for the campaign and most of respondents claimed that to be the end of the campaign as it damaged the reputation of the organization and the leader of it very badly .as one

of the participant (F,28) responded "I think that the organization has taken a very serious blow because of this news and it will take a lot of time for people to forget and for the organization to regain trust of public and credibility again ."

As discussed earlier by (Harlow, 2012, p.229) that Social movements and campaigns are in constant need to get highly motivated people to spark mobilization to get more participants and resources while it can be done with a mouse click by participant to be engage globally. However the approach to generate motivation among audience can be different among the organizations. Invisible children" organization has always used the documentaries, as their tool to reach youth for their awareness campaigns and as the trend of most of charity organizations, their video also showed graphic images to make the audience feel the terror and thus be motivated and mobilized enough to donate and support. However, the filmmaking background of the team behind Kony 2012 and massive money spent on it are extra features that attracted criticisms.

6.4 <u>Kony 2012 and Social media activism:</u>

The role of social media in acceleration of a campaign and promoting participation is the main research question for this case so In order to discuss the alternative ways new media offers for citizen participation and activism, we can go back in the theoretical framework where the arguments of different writers was presented on the topic of social media activism where some are in favor and some are skeptical of it. Also the case will be analyzed using concepts of convergence culture and civic culture to answer the questions with help of different theories. The different concept discussed there will be revised here to analyze the case of Kony 2012.Social media is discussed in details earlier so very briefly "Social media is the media we use to be social" (Safko, 2010,p3) it can be said as trusted network is a group of people who gather together at a common place to share the personal information and also their thoughts and ideas (Safko, 2010,p 21) where the audience participation and their role as both user and producer of content is significant for the social networks. Social media networks such as YouTube, twitter and Facebook have recently given many examples how people can be mobilized and organized in a social movement and shown many ways to the user to participating in social and political spheres without leaving the comfort of their home.

The concept of social activism or social movements using internet and social network as tool has been debated .Despite the critique on the notion of social media activism; we have successful

examples as well. There is a need to analyze the Kony 2012 campaign as an example of a movement based on social media. Looking at the case study it is obvious that Invisible children used the power of social networks to generate support and funds for their cause which can be categorized as an excellent approach to reach their target audience which was the youth not to mention where most of the youth of the developed world have internet access are in social media circles and actively using it. On the other hand, this approach is not effective for the audience in less developed parts of the world as internet access is not available commonly.

Accordingly, the interviewees mentioned Facebook as a common platform where they first got to know about the campaign and then they moved within different spaces they have on the internet from websites to blogs and to other networks, where this ability to move within different spaces offered by new media is discussed in the frame of convergence cultures. The concept of convergence culture is described in the theory section of this paper. Jenkins mentions that convergence does not take place through media appliances how ever become sophisticated with it, it occurs within the minds of consumers and through their social interactions. (Jenkins, 2006, p3)

In Kony movement it was obvious that a modern media user received the campaign and the public discussions on the internet and in the real world on the issue gave it a spark. Also the consumer acted both as the media consumer as well as producer in their act of sharing the video on their social media which can be linked to the idea of participatory culture of Jenkins. Media convergence has changed the ways of media consumption. The Internet has allowed media convergence to flourish; it can be said that the massive number of audience received by Kony movement was done through this media convergence and participatory culture and spread as convergence is said to promote participation and collective intelligence.

In this regard another concept which was touched upon in the earlier section can be related to this is the weak ties. Granovtter's idea can be applied to the working of Facebook, where weak ties among acquaintances operate as bridges to smooth the progress of the transfer of knowledge and ideas among people scattered at different geographical places while still influence the sharing of ideas and can generate shared action such as protests as well. Weak ties should be more efficient and successful to generate a positive response to the protest calls.(Somma, 2009, p291) In this case on Kony 2012 the weak ties between acquaintances, friends, strangers and groups on social networks facilitated the flow of information regarding the movement; as one of

the interviewee said that she has spread the word through her Facebook and brought the attention of her acquaintances living in different places to the cause, who are usually not interested in socio political matters. This shows the power of weak ties when it comes to spread the information across networks.

Moreover, as the focus of this paper is not in the success or failure of the campaign but rather on the strategies used by the organization and motives of people participated in it, we will look at it relating it to the ideas of both social media activism believers and skeptics.

Kony 2012 ,can somehow be related when it comes to the idea of social media as an upgrade in promotion techniques of social movements as Shirky mentioned that social media is an upgrade for the promotion of social and political causes and is able to play important role in socio political change. According to him, it has become an organizing tool for most of the world's political movements; just as many of the world's dictatorial governments are trying to limit free public access to it. In response while the U.S. State Department has committed itself to "Internet freedom" as a policy aim (Shirky, 2011, p2)

On the other hand ,it is obvious from the news ,interview and Facebook discussions that the campaign did not work in real life as it was expected and the massive response was limited to the social media and internet which proves Malcolm Gladwell's and Morozov's argument against social media activism to be true.

Harlow (2012, 230) mentions that:

> While Morozov (2007, 2009) acknowledged that the internet can facilitate mobilization and collective action, and that the latest generation of activists and protesters might as well be based out of Facebook, he cautioned against technological determinism that glosses over the importance of offline participation. Similarly, other scholars have questioned whether virtual interaction could prompt the levels of trust among participants needed to support sustained collective action.

Moreover, a huge number of people might read newspapers and follow traditional media but still there are over seven hundred million people that use Facebook, which is a medium with the characteristic of being free of cost and ability to connect people in social spheres regardless of their physical and geographical positions, a medium where information flows without any barrier in the interest groups and friend circles, all these characteristics makes it a good medium for

campaigns and causes .However, as discussed by Morozov that it cannot be predicted that which causes will work and which will not.

In addition, according to Gladwell (2010)activist are now defined by their tools while once they used to be identified by their causes (Gladwell, 2010) he also argues that Social media cannot deliver the requirements of bringing social change and it only supports weak ties and low risk activism, while Social change requires high-risk meaningful activism. This can be applied at the case of Kony 2012 as it only worked within the weak ties of social media but failed when it came to offline participation of high risk activism as mentioned by Gladwell.

6.5 <u>Social media activism and civic cultures:</u>

The idea of civic culture is crucial to understand the role of internet and social media in the project Kony to understand how it worked to spread the word across the masses. However it does not mean that it is a successful campaign offline as mentioned above with Gladwell's argument that it worked well online only but did not live up to the expectations in the real world or offline activism. The patterns behind online participation is important to be analyzed with circuit of civic cultures as it was discussed in the theory section that according to Dahlgren (2003) "The idea of civic cultures takes as its starting point the notion of citizens as social agents, and it asks what are the cultural factors that can impinge on the action and communication in their roles as (multifarious) citizens" (Dahlgren, 2003, p.152.)

In addition, if the well-known concept of public sphere points to the relevant communicative spaces of democracy, the civic cultures concept underlines the features of the social and cultural world which serve as preconditions of people's actual involvement in the public sphere and political community. These preconditions include prevailing cultural characteristics among citizens that can facilitate democratic life in different ways. (Dahlgren,2009, p 105.)

The project Kony 2012 can also be analyzed through civic cultures lens as according to Dahlgren both traditional and new interactive media influence the characteristics of civic cultures through their form, content, logic and modes of use (Ibid.105)

Dahlgren discusses circuit of civic cultures which has a focus on media to study citizen participation and is consist of six dimensions of knowledge, values, trust, spaces, practices and identities.

1. Knowledge:

The citizens need to have knowledge in order to participate politically. In order to be civically engaged, they must have access to reliable reports, portrayal, analysis, discussion and debates about current affairs. (Dahlgren, 2009, p108)

In the case of Kony 2012 project "the knowledge" and information was main focal point .The project's aim was to inform more and more people about a specific person involved in criminal acts for long time and most of the world do not have knowledge about it. It almost made it appear that if people had more knowledge about Kony, things would have been better and that is why the first mission of the campaign was to make Kony famous among common public. The group behind Kony focuses very much on delivering information to the masses through social media and also through webpage and email newsletters to the people who took pledge with the campaign to stop Kony. The information in the newsletters included all the progress and hurdles that campaign is facing.

The invisible children used internet and social media, most importantly YouTube, Facebook, twitter and tumblr as a tool for the distribution of the knowledge to achieve the goals. In short, the spread of the video was an effort to spread knowledge first to be able to move on to the next step. Hence knowledge is the major aspect for public participation.

However, the criticism about the campaign pointed out that the information given through this campaign was highly over simplifying and ignores many important aspects and somehow provides wrong information about certain things. So the people received both kinds of knowledge, one that was provided in simple form to target simple and general public and second that was criticizing and correcting the facts given to public through the same platform of social media and also press. Dahlgren mentions that the ability of a citizens to acquire knowledge is as important as having knowledge. People should be able to make sense of the information that flows in the public sphere (Dahlgren, 2009, p.109.)

Given that the Campaign was all over social media, citizens did not have to be on the website to get information about it as almost every platform they use on internet was filled with positive as well as negative discussion on the issue and there was too much to follow. The constant emails from the invisible children to the people who took pledge kept the user informed about the development and the problems in the project and encouraged to share the information.

3. **Values: substantive and procedural:**

Dahlgren (2009, p.110) states that, "democracy will not function if such virtues as tolerance and willingness to follow democratic principles and procedures do not have grounding in everyday life." Reports from troubled areas of the world prove that democracy cannot survive in a condition of widespread lawlessness. There is a necessity to have a group of democratic values and principles to resolve and deal with conflicts where consensus is not possible. He further notes that a set of rules offered by procedural mechanisms are very important in the situations where groups or individuals have contrasting points of views.

(Dahlgren, 2009, p.111)

Dahlgren classifies these values in to two types; substantive values and procedural values Substantive values consist of those such as equality, liberty, justice, solidarity and tolerance, while on the other hand, procedural values include openness, reciprocity, discussion, responsibility and accountability.

This difference between substantive and procedural values is important to this campaign as substantive values such as equality, justice, and solidarity apparently seem to be advocated by the organization(IC) as the campaign focused and motivated people to be joining together to show solidarity for the justice. On the contrary, procedural values such as openness, responsibility and accountability apparently were not given much importance as they were substantially criticized for their apparent issues of financial accountability.

Moreover, Dahlgren (2009, p.112), mentions that a strong eagerness for democratic values can stir up response, stimulate engagement and generate action ; also this enthusiasm for democratic values is the basis of civic virtue and the guideline that characterize ideal civic behavior.

4. TRUST : Optimal and Directed

Trust is a crucial component of democracy where the citizens are assumed as the bearers of trust where the objects of trust are institutions and government representatives. (Dahlgren, 2009, p.112)

The author mentions that the subject of theme has been explored in many civic contexts but as for the civic cultures circuit; most important is the trust between or among group of citizens.

Dahlgren further describes thin trust as "generalized honesty and expectations of reciprocity that we accord people we don't know personally but with whom we feel we can have a satisfactory

exchange". In civic contexts, thin trust becomes more relevant and without an amount of thin trust, collective political action becomes unfeasible (Dahlgren, 2009, p.113)

According to Dahlgren (2009, 113) "Politics involve conflicts of interest, as well as identities in opposition, which insert an element of mistrust into these social relationships from the start "therefore, excessive trust is unsuitable.

The concept of trust can be understood when applied to Kony 2012 case .Invisible children, as an organization wants the audience to trust the organization and its purpose and responds to the criticisms to regain the public trust regarding financial accountability.

Moreover, (p, 114) qualifications to act like a citizen require collective efforts and loose relation of networks while depending on minimally operational thin trust.

4. Spaces: communicative access and contexts of action:

Dahlgren(2009,p114) mentions that the citizen must be able to interact and talk to each other for democracy to come about and they need to have contact with each other to build up their political efforts and deal with situations in which they can act collectively.

The earlier discussed concept of public spheres and the idea of Space by Dahlgren are quite similar as they both acknowledge platforms and spaces that allow public to communicate and engage in discussions within a socio political context.

According to Dahlgren (2009) Citizens should be able to contact their representatives and to involve in the spaces where policy and decision making is discussed (p.115) Moreover, by means of media, the possibilities of civic interaction expand and communicative spaces multiply. The author further says that media has allowed the people who are not physically present in those spaces to have a sense of co presence.

According to Dahlgren (2009, p, 116) Websites, blogs, wikis, discussion forum etc are the new communicative spaces offered by the internet where people can interact freely and "Interspatiality, the capacity to move freely between different cyber communicative spaces becomes easy" (p, 116)

The internet is used as the core space concerning the case of Invisible children's Kony campaign where people could share the information, pledges for the cause and donate to help. People are able to see the video on YouTube or the website, share on Facebook or twitter and discuss it on blogs and social media hence moving freely within different cyber communicative spaces.

5. Practices: embodied agency and skills:

According to (Dahlgren, 2009, p.117) "A viable and growing democracy must be embodied in concrete, recurring practices-individual, group and collective-relevant for diverse situations" They assist to provide personal and social meanings of democracy and must contain an element of routine to be a component of civic cultures. Practices can be learned and need specific skills particularly communicative abilities like reading, writing, speaking, using the computer and the internet (Ibid, p.117)

Moreover, as a practice, talk has an important position and it is associated with democracy and opinion formation. "Civic talk can involve a number of different practices, beyond that of formal deliberation" Key practice for civic engagement is the ability to use networks in order to connect with issues that are related. (Ibid.117)

In this regard, talk was the very important aspect regarding Kony campaign as each of the link or post about it on the internet generated a short debate resulting in different ideas and arguments regarding participation in the campaign; also people talked about this topic in their general every day get-togethers as well. Some participants in the interviews mentioned that they discussed this topic among their peer groups and argued, as every person had a different perspective about the case.

In addition, (Dahlgren,2009,117)a major practice for civic engagement is not only developing or joining networks but also the ability to use those networks regarding specific issues**.** Invisible children organization has used networks in their Kony project to connect with their target audiences and participants. The people joined together for the cause that is generated by the campaign because the networks the young generation uses were all flooded with the information regarding campaign and when each user shared the link or participated in discussions (online or offline) ,it was a contribution in itself to the campaign.

6. Identities: heterogeneity, empowerment, community:

Dahlgren mentions identities, a theme of people's subjective vision of themselves as participants and members of democracy. Moreover, identities can be claimed as a centerpiece of civic cultures, with other five dimensions equally contributing to shaping the conditions of its existence (Dahlgren, 2009, p.118-119)

Identities develop and grow through experience and experience is based on emotions; in modern times, the affective dimension of civic engagement should not be associated with irrationality in destructive sense, automatically. Moreover, "the salience of civic identities can vary enormously among individuals, but for most people it is low" (Dahlgren, 2009, p.119)

Furthermore, According to Dahlgren, (2009, p.120)

> Received citizenship, that is, formal membership as legitimate, equal and recognized citizen of the state, is probably the most fundamental source of civic identity for most people, especially if they are not particularly engaged in any specific political issues.

Dahlgren (2009, p.120) suggests two components to civic identity that can operate together; First is the sense of political empowerment and is connected with the idea of achieved citizenship with civic agency. Empowerment appears at the subjective level but according to the author;

> At some point, of course, empowerment must be experienced as meaningful, that people sense that their efforts at least made a contribution in a political struggle, even if they do not win each time. (Dahlgren, 2009, p.121)

In addition, the other component of identity is membership in one or more political communities, as civic participation is collective action where people work with one another.

Identity as a part of civic cultures, with both of its components of empowerment and membership is not very significant in this case; but can somehow be related with Kony campaign and people's participation in it, if we look at the components of identity in a collective way and not in individual.

7. Conclusion:

This paper aimed to look at the role of internet and social media in participation and activism using the case of Kony 2012 .It also aimed to see the response, reactions, attitudes, contributions and motivations of people using interviews regarding this campaign. Theoretical frameworks related to civic engagement, public sphere, social media activism and civic cultures are used to analyze the case. The patterns of sharing content and discussion on it is also analyzed by

studying internet; more specifically observing the Facebook posts and chatter about the campaign.

In the case of Kony 2012, the social media hype proved that internet can be used as an tool to gather and organize people to raise their voice for some cause however, this efforts seems to be limited to the screen of the computers while failing to bring the user on the streets or to do some real contribution proving Gladwell's argument to be right.

However, the Youth have shown great interest in this campaign and at least to some extent in America, have also tried to participate physically while being organized through virtual discussion and interest groups on social media. It shows that the youth is more inclined to participate and engaged in the nongovernmental areas that are related to development and humanitarian causes. The role of culture is also important as it appeared during the study that the effect of celebrity tweets and message was massive and Oprah contributed huge in this regard as after her tweets about Kony, the YouTube views of the video skyrocketed. This shows the influential power of celebrities in today's culture.

Moreover, People were affected by the critics that pointed out that the video Kony 2012 is about how white man can act as a hero and save the world and it represents the poor and conflicted Africa where poor children are in need to be rescued while it did not focus on the developments regarding the issue. Accusations for giving wrong and misleading demographic idea about of Joseph Kony and his army were also significant as critics claimed that he doesn't control and operate in Uganda anymore.

When it come to the contributions, People participated more in the virtual world by sharing the video and taking pledge but to some extent, signing the pledge to make Kony famous and buying expensive action kits seems pointless but this approach got the organization to receive massive funds which suggest that for the young people, these actions of putting up posters and wearing Kony t shirts might mean as an action of participation or activism. The feel good factor is obvious in this regard where the people want to do such actions in which they have to do minimum effort and have a satisfactory feeling that they have taken part in a social cause to help someone.

Malcolm Gladwell's strong and constant rejection shows that he does not consider the importance of social media regarding social activism .however it can be said that social media can be an impressive tool for the spread of information and gather support but it often fails to

mobilize people to leave the comfort of their houses and to come on streets. Moreover there is no guarantee of success of a campaign on social media as Morozov says that it cannot be predicted which campaign on social media will work and which will not.

The significance of social media in the case Kony 2012 is undoubted, it has acted as a public sphere for the people to gather and engage with the project. The characteristic of social media being open for all sorts of discussion also allowed the negative criticism against the campaign flow freely and the discussions and information on the social media about it was both positive and negative. Social media can act as a catalyst in the act of spreading the message across masses.

The case is also analyzed using the concept of Civic cultures, to see the patterns of people's engagement using the alternative new media the dimensions of civic culture such as knowledge, values, practices, spaces and trust demonstrates various aspects of citizen participation in the case of Kony 2012 with use of new interactive media as a tool of participation. In addition, it also appeared that most of the people who have shared the video, just fell for the emotional factor of the video while some saw their friends or family post something about it on their social media and hence the loop started and some who wanted to join to be a part of the power of public as shown in the video to enjoy the empowerment which had a feel good aspect attached to it ,that by filling walls with posters ,they are helping the cause to save children in Uganda.

This research project has emphasized on the strategies and structure of the project and the ways it used social media as a tool to generate support .The Kony project is still on going and there are new developments by invisible children in the campaign which will continue until the goal of Joseph Kony's arrest is achieved. Nevertheless it can be concluded that the use of social media was a very impressive and clever idea for the campaign 2012.The adoption of the new media has demonstrated a massive response to the campaign but at the end of the day, it failed to live up to the expectations of the organization as it could not make people to participate in the real world for instance; in 'cover the night' as it was expected and the campaign remain limited to the discussions in social media.

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9. ANNEX:
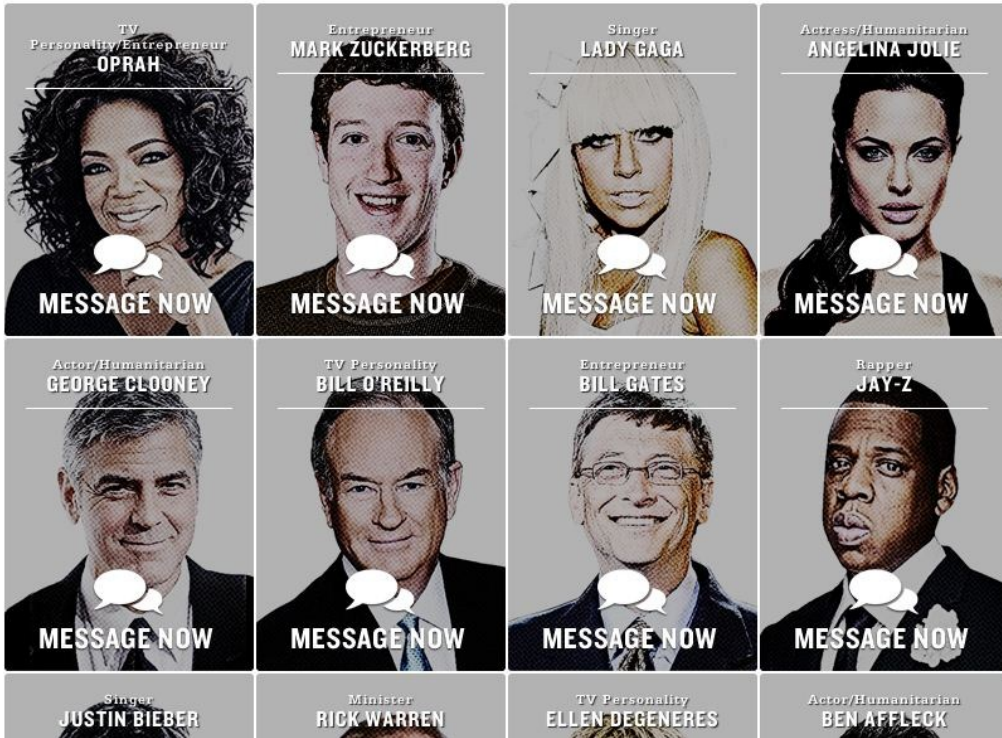
Annex.1 :Source.www.kony2012.com .snapshot taken on 13th march 2012.

Joseph Kony is one of the world's worst war criminals, and I call on my leaders to support the international efforts now led by the United Nations and African Union to arrest him and his top commanders, bring the child soldiers home, and restore lasting peace. SEE FULL PLEDGE

PLEDGE YOUR SUPPORT

First Name | Last Name | Select Country

Email Address | Zip/Postal Code

☐ YES, I participated in Cover The Night

PLEDGE NOW

Annex:2.source :www.Kony2012.com

BUMPER STICKER	BUTTON
KONY ▼ 2012	
KONY T-SHIRT	STICKERS
KONY	KONY ▼ 2012
3 BRACELETS	10 POSTERS

Kony 2012 Action Kit $30.00   Kony Bracelet $10.00   Mend / Slingshot Cow Tote $75.00

Annex: 3, source: www.kony2012.com

10. INTERVIEW GUIDE

Date of Interview: day....../month......./2012

<div align="center">**PART I-BACKGROUND**</div>

Name of Respondent:
1. Age of respondent:
2. Sex of respondent
3. Nationality:
4. Educational status   (a) Bachelors [ ] (b) Masters [ ]

<div align="center">**PART II-SOCIAL MEDIA AND CAMPAIGN KONY2012**</div>

Question #1. How did you find Kony 2012 video first? And what was your first thoughts and reaction to it?

Question#2.In   what   ways,   have   you   contributed   to   the   whole   campaign?

Question #3. Have you bought bracelets, shirts etc from this campaign's website and did you take part in cover the night event?

Question # 4 .What do you think about the press debates, criticisms about this campaign? How have you reacted to the negative buzz about it?

Question#5 . Did you take part in any of Invisible Children's past projects before Kony?

Question #6.What do you feel about the campaign as a whole? What were your reactions to the documentary; the images and the conflict for this case?

Question #7. Do you think such campaign can make a difference through social media?

Question#8 .How do you think this campaign can contribute to this political conflict?

Question #9.What is social activism in your point of view? Do you define and understand this Facebook campaign as activism?

Question #10. Is there anything you would like to add or comment on that we have not covered in this interview?