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PRACTICES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN ORGANIZATIONAL  
REPUTATION BUILDING: CASE STUDY OF LIMMU COFFEE FARM COMPANY

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**Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for MA and/or for other purpose in any company.

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Signature

## **ABSTRACT**

*This study assessed the practices and opportunities of public relations (PRs) in building reputation of Limmu Coffee Farm Company as main objective. To achieve this objective, the practices & activities of PRs/strategic communication in corporate social responsibility (CSR), communication instruments, and factors affects company reputation/practice public relation were categorized and seen as attributes on 'reputation building'. The study employed qualitative research approach, wherein, in-depth interview and document analysis were used as data collection instruments. Eighteen (18) interviewees were selected for interview by purposive and convenience sampling technique. Thematic analyses were used in data analysis. The study shows that the practice/activities of PRs were more focused on tradition. Publicity activity was applied in CSR activity; activities of CSR were not only for the purpose of existence, but also for the society interest with less attention on regular stakeholders' contributions. There was a serious professional gap, lack of professional training skill development, and lack of manpower were a inhibited the practices of public relations. The researcher concluded the PRs sector was not professionally and structurally organized; practices of PRs was not well perceived, corporate social responsibility activity was not well understood as it establishes linkage between company's reputation with its constituents' stakeholders in building positive reputation. Finally, the researcher recommended practice of PRs should perceived as it is very crucial for private company, public relations department should professionally and structurally organize, CSR activity should consider stakeholders contributions to build sustainable company reputation.*

**Key words:** Public relations practice, strategic communication instruments, opportunities, Corporate Social Responsibility, reputation building, open system theory, stakeholder approach.

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Table of Contents.....	page
Approval .....	i
Declaration.....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
ACRONYMS .....	viii
Operational Definition of Terms and Glossary.....	ix
List of Tables .....	x
List of figures.....	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Background of the Study.....	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem .....	2
1.3. Research Objectives .....	4
1.3.1. General Objective .....	4
1.3.2. Specific Objectives .....	4
1.4. Scope of Study .....	4
1.5. Significance of the Study .....	4
1.6. Limitation of the Study .....	5
1.7. Structure of the Study Organization.....	5
1.8. Ethical Consideration .....	5
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	7
2.1. Definitions and Background of Public Relations Practices .....	7
2.2. Effectiveness of Public Relations Practices .....	8
2.2.1. Public Relations and Communication .....	8
2.2.2. Public Relation and Strategic Communication.....	9
2.2.3. Public Relations and Corporate Communication .....	10
2.3. Organizational Reputation.....	11
2.3.1. Organizational Reputation and Corporate Identity.....	12
2.4. Practices of Public Relations/Strategic Communication in Building Company’s Reputation .....	13
2.5. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).....	15
2.5.1. Activities of PRs/Strategic Communication in Company’s CSR Policies and Practices .....	16

2.5.1.1. Public Relations in Corporate Social Responsibility Practices.....	18
2.5.1.2. The Social Responsibility of Business to Increase Profits.....	19
2.5.1.2.1. Stakeholders Approach .....	19
2.6. Public Relations/Strategic Communication Instruments in Building Company’s Reputation .....	19
2.7. Opportunity .....	20
2.8. Future Challenges for Public Relations.....	21
2.9. Theoretical Framework .....	22
2.9.1. Open Systems Theory and Public Relation Practices.....	22
2.10. Models of Public Relations .....	23
2.10.1. Press Agency Model .....	23
2.10.2. Public Information Model .....	23
2.10.3. Two-way Asymmetric Model.....	23
2.10.4. Two-way Symmetric Model.....	24
2.11. Conceptual Framework .....	25
2.12. Empirical Studies .....	25
<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES .....</b>	<b>27</b>
3. 1. Research Design and Method.....	27
3.1.1. Research Design .....	27
3.1.1.1. Research Method .....	27
3.2. Population of the Study .....	27
3.3. Sample Size and Sample Technique .....	27
3.3.1. Sample Size .....	27
3.4. Data Collection Method, Procedure and Technique of Analysis .....	28
3.4.1. Data Collection Method.....	28
3.4.1.1. Interviews.....	28
3.4.1.2. Document Review.....	28
3.4.2. Data Collection Procedures .....	29
3.4.3 Data Analysis Technique.....	29
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.....</b>	<b>30</b>
4.1. Result From Interview.....	30
4.1.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants. ....	30



4.1.2. Practices of Public Relations/Strategic Communication in Building Company Reputation.....	32
4.1.3. Activities of PRs/strategic communication more in CSR Policies and Practices.....	34
4.1.3.1. Activities of PRs/Strategic communication in CSR .....	34
4.1.3.1.1. Responses of Farm Managers .....	36
4.1.3.1.2. Responses of Employees .....	37
4.1.3.1.3. Responses of Stakeholders .....	38
4.1.3.1.4. Available opportunities .....	39
4.1.4. Public Relations/Strategic Communication Instruments .....	40
4.1.2. Result from Document Review .....	41
4.2. Discussions .....	42
4.2.1. Practices of Public Relations/strategic communication.....	42
4.2.2. Activities of Public Relations/strategic communication more in CSR policies and practices .....	43
4.2.3. Public Relations/Strategic Communication Instruments .....	44
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION .....	45
5.1. Conclusion.....	45
5.2. Recommendation.....	45
References.....	47
Interview Guidelines .....	52
Appendix A.....	53
Appendix B .....	54
Appendix C .....	55
Appendix D.....	56
Appendix E .....	57

## **ACRONYMS**

### **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

CIPRs-----Charter Institute of Public Relations

PRs-----Public Relations

SC-----Strategic Communication

CSR-----Corporate Social Responsibility

UKIPRs-----United Kingdom of Institute Public Relations

EUPRERA-----European Public Relation Education Research Association

LCFC-----Limmu Coffee Farm Company

IPRs-----Institute of Public Relations

CEO-----Chivies Executive Office

PRSA-----Public Relations Society of America

HRM-----Human Resource Management

IPRA-----International Public Relations Association

PRISA-----Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa

## **Operational Definition of Terms and Glossary**

Organizational Reputation – Shamsie’s (2003), defines “as the level of awareness that the firm has been able to develop for itself”; and Carroll (2011), identifies that it is how stakeholders perceive the quality of specific qualities in the context of the organization.

Opportunity- is an idea or vision that is discovered or created by an industrial entity and that is revealed through analysis over time to be potentially profitable.

Company: Any group of people voluntarily united to jointly performing any activity. This is synonymous with enterprise, firm, or corporation.

Private Company: is a company whose shares are restricted in the sale equity.

## **List of Tables**

1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

## **List of figures**

Figure 1: Activities of Public Relation

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background of the Study**

Chartered Institute Public Relations (2010), addressed public relations practice is the discipline concerned with the reputation of organizations (or products, services, or individuals) with the aim of earning understanding and support. Chartered Institute Public Relations (CIPRs) approach refers public relations (PRs) as being ‘about reputation – the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you’, and the discipline which looks after reputation. PRs practiced in many different organizational contexts to corporate communications roles. PRs practitioners build and enhance the organizational reputation as well as maintain relationships that are important to the organization and its goals (Smith, 2002).

According to Butterfly & Pires (1999), today in the advent of a technological revolution, PRs practices can be found everywhere, and especially in the private sector. The private sector has always valued its publics (Botan, Carl & Vincent, 2006), but today even more so as they follow a proactive approach (Yang, 2002). Depending on this practice of PRs value organizations and the public proactively in their workplace. Edward Bernays (1920), states PRs is more important for the organizations and even for the country to build long term relationships with the strategic public based on two-way communications, problem-solving, trust, strategic planning, and control mutuality.

Baskin *et al.*, (1997), states that PRs practitioners communicate with all relevant internal and external publics to develop positive relationships and to create consistency between organizational goals and societal expectations. PRs practitioners develop, execute and evaluate organizational programs that promote the exchange of influence and understanding among an organization’s constituent parts and publics. Banik (2002), stated PRs is an effort used to inter policies and programs of an organization with the objective to establish a bridge of understanding and goodwill between the organization and its publics; this conceptualizes that PRs specialist will investigate and analyze internal and external pressures, diagnose problems confronting the organization, suggest future trends and developments, and propose or counsel prescriptions for future action depending on the proposed objective.

Reputation is a goodwill that the company has achieved through a formidable approach to enhance its credibility as a reputable company (Fombrun, 1996). A company's reputation is built upon the relationships it has with its stakeholders. A strong reputation platform rests on a interpretation of the company's history, strategy, identity, and reputation that rings true to internal and external observers. Martins (2012), defines that organizational reputation is understood as a socially constructed collective product. From this perspective, reputations are derived not only from the actions of organizations but also from social interactions between stakeholder groups. The Economist (2008), stated "Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) once a do-gooding sideshow is now seen as mainstream." The connection between CSR and PRs covers beyond the community relation function of PRs.

Limmu Coffee Farm Company (LCFC) is a private company that established in 2007 E.C in Oromia Region Jimma Zone, nearly 350 km from Addis Ababa (from company profile). The excellence plan of this company is the ability to give solution to the taste and preference of customers in which sustainability of production and the equity of the future generation is maintained through the philosophy of the give-back to the soil and society with which the company discharges its CSR by transferring technology and investing on a number of projects that are originating from the needs of the surrounding community (from Company profile). The core idea behind CSR is that businesses are now increasingly expected to fulfill social expectations that go above and beyond what is required under the law or the customary expectations of profit-making (Falck & Heblich, 2007). So, practice of PRs is the most important to meet the company existence; this study focused on assessing practices and opportunities of PRs in building organizational reputation.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Public Relations actually play an important role in the organizations' communication programs and refer to the reputation of an organization (Prida, 2007). PRs had a significant role in building the reputation of some of the world's most admired corporations (Skolnik, 1994). According to this concept, practice of PRs has a great role in building company reputation in an admired way. PRs professionals expected to develop a brand and create a communication strategy in order to build an organization's reputation (Legion, 2002). However, PRs practitioners still do not measure up to professional standards Grunig & Hunt (1984:4). The business situation has

recently been much more challenging due to the increased demands of the related stakeholders; so, the roles of PRs for a business have also been far more crucial.

The growth of social responsibility in business has led to a feeling among practitioners that they should be recognized as professionals, despite the origins of the industry in press agency (Theaker, 2004). Capriotti & Moreno (2007), openly argue that CSR is a vital part of public relations. However, the same cannot be said regarding CSR's body of literature when it comes to public relations. Tarawneh (2015), believed PRs is the central department in the heart of any company which deals with everyone inside and outside the company. The success of the enterprise depends on the delivery of target public services and satisfaction gained through plans and programs offered by PRs practitioners. The concept of PRs has evolved in many countries and has come to serve a key role in organizations; but still, PRs is limited in many government agencies.

Mulualem (2017), cited Bereket (2013), and Ermias *et al.*, (2006), PRs is a young profession in Ethiopia; and stated PRs practice is crucial for government; however, he found as it is not well understood, and as strategic communication was not well functioned focusing on government organization. Most companies do not have a system in place for regular, and periodic accountability on variations in reputation, yet without such a system opportunity will be missed and problems will become magnified (Doorley & Garcia 2007). Tesfaye (2018), stated PRs practitioners have not perceived as the management function in government University.

However, there was professionally a potential problem with the practice of PRs and strategic communication, and also the emphasis of past researchers was more on government organizations and Universities. What made the current study new is it focused on private company on LCFC which other local researchers did not done on it before this study conducted on the proposed title. So, this study conducted to assess the practice and opportunities of PRs in building reputation in case study of LCFC. The present study will fill the gap in the literature by examining how private company in Jimma Zone, specifically LCFC incorporate practices of PRs into their day-to-day activities in order to build and enhance their reputation.

Since there was no research conducted on the practice and opportunities of PRs before this study in the above area, obviously it needs to see the practice of PRs/SC that takes place in this company in reputation building. By considering these, the researcher believes that conducting



this study in this area will fill gaps in the literature and serves as an input for company and for other researchers to further studies in future. Having this in mind, this particular study expected to answer the following questions:

1. What are the practices of PRs/SC in building the company's reputation?
2. What are the activities of PRs/SC and opportunities more specifically, in the company's CSR policies and practices?
3. What PRs/SC instruments are used in building company's reputation?

### **1.3. Research Objectives**

#### **1.3.1. General Objective**

The general objective of the study was to assess the practices and opportunities of PRs in building the reputation of Limmu Coffee Farm Company.

#### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives**

- To identify the practices of PRs/SC in building the company's reputation
- To describe the activities of PRs/SC and opportunities, more specifically, in the company's CSR policies and practices.
- To identify PRs/SC instruments used for company's reputation building.

### **1.4. Scope of Study**

This study focused on the practices and opportunities of PR building LCFC reputation. The researcher conceptually focused on practices of PRs, activities of PRs/SC in company's CSR policies and practices within the available opportunities, communication instruments, as well as internal and external factors that affect company reputation and PRs practices were the core issued in this study. Geographically, this study included five farms namely: Gomma I, Gomma II, Kossa, Suntu, and Gumer, and head office within a range of December, 2020/2021 to June, 2020/2021.

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

PRs is a goal-oriented that contribute to committing legitimacy that led to build acceptance of new ideas and concepts; as well as repairing and maintaining legitimacy when an organization's practices are being challenged (Rao *et al.*, 2003). Van Riel (2007), stated the success of an

organization's efforts to acquire resources and to influence the context within which it carries out its activities depends heavily on how well and how professionally a company communicates with its resource holders. So, communication is a key in maintaining a satisfactory, long-term, trusting relationship with publics and stakeholders that is provided through the practice of PRs.

However, there is a potential problem in practices of PRs in developing country like Ethiopia. So, this study focused on practices and opportunities of PRs in building LCFC reputation by categorizing variables like the practices of PRs, activities of PRs more in CSR and opportunities, Communication instruments, and factors affected company reputation and practices of PRs within related literature review. So, LCFC is a direct beneficial to review its practices as a whole particularly regarding practices of PR practitioner, leader, and farm managers who was responsible for all organization activities. On the other hand, the findings also could serve as essential inputs for next researchers who may conduct further studies on practice and opportunities of public relations on organizational reputation building.

#### **1.6. Limitation of the Study**

During data collection, the researcher has faced a little challenge; lack of interest was occurred at the first time, company asked official letter from university, the researcher gave and convince them with the research objective to conduct this study in their company. So, the researcher used appropriate facial expression throughout the work and gained what was wanted objectively.

#### **1.7. Structure of the Study Organization**

This study was structured into five chapters. The first chapter contains the background, statement of the problem, objectives, scope, significance, and limitation of the study. Chapter two held literature reviews. Chapter three held methodologies: Research method, research design, sample size, sampling technique & procedure, data collection method, data collection procedure & analysis technique. Chapter four hold results and discussion of the findings. Finally, chapter five held conclusion and recommendation.

#### **1.8. Ethical Consideration**

In this research, a great care of ethical issue that is common in any scientific research undertaking were taken. During data collection, the researcher was taken care of the interviewees' privacy and willingness. They were clearly informed about the purpose of the

study and asked only if they are willing to provide the required data. They were assured the information they provided confidential and only used for the research purpose.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

In this chapter the definition and background of PRs practices, effectiveness of PRs practices, PRs and communications (strategic communication and corporate communication), organizational reputation, practices of PRs/SC in building organization reputation, activities of PRs/SC more specifically in company's CSR, PRs/SC instruments, factors affect company reputation, future challenges of PRs, theoretical framework, open systems theory, models of PRs, conceptual review and empirical review was described separately.

### **2.1. Definitions and Background of Public Relations Practices**

Katlib (2013), defines PRs as “the deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics”. On the other hand, Edwards (2012), has argued the field of PRs has been transformed, and PRs should be redefined as “the flow of purposive communication produced on behalf of individuals, formally constituted and informally constituted groups, through their continuous trans-actions with other social entities. It has social, cultural, political and economic effects at local, national and global levels.

According to the system theory, PRs based on management approach, that helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understand, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; serves as an early warning system to help anticipate movements; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools cited in (Kayode, 2014). As discussed above, PRs professional provide counselling role, advising what and how to communicate that rings true to internal and external observers. In addition, Legion (2002), stated PRs professionals expected to develop a brand and create a communication strategy in order to build an organization's reputation. The International Public Relations Association (IPRA) states that public relations practice is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling the leaders of organization and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organization and the public interest (Skinner *et*

*al.*, 2007). The Public Relation Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) adopted the definition of PRs: “PRs is the management through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organization and its internal and external stakeholders” (PRISA, 2014).

## **2.2. Effectiveness of Public Relations Practices**

J. Grunig (2002), stated at the beginning of the 21st Century, academic scholars and PRs practitioners seem to be rushing in different directions to identify a concept that defines the value of public relations to an organization. Organization solves problems for society, but they also create problems for society. As a result, organizations are not independent units free to make money or to accomplish other goals they set for themselves. They are interdependent with stakeholders. They have relationships with individuals and groups that help set the goals they choose, define what the organization is and does, and affect the success of its strategic decisions and behaviors. PRs contributes to value an organization by developing and cultivating high-quality relationships with the strategic components of an organization’s institutional environment and again PRs professionals add sustainable value to an organization.

### **2.2.1. Public Relations and Communication**

In organization communication, explaining why organization exist and well-motivated people who can work together are vital for any business (Fielding, 2006). PRs practitioner serves as an intermediary between the companies that he or she represents and all the companies’ stakeholders/publics through communication (Newsom *et al.*, 2013:2). Facilitation of communication in businesses is the responsibility of the PRs practitioners. Some companies, however, do not have public relations practitioners within their organizational structures, mainly because of the misconceptions that exist between the field of public relations and other related professions.

Van Riel (2007), stated the success of an organization’s efforts to acquire resources and to influence the context within which it carries out its activities depends heavily on how well and how professionally a company communicates with its resource holders. As communication is a key in maintaining a satisfactory, long-term, trusting relationship with publics and stakeholders, PRs provide it the greatest value to an organization when it is used strategically. Communication supports the company in listening to stakeholders’ expectations and in expressing the

organizations' history, strategy, identity and behaviors to the right stakeholders (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007).

Most PRs communication is mediated, though it is worth remembering that PRs also use direct media, such as exhibitions, leaflets or corporate videos, where the content is wholly controlled by the sender. Communication is the lifeblood of all organizations; it is the medium through which companies large and small access the vital resources they need in order to operate. It is through communication that organizations acquire the primary resources they need (such as capital, labor, and raw materials) and build up valuable stocks of secondary resources (such as “legitimacy” and “reputation”) that enable them to operate.

### **2.2.2. Public Relation and Strategic Communication**

Strategic communication has been used synonymously for public relations (Kaplan, 1991; White & Mazur, 1995). Wehmeier & Winkler (2013), believe that “strategic communication practice is something that many actors – such as managers, leaders, politicians, marketers, lawyers and human resources people and volunteers – are performing in more or less formalized social groupings”. This implies that they act and communicate strategically and contribute to the production and reproduction of an organization. The cornerstone for successful communication is to build relationships inside and outside the company that are genuinely mutual and beneficial to both the company and its global constituents.

Hallahan (2007), defines *strategic* communication as ‘communicating purposefully to advance mission’ of an organization. When communication helps to move the organization’s mission forward in a purposeful way, we may speak of strategic communication. Therefore, only communication that has the intention to advance an organization’s mission can be defined as “strategic.” For these scholars, it is not the quality that makes communication strategic, but its purpose of enhancing the organization’s mission (Hallahan *et al.*, 2007). However, Hallahan claim that: “Strategic communication examines organizational communication from an integrated, multidisciplinary perspective by extending ideas and issues grounded in various traditional communications disciplines.”

From a social theoretical perspective, the increased interest in strategic communication may be interpreted as a consequence of modernity: “In circumstances of uncertainty and multiple

choices, the notions of trust and risk have particular application” (Giddens, 1991:3). In line with this thinking, strategic communication is an expert system used by organizations and individuals to achieve or enforce legitimacy in relation to different publics, institutions or stakeholders. Strategic communication is similarly recognized as an element of interpersonal and leadership communication (Management Concepts, 2006; UCSB Leadership Skills Map Institute, 2006).

Hallahan (2007), stated SC focuses on how the organization itself presents and promotes itself through the intentional activities of its leaders, employees, and communication practitioners. Strategic communication therefore also describes how organizational symbols are created through communication practice, both internally and externally: this provides the opportunity to apply visual narrative theory to this discipline. The two keywords that comprise the term strategic communication are particularly significant. First, these activities are strategic, not random or unintentional communications—even though unintended consequences of communications can adversely impact the ability of an organization to achieve its strategic goals. Importantly, strategic must not be defined narrowly. Instead, strategic is a rich, multidimensional concept that needs to be examined broadly. Second, the concept of strategic communication emphasizes the fact that communication ought to be the focal interest of communications scholarship. The value of such an approach is readily apparent if communication is defined as the constitutive activity of management

### **2.2.3. Public Relations and Corporate Communication**

Having a reputation as a financially healthy organization with quality products and a solid social and ecological track record is essential in order to be found legitimate by important stakeholder group and to ensure that sufficient financial transactions are generated. A good corporate reputation has a strategic value for the organization that possesses it. It ensures acceptance and legitimacy from stakeholder groups, generates returns and may offer a competitive advantage as it forms an asset that is also difficult to imitate (Joep Cornelissen, 2004).

According to Wood (2012), corporate communication expresses establishing meaningful values which shall encourage the organization to act in a consistent manner and to communicate such values in order to form social capital and to take the support of the stakeholders. Professional communicators help mobilize the resources of organizations to affect the behavior of those

groups in ways that are more beneficial, that enhance the groups' relationship with the organization and that affirmatively contribute to a better reputation.

Riel & Fombrun (2007), identify that corporate communication is a series of activities where all internal and external communication which aim to form desired starting points together with the stakeholders associated with the organization are managed and orchestrated. As this idea indicate corporate communication takes its roots from the public relations discipline, the management approach of the corporation and the public relations policy it follows may create different practices in the management of the communication process. The responsibilities of corporate communication are: to flesh out the profile of the "company behind the brand" (corporate branding); to develop initiatives that minimize discrepancies between the company's desired identity and brand features; to indicate who should perform which tasks in the field of communication; to formulate and execute effective procedures in order to facilitate decision making about matters concerning communication; finally, to mobilize internal and external support behind corporate objectives.

### **2.3. Organizational Reputation**

Shamsie's (2003), defines organizational reputation "as the level of awareness that the firm has been able to develop for itself". This means if awareness of the firm is broader and if perceivers have a more distinctive perceptual representation of the firm irrespective of judgment or evaluation. An organization's reputation, and changes in its reputation, influences the organization's relationships with its stakeholders. Saxton & Dollinger (2004), refer to organizational reputation in terms of "brand name," means reputation is focused on understanding product quality differences among a group of firms. Bromley (2000), defines reputation "as the way key external stakeholder groups or other interested parties actually conceptualize the organization." The related definition was given by Rindova & Martins (2012), organizational reputation is analyzed at the collective stakeholder level and is understood as a socially constructed collective product. From this perspective, reputations are derived not only from the actions of organizations but also from social interactions between stakeholder groups. Fombrun (1996), argues reputation is built in a planned manner by organizations taking necessary notice of the environment in which they operated, and depend upon the relationships it has with its stakeholders.



Better regarded companies build their reputation by developing practices which integrate social and economic consideration into their competitive strategies. Economists view reputation as either traits or signals that organizations use to build a competitive advantage. Companies with a strong reputation can develop their internal control systems and monitor their employees and find time to realize the problems that may occur beforehand. These opportunities reduce the risk of the future (Halpern, 2001). Good entrepreneurs invest in reputation because they know that this investment brings profit, recognition, and cooperation with the right people (Fombrun & Gardberg, 2000). Alison Theaker (2001), explained a good general reputation often maintained through sustained PRs activity and good service and products enhance reputation.

Moreover, a good reputation benefits the company brand in immeasurable ways, including the ability to attract and retain business clients. Again, good reputation helps a company attract the people necessary for its success analysts, investors, customers, partners, and employees. Reputation is the Sum of images which is achieved through Performance and Behavior and Communication. A negative image critically damages organizational reputation, decrease the stakeholder's trust in an organization and it business (Garcia, 2007). PR practitioners work with a media to promote and build the organization reputation.

They not only do things right – they do the right things. In doing so, they act like good citizens. They initiate policies that reflect their core values; that consider the joint welfare of investors, customers, and employees; that invoke concern for the development of local communities; and that ensure the quality and environmental soundness of their technologies, products and services (Fombrun, 1996).

### **2.3.1. Organizational Reputation and Corporate Identity**

Fombrun *et al.*, (2000), defines reputation as “a collective assessment of a company’s ability to provide valued outcomes to a representative group or stakeholders”. This means reputation as the sum of the images the various constituencies have on an organization. Relatively the same definition was given by Bromley (2000: 241), reputation “as the way key external stakeholder groups or other interested parties actually conceptualize the organization.” As this definition organization can influence to some extent the images of their various stakeholders have of them as well as their reputations through organizational identity.

It begins with a process of discovery designed to unearth the “beating heart” of the company – what the organization stands for at its core, what it really is. Discovery is an inside-out process initiated at the top of the organization and involves the organization in a broad dialogue about the company’s “core purpose”, its reason for being. A company with a strong identity generates identification. Corporate identity primarily refers to the way employees and management view (see, feel and think) about their organization and this includes a set of values and principles that employees and management associate with their organization (Fombrun, 1996). According to Cornelissen (2004), the purpose of corporate identity is to project a consistent and distinctive image of the organization, which, hopefully, leads to favorable reputations with stakeholders, suggesting also that organizations with stronger identities have more positive reputations. Organization can influence to some extent the images their various stakeholders have of them as well as their reputations through organizational identity as a backbone of reputation (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007).

#### **2.4. Practices of Public Relations/Strategic Communication in Building Company’s Reputation**

Fombrun (1996), identified Companies engage in the explicit reputation-building activities like PRs in order to improve their companies’ reputation. PR is the practice of managing the spread of information between an individual or an organization (such as a business, government agency, or a nonprofit organization) and the public. PRs may include an organization or individual gaining exposure to their audiences using topics of public interest and news items that do not require direct payment. It might be helpful to conceptualize PRs as management of the communication in order to build relationship/reputation/public trust/legitimizing (Ruler, Verčič, 2005). This idea implies that monitoring and measuring information to ensure that work group identify with and own the information best suited to their function and accomplishment of the mission. The aim of PRs is mainly to persuade the public, investors, partners, employees and other stakeholders to maintain a certain point of view about the company, its leadership and products.

Company reputation depends on the performance of the responsible body inside and outside of company, including the connection of social environments that may handle by PR practice

(Drum, 2012). According to this concept the performance of concerned body is a mandatory in building company reputation. A good reputation does not happen quickly or by chance, it is “in a constant dynamic process of evolution, subject to review and re-evaluation” [L’Etang, (2012), p.50], and is the result of an organization’s actions. Reputation is built on trust, as long as it can be considered as one of the foundations of a relationship between organizations and stakeholders. When there is trust between an organization and its stakeholders, it is easier to build and maintain reputation (Aula & Mantere, 2008). Dhalla & Carayannopoulos (2013), argue that positive reputations yield positive organizational benefits which was very familiar with the concept of Walker (2010), these benefits include the ability to lower firm costs, charge premium prices, increase profitability, attract applicants, investors, and customers, and create competitive barriers. Therefore, a good reputation brings about a number of beneficial outcomes.

Romenti (2010), states that a positive reputation is an indication of the capital company has in its credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness in relation to its stakeholders and accordingly, the degree of support the organization has at its disposal to be legitimized as a ‘good citizen’ in society. The author provides convincing evidence on how reputation can have a positive impact on growth versus peers in profit margin, employee morale, community goodwill, investor support, relationships with vendors and suppliers, and overall organizational pride, calling this ‘reputational capital.’

Smith (2002), stated PRs is fundamentally a management of communication processes in the context of organization. Long-term ongoing PRs programs are developed to maintain the dialogue and communication with publics and audiences such as communities, investors, neighbors, and employees. Strategic communication is a part of an organization’s management function and decision-making process, based on careful planning that identifies issues, gathers data, considers alternatives and determines action. It is rooted in the organization’s mission as lived out through its bottom line. Note that this bottom line goes beyond money earned or raised; it focuses on the organization’s fundamental purpose or mission. The emphasis is on the strategic application of communication and how an organization functions as a social actor to advance its mission. The purposeful nature of SC is critical; it focuses on how the organization itself presents and promotes itself through the intentional activities of its leaders, employees, and communication practitioners.

Reddi (2000), stated PRs play a critical role in building the reputation of a company based on its vision, mission, goals and performance. Public relation society of America (PRSA) describes providing advice to management concerning policies, relationships, and communications is a key process. The modern world PRs practitioners become their organization management member and participate in decision-making (Kruckeberg, 2013). In one hand, these help the PRs to know his organization very well and to communicate with the public in a better approach. In another hand, maximizes the awareness of the management team about strategic communication and its impacts in order to make a wise managerial decision. PRs communicates with own organization management to make them fit with internal and external stakeholders (Alison, 2004). It helps to ease crises to good opportunities.

## **2.5. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

The term CSR refers to business practices that address an organization's various economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities as they relate to a wide range of stakeholders (Carroll, 1979, 1999; Maignan & Ferrell, 2004). The core idea behind CSR is that businesses are now increasingly expected to fulfill social expectations that go above and beyond what is required under the law or the customary expectations of profit-making (Falck & Heblich, 2007). According to the above idea, CSR is now not only a part of companies' non-economic agendas, but also, with moral, ethical, and social implications that promote mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its existing potential publics.

Communicating CSR initiatives should focus on establishing a linkage between an organization's identity and its CSR practices. When companies pursue global initiatives related to human rights, labor, the environment, and other "public goods," their corporate reputations can be significantly enhanced along with potentially positive effects on shareholder value, revenue, employee morale, and productivity. Cone communications' (2015), recent survey of consumers' perceptions of CSR indicates that consumers now understand the concept of CSR very well and that they are more willing than ever before to reward or discipline companies based on evaluations of CSR initiatives.

Bortree (2014), argues that more refined CSR communication has become an increasingly significant agenda for practice of PRs field. CSR is a kind of competitive advantages of the

company. Therefore, CSR can lead to attract public attention or lead to build a corporate reputation. In line with the significance of CSR communication in practice, academia has also paid increasing attention to CSR as evidenced by various publications on the subject of CSR; including the recent publication of a comprehensive handbook about CSR communication (Ihlen, Bartlett, & May, 2011), and special issues of CSR articles in PRs Journal in 2014 in corporate communication.

Alexander Franco (2015), states that the definition of CSR in Carroll's (1991), structures of CSR in four parts: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities. Carroll sees economic responsibility as being primarily accomplished by the firm maximizing profits for its shareholders as it also complies with the "mission to provide goods and service for society" (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Legal responsibilities are accomplished by following the existing rule of law and philanthropic is a charitable responsibility that has a less connection within business incensement.

### **2.5.1. Activities of PRs/Strategic Communication in Company's CSR Policies and Practices**

Communication is integral to the success of CSR activities of any corporation, and PRs provide key ingredient by helping define and execute CSR activities for corporations including mobilizing human and other resources. CSR communication is an area pertinent to the field of PRs where corporations use public relations to leverage their CSR activities. PRs can facilitate and provide opportunities for interaction within organization and encourage innovation and creativity (Lattimore *et al.*, 2006). Below are the major activities of PRs in theory of PRs practice.



Figure 1: Activities of PRs

Source: From History, Theory and Practice of PRs course (PRCC 511)

The above figure explains the activities of PRs to promote positive message about the organization and its product and services.

**Media relation:** good media relations can contribute to longer-term strategic objectives, such as improving company or brand image, higher and better media profile, improving relationships with the community, and improving communications with investors. The true purpose of press relations is to enhance the reputation of an organization and its products and to influence and inform the target audience.

**Publicity:** publicity and media relation has relatively the same meaning and contribution in promoting products. Publicity is really a subcategory of PRs effort, and is controlled and disseminated by the PRs department, is more reactive than a proactive approach, it is typically a short-term; strategy. Publicity means supplying the factual, meaningful and interesting information to the media on which the organization has no control. The purpose of publicity is to encourage prospective customers to make purchases and provide all the necessary information about the company and its products with which the customers can associate their needs, wants and desires.

**Counseling:** PRs expert practices the advisory role wherein he/she guides the senior management of the organization in special communication programs. They give suggestions and recommendation on the policies of the organization as well as help in making the decisions

particular to the communication. This helps the management to efficiently manage their flow of information to its public.

Research: The organizations adopt the two-way communication models of PRs to facilitate a free flow of information between the organization and its public. This helps in making the extensive use of research and survey techniques to better understand the public and influence their behavior.

Employee relation: For an organization, its employees are its important internal public, therefore, corporate PRs people create several employee's communication programs, including internet postings, newsletters, bulletin boards, etc.

### **2.5.1.1. Public Relations in Corporate Social Responsibility Practices**

The practice of CSR is usually regarded as a PRs function because this is where the company meets the public outside the usual roles of producers (or service providers) and customers. Another key reason why PRs specialist have a habit of to be associated with CSR claim that PRs can be an instrument within substantial, pluralist society to enable the realization of 'laudable social goals' (Gandy, 1992). Again, this author wrote there would appear to be two choices: PRs practitioners can use CSR as just another element in 'the creation of consent' in order to foster 'a favorable and positive climate of opinion toward the institution' (Steinberg quoted in Gandy, 1992), or they could try to realize the idea that PRs can act in the public interest (Cutlip *et al.*, 1995), by making genuine attempts to discover the requirements of community stakeholders and help companies be more responsive to social needs.

In respect to CSR programs it would mean that all stakeholder groups including the potential beneficiaries of such programs should contribute to the decision-making process. This would demonstrate that companies are treating the beneficiaries of CSR with 'good will' and as ends in themselves. Raja Sarkar (2018), states that PRs professionals represent the interests of the organization and the communities to develop, implement, and communicate programs. The collector role may facilitate a CSR culture and tradition in an organization by collecting and publicizing the independent volunteer work done by employees. A significant function of PRs is to "help tell the stories" of combined CSR efforts through sustainability reports, media pitching and publicity efforts, and program visibility internally and externally.

Frankental (2001), argued that CSR is an invention of PR, and will remain so, this means that CSR can only have real substance if it embraces all the stakeholders of a company, if it is reinforced by changes in company law relating to governance, if it is rewarded by financial markets, if its definition relates to the goals of social and ecological sustainability, if its implementation is benchmarked and audited, if it is open to public scrutiny, if the compliance mechanisms are in place, and if it is embedded across the organization horizontally and vertically. In other words, these ideas must not only influence the language chosen by PRs practitioners to communicate with publics, as a way of rotating an organizations' activities, but must permeate thinking at all levels of strategic decision making and implementation.

### **2.5.1.2. The Social Responsibility of Business to Increase Profits**

#### **2.5.1.2.1. Stakeholders Approach**

Stakeholder theory asserts that managers need to consider the values, opinions and expectations of their key stakeholders, where a stakeholder is any individual or group that has a “stake” in the firm and “can affect or be affected by the achievement of an organization’s objectives” (Freeman and McVea, 2001). From the stakeholder perspective, CSR is not an optional extra, it is integral to the responsibilities of the company and the company must pay as much attention to its social duties as it does to maximizing profits.

### **2.6. Public Relations/Strategic Communication Instruments in Building Company’s Reputation**

Public relations represent an important promotion and communication instruments. Strategic communication uses multiple tools, drawing from all communication-related disciplines to talk with various groups of people. The main instruments of PRs are publications, demonstrations, news, discourses, activities for public service, written or audio-visual materials, means of constructing corporate identity and telephone services. The planning of PRs activities involves establishing objectives, choosing the appropriate messages and means to transmit them, as well as evaluating the results.

Studies and Scientific Researches on Economics Edition, No 25, 2017 in the title ‘The Use Of Public Relations In Projecting An Organization's Positive Image’ wrote by Ioana Olariu (2009),



showed a major mass promotion instrument is represented by the activity of public relations – creating good relations with various existing categories of the public, obtaining a favorable media representation, creating a company image in the public perception, and judiciously managing or removing the negative effects of rumors, accounts or unfavorable events that are harmful to the firm.

In CSR externally, PRs practitioners use all available communication tactics, published an annual or regular responsibility report combining all efforts and results from across the variety of programs. Internally, PRs highlight employee's work so that others get involved in programs. Professionals use a variety of traditional and digital tactics, including internal websites and news channels, posters and company magazines, town hall meeting, news releases and statements for media/press release (TV or Radio), newsletters, organization and participation at public events conferences and word-of-mouth communication to boost their clients' public image and help them form a meaningful relationship with the target audience.

Banik (2004), defines PRs as it is a tool, that use in creating belongings and wining employee's cooperation, building good will, furthering mutual interest and overcoming public misconceptions. Nowadays, European Public Relation Education Research Association (EUPRERA) focused on practice of PRs especially on performing/creating, managing, counseling/advising, education, and creation in building or improving an organization reputation.

## **2.7. Opportunity**

Description of the opportunity concept requires consideration of two related concepts, both of which may or may not advance into opportunities. Ideas are a function of creativity and learning; however, ideas lead to potential opportunities only if carefully examined and developed (Dimov, 2007b; Hsieh *et al.*, 2007). Denrell *et al.*'s (2003), states that a successful opportunity is a consequence of effort and luck joined by alertness and flexibility, where the effort was not initially directed to the specific end realized, alertness is required to recognize the lucky appearance of a new possibility, and flexibility is displayed by redirecting the effort. Overall, the literature addressing the nature of opportunities calls attention to three main issues: the discovery versus the creation of opportunities, temporal dynamics surrounding opportunities, and the evolution of ideas and dreams into opportunities.

An opportunity is an idea or dream that is discovered or created by an entrepreneurial entity and that is revealed through analysis over time to be potentially profitable. An enterprising individual's personality, beliefs, values, attitudes, needs, and traits are all potentially antecedents to opportunity search, discovery, and exploitation (Shook, Priem & McGee, 2003). Entrepreneurship scholars have theorized that the presentation of limitations by engagement officers of an individual's career potential within a given organization could lead individuals to pursue other opportunities in society (Lee & Venkataraman, 2006).

## **2.8. Future Challenges for Public Relations**

Important areas for growth were mainly environmental and government PRs. 'I believe that PRs will increasingly be seen for what it really is – an indispensable tool of management (Gummer, 1990). In future, public relations, involving skillful management of important relationships and communication with groups of people on whose support any organization depends, will come to be regarded as a key task for senior management (White & Mazur, 1995: 251). The two possible futures for PRs that White and Mazur envisaged were that it would become more technical, using communications techniques to support marketing activities, or that it would become a social practice, helping organizations to fit in with their social environments. PR has got an image problem that, ironically, has been fueled by the very audience our industry claims to influence – the media. PR fluff or spin doctoring conjures up images of insincere attempts to manipulate the media and to distort or hide the truth. Organizational communication is probably the best description of what we do.

PRs elicit bad perceptions amongst certain people – largely because they are unclear about its function. A new name could be targeted audience communications or awareness rising and issues management (Jo Chipchase, freelance IT PR consultant and author). The development of the internet as a communications channel was also seen as one of the most challenging areas for PRs and one of its greatest opportunities. The internet has given us a direct pathway to the consumer, enabling us to circumvent the media as a filter and to build relationships directly with consumers, while still allowing us to act as intermediaries with the media' said Richard Edelman, CEO of Edelman PRs. The increased speed of communications also makes corporate reputations harder to manage, and because of increased access to information, transparency and immediacy of response are needed.

## **2.9. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.9.1. Open Systems Theory and Public Relation Practices**

Cutlip *et. al.*, (2000) and Grunig & Hunt (1984), refer systems theory to explain the structure and operation of organizations and their interaction with the environment. In core systems theory describes an organization as a set of parts which impact on each other and which together interact with the organization's environment. Organizations depend on their environments for several essential resources: customers who purchase the product or service, suppliers who provide materials, employees who provide labor or management, shareholders who invest, and governments that regulate. According to Cutlip, Center, & Broom (2006), PRs is essential to help organizations adjust and adapt to changes in an organization's environment.

System seeks feedback to determine if the output was effective in bring back balance, and systems approach focuses on the means used to maintain organizational survival and emphasize long-term goals. In the throughput of information, the organization analyzes it and tailors it strategically to fit with the organization's goals, values, and within the relationship context it holds with publics. The PRs professional can use the academic concept of systems theory to implement protocols for regular feedback to the organization, thereby aligning it with the desires of publics in its environment. The practical implementation of this approach keeps PRs from being used as a simple publicity function, and places the function squarely in the strategic planning process.

Proactive PRs is allied to open systems approaches and its role involves changing and influencing both the environment and the organization as a result of changes in the environment and is essential in strategy-making and integral to the decision-making process. The emphasis here is on reciprocity – communication with publics takes the form of a genuine dialogue (the two-way systematical approach advocated by Grunig & Hunt) and the organization is as likely to change as the target publics as a result of the communication exchange. The purpose of this approach is to have organizational goals that are mutually acceptable and supported by both the organization and its publics. Where there is a difference in what these should be, change can be initiated before real issues or problems arise. This proactive stance is important for organizational decision-making and that is why PRs practitioners who operate in this fashion are often part of the dominant coalition.

## **2.10. Models of Public Relations**

In 1984, two of the earliest systems theorists, James E. Grunig & Todd Hunt, published *Managing Public Relations* in which they presented a set of PRs typologies based on observations of practice in the United States and put four models: press agency/publicist; public information; two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric communication (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

### **2.10.1. Press Agency Model**

The purpose of press agency is to disseminate a particular point of view through the media and other channels. The communication is one-way: no dialogue with the intended audience is required and the main objective is to put forward one particular view of the world – which may or may not be completely truthful. This model can place the goals of accuracy and truth in second place to publicity. While this model can produce good results for the client organization, at least over the short term, it can be bad for the various constituencies (for example, the media, customers, employees, and the community). The term ‘spinning,’ which came into vogue twenty years after this model was defined, is just another label for it. This is the approach that gives public relations a bad reputation.

### **2.10.2. Public Information Model**

Public information is related to press agency, central and local government departments often create information leaflets and make announcements to explain alterations to policies and processes that affect members of the public – for example, processes for claiming benefits or notifying the department of changes in personal circumstances that might affect their benefit entitlement. The information has to be accurate, true and specific – the main aim is to inform rather than persuade. In theory, the constituency wins. The client organization, often a government agency or nonprofit, can also win. But we would argue that public relations practitioners have a responsibility to advocate for the client, not just to disseminate information. And if the advocacy is up front—that’s why organizations have letter head then the advocacy is transparent and ethical.

### **2.10.3. Two-way Asymmetric Model**

Two-way asymmetric communication is more commonly practiced today than the first two models. This type of PR is rooted in persuasive communications and aims to generate agreement between the organization and its audiences by bringing them around to the organization’s way of

thinking. Non-governmental organizations such as Oxfam, Greenpeace and the Worldwide Fund for Nature practice this type of PRs; the information they send out must be beyond reproach in order for them to retain their reputation and credibility and to persuade audiences to their way of thinking. Feedback from audiences is important in this model of communication, but it is used to adapt communications strategies to be more persuasive, not to alter the organization's position.

In line with the objectives of this communication, research here is used to measure attitudes in order to establish the degree of persuasive success achieved. The PRs practitioner conducts research to determine the views of a particular constituency and then uses that information to help achieve the client's objectives. The client organization can win, at least over the short term. But the constituency probably loses, and we would argue that this is a myopic and sometimes unethical approach.

#### **2.10.4. Two-way Symmetric Model**

In two-way symmetric communication the aim is to generate mutual understanding the two-way communications process should lead to changes in both the audience's and the organization's position on an issue. Research for this type of PRs does not just measure attitudes, but also investigates the understanding that has led to those attitudes, therefore establishing the quality of the dialogue taking place. This is the approach that will most often produce a win-win outcome. It can be useful in conflict resolution and in any public relations program. It can help address ethical questions, including that of advocacy versus objectivity, by looking at the interests of both the client organization and its constituencies. Organizations are open to changing their internal policies and practices in this model based on what they learn from their publics. It is a collaborative approach to building understanding and although not perfectly balanced; it is a moving equilibrium in which both sides in the communication process have an opportunity to have input and change issues.

However, genuine two-way symmetry can occur only where both parties have equal power to influence the other and it is worth remembering that this is the rarest form of PRs. It is important to note that these models do not reflect the real world, organizations may use different models as strategies for dealing with different publics or different public relations problems.

## 2.11. Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework is a crucial process that is useful to show the direction of study. PRs practice has an essential role in building a company reputation. From the past general idea in literature review the goal of PRs practice is to build organizational reputation by maintaining the relationship between an organization and key public. PRs can build strong long-term relationships within internal and external publics by establishing two-way symmetrical model of communication. PRs professional can use CSR in the creation of permission in order to foster a favorable and positive climate of opinion toward the institution.

The model of this study was determined in figure two (2) below. This shows that the independent variables: practices PRs/SC, activities of PRs in CSR, and PRs/SC instruments. If the practice/activities of PRs are strategically implemented, it can result in an enhanced reputation of the organization; and employees, stakeholders, investors, and others interested group trust the organization. Also, if the above practice/activities implemented poorly the company lose its reputation, and constitutes mistrusted with employees, stakeholders, investor's and interested group/communities as well as cause for business reduction.

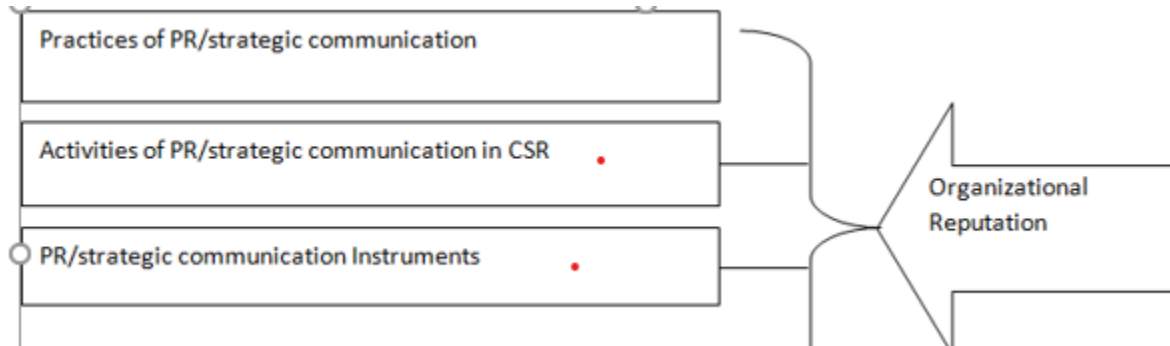


Figure 2: Conceptual framework

Source: Researcher Creation (2021)

## 2.12. Empirical Studies

Most authors who make the case for organizational reputation being defined as an asset do so by detailing reputation's positive outcomes for the firm (e.g., Boyd *et. al.*, 2010; & Brooks, *et. al.*, 2009; Roberts & Dowling, 2002). If this practice seems to make the idea of organizational reputation as asset more of a description of the consequences of the concept than a definition of the concept (Barnett *et. al.*, 2006), it would be useful to consider what the idea of asset implies

beyond reputation's positive outcomes for the firm. PRs is a field still transitioning from its strongly US nation-state origins and its West-centric past. In essence, while globalization has increased the relevance and importance of PRs; the Various outcomes of globalization have exposed many gaps in both theory and practice (McKie& Munshi, 2007).

J. Grunig (2002), stated in his empirical study reputations are a product of management behaviors and organization-public relationships thus providing evidence that relationships should be the primary focus of public relations. A longitudinal study of the Australian banking industry showed the environment moved to embrace CSR; banks shifted PRs practices from a one-way influence perspective to a two-way perspective (Bartlett, Tywoniak & Hatcher, 2007). As climate change, community relations and other issues relating to CSR shape the communities' expectations of organization, PRs will have a role in ensuring that organization respond.

Mohd Remie Mohd Johan & Noor Anida Zaria Mohd (2013), stated in their empirical study Companies are increasingly often asked to demonstrate their actions and policies meet various predetermined social and ethical criteria. Doing so can help build reputation; failing to do so can be a source of reputational risk. The above concept explains that as company has to demonstrate its actions and policies with social and ethical criteria; this makes company more effective in business area. CSR can lead to attract publics' attention or lead to build a corporate reputation. Gardberg & Fombrun (2006), said: The developments advance from the more voluntary forms of CSR chosen in the USA and are having a significant effect on the reputation-building strategies of global companies in many countries. As this concept CSR is chosen in developed and other countries as a significant effect of reputation building.

Cornelissen (2004), stated growing demand for business to deliver more than financial returns has led to the emergence of CSR. Through CSR, organization focuses on the social, ecological, and financial contribution or impact they make through their operation. Australian research has shown CSR was integrated into organization through philanthropy and respect for the natural environment (Johnston & Beatson, 2006). This research also found that social responsibility was emphasized over financial performance. CSR presents a challenge and an opportunity to the theory and practice of PRs. A longitudinal study of the Australian banking industry showed as the environment moved to embrace CSR.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES**

### **3. 1. Research Design and Method**

#### **3.1.1. Research Design**

The basic research questions in line with the objectives of the research should be studied with an appropriate design that can avoid ambiguity on the research findings. So, the researcher employed a case study design; so that it abstracted the findings in line with the objectives of this study in examining the research problem and also the use of the case study approach has been aligned with qualitative research method.

##### **3.1.1.1. Research Method**

This study was conducted in LCFC from December to June 2020/2021. The researcher used the qualitative research method since it is extremely valuable and allows to truly understanding the experiences, values, and viewpoints of participants on the objective of this study.

### **3.2. Population of the Study**

LCFC was selected as case study area, with five farms sites namely: Gomma I, & II, Kossa, Suntu, and Gumer. These were selected purposively to have the population of this study to get representative information. So, leader of the company, public relation practitioner, farm managers, employees, and stakeholders were the target population of this study those were selected purposively and conveniently in order to achieve the study objectives.

### **3.3. Sample Size and Sample Technique**

#### **3.3.1. Sample Size**

To achieve the objectives of this study, researcher selected eighteen (18) interviewees (one PR practitioner, one leader, five farm managers, six human resource management, and five stakeholders) by using purposive and convenience sampling technique; most them from farms, the reason behind selecting most of interviewees from farms was it is a real workplace/a potential fieldwork sites for the head office, so the that researcher wanted to conduct interviews with key personnel in each site. Accordingly, one PR practitioner, one leader, five farm managers, six human resource management, were selected purposively, while, five stakeholders were selected conveniently; the researcher selected those stakeholders from external those available in a workplace during the interview field.



### **3.4. Data Collection Method, Procedure and Technique of Analysis**

#### **3.4.1. Data Collection Method**

Data collection methods were the way researcher collect the necessary data by using some method according to the study objective. The researcher used interviews and documents review as data collection methods.

##### **3.4.1.1. Interviews**

The researcher employed in-depth interview to assess the practice/activities of PRs in LCFC. LCFC is a profit-making organization which has different farms in different wereda and most of CSR activities were done in each farm; So, semi-structured interviews instrument was used and helped the researcher to have detailed information in the framework of the research aim. The researcher interviewed managers, human resource managements, and stakeholders in their respective workplace/farms. The reason why interviewed those participants from five farms was not only to achieve the desired objective, but also to understand their feeling and attitude regarding the effectiveness of PRs professionalism in company reputation building. Consequently, PR practitioner, leader, and one human resource management was interviewed at the head office. Interviewing those participants helped the researcher to arrive on the main objective this study, since the policy of this company believes the centrality of structure/chain in its activity. Flexibility was helped the researcher to a have a rigor data. All interview were audio-recorded.

##### **3.4.1.2. Document Review**

Document reviews one of qualitative data collection technique. The main purpose of reviewing documents was to understand what was documented concerning the practices/activities of PRs in this company. The researcher prepared checklist to review the necessary documents. The reviewed documents included annual plan and reports on activities of CSR, video-recorded of CSR activity, pictures, news for media, and certificate were documented. This helped the researcher to understand the practices/activities of PRs were documented. However, it was not independently documented, it was within other work documents.

### **3.4.2. Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection procedure started from letter sent from Media and Communication study departments to LCFC for permission before data collection. They allowed and sent other letter to each farm just to inform as they allowed for researcher; this procedure was takes place as the first round. Then, the researcher prepared in-depth interview guideline items in English version then translated into Afan Oromo; then checked for equivalent meaning by advisor and approved. After that, the researcher developed interview schedule; then met the interviewees and oriented them on the overall objective of the study, consequently interviewed. Sound was recorded and note was taken. Doing so helped the researcher to gain pertinent and verified concepts on the objective of the study.

In procedure of document review checklist was prepared to check the practices/activities of PRs in any available written form (plan, reports (organizational or institutional reports), any publications, records, certificate, event programs, etc...). Doing so helped the researcher to understand how the practical PRs practices was there and documented as well.

### **3.4.3 Data Analysis Technique**

Before data analysis started, the gathered data were written down formally, then categorized depending on study variables as it gives meaning, after that fragmented and merged according to the literature knowledge. By sequencing the fragmented data from data obtained from demographic characteristics of participants, next data obtained through interviews, then the result gained from reviewed documents. Finally, data was analyzed thematically, and helped the researcher to compare the knowledge of theory and practices of PRs in LCFC.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter focused on results and discussions on the practices and opportunities of PRs in building Limmu Coffee Farm Company reputation. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and document reviews from LCFC head office and five farms focusing on practices and/or activities of PRs/strategic communication within available opportunities in CSR., and PRs/strategic communication instruments in building company reputation.

### 4.1. Result From Interview

#### 4.1.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants.

The table below shows that the demographic of the respondent's position, gender, age, educational status, and background education.

Table 4.1: Demographic characteristic of interviewees

Participants	Number of participants	Position	Age and Sex		Education status/level	Field study/background
			M	Age		
Head office leader	1	Leader	M	36	First degree	Agronomy
Public relation practitioner	1	PR s	M	62	First degree	English
Farm Managers	5	Kosas' farm manager	M	37	MA degree	MBA
		Suntus' farm manager (Deputy)	M	34	First degree	BAIS
		Gumers' farm manager (Deputy)	M	42	First degree	Horthy-Culture
		Gommas' I farm manager	M	40	MA degree	Plant Science

		Gommas' II farm manager	M	40	First degree	Sociology
Employees	6	Suntus' HRM	M	45	Diploma	HRM
		Gommas' I HRM	M	45	Diploma	Mgt
		Gommas' II HRM	M	48	First degree	BM
		Gumers' HRM	M	54	First degree	Pure Mgt
		Kossas' HRM	M	50	First degree	HRM
		Head Office HRM	M	36	First degree	Masters of Public Management
Stakeholders	5	Suntus' stakeholder	M	48	9 <sup>th</sup>	-
		Gommas' I stakeholder	F	40	-	-
		Gommas' II stakeholder	M	25	First degree	-
		Gumers' stakeholder	M	40	-	-
		Kossas' stakeholder	M	38	10 <sup>th</sup>	-
Total						

Source: Researcher own field observation March, 2021

The above table shows that the demographic characteristic of interviewees those participated in this study in terms of age, educational status, sex, and background of their education. Regarding educational status most of the interviewees are first-degree holders, two of them are MA degree, two of them are diploma. Concerning their educational background more or less has a field related educational background especially within their field work, rather than within their position. The majority of the interviewees age was relatively between 40-54 and some of them were between 25-48.

The demographic characteristics results show that the selected interviewees had Bachelor degree and MA degree holders. So, the result indicated that the study interviewees were well educated personnel even if their educational background was more related with their work site rather than their position. This shows that they had potential to follow the field work especially on farm, so it has a great contribution to success the company vision around increasing business with less attention on increasing acceptability of company.

#### **4.1.2. Practices of Public Relations/Strategic Communication in Building Company**

##### **Reputation**

LCFC is one pillar of Midrock Ethiopia investment group found in Jimma Zone established with a prime focus of boosting the Farms of coffee production. This company has its own vision and mission. The researcher started the interview questions from vision and mission concept to identify to understand to what extent PRs practiced in building company reputation by relating within their position. The response was as follows:

*The company's vision is supplying the best-preferred coffee in the world market within quality and quantity. The mission was producing the best coffee for both local and global market by the use of farming practices which are environmentally friendly and production systems. In relation to my position, I practiced depending on the vision and mission of this company, by working on relationship building between the company and society as well as between internal and external employee, by solving the existed problem (key inf.1 April, 2021).*

Reddi (2000), PRs play a critical role in building company reputation based on vision, mission, goals and performance. The reason why the researcher started interview from company mission and vision was also depended on this assumption. So, the above data shows that PRs was practiced in relation with his position in building relationship and solving problem. The researcher understood that as this practice opened door to success of company's vision & mission. So, such like practices are important in this socially responsible organization.

Next, the researcher interviewed in detail on communication strategies practiced/used, on diversity and about professionalism. The response was as follows:

- *We apply communication in our daily activities within internal and external employees. We are not a professional person the communication. However, we had a smooth*

*relationship with employees, and environment society on communication area. The company reputation was repaired from the past defamation through communication with society, but we have a gap on its sustainability application of communication strategies. On the integration of diversity in the workplace, we focused on building relationships by meeting employees and stakeholders individually, especially when a problem happened, we advised them and solved their problem immediately (Key inf. 1, 2 April, 2021).*

According to the above data, the communication strategies that applied in this company were not in a professional way. Regarding professionalism, including PR practitioner others they not a PRs professional; the applied communication was not as much as for the target of building reputation, just to increase their production. Fombrun & Van Riel (2007), stated the concept ‘communication’ as it is a key in maintaining a satisfactory, long-term, trusting relationship with publics and stakeholders, public relations provide it the greatest value to an organization. So, the researcher analyzed that, the used communication strategy was not as it values the organization regarding reputation building.

The researcher interviewed the participants on strategic communication practiced by framing the research objective. The researcher started from vision and mission by relating with their position again. The main target was to identify the practical practice of SC on company reputation building in business context. The interviewees’ responses were as follows:

- *The vision is the best preferred coffee in the world market by its premium flavor and quality’; its mission is producing the best coffee for both local and global market by the use of farming practices which are environmentally friendly and production systems which are high-tech and could enhance profitability, competitiveness and maintain the interest of stakeholders and the government in a sustainable way we do on it within a different department. In building our company reputation we are doing depending on company’s vision and mission relating within our position by technologizing farm processing material, by removing the old coffee and planting young, by powering excess human power, by funding necessary budget and by fulfilling other necessary things for farms and managing them appropriately to success company’s vision and mission. We communicate and follow the work in a*

*sustainable way within employees to success the vision of company (key inf.2 April, 2021, key inf.3, 5,6, March, 2021, and inf. 01 April, 2021).*

- One of the interviews said: *we use communication throughout our activities; when we see the reality as a professional way, we did not do on it (key int. 4,7 March, 2021)*

Hallahan (2007), defines *strategic* communication as ‘communicating purposefully to advance mission’ of an organization. According to the above data, the interviewees identified the company’s vision & mission in a clear way and confidentially spoken about their position, how they are practicing. Knowing company vision and acting depending on their position may be because of they are employed for this in this company; but what the researcher wanted to know is how such practices valued company reputation.

Wehmeier & Winkler (2013), believe that strategic communication practice is something that many actors – such as managers, leaders, and human resources people and volunteers – are performing in more or less formalized social groupings, the purposeful nature of it is critical; it focuses on how the organization itself presents and promotes itself through the intentional activities. So, the researcher analyzed the activity of strategic communication was more focused in increasing productivity with less attention on reputation building.

#### **4.1.3. Activities of PRs/strategic communication more in CSR Policies and Practices.**

##### **4.1.3.1. Activities of PRs/Strategic communication in CSR**

Communication is integral to the success of CSR activities of any corporation, and public relations provides that key ingredient by helping define and accomplish CSR activities for corporations. CSR communication is an area pertinent to the field of public relations to influence CSR activities. The researcher interviewed in detail activities of PRs/strategic communication, available opportunities regarding CSR activities and level of CSR that practiced in this company. The response was as follows:

- *This company done different things for society; built bridges, bought light transformer, road constructed, a preparatory school for Limmu Kossa District built and other was maintained, pure water supplied, and the company helped by different social service. Others the company contributed by the level of philanthropic/gave a chance for one female student by fulfilling the necessary things In CSR area my activity was publicizing while the work of CSR done for respected society. My activity was on a traditional way,*

*I'm not a professional communicator, and strategically we did not do on it especially in recent time. (Key. inf. 1 April, 2021).*

- Other interviewee said: *By CSR activity, the company participated in the level of legal and economical, but more we focused on society economical increasing participation with the environment society, job opportunity was created, training on farm mechanization was given to improve the economy of society on ecological familiarity production. At the legal level, we communicated with environment youth, representative of people, and elder people at a farm and gained a positive response from them; then they promised to keep the resource of this investor as their resource. This process was responsible for security department. Depending on this we tasted as it has a great contribution in opening the opportunity in building company's reputation. The company had a system in which it will help the environment society that works on such issues. The gap we have was we did not find more opportunity in building our company reputation, we can't say our communication is also strategic, and also, we have not a periodical schedule for stakeholder (key inf. 2 April, 2013).*

According to the above data, the activities of PRs/SC was not in a professional way means that they are not a professional communicator with the wealth of strategic communication concept; some of them practiced traditionally, here the researcher acknowledged for their transparency, the interviewees didn't cover their internal feeling. Hallahan *et al.*, (2007), states that as 'strategic communication' examines organizational communication from an integrated, multidisciplinary perspective by extending ideas and issues grounded in various traditional communications disciplines. Publicity activity was done, philanthropic, legal, and economical increasing level of CSR was done.

Carroll & Shabana (2010), stated legal responsibilities are accomplished by following the existing rule of law. According to the above data, LCFC was responsible for the existed legal of country by powering security department in legal activity with existing rule of law even within the environments people agreement. When the researcher sees company reputation with such CSR activities the company has a good performance. Sen & Bhattacharya (2001), argue that CSR is highly relevant to business activities that will benefit organization. So, the researcher analyzed



this legal contribution valued company in building reputation. However, the researcher suspected its sustainability from their word of mouth.

#### **4.1.3.1.1. Responses of Farm Managers**

The researcher interviewed farm managers on their activities of CSR, strategic communication instruments they used in building relationship with inside and outside stakeholders, and their perception on LCFC activities starting from mission and vision of company. Here, for all interviewees there was question about vision, mission as well as how they related this to their position. The reason behind this question was the assumption of good reputation building is concentrated around vision, mission, goal and performance of the organizations' responsible body. So, their response was as follows:

- *We work depending on the company's vision and mission to increase productivity, supply quality coffee to a foreign currency market, to increase sufficient/quantity coffee is a vision of our company. We did by using technology/machine by minimizing more human power and maximizing productivity to be competitive as a country in coffee export. In relation to our position, we are in a workplace to follow daily the work of productivity, we give direction, we have a good relationship with employees and every employee know the vision and mission and did to succeed it appropriately. We use meeting, official letter, and walk-talk radio in our interaction internally as well as externally. In CSR activity we gather questions from representatives of people and send to head office. Accordingly different things were done through this our perception was high regarding CSR activities (Key inf.3, 4, 5, 6 March, 2021).*
- *One interviewee said: this institution did different things through CSR like road constructed, quality water supplied, Mosque was built and school was maintained, but on awareness creation we have a gap, some people didn't know as those projects was done by this institution (key inf.4 March,2021).*
- *Other interviewee said that: we didn't gather the question of CSR from wereda or other authorized person, we directly gather from people; because we haven't a good relationship with weredas authorized person in case of their personal interest (key inf. 3 March, 2021).*

According to the above data, different activities were done through CSR to the society, managers perceived it positively and really, they did as their profession on that. The gap was the way they collected the question/interest of society was different, but most of them collected this question from representative of people. So, the researcher seen as a less attention was given from the orientation giver and their understanding was different. The core idea behind CSR is that businesses are now increasingly expected to fulfill social expectations that go above and beyond what is required under the law or the customary expectations of profit-making (Falck & Heblich, 2007). The researcher analyzed that all interviewee understood the value of CSR as it increases not only business, but also reputation, but on its application, there was a gap. The communication instruments they used were meeting, official letter, and walk-talk radio. However, there was a gap on awareness creation.

#### **4.1.3.1.2. Responses of Employees**

The researcher interviewed a person who works on the human resource management starting from company's vision and mission, their understanding on company reputation, the way they used the strategic communication and instruments, their activity/contribution in increasing company acceptability was interviewed in detail individually. Their response was as follows:

- *The company's vision the best-preferred coffee in the world market by its premium flavor and quality has a significant contribution to the national coffee export and foreign currency generation, job opportunity creation, and the macro economy as a whole. Company reputation is a good thing to me and I understood it well. Depending on the company's vision, we are doing a comparable work in a succession of vision, especially on coffee collection season human power brought from another place in addition to the environment a common and period employee, by covering all necessary things to collect coffee been to keep the quality of coffee to be competitive in Ethiopian current market. Annually, there was additional payment as a bonus to motivate employees, we oriented and trained them; we had a circular process, regular meeting, official letter, and telephone (inf.01 April 2021, inf. 02, 04, 05 March, 2021.*

Fombrun (1996), stated company will never be perceived as authentic if its employees don't believe and express the company's shared values in their day-to-day interactions with customers and suppliers, investors, and the public. As the above data showed LCFC employees' perception

on reputation of company is good and they understood it well, and their contribution was also on the right way in increasing productivity. The communication instruments they used was meeting, letter, and telephone, meeting and official letter was for their regular program, while telephone was used for immediate communication on necessary issues. So, employees did well in increasing company's acceptability. The researcher understands that they see the company in a positive way. Haywood (2005), states that the contribution employees can make to enhance corporate reputation is considerable and often at no cost, good reputation in the eyes of employees reinforces employee commitment to the values, beliefs, mission, and objectives of the company.

#### **4.1.3.1.3. Responses of Stakeholders**

External stakeholders are individuals or groups outside the company that can affect or be affected by an organization's activities (Fassin, 2008). The researcher interviewed external stakeholders individually to see how the activities of LCFC were proper, desirable and appropriate within environmental social system. So, the intention of the researcher was to ask on how the company was seen and accepted, their perception of CSR regarding its values in society, to identify to what extent stakeholders know the activities done by LCFC and what communication instruments LCFC used was the main target for researcher in relation with company reputation building depending on the objective of this study. Their response was as follows:

*We have seen LCFC as a well-organized company in recent time after the owner of this investor came. When it is in the hands of the government, we didn't value from it, but now there was a change, its acceptability was increased. This company had created job opportunities for the people, we gained social service from farms as we want every time (inf. 004, 001,003 March, 2021).*

*LCFC did different activities (road, school, bridge, shade for work finders, ambulance and tractor service, giving hand for COVID-19 pandemic, pure water supply, light transformer) to society through CSR. The society valued from it, but sometimes they didn't discuss with us on this CSR in a regular way, they did not do hand-over program (inf. 004, 001, 002, 003 March, 2021).*

The above data indicated that different activities were done by LCFC for society, they also valued from these services. From the PR perspective, in respect to CSR programs, it would mean that all stakeholder groups including the potential beneficiaries of such project should contribute to the decision-making process. This would demonstrate that companies are treating the beneficiaries of corporate social responsibility with 'good will' and as ends in themselves. Van Riel & Fombrun(2007), stated communication supports the company in listening to stakeholders' expectations and in expressing the organizations' history, strategy, identity and behaviors to the right stakeholders. LCFC didn't focus on the stakeholder's attention regularly here also from the mouth of stakeholder. Above also from one key stakeholder the researcher understood it as they haven't a periodical decision-making schedule. So, obviously thinking good reputation without stakeholder participation may raise other issue which can affect company's reputation.

#### **4.1.3.1.4. Available opportunities**

The researcher interviewed key participants to see what opportunities were there according to company context especially in CSR activities. The response was as follows:

- *This company had opportunities to build its reputation, especially in recent year most of people understand the activities those done through CSR for them, this is a great chance for us, but we didn't take it in account, for the future we are trying to use it by preparing campaign to create awareness to the surrounding communities (key inf. 1,2 April,2021).*

The above data showed as the company had an opportunity through CSR activities, but there was a gap of knowledge-based/organized idea, and not caring for reputation means that creativity is not considered by PRs activity. Dimov (2007) & Hsieh *et al.*, (2007), identified the description of the opportunity concept as it requires consideration of two related concepts, both of which may or may not advance into opportunities. Ideas are a function of creativity and learning; however, ideas lead to potential opportunities only if carefully examined and developed. A company that lacks clear strategy can create a current effect that will infect every principle on which the company stands. CSR can be much more than a cost; it is 'a source of opportunity, innovation and competitive advantage' (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

From a PRs perspective, opportunities may arise from communication that brings dissimilar groups together (Johnson, 2004). So, if strategic communication applied on this activity, it may

become easy to have a good reputation, opportunities may arise from effective communication/strategic communication in a shared meaning by bringing different knowledge-based gained from own field or experience in the workplace together.

#### **4.1.4. Public Relations/Strategic Communication Instruments**

In literature review strategic communication uses multiple tools, drawing from all communication-related disciplines to talk with various groups of people. The researcher interviewed to describe what communication instruments were applied in this company. The response was as follows:

- *The communication instruments we used with employees and with the representative of the employees on the sub-farms station was telephone, official letter (from institution to sub-farm and vise-versa) and meeting. We observed practically sub- farms; due to that time we met employees face-to-face. As an institution, we have also a periodical/schedule for meeting with all employees orally twice a year. The main head office also used to reach us through formal meeting, walk-talk radio, and official letters. (Key inf. 7, 6,3,4,5 March, 2021).*
- *As whole we used meeting, official letter, walk-talk radio, and annual reports to reach farms and we used Jimma Fana Radio (FM 98.1), and ETV with media coverage (key inf.2, 1 April, 2021).*

According to the above data the communication instruments that farm managers used to reach bottom employee/sub-farm station was face-to-face meeting, telephone, practical observation, and official letter; head office used meeting, walk-talk radio, and official letter; to reach farms; as whole Jimma Fana Radio (FM 98.1), and ETV was used for media coverage. According to the company's situation having a meaningful communication practice has a vital role in building company reputation. So, in recent time those instruments were used in this company.

The researcher interviewed depending on company context especially the activity that was done around counseling/education, coaching, creation, managing/advising, organizing and conducting research. The response was as follows:

- *We advised the employees especially when there was disagreement/conflict both inside and outside of the company. On managing information, it was followed by plan and*

*information department as well as by security department; independently the PR department not organized, there was lack of professional person (key inf.1, 2 April, 2021).*

The above idea showed that LCFC was applied advising role and became succeeded on it, but its sustainability was under question. On managing and organizing information there was also a gap, it was not done on it appropriately in a strategic way, however they used the security department especially when the situation became difficult for business. Bernays recognizes that the value of the public relations counselor and today the value of any professional communicator is the ability to advise on the ongoing engagement between a company and its critical constituencies, and in particular how a company's engagement is likely to influence how that constituency is likely to think, feel, and behave across a number of scenarios. Bereket (2013), states that PRs is mainly an instrument for leaders in business government and other institutions to build beneficial relationship with other organizations and groups who have an interest on a given issue.

#### **4.1.2. Result from Document Review**

Due to the document analysis, researcher framed analysis of these documents by duration of time according to the study objective, means a recent one-year activities that documented from March, 2019 to 2020(a recent one year) was assessed and analyzed to find out: how PRs practices/activities is routinely planned and documented, what was published to transmit message in CSR activity, and is that written material got attention in building tangible and sustainable reputation was written was the main concept what the researcher try to identify to related the result with interview concept. Checklist was prepared to prove the available documents.

The results were: plan and the reports of CSR, video recorded of Limmu preparatory school and one female student gained chance to learn by free service/charity program, picture of a (green legacy announcement, the built bridge and constructed road), statement written for media, and certificate were available in these documents. The available documents were on CSR activities for example, there were a four (4) year plan (2011-2014 E.C), annual reports on finished projects and also ongoing projects were documented. Generally, seventy-five (75) million Ethiopian birr was hold yearly for CSR activity, and they had a good start on doing projects according to their plan. On the other hand, company and each farm had appreciation certificate from the central

Midrock investment group. From this, the researcher analyzed that having such document is good; however, the written material was not documented independently, it looked with other reports; even if different works were done the way it documented might not see separately and vividly as a PRs work.

Generally, all the interviewees agreed on PRs/strategic communication has a great value to build company reputation; organizational reputation is built on vision and mission of the company. So, Reddi (2000), encourages the above idea as PRs play a critical role in building the company reputation. On the other hand, those interviewees didn't have the same concepts on practices/activities of PRs as it is a management of the communication in building company reputation, using opportunity through the activities of CSR was misused in means that because of more works focused on increasing production, building reputation gain less attention in a professional eye. Here, there was no idea which the interviewees disagreed on it boldly; even if their ideas/concepts were not exactly the same, conceptually the researcher understood and analyzed that as their concepts had a relationship.

## **4.2. Discussions**

As mentioned above Limmu Coffee Farm Company is a profit-making private company. By taking this concept into account the researcher assessed the practices and opportunities of PRs in building reputation of this company as the main objective in this study. To achieve this objective in-depth interview and document review techniques were used and thematic analyses were employed.

### **4.2.1. Practices of Public Relations/strategic communication**

The practices of PRs were not only on the back of PR practitioner, but also on the company leader and farm managers; they are responsible in practicing PRs role in their daily activity. At head office the practices of PRs were more in a traditional way according to the surround culture; especially, the way PR practitioner practiced was as 'Jaarsa Biyyaa' in Oromo culture which is very related with the concept of 'negotiation', depending on environment situation in problem-solving and in minimizing conflict. Through traditional way, PRs can increase a company's profile, raise awareness of what the company does, educate target audiences, and position the company as an expert in the field (CIPR, 2013). The practices of PRs did not adequate with the knowledge of literature. Badreya Al-Jenaibi (2015), stated in her qualitative study on a current

issue of PRs professional of United Arab Emirate (UAE) companies in the UAE lack adequate PRs strategies and practices. Similarly, the current study revealed the same result, LCFC lack adequate PRs strategies and practices professionally.

Geremew (2017), stated PRs did not participate in the top-level management decision making; the current study revealed the same result, the PR practitioner did not participate in top-level management. The same result was gained by Demelash Mengistu & Hamza Hasen (2020), PRs practices was still at its infant stage, PRs practitioners did not take part in top-level management and were not decision-makers. The current study also found out the same result with this study, the practices of PRs in LCFC was at its infant stage and PR practitioner did not take part in top-level management decision-making as well as not a decision-maker.

Eyasu Yaya Sada (2019), stated in his study in Jimma Zone Seka District Communication Affairs found out lack of man power in department. The current study result was the same with this study, LCFC PRs department/sector problem was lack of man power. Tesfaye Bezabih (2018), stated in his study on government Universities as PRs offices were not structured and organized professionally and as it was not well understood by top leaders. The current study found out the same result with this study, LCFC PRs department was not well structured and organized professionally and it is not well understood by company leaders.

#### **4.2.2. Activities of Public Relations/strategic communication more in CSR policies and practices**

The result regarding practices of PRs in this company were more focused on publicity in CSR with less attention on stakeholders' approach. Similar finding was gained by Bartlett, Jennifer L., Tywoniak, Stephane and Hatcher, Caroline A. (2007), practices of PRs focused on publicity approaches in their study in Australian Banks. Australian research has shown CSR was integrated into organization through philanthropy (Johnston & Beatson, 2006). This research also found that social responsibility was emphasized over financial performance. Similarly, the current study was identified philanthropy contribution in financial performance in this company.

From the stakeholder perspective, CSR is not an optional extra, it is integral to the responsibilities of the company and the company must pay as much attention to its social duties



as it does to maximizing profits. Changing the challenges to opportunities wants tactics of PRs creativity.

#### **4.2.3. Public Relations/Strategic Communication Instruments**

LCFC used meeting, observation, telephone, official letters, annual reports, walk-talk radio for internal worker; Jimma Fana Radio (FM 98.1), and ETV for external media. However, using PRs as a tool in managing information, educating on the company purpose, organizing activity in appropriate way, and coaching were misused. EUPRERA agreed PRs focused on performing/creating, managing, counseling/advising, and educating in building an organization reputation.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **5.1. Conclusion**

This study assessed the practices and opportunities of PRs/strategic communication in building reputation of Limmu Coffee Farm Company. The result depicted that:

- The practices of PRs in this company depends on environmental context in a traditional way; in solving existed problem internally and externally, publicizing the activity CSR, and in advising on interpersonal relationship. The PRs department did not professionally and structurally organize independently.
- The practices of PR practitioner did not perceive well in the eyes of top-level leader. PRs personnel did not train on PRs issues concerning on ways of work going on.
- Most of the applied strategic communication was for the purpose increasing productivity with less attention on company reputation. Using organizational communication purposefully in building company reputation was not as much gained attention.
- The activities of PRs/strategic communication in CSR were not focused stakeholders' approach to build company's reputation, the opportunity was misused.
- The PRs/strategic communication instruments were meeting, official letter, face-to-face observation, telephone, walk-talk radio, Jimma FM Radio/FM98.1, and ETV (Ethiopia Television). Professionally, using such instruments only did not made company reputable.
- The documented material was not independently available.

### **5.2. Recommendation**

Based on the conclusion of the findings the researcher strongly recommended as follows.

- PRs department should well professionally and structurally organize as well as functioned independently. In this twenty-first century where information overload is making world turbulent, organizing this department with professional personnel make company more personalized and goal-oriented to success its vision and mission; indeed, PRs practice is a deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its public, so it is better to consider this concept for LCFC.

- Top-level leader should perceive the practices of PRs as it is verified to every activity of company and take PRs as a tool in top-level management as the first warning informer on company issues. The company should train a person/expert who do the work of PRs to develop and familiarize the modern PRs in their professional skill.
- Using organizational communication purposefully in appropriate way is important to keep organization reputation rather than publicly informing the company's work. According to LCFC context it is better to take into account the practices of PRs within key stakeholders' opinion especially in CSR activity, listening/following the intention of environment society rumors (from youth, religious people, elders and women) through action research and bringing that into table surround, then deciding a professional measurement may made company reputable.
- It is better if company leader, PR practitioner and farm managers should do a coaching work to help an individual as well as group to be more efficient or productive in the workplace.
- Consequently, it is better if the company focus more on educating the stakeholders/creating awareness on the responsibility of company more in CSR policies, budgeting for professional short-term training for expert to be effective, researching and re-evaluating their activity to take correction make company more legitimate. It is better utilizing multiple strategies like using routine and non-routine strategy. This may open the opportunities to build company reputation.
- Generally, good reputation does not happen quickly or by chance, it is in a constant dynamic process of evolution, subject to review and re-evaluation [L'Etang, (2012), p.50], and is the result of an organization's actions. Reputation is built on trust, as long as it can be considered as one of the foundations of a relationship between organizations and stakeholders. So, it is better to consider this assumption in their activities. So, it is better if PRs materials/reports is documented independently to review and re-evaluation the past activities to take correction rather than theorizing orally.

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## **Interview Guidelines**

My name is Almaz Teshome, MA student by Public Relation and Corporate Reputation, from Media and Communication Studies at Jimma University

**Dear interviewee,**

The research title of this study is: “*Assessing practices and opportunities of public relations in organizational reputation building: case study of Limmu Coffee Farm Company.*” The purpose of this interview is to gather data for the partial fulfillment of the MA thesis in PRCC.

Audio recording is required by the researcher to aid subsequent data analysis. If so, you will be informed at the beginning of the interview. All records of the interview, including the notes, audio file and transcripts, will be kept secure and at all times personal data will be treated in ways that are consistent with the data protection principles.

Thank you for your time.

### **Personal profile:**

1.1 Name \_\_\_\_\_

1.2. Sex \_\_\_\_\_

1.3. Age \_\_\_\_\_

1.4. Educational level \_\_\_\_\_

1.5. Field of study \_\_\_\_\_

1.6. Position \_\_\_\_\_

1.7. Work experience \_\_\_\_\_ (years

## Appendix A

### Interview questions for leader of LCFC

1. Would you like to tell me about your company? What is your company's vision and mission? How do you relate your work position related to company's mission?
2. What a communication strategies and instruments did you used in building a good reputation?
3. Is there any strategic communication practice in your company, related to reputation building?
4. CSR is a kind of competitive advantages of the company. Do you think strategic communication can values these activities (CSR), if yes how?
5. In which level the company used social responsibility, did you think can it create opportunity to build company's reputation? How?
6. Reputation depends on the performance of the responsible body inside and outside of company, including the connection of social environment that may handle by you; so, what instruments/tools did you use?
7. Is there any activity in creating entrepreneurial opportunities, related to reputation building?
8. Do you think that your company is openly dialogue and interact within target stakeholders, if yes how?
9. How strategic communication help the company, its staff members and employees better to communicate (counseling and coaching)? Adapted from Worknesh Demissew (2019) within little correction.

## **Appendix B**

### **For Public Relation Practitioner of LCFC company**

1. Would you like to tell me about your company? What is your company's vision and mission? How do you relate your work position related to company's mission? And what are the corporate values for company's vision?
  - A. How you realized the mission and vision in your PR/SC activities?
  - B. Did you practice two-way communication, if yes, how?
  - C. Did you support the management, if yes, how?
  - D. Did you integrate diversity in your work, if yes, how?
  - E. Do you think you are PR professional in this regard?
2. What Communication strategies did you used to build company's reputation? what about PRs role in building a good reputation, and what about instruments used?
3. What is your activity in company's CSR policies and practices, and is there any opportunities that could build reputation of the company?
4. How can the Communication/PR help the organization, its staff members and employees better to communicate (counseling, coaching, and strategic advising roles)? Adapted from Worknesh Demissew (2019) with little correction.
5. Do you think that your company is openly dialogue and interact with target stakeholders, If yes how?
6. What are challenges and opportunities in practice of PRs in building organization reputation? Adapted from Worknesh Demissew (2019). With some edition.

## **Appendix C**

### **Interview question for farm manager**

1. Would you like to tell me about your company? What is your company's vision and mission? How do you relate your work position related to company's mission?
2. What are the corporate values for company's vision and mission?
3. What tools/instruments which LCFC was used to contact with you and others?
4. How you perceived the reputation of LCFC, its behavior, and its communication?
5. LCFC did CSR for environment society? If yes, how you see it?
6. What is your activity in company's CSR policies and practices?
7. In building relationships with stakeholders (inside and outside), in building a good reputation (respect, engagement, understanding, trust), what tools of communication/instruments did you used?

## **Appendix D**

### Interview questions for employee (HRM)

1. Would you like to tell me about your company? What is your company's vision and mission? How do you relate your work position related to company's mission? And what are the corporate values for company's vision?
2. What was a company reputation to you?
3. What was your contribution/activity to increase your company's acceptability?
4. In building relationships with employees (inside and outside), in building a good reputation (respect, engagement, understanding, trust), what tools of communication or instruments did you used?

## **Appendix E**

### **Interview questions for stakeholders**

1. How did you see Limmu Coffee Farm Company?
2. How did you percept CSR activity? How did you percept it's values in society? Did you think society valued from this? Give example.
3. How did you see acceptability LCFC? Do you think its acceptability is great in society? Through which channel/tool did you hear the message of company at farms?
4. What about the most important resource LCFC got from the environment?
5. What communication instruments LCFC used to reach you or other stakeholders in society?

## **Gara Afaan Oromootti Kan Jijjiirame**

### **Appendix A**

#### **Af-gaaffii Hooggansa Kaampaanii Qonna Buna Limmuutiif qophaa'e**

1. Waa'ee Kaampanii keetii natti himuu dandeessaa? mul'atni fi ergamni kaampanichaa maali? Itti gaafatamummaa kee fi mul'ata Kaampaanichaa akkamitti walitti firoomsite?
2. Fudhatamummaa/maqaa gaarii kaampaanii kanaa ijaaruu keessatti komunikeshinii istratejii fi meeshaalee komunikeshinii akkamii fayyadamte?
3. Maqaa gaarii kaampaanii kanaa ijaaruu keessatti yaaliin kominikeshinii qindaa'aa hojiirra jiraa?
4. Kaampanii kana dorgomaa kan taasisan keessaa hojiileen dirqama hawaasaa isa tokkodha. Kana keessatti komunikeshinii qindaa'aan hojii kanaaf bu'aa ni buusa jettee yaaddaa? Eeyyee yoo jette, akkamitti?
5. Kaampaaniin kun itti gaafatamummaa dirqama hawwaasaa sadarkaa akkamii bahataa jira? Maqaa kaampaanichaa karaa sirriin ijaaruuf carraa uumeera jettee yaaddaa? Eeyyeen yoo ta'e akkamitti?
6. Maqaa gaariin dhaabbata kanaa hojiilee dhimmamtoota keessoof alaa si'iin to'atamuu danda'an irratti hundaa'a, kanaaf meeshaalee qunnamtii kominikeshinii akkamii fayyadamaa turte?
7. Fudhatamummaa kaampaanii kanaa ijaaruu keessatti sochiin kalaqa carraa(opportunity) jira turee?
8. Kaampaniin kun qooda fudhataa wajjin marii fi walitti dhufeenya banaa ta'e taasisaa turee? Eeyyeen yoo ta'e akkamitti?
9. Koominikeeshinii qindaa'aan akkamitti dhaabbata, hojjetootaa fi miseensota isaa caalaatti akka dubbataniif gargaara? (gorsaa fi leenjii kennuun) Worknesh Demissew (2019), irraa sirreeffama xiqqoo gochuun fudhatame.

## Appendix B

### Af-gaaffii Ogeessa PR kaampaanii Qonna Buna Limmuutiif Kan Qophaa'e

1. Waa'ee Kaampanii keetii natti himuu dandeessaa? Kaayyoo fi mul'atni kaampanichaa maali? Itti gaafatamummaa hojii keetii fi kaayyoo Kaampaanii akkamiin walitti dhiyaatu? Bu'aan korporashinii maali?

A. Kaayyoo fi mul'ata kaampaanii akkamiin hojii kee waliin hubatte?

B. Koomunikeeshinii gar-lamee ni fayyadamtaa? Yoo fayyadamte, akkamitti?

C. Hooggana ni deggarta? Yoo deggerte, akkamiin?

D. Sabdanessummaan hojii kee keessatti hammatamaa? Eeyyeen yoo jette akkamitti?

E. Ati ogeessa harriroo uummataa (PR)ti?

2. malootni koomunikeeshinii ati fayyadamtu kan akkamiti? Maqaa gaarii kaampanichaa ijaaruu keessatti gaheen kee maali? meeshalee koomunikeshinii itti fayyadamtuu maali?

3. Hojiilee PRn imaammataa fi yaalii kaampanii CSR'f hojjettu maali? Carrraaleen ittiin maqaa gaarii kaampaanii kana guddisiisuuf oolan jiruu?

4. Koomunikeeshinii ykn PRn, akkamitti dhaabbata, hojjetoota biiroo fi miseensota isaa gargaara? Xiinxalli, barsiifni fi Gorsii ni kennamaa?

5. Kaampaniin kun qooda fudhattoota wajjin mariif sagantaa banaa ta'e godheera jettee yaaddaa? Worknesh Demissew (2019), irraa sirreeffama xiqqoo wajjin fudhatame.

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6. Rakkoo fi carraawwan hojii kee ijaarsa maqaa gaarii kaampaanii kanaa keessatti si mudata ture maal fa'i?



## **Appendix C**

### **Af-gaaffii hoji-gaggeessaa Dhabbata Qonna Buna Limmuutiif (KQBL) Qophaa'e**

1. Waa'ee kaampaanii kanaa natti himuu dandeessaa? Ergamni fi mul'atni isaa hoo? Iddoo amma irra jirtuu fi mul'ata kaampanichaa akkamiin walsimsiiftee ilaalte?
2. Faayidaan/bu'aan Corporation ergamaa fi mulata kaampaaniif qabu akkamitti ibsita?
3. Meeshaaleen komunikeshinii KQBL si'ii fi qaama qonna biroo qaqqabuuf itti fayyadamaa ture maal fa'i?
4. Fudhatamummaa KQBL, amala isaa fi komunikeshinii kaampanichi taasisu akkamitti ilaalte?
5. Kaampaaniin Qonna Buna Limmuu dirqama faayidaa hawaasa naannoof hojjetaa turee? Eeyyeen yoo ta'e akkamitti ilaalte?
6. Dirqama faayidaa hawaasaa keessatti sochiin kee ittiin bulmaata kaampaanichaa wajjin akkam ture?
7. Hariiroo gaarii qooda fudhataa alaa fi keessaa wajjin fudhatamummaa/maqaa gaarii kaampaanichaa ijaaruuf (fkn kabaja, kutannoo, wal hubannaa fi dhugaa) meeshaalee kominikeeshinii maal fa'i fayyadamaa turte?

## **Appendix D**

### **Itti-gaafatamaa humna namaa Kaampaanii Qonna Buna Limmuutiif(KQBL) kan qophaa'e**

1. Waa'ee kaampaanii kanaa natti himuu dandeessaa? Ergamni fi mul'atni isaa hoo? Iddoo amma irra jirtuu fi mul'ata kaampanichaa akkamiin walsimsiiftee ilaalte? Ergamaa fi mul'ata kaampaniif korporashiniin faayidaa qaba jettee yaaddaa?
2. Fudhatamummaa kaampaanii kanaa akkamitti hubattee?
3. Fudhatamummaa KQBL dabaluuf qoodni kee ykn gaheen bahachaa turte maali?
4. Hariiroo gaarii qacaramtoota alaa fi keessaa wajjin fudhatamummaa/maqaa gaarii ijaaruuf kaampanichaa ijaaruuf (fkn kabaja, kutannoo, wal hubannaa fi dhugaa) meeshaalee kominikeeshinii maal fa'i fayyadamaa turte?

## **Appendix E**

### **Af-gaaffii qooda fudhataa dhaabbata qonna buna Limmuutiif qophaa'e**

1. Kaampaanii Qonna Buna Limmuu akkamiin ilaalte?
2. Faayidaa hawaasaa eegsisuuf hojiin kaampaanichi hojjete akkamitti ilaalte? Hawaasni irraa fayyadameera jettee yaaddaa? Fakkeenyaan ibsi.
3. Fudhatamummaa Kaampaanii Qonna Buna Limmuu akkamitti ilaalte? Hawaasa keessatti hoo fudhatama gaarii qabaa? Ergaa kaampaanichi dabarsu/beeksisu karaa kam/maaliin dhaga'aa turte?
4. Kaampaaniin Qonna Buna Limmu naannoo irraa qabeenya akkamii argata? Hariiroo sirrii hawaasa naannoo wajjin qabaa?
5. Kaampaaniin qonna buna limmuu meeshaalee kominikeshinii maal fayyadamee qooda fudhataa qaqqabaa ture?