

JIMMA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN IMAGE BUILDING: THE CASE OF
JIMMA UNIVERSITY

BY

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DECEMBER 2020

JIMMA ETHIOPIA

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MEDIA AND
COMMUNICATION STUDIES**

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Temesgen Alebachew, entitled the role of PRs in image building: the case of Jimma University submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the Degree of Master of Art in public relations and corporate communication complies with the regulations of the university and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Declaration

I, the undersigned declare that this research is my original work and has neither been presented in any other university nor was published before and that all source of material used for the research have been acknowledged.

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Abstract

This study was aimed to analyze the role of public relations in image building: The case of Jimma University. To achieve this, the researcher employed descriptive research design and qualitative research approach. Hence, in-depth interview, supportive questionnaire and document analysis were instruments of data collection. As to the finding of this study, there is misconception among the public relations practitioners regarding strategic plan in relation to image building. The role of the PRs practitioners in the university was supposed to be more of

the managerial role as it plays greater place for image building. Whereas, what is on the ground shows that more of the routine activities of the coworkers is performing technician roles like facilitating stage, coordinating events, creating media relation and publications of promotional materials. Furthermore, public relations campaign is one of the ideal methods performed in order to convince a specific public of a certain organization. However, Jimma University public relations office has never done PRs campaign. The finding of this paper has confirmed that the office does not have its own strategic plan. Hence, it has confined the role of the public relations office in exerting its role related to image building. Finally, the study is concluded by suggesting helpful comments for further development.

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Abbreviations

CETP= Community Based Training Program

CI=Corporate Image

DTTP= Developmental Team Training Program

GC= Gregorian calendar

ICT=Information Communication Technology

JU=Jimma University

PRO = Public Relations Office

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Organization

Image is a notion which an individual holds with regards to another individual, group or organization. In other words, image is an impression which an individual or group seeks to create or strike up on others regarding himself/herself/itself (Marteson, 2007). On the basis of these explanations, corporate image, shortly, can be explained as all kinds of impressions that the community makes about a corporation. Companies invest a large part of the marketing and

advertising dollars to build and maintain a positive corporate image, which is vital to the competitive status (Brady, 2005).

The purpose of the corporate image is to enable the clear and accurate understanding of the firm. Corporate image is about emotions and therefore, the image about the corporation differs from person to person. Therefore corporate image is an important issue for many institutions including higher education in being a competitive environment that requires higher quality of educational services.

Corporate image can be defined in many ways by the scholars who study more about it. For example, the corporate (organizational) image refers to the natural, spontaneous, or the resulting image of the expectations and the exchanges that the people have with the organization (Giangrande1995). Guedez and Osta (2012) consider that the organizational image of a university refers to the image perceived by its internal and external public

Jimma University is a public research university located in Jimma Ethiopia. It is recognized as the leading national university, as ranked first by the Federal Ministry of Education for five successive years (2009 - 2012). The establishment of Jimma University dates back to 1952 when Jimma college of Agriculture was founded. The university got its current name in December 1999 following the amalgamation of Jimma College of Agriculture (founded in 1952) and Jimma Institute of Health Sciences (founded in 1983). The university campus is located in the city of Jimma, situated around 352 kilometers southwest of Addis Abeba.

The university is organized in to six college and two institutes namely;

- College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine
- College of Business HYPERLINK "<https://www.ju.edu.et/beconew/>"& HYPERLINK "<https://www.ju.edu.et/beconew/>" Economics
- College of Education and Behavioral Science
- Institute of Health Sciences
- College of Law and Governance

- college of Natural HYPERLINK "<http://www.ju.edu.et/cssl>"Sciences
- College of Social Sciences and Humanities
- Jimma Institute of Technology

Today, Jimma University has numerous Memorandums of Understanding's with a variety of partners from around the world. Jimma University emphasizes that the power of collaboration is greatest when there is the most diverse set of international partners.

The University is in a critical development stage, and with the physical and programmatic development of the institution, the goal of becoming a globally collaborative and competitive university which produces the highest quality academic and research output yearly will surely be achieved. Jimma university PR offices does the job of awaring the community in different means. For example it organizes an event on different issues. For instance in order to declare promotion of staff members, graduation ceremonies, student admission, expansion of new fields, recognition and rewards, and some other activities.

In doing so, the PR office employees different means of PR communication tools for example social medias (Facebook, twitter, telegram) conventional Medias (television and radio). Apart from this, the PR office uses radio media which are close to the society like fana fm 98.1 and its own community radio station 102.0, though not largely.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

John Martson writes in his book 'The Nature of Public Relations' (1963) "planned, persuasive communication designed to influence significant public". He emphasized that public relations is not accidental but planned to convince some to do or believe in something.

Image is the perception that people carry towards an individual, a service, an organization or brand. Image is a good term to use as it may or may not be true and equal to the reality. But

that's what appears to people and they perceive. It's an important aspect that helps achieve goals. Organizations do get an edge over others if they are founded well keeping in mind the long term vision. Favorable image takes you distance and takes a long time to build. The image of an organization can be summarized under many categories ranging from young, friendly, speedy, and honest to corruptive, in-efficient, suspicious and anti-social. Public relations' role is not to project the negative with a positive image but to open the communication channels, remove the myths, doubts and suspicions. Thus changing the shade of light that's to be shed and bringing the best face of the organization forward.

Jimma University is known to be one of the best universities in the country. It has marked this by winning the leading national university award for five consecutive years (i.e. from 2009-2012 G.C). Moreover it has got a compliment and recognition in collaboratively working with some famous international universities regarding various activities.

Having this big name, Jimma University is considered as alien by the surrounding community. This can be seen from different perspectives. For example, one of the dissatisfactions from the neighboring community is the drastic problem around the city, which could have been eliminated by the university-it is flooding. Every summer season the society has to pass through difficulties due to over flooding, even sometimes from the ill-constructed drainage system by the university in its compound. Not only are this, but also leakage of sewerage which is fatal for the health of the community, and others some of the reasons for the complaints from the society's side.

Tesfaye, A., etal (2020), in their study about Jimma city community's perception towards Jimma university's corporate image and reputation, they revealed that community expectations, organizational behavior and reputations of the university. The study assessed the perceptions of the community in Jimma University towards the corporate image and reputation of Jimma University. It also explores how the current state of the community perception may affect the overall image and reputation of Jimma University.

Chala (2019) in the study of the practice of PRs in building image: the case of Bule Hora University, his objective was to indentify to what extent the PR department of Bule Hora University is engaged in image building, self -auditing and follow up. His finding shows the PR

department of the university is highly engaging in image building by self-auditing, follow up and self-assessing in the situations for its effectiveness.

The other driving force that led me to conduct this paper is, though the university does a few activities in favor of the community. It does not properly publicize in a way which easily accessible to the community. For example when something is done to the community, (be it by the DTTP, TTP, CBTP) or other means, the community should be informed with easy access by the PR office. Like using conventional media (TV, Radio, and FM) than the social media. Because the surrounding community's awareness and access should be given the major attention.

Researcher have been carried out such as on the Jimma city community's perception towards Jimma University's corporate image and reputation and the practice of PRs in building image: the case of Bule Hora University. In addition, the current researcher has read and identified many other researchers conducted on PR cases in different countries and universities. But what is new and uninvestigated is the current research topic the role of public relations in image building: the case of Jimma University, which has never been conducted in Jimma University. Moreover, the topic of this research is new regarding time and place. In light of these reasons, the current research is interested to conduct on the role of PRs in image building the case of Jimma University.

Therefore, having mentioned all the aforementioned driving issues and bringing them to the stage as major point of discussion, the finding of the research will show away to the concerned bodies of the university to come up with better approach in using the right PR tools for the university's image.

1.3 Objective of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this research is to analyze PR's contribution in building the image of Jimma University.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- To analyze the university's strategic plan for image building.

- To examine PR activities Jimma University is engaged for image building.
- To identify PR activities done to persuade the public and the stakeholders to believe in the university's over all activities.

1.4 Research Questions

The study will answer the following research questions;

- What is the strategic plan in relation to image building of Jimma University?
 - How does the role of PR activities help in improving or building image of Jimma University?
3. What activities has the PR office of Jimma University has done to convince the community and the stake holders?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is concerned with the distinctive and effective role that public relations can play in building corporate image. It also checks the activities carried out by the PR office to build corporate image.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The finding expected to help the university management to appreciate and improve the need for corporate image and how it can be used as a strategic tool to create favorable perception of shareholders. In addition to this the study will serve as a reference material of public relations finding about corporate image for further study on the same issue. What's more, the study will give an input the Jimma university PR office for issues to be considered in the process of corporate image building.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

As it is obvious that whenever we try to do something, everything will not be as smooth as planned. There might be some problems and limitations. Similarly, in this specific study some obstacles that would hamper the effectiveness of the study were anticipated. Lack of access to reference materials like books and journals, budget and financial constraints and lack of cooperativeness from the respondents and officials side in giving information.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This study has been presented in five chapters. The first chapter includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, scope of the study, significance of the study and limitation of the study. In the second chapter, review of related literature is incorporated to set the framework of the study.

In the third chapter, main research methodology techniques are implemented via the research work. The fourth chapter details with presentation and discussion of the findings and the final chapter presents the conclusion and recommendations about the study.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Definition of image

"An image is synthetic. It is planned: created especially to serve a purpose, to make a certain kind of impression." (*A person's image is*) "a visible public personality as distinguished from an inward private character.

"By our very use of the term we imply that something can be done to it; the image can always be more or less successfully synthesized, doctored, repaired, refurbished, and improved, quite apart from [though not entirely independent of] the spontaneous original of which the image is the public portrait."

Today we use the term "image" to convey what a person or an organization appears to be, which is sometimes very different from who/what they actually are in private.

Some personal or corporate images seem to be "more real," or to be a more honest reflection of the subject's "actual personality." This may be because such people/organizations are without artifice and feel comfortable being themselves in public, or it may be because they became public unexpectedly or by accident and had no time to prepare a different sort of image. Other images are obviously public personalities that are very consciously and carefully projected.

2.2 Image Building Exercise and Role of PR

John Martson writes in his book 'The Nature of Public Relations' (1963) "planned, persuasive communication designed to influence significant public". He emphasized that public relations is not accidental but planned to convince some to do or believe in something.

Image is the perception that people carry towards an individual, a service, an organization or brand. Image is a good term to use as it may or may not be true and equal to the reality. But that's what appears to people and they perceive. It's an important aspect that helps achieve goals. Organizations do get an edge over others if they are founded well keeping in mind the long term vision. Favorable image takes you distance and takes a long time to build.

The image of an organization can be summarized under many categories ranging from young, friendly, speedy, and honest to corruptive, in-efficient, suspicious and anti-social.

Image building exercise

The exercise of image building starts with evaluating the status, understanding the current perception for the brand in general and publics specific. It's followed by deciding the image to be build or need of alteration and activities involved to do so.

The data collection to gauge the present image can be done by:

- **Interviews and interactions** with the target group. Various structured survey tools or talks and interactive communication can be employed for this data collection.
- **Secondary sources** like articles published media coverage and mentions about the brand are analyzed to check the perception.

The data collected forms to be the basis of the analysis of the image. Breaking down the data gets you the image at the time of data collection and should be read with reference to the source of data. It may vary from time to time and from publics to publics.

2.3 Desired image

Brand may like to project a certain preferred image while the present image may or may not fall in line with its expectations. The ‘Mission Statement’ of the brand helps identify the image to be projected and the role of public relations is to narrow it down and bring in sync with the desired positioning as well. For instance a banking or financial institution may want to be known for its integrity, honesty and efficiency in asset management but may like to project a ‘speedy’ or ‘friendly’ or ‘socially responsible’ image.

Based on the analysis of existing image and the desired image an action plan is to be drawn and suggested by the PR. In case the image is way deviated and degenerated as compared to the expectations a neutralization activity or crisis management exercise is to be undertaken.

2.4 Definitions of Organizational Image

Image is very essential for the success of every government and private organizations to provide their service and products for their stakeholders and customers. This very basic thing for organizational success; image is interpreted and defined by scholars differently from time to time. Organizational image is defined by (Arpan et al., 2003) as the sum of the quality of products and services produced, activities organized and successes achieved by an organization since its establishment until present day. This scholar’s view refers that the organizational image is defined as the reward which is gained from the quality of that organization’s services and products provide for their publics which is organized and achieved the success of that organization starting from its establishment.

Organizational image does not only develop based on tangible and physical elements related to appearance, but it is also affected by visual, auditory and behavioral elements. Additionally the

organizational image is a complex construct based on the perception of the public or personnel of an organization that carries out a differentiating and comparative appraisal of its characteristics (Gunalan & Ceylan, 2014).

To build organizational image; it is difficult, because the perceptions of the publics of the organizations are different and comparative to each other. The image is formed for the people or for the public of the organization as a result of the interpretation that they make out of the information or disinformation of the organization (Toto & Garcia, 2012). Means this, image is formed and build based on the information the publics and stakeholders of the organization have and not. Also, Polat (2011) defines the organizational image as the vision, representation or impression that the people form in their minds based on the information or data of an organization obtained through the interaction they have had with the elements or components of the organization. Image is firstly formed in the mind of people by having vision, representation and impression through communicating and maintain positive image. In other way (Helgesen & Nettet, 2007) organizational image is presented as the corporate image, perceived external prestige, corporate reputation, and corporate identity, among others. In general organizational image is the beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of an organization.

2.5 Corporate Image

Corporate image has been defined by Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) as “the business name, architecture, variety of products/services, and interaction with the firm’s clients” hence forming the physical and behavioural attributes of an organization. Barich and Kotler (2001) agree that corporate image casts an imprint on the way the public perceives the organization in their minds. Corporate image tends to cause effects on customer loyalty through previous indirect and direct evaluation processes (Ball, Coelho, and Vilares, 2006; Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001).

From the point of view of Grönroos (2003) how consumers perceive an organization and the influence it has on the consumer constitutes the image of the company (Keller, 2003). Corporate image is a perception which influences. Service evaluation is largely influenced by a company’s corporate image as they are the leading drive behind these attitudes. Literature on attitude acknowledges that the manner in which services are evaluated is determined by increments “in predictive value as they become more accessible in memory” (Fazio (2005), Fazio and Zanna, (2004).

Future behaviours make attitudes easily reachable and foretelling. Oliver (2000) affirms that a customer's first behaviour during the point of service provision as well as the level of satisfaction derived from a consumer experience extremely dictates the attitude formed towards a product/service choice. The global brand or corporate image of a firm is influenced by how consumers evaluate and perceive the quality of performance (Selnes, 1993). An examination of the airline service agrees that "positive experience over time (following several good experiences) will ultimately lead to positive image" (Ostrowski et al., 2006). Corporate image is a sub-set of service quality which represents the experience derived from consuming a service. In other words, how customers perceive the quality of service directly affects how they also perceive the image of the organization (Aydin & Ozer, 2005) which also confirms that the perception of service quality directly affects the perception of corporate image.

It has been shown that corporate image is reiterated when the name of a business in any industry (such as hospitality, health care delivery, education and others) is mentioned to travellers. The total package of the consumer's response forms the corporate image. It is best explained as the impressions, beliefs and ideas that the public has about an organization which are displayed by an interaction with the organization's clients. Furthermore, the accumulation of purchasing/consumption experience overtime noted as corporate image can further be divided into two major components, functional and emotional.

Weiwei (2007) believes that the functional component is related to structures in place, "while the emotional component is associated with feelings and attitudes towards an organization" comprising the psychological measurements. When customers experience the service from a business and processes the information regarding the way that the service was delivered in terms of measurable attributes, these form the basis for the feelings that they derive.

Berman and Evans (1995) described corporate image in terms of both functional and emotional dimensions. In regard to this they indicated that it is directly linked to ensuring a customer's satisfaction through factors such as advertising, spoken word effect and when prediction meets expectation in the future thus having a direct positive influence on satisfaction. (Young,(2000)). Therefore, when customers are able to note the differences and similarities between various organisations in terms of their attitudes this process is believed to be as a result of corporate image.

Competition has been growing in every business sector forcing organizations to work and foster a sense of positivity about its image through effective communication to their stakeholders such as shareholders/owners and the public. Young (2000) confirms that any firm which either ignores or mishandles its image would as a result face poor relationships with vendors or government officials. Other challenges that will result from poor corporate image include low customer loyalty, high employee turnover, and declining worth of its stocks/shares.

According to Young (2002) “if an image problem is left unaddressed, a company might find many of its costs of doing business rising dramatically, including the costs of 13 product development, sales support, employee wages, and shareholder dividends. In addition, since the majority of consumers’ base their purchase decisions at least partly on trust, current and future sales levels are likely to suffer as well” (Young, 1996).

In businesses that range in different sizes, it is important that management recognises the need not to only establish. However, the entity must have the culture of maintaining a strong image and having the sole responsibility that its employees are also aware of. Corporate image begins at the top management level. Its focus should be the creation and developing of good company policies, rather than trying to do damage control caused by bad company policies.

Young advises that transparency in all business dealings, base actions on substantive policies, focusing on the long-term plan, and the right of knowledge of stakeholder should be taken by business owners and managers leading to an incline towards improving their companies' image. After all, he affirms, a good corporate image that can take a lifetime to build would destroy in only minutes. (Young, 1996).

Different pictures have been formed by a range of corporate audiences thus leading to diverse interpretations from various branches of research. In spite of this corporate image which for some time now dominated a lot of research work, is not a one-sided story. Generally, the various meanings put forward for corporate image is as many as the various images that the public forms in relation to a company (Howard, 2001).

2.6 Communication and Institutional Image

Raj shekharet al (1994) picks out communication as the best means through which companies can make this image and maintain it. Consumers use different sources of information to form their impressions about a company. Because of such diversity, companies need to always be on the alert as to the right medium to use and the best things to do. Raj shekhar et al, 1994 discuss sponsorship as a means of boosting company image. Increasingly, companies want to write their names as sponsors of some important activities, especially social activities that benefit human beings and lead to development as a means of making them look good before their stakeholders. A company that creates an identity like one that has the immediate society at heart would definitely enjoy a good image.

The importance of organizational image has increased. Outsiders have higher expectations about transparency and organizations' ability to express who they are, and what they stand for; just as insiders pay more attention to how outsiders perceive their organization. At the same time, the value creation in organizations is increasingly depending on intangibles, where the unique heritage and identity of the organization is part of what enables the organization to create an organizational image, which is appealing to stakeholders. The construct of organizational image is developed in close interrelationship with other constructs such as organizational identity, organizational culture, corporate branding and corporate reputation. This development emerges from the growing overlap between internal and external constituencies and the difficulties organizations are facing when trying to compartmentalize their activities Schultz (2007).

Stephen & Stephen (2004), finds a positive relationship between corporate philanthropy, sponsorship and the reputation of the company. Even though this seems to stand as independent action, the use of sponsorship by companies is an easy way to communicate the company's involvement in things that are of importance to the population. This is because social performance increases the identification of the company and informs the stakeholders of what they will consider the core values of the corporation. Social sponsorship is defined as the corporate social support of causes by a firm, usually used as a promotional tool with the aim of maintaining a good reputation with stakeholders. This includes sponsorship of social activities and philanthropic works according to Simmons C.J. & Becker-Olsen. (2006). Bernstein (1984) argues that low profile companies that are notorious for being passive, uninvolved, avoidant and

un-influential, get this poor image from their inability to communicate its works or participate in social activities that involve the public. He explains the choice to keep a low profit as stemming from the risk of communicating poorly.' However, poor communication only serves to sever ties between a company and its stakeholders but the lack of it could mean a total absence. Grey & Balmer (1998) posit that even the names of the companies are enough to communicate its goals.

According to McDonald C, 1991, some companies carry out sponsorship with a vague meaning as to what they are doing and thus do not make the effort to do any form of publicity after that. This reveals that when sponsorship is done without adequate communication on what the firm is actually doing, or what its intentions are; it could end up a failure. He notes that due to the lack of Passion to follow up social sponsorships and communicate effectively, some companies have resorted to the sponsorship of television programs since it speaks for itself and need no further communication. He advises that sponsorship deals should be long term in order to create expected results and they should be properly thought of before executing. Grey & Balmer (1998) proposes that a routine interaction with the stakeholders in order to get their reactions to the company activities and products. According to Bernstein, 1984, a company owes the duty to its stakeholders to communicate because failure to communicate is negative communication. He looks at communication as the best means to get feedback and thus encourage improvement. The company name and identity, partnerships, and social activities etc. are among the many ways used to communicate a good reputation. Action should always be followed by communication and vice versa. This permits the companies to explain the reasons and course of their actions in order to be better understood and to stay alive in the minds of consumers.

When all the work is done, companies must give room for feedback from the stakeholders in order to give them the impression that they are being listened to and are important part of the company. Equally, companies should try getting feedback on the activities so as to be sure of the impact their actions have had on their public. The contemporary media are one of the strongest tools that can be used by a company to remain in the minds of the stakeholders, and to build a good image. Poor relation with the media may get the company into trouble and rip it of its popularity. Bernstein says that the more a company communicates, the more it is able to build a good image for itself. Staying out of public eye is the easiest queue up for a bad image. Star Bowling (2010) believes in making use of Facebook to get their company known to the public.

He also recommends quality service as its main strategy to maintain a good image. According to Kaplowitz, 1990, the maintenance of a positive national self-image is crucial to continued public acquiescence and support for government, and thus to the smooth, on-going functioning of the state.

2.7 organizational image of the university

Organizational image of a university is very crucial for every higher education in order to create good perception about the institution in the mind of its internal and external publics and as well as its stakeholders. Organizational image of a university is defined by the scholars in different ways. Among those definitions some of them are the following.

Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) define the organizational image of a university as the perceived image that the public has of a higher education institution according to their ideas, interests and personal experiences. Under this definition, the person linked to the university does a rational and emotional assessment of the tangible and intangible attributes of the institution. Means this; the organizational image of a university is refers that the perceptions of the publics and stakeholders of a university they have about the university.

In turn, Guedez and Osta(2012)consider that the organizational image of a university refers to the image perceived by its external public (public and private organizations, graduates, governmental institutions) and internal public(students, instructors, administrative and services personnel, among others), who, according to their experience, interests and ideas carry out a rational, cognitive and emotional assessment of the characteristics and attributes of the institution. As this definition organizational image of a university is based on the feeling, attitudes, beliefs and information the internal and external publics they have.

2.8 Using Public Relations in Building Image

Most of the organizations today place heavy emphasis on externalities such as marketing, branding and image management, and lesser attention on internal communications (Chong, 2007).As Chong suggests that many of the companies are pay more attentions for their organizations image in order to build and branding their services and products before their publics and stakeholders.

Additionally according to Pickton and Broderick (2005) image is the perception of the company by its publics. The authors emphasized that an organization have many images, but not just one, because each target audience is affected by its own interest and contacts. Clow and Baack (2007) stressed that strong company image, which took years to build, may be destroyed in just a few weeks or months by negative publicity and events. Therefore the role of public relations in building strong company image is very essential. Wellsetal.,(2005)mentioned employee relations, media relations, corporate relations, financial relations, public affairs and community relations as types of relations that public relations professionals of an organization deal with. Dortok (2006) concedes that building an image and a relationship for an organization, it is crucial to pay more attention to employees as they are considered one of the most trusted information sources of an organization. Also Ledingham and Bruning (2000) further indicated that communication becomes a vehicle used by an organization to initiate, develop, maintain and repair mutually productive relationships.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

Since this study delved in to the preferred functional approaches to the role of PRs for corporate image the case of Jimma University, it's anchored in the following theories;

2.9.1 The Corporate Image Theory

In the ever-increasing competitive conditions of modern society, enterprises no longer compete only within the dimensions of products, functions, specifications and quality but also within the areas of corporate image, brand and reputation.

As we analyze concept of image, it is detected that a myriad of disciplines such as marketing, public relations, environment and management are collectively intertwined as well (Finn, D. 1961:135). Corporate image is the picture emerging in the mind of target mass that any given enterprise aims to reach.

In a different saying; corporate image is the accumulation of all judgments that exist in the minds of target mass as regards the adjectives associated with a given enterprise. In addition, it refers to a compilation of all analyses related to the way enterprises are recognized and perceived

by the audience. All these analyses make-up of the entire corporate image (Çetin and Tekiner, 2015:419).

Ensuing the 1970s in particular, the gravity of corporate image studies has increased. Having then construed that image has nothing to do with visuality or pretentious moves to fool customers, enterprises have been trying to align their corporate image with the corporate behaviors making the whole of an enterprise (Köktürk et al., 2008:3).

Researchers from the disciplines of marketing, strategy and communication disciplines delineated image via associating with concept of corporate reputation. In that they defined image as the effect that an enterprise creates on the entities outside the business circle; in another saying they described image as the thoughts and beliefs in the minds of people outside the scope of any organization (Hatch and Schultz, 1997: 359).

Corporate image relates not only to beliefs, thoughts and impressions regarding the enterprise but also related to the name of an organization, impressions on its architectural structure, product and services, traditions, ideology and quality aside from the communication that each employee establishes with their corporate customers. It consists of two components as functional and emotional (Fombrun, C. J., Gardberg, N. and Sever, J. 2000:4).

Functional component integrates physical qualities and can be measured easily whereas emotional component is related with psychological dimensions surfacing with emotions and attitudes and such emotions derive by processing personal experiences in tandem with knowledge. Thus, corporate image can be defined as the outcome emerging once customers make a comparison on various qualities of enterprises (Ateş, 2016:27).

Image is the derivation of the word 'icon' that means the mental recreation of visualized face of any given entity. It refers to impressions on a person, enterprise, product or situation created in one's mind to help the person remember and recognize the entity. Image has the character of guiding purchase behaviors of individuals and on a broader scale, it can be defined by employing adjectives such as positive, negative and average. In everyday life image refers to positive or negative perceptions created consciously or unconsciously about people, enterprises, cities or countries (Akdu, 2017:67).

Image is recognized as perceptions of stakeholders based on the short-term impressions on an enterprise whereas corporate image refers to the specifications of manufactured products or services. It entails achievements and impacts that a company has attained since its establishment, behaviors in the relationships between employers and workers, a sense of responsibility toward the environment, personal experiences with the enterprise, informing people in line with their comprehension levels about the enterprise, incompany communication, and the impact created on the target mass by the company (Küçüksüleymanoğlu, 2015:2668).

The organization should analyze all its functions and take necessary steps to boost its effectiveness. Empowering corporate image can be actualized in coordination with communication skills. In that viewpoint, all shareholders of any company should communicate with all its shareholders and improve the communication in all platforms. Communication that a company establishes with its employees would not be identical with the interaction to be built with customers and suppliers; thus for each part involved different communication styles should be developed in accordance with a professional approach.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study used descriptive research design and qualitative research approach to analyze the contribution of public relations in building image. The term descriptive research refers to the type of research question, design, and data analysis that will be applied to a given topic.

The type of question asked by the researcher ultimately determined the type of approach necessary to complete an accurate assessment of the topic at hand.

3.2 Population of the Study

Jimma University has many different societal strata like students, teachers, administration staffs, supportive staffs and so on. In order to undertake this study about building corporate image, the researcher has taken Four (4) interviewees in order to collect the required data. These are the senior PR director, and three directors (communication, international relations and web and publication director). For supportive questionnaire the researcher used six (6) professionals.

These are, the same professionals mentioned for the interview excluding only senior director and web and publication director, two PR practitioners, one editor and one ICT expert. There are also a number of supportive staff members in this office example (secretary, janitors, and cameraman) who are not included in this source of data because the researcher thought that information which were obtained from these people has been less likely in keeping the relevancy of the data.

Regarding the sample size, since the number of the population who are relevant to the study in the PR office are not many, the researcher has used almost all of them except very few of them whose importance in the process of the study would be insignificant.

3.4 Sampling Technique

The study used non-probability sampling design. Non-probability sampling enables researchers to use their judgment to select cases that will best enable their researchers answer their research questions and meet their objectives.

The sampling technique used for this research was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a deliberately non -random method of sampling, which aims to sample a group of people, or settings, with particular characteristic usually in qualitative research designs.

3.5 Data Collection Techniques /Tools

In this study, data was collected through the use of in-depth interview, supportive questionnaire and document analysis.

3.5.1. Interview

The researcher used in-depth interview as one tool of data collection. To this effect, the researcher has interviewed four (4) professionals. One senior director of the PR office and three

directors of the PR office (i.e., communication, international relations and web and publication director

3.5.2 Questionnaire

The supportive questionnaire, which is the other basic tool of data collection in this research, are six (6) respondents. These were two directors (communication, and international relations), two PR practitioners, one editor and one ICT expert.

3.5.3 Document Analysis

The other important means to have the required data is a document analysis. So the researcher tried to assess some documents used so far by the PR office of the University for Image building. For this matter, the social media of the office (especially Facebook and telegram), you tube channel and web address has been examined. Moreover, magazine, brochures, stickers, fliers and so on are checked so as to make the data strong and relevant. All the documents analyzed were done in the year 2012 E.C (2019 G.C). The reason is for the sake of manageability of data and time constraints.

3.6 Data Presentation and Analysis

In this study, once the qualitative data is collected through the in-depth interview, supportive questionnaire and document analysis has been analyzed manually.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

In conducting this study the following ethical considerations has been taken in to account;

Ethical clearance-it was obtained from Jimma University College of social sciences and humanities.

Informed consent -before starting data collection, the purpose and importance of the study was explained to subjects in the study. In addition to the above the privacy of the subject was promoted and they were informed that whatever information they provide has been kept confidentially.

CHAPTER FOUR

Result and Discussion

The relevant data after being collected through questionnaire, interview and document analysis was analyzed and interpreted accordingly. The collected data were analyzed manually.

4.1 Result

4.1.1 Result from Interview

4.1.2 About Strategic Plan Specific to PR office

Regarding strategic plan specific to PR office, informants of this study have given two contradicting ideas some of them said the office has strategic plan but others thought still now the office has not strategic plan rather it used monthly and annual plan. In addition to this, Jimma university strategic plan also served as strategic plan of PR office.

Informant I said,

“Jimma university PR office has strategic plan which served for the last five years and now we are preparing a new strategic plan which is specific to the PRs office”.

This implies that the office right now is designing its own strategic plan that is specific only to the public relations office. Informant II told to the researcher the same idea regarding strategic plan.

But informant III has a little bit different points with regard to the strategic plan. He said:

“What I can say is we don't have yet comprehensive and well organized strategic plan for external relations and communication office. We are preparing one but we usually prepare annual plan for execution and evaluation. But as far as strategic plan is concerned we do have only for international office which was formulated in 2016 and has been functioned for almost five years from 2016-2020 GC. Likely the same plan was adapted in to the strategic plan of the university.”

As we can easily understand from informant III, university PR office has not got its own strategic plan which helps the office to execute and evaluate its activities but it uses the whole Jimma University bigger plan as a guideline to prepare their monthly or annual plan based up on the university's strategic plan. The informant also said they made a lot of efforts to prepare strategic plan and they are also drafting one since the last two months and hoped it will be completed soon. In a plain speaking, so far all the activities performed by the PR office are planned based on the institution's general strategic plan; not by the particular PR plan. Apart from this, the PR office is striving to have its own strategic plan, which is advanced by now and already in its drafting level.

Informant IV also supports the idea of the above mentioned informant and said even if we used the university's strategic plan as a guideline for the last five years, now we are going to complete our own strategic PR specific plan which serves for the coming ten years. This can help us fix problems that hindered activities in the office. In addition to the informants, the researcher asked respondents about the strategic plan by preparing supportive questionnaire. According to the

analyzed data 3(50 %) of respondents said the PR office has its own specific strategic plan. In contrast to this the same number of respondents also said the PR office has no specific strategic plan.

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	3	50%
No	3	50%

Table 1: strategic plan specific to PR office

As table 4.1 shows respondents response regarding strategic plan was fifty-fifty which implies that there is no a clear and brief common understanding about strategic plan by employees of the office. Issue related with main focuses of strategic plan 50% or half of respondents said the plan give emphasis on the overall activities of the office and planned to strengthened collaboration with external publics in order to achieve its own goal, vision and mission. Those who said the office has no strategic plan said they don't know all about the strategic plan. So, this indicates that they are not capable of telling about its main focuses.

Question related to evaluation of the strategic PR plan respondents said the plan fit to overcome problems encountered regarding the office's functions and to the publicity of the university in general. So, they measure/evaluate/ the effectiveness of the strategic plan by a perception that they got from internal and external publics. To the opposite, the other respondents said they have no idea for what they didn't come across the plan. To sum up, based on the gathered data through questionnaire and interview, the researcher has confirmed that there is a huge confusion among the practitioners regarding the strategic plan despite the office is formulating its own PR strategic plan.

4.1.3About Human Resource . . .

Concerning this issue all informants agreed on the idea of shortage of human resource. Informant I assumed that in the next strategic plan they will give emphasis for qualified and experienced employees those who are important in order to achieve what is planned. In other words what the

informant I said is right now employees of the office are not enough to execute the overall activities of the office. Another informant thought the human power (resource) has always been a constraint to the office as it is needed to have a lot of experts. He added:

“We are engaged more in routine activities than strategic tasks so this pattern will be changed that’s why we are in the process of preparing the strategic plan but even though you have strategic plan if you don’t support it with budget, structure and human resource then the plan will remain to the blue print on paper.”

Based on this, it can be deduced from the upper extract of informant III, almost all the officers under the senior director are currently facing serious challenges with regard to human resource. Due to this even if you are named director you may engaged in daily routine mainly handling detailed activities which should have been handled by experts probably some other practitioners. But with their framework they don’t have necessary human resource with job description to help each director`s to realize their goals. Generally, human resource is always a problem which is explained from two different perspectives, quantity and quality.

As to the informants the university strives to hire employees for the PR office; but when you try to employ, again you may not able to find out qualified people that could really handle the job up to the standard so there are always challenges with regards to human resource in terms of quality.

The result from supportive questionnaire also support what the informants said.

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	1	16.7%
No	5	83.3%

Table 2: skilled human resource

As to table 4.2 83.3%(5 respondents) said even if human power is one of the tools that is used to apply the strategic plan and image building, it was not given due attention mostly until recent time. That means the PR office has no enough employees to achieve its overall activities. In addition to this, the respondents of this study said that the shortage of human resource hindered

the office not to discharge its role properly. From this, we can easily understand how the office is struggling to cope up with different issues due to shortage of human resource.

4.1.4 Practitioners' experience to undertake the PR activities

For interview question about employees' qualification and experience, all the informants assumed that employees of the office were qualified and well experienced. This is seen based on activities done there but if strategic tasks comes it may be difficult to judge whether they are fit enough or not but for the daily detailed and routine tasks, they are able enough. By asking similar supportive question the research got the contradicting result

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	4	66.6%
No	2	33.4%

Table 3: experience of PR practitioners

As table 4.3 shows that out of the total respondents 66.3 % (4) said the practitioners has enough experience to undertake the PR activities. As the table indicated 33.4 % (2 respondents) have responded the practitioners have no enough experiences to actively engage in the overall activities of the office.

4.1.5 Role that the PR office of Jimma University used to build image.

One of the informants in this study thought that they used both the managerial and technician role. *“What we want is more of managerial role but it’s not such applicable”*. This indicates even if they want to apply both roles by focusing the managerial one, but the reality is the opposite one. They passed most of their time by working a routine and detailed technician role like coordinating stages, adjusting mic and speaker and facilitating media relations which mainly gives emphasis for positive activities done by different colleges of the university.

Informant II said that they would try to apply both roles in order to build a sustainable and acceptable good image of Jimma University. In contrast to the above idea, informant III of the study assumed as they focus on more of technician role:

“I can say it’s more of technician’s role that we are performing due to different reasons. Our office has been holding routine activities most of them are not planned by the office; rather just come from other colleges, departments, organs and units of the university. You only handle jobs in managerial role if they are planed and try to execute as well as evaluate it.”

This shows that Jimma University PR office has focused more on facilitating situations to the different sections and units of the university which is totally event based duties. So, in such way it’s difficult to apply the managerial role which they wanted to apply but in reality the opposite is happening.

As to respondents said the PR office applied different methods to execute its strategic PR plan. From these some are media relations, social media, publication materials, webpage and other soft wares were mentioned.

For the supportive question regarding primarily role applied in the office, all the respondents gave similar answer which was “technician role”. Even if they wanted to apply both roles i.e., managerial and technician role, due to different reasons they give focus for certain routine activities than acting on the managerial duties. Generally, both the informants and the respondents agreed as they are applying the technician role.

4.1.6 Approaches the PR office used to build image of Jimma University.

In order to evaluate their plan whether the annual or quarter plan and to have smooth relationship which helps Jimma university to understand the external public’s perception, the PR office applies different approaches. All informants told the researcher that they are using several mechanisms in order to build image. For instance, social media, media relations, magazine, newsletter, webpage, website, community based activities like community based training program (CBTP) , developmental team training program(DTTP),and the likes are some approaches which are directly applied for building good image of Jimma university. Especially the social media outlet helps the PR practitioners and officials to promote their activities and to build image of the university. The PR office under web and publication director office prepares different materials for the purpose of branding and image building like flash disc, T-shirt, billboard and so on.

The informant believes that Jimma University has been promoted well than other universities. But, when we compare activities done by different colleges and institutes mainly issues focused on those which solves different socio-economic problems, there are limitations in promoting those success which easily attracted the hearts of external community or publics.

To sum up, Jimma University PR office practitioners and officials use different mechanisms to build image and make mutual understanding with publics. But one thing that we should take in to consideration is that as to the real fact which is obvious that the university has PR office and teaches post graduate students in this area, there are problems in selecting the appropriate media in which the proper message is transmitted to the audience through. The researcher said this because of the huge blame received from the society towards the university. The university's motto "We are in Community" and what the community observes doesn't go together. Based up on my observation during the Developmental Team Training Program (DTTP) section what the university perceived as its essential part is directly or in directly bored the society. That means the community expected a lot from the university but paradoxically students from the same university are begging money and materials from the society every year in the name of a project called community based service.

In addition to the above idea, there is also misunderstanding from the community. Some of them considers Jimma University as a financial institution and asks it for some contribution. When their proposal fails, they use this opportunity to criticize the university more. From this we can easily understand two big gaps one from PR office (practitioner and officials) in selecting the appropriate channel to transmit information. The other one is misperception from the community's side regarding the service that the university renders.

As the data collected through the supportive questionnaire, all the respondents give their recognition for different tools applied to image building. These tools are mainly; social media, web page, telegram, Facebook and other various community based activities. Therefore, the institution has used all the aforementioned tools in order to build good image. But for question related to the most significant PR activity in the process of image building Jimma University used media relations, as of the respondents. This implies Jimma University has given emphasis for media relations because of event based activities. The Media reports what is done and what will be done in the university. Generally event based media coverage is the dominant one. From

other respondents point of view there was no partial role in the process of image building. Some of the respondents revealed that the university does not have a clearly identified PR tools; therefore all PR tools are applied in their respective role

Issue regarding about external community perception towards Jimma University, the respondents have given similar ideas.

Response	Number	Percentage
Positive	4	66.6%
Negative	0	0%
Mixed	2	33.4%

Table 4: external community perception

From table 4.4 it is easy to understand that 66.6% (4) respondents think that the external community has positive attitude towards the university. And those perceive the university positively support it in all required way. From respondents of the study 33.4% (2) said that they have developed mixed perception towards the university regarding its image building; that means both positive and negative perception. So, this implies that some of the communities always criticize and blame the contributions of the university where as others appreciate it. Similarly, the university itself, due to shortage of human resource, doesn't communicate what is done to build mutual shared and understood relationships. Generally, from what we discussed above it's difficult to say (categorize) the community's perception either positively or negatively.

4.1.7 Ways of Feedback Collection

As the informants put, to get comments and feedbacks from different stakeholders, the PR office uses various options but mainly give focus for new emerging or online media outlets. By using online plat forms that help them to express their feeling and comment without any fear, they write comments and suggestions regarding issues raised by the concerned bodies. The PR practitioners and officials also give the comments and suggestions to the body that concerned in order to solve the problem stated by the communities.

In addition to the above idea, the result that the researcher got from the supportive questionnaire is also the same. These are mainly, Social networks (Media) like Facebook, you tube, telegram, webpage were mechanisms which helps the office to collect feedbacks from different publics. Those channels or tools of feedback collections allow the office to communicate in two-way approach.

In contrast to the above, some respondents assumed the university would prepare questionnaires and conduct survey to get the heartbeat of the community; which is important to know what the communities thinks about the university.

4.1.8 PR campaign to address the public

Both respondents and informants of this study said there was no campaign which has been done to address the public. All activities which were done to address the community are event based and routine jobs which got emphasis than a campaign. The only thing which is counted as a campaign is that the program which is transmitted once in a week with Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN). Its main focus is promoting activities done in all colleges and institutes those which are very much essential to the community and higher educational institutions. But due to some disagreement between the institute and the broadcasting station, the program which had been aired almost for one year has currently stopped. After all it was difficult to call it a campaign that used to be aired once a week and surprisingly only for thirty minutes.

4.1.9 Scientific Applications of Public Relations in Jimma University.

When we talk about public relations, it is “a planned, persuasive communication designed to influence significant public”. This implies that public relations is not accidental but planned to convince some to do or believe in something. In fact, in 2012, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) accepted a few *thousand* submissions before finally agreeing on a definition: “Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.” When we see what is happening in Jimma University in scientific applications of PRs, the senior director of PR office of the university and informant of the study told to the researcher what challenged him is the issue of scientific applications of public relations.

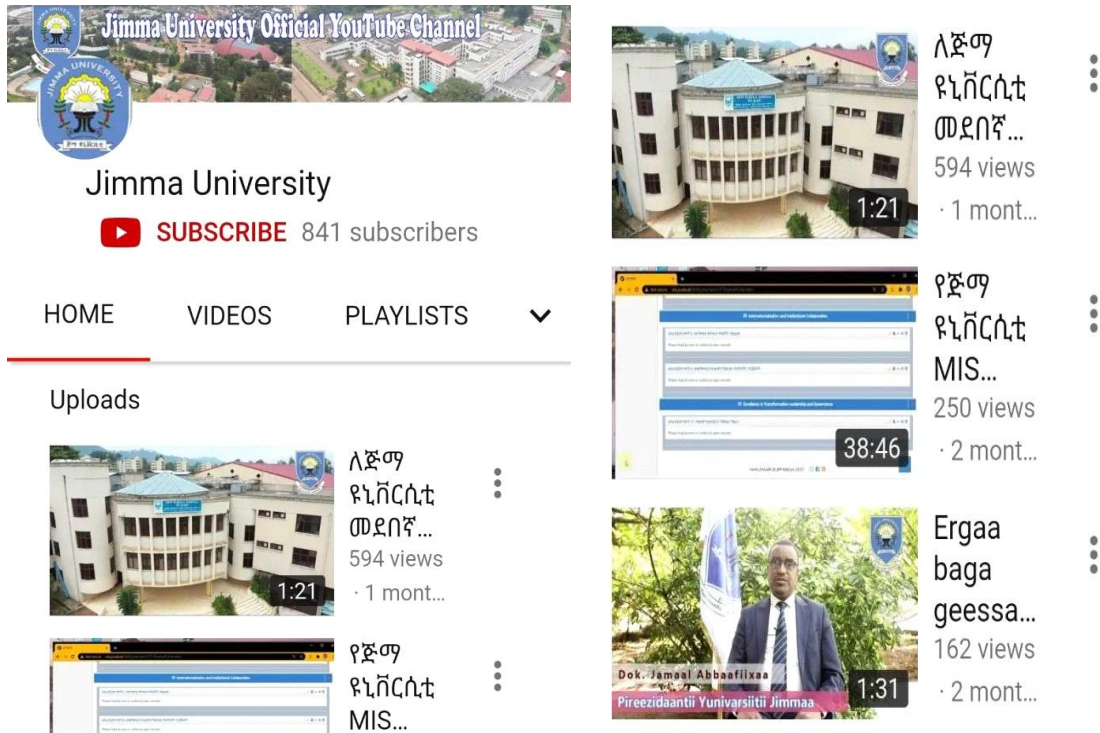
“To tell you the truth, I am also losing my position because of that when I am talking about science they said leave out your science and do what we said. And I’m not happy with this situation.”

Even if Jimma University is an educational institution and teaching public relations courses, the scientific meaning and real application of public relations is quite unrelated. So, it needs further amendment. It is shame to do in such a way, the university teaches students about what is the scientific definition or meaning of PR but its PR office did quiet surprisingly in a traditional application of PRs activities which is mainly dominated only by positive things that looks like a propaganda.

4.2 Result from Documents

In conducting this study, the researcher collected data from different documents especially from brochures, pamphlets, magazine, social media outlets like facebook, telegram, webpage and YouTube of Jimma University.

4.2.1 You Tube



Jimma University Official YouTube Channel

Jimma University
SUBSCRIBE 841 subscribers

HOME VIDEOS PLAYLISTS

Uploads

ለጅማ ዩኒቨርሲቲ መደበኛ...
594 views
· 1 mont...
1:21

የጅማ ዩኒቨርሲቲ MIS...
250 views
· 2 mont...
38:46

Ergaa бага geessa...
162 views
· 2 mont...
1:31

Jimma university official You tube channel has 841 subscribers when the researcher search the channel on November 29, 2020 G.C. The university joined you tube channel on January 27, 2018 and now 35 videos were uploaded in this official you tube channel. As the researcher`s observation, just like the magazine, the main emphasis of the uploaded videos was related to events and expansion of the campus (for instance, Agaro campus which is under construction). The rest videos focus on students` graduation, promotions of doctors to professor, and so on. In addition to this, drone Footage at Jimma University College of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine was uploaded.

4.2.2 Facebook

Jimma University uses different social media from this, the dominant one is Facebook. The official Facebook page of Jimma University was created on February 14, 2015. When the researcher visits the page for the purpose of data analysis on November 30, 2020 G.C 128,867 peoples liked the page while 131,326 followed it.

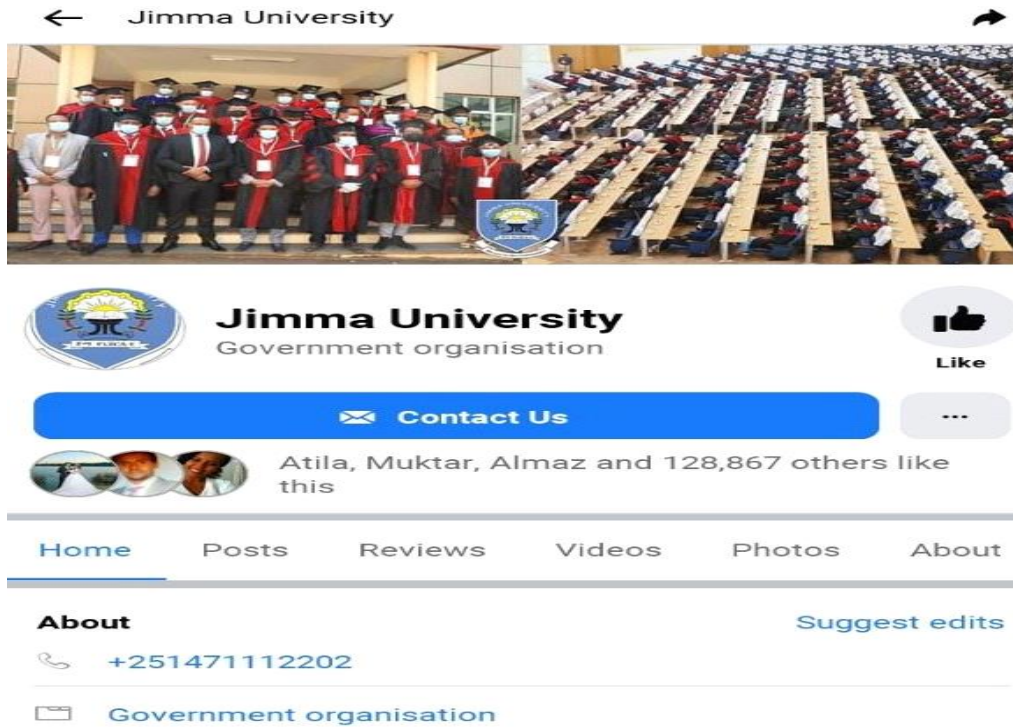


Figure 1: Jimma University official Facebook page

Jimma University's official Facebook page which the researcher analyzed from September 8 2019 to August 31, 2020 different activities were done by the university were posted. By the researcher's view most of the posts were given emphasis on events, academic promotions like lecturers' promotion from one stage to the other and innovation works which were done by students and lecturers.



Post 1



Post 2

Post 1 was posted on August 19, 2020, which focused on promotion to full professorship of Dr. EsayasKebedeGudina and Dr. Tsige Ketema Mamo to full professorship. Jimma University Board of Governors has approved the promotion of two faculty members, Dr Esayas Kebede Gudina and Dr Tsige KetemaMamo for the contribution they have made in research, academic and community service. Jimma University used this opportunity to congratulate Professor Tsige and Professor Esayas upon the well-deserved promotion.

The second post was posted on June 14, 2020 and focused on Green Legacy Campaign of 2020. As it is obviously known, for the last two years Green Legacy Campaign was under taken nationwide. In this situation Jimma University also has a contribution in planting and taking care of trees.

In addition to the above issue, a post on June 19, 2020 G.C has given emphasis for the support of teachers and staff of Jimma University in a program that aimed at donation to the people of Jimma city, who are economically poor. The teachers and staff have donated 3.2 million birr.

Post 3



Figure 2: Jimmacovid 19 testing operation

On 22nd May 2020: Jimma Emergency Operation Center for COVID-19 officially began Mass Testing. The Covid-19 testing service has been functional for the entire south western Ethiopian people. In addition to this the Facebook page has done a lot with regard to mobilization about C0vid-19.

The collage features the Jimma University logo at the top center. Below it are four individual portraits of men. To the right is a large orange and white poster titled 'CALL FOR DEBATE THE ETHIOPIAN DEBATE 2019/20'. The poster text includes: 'TO ALL JIMMA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS', 'THE DEBATE AND PUBLIC SPEAKING CLUB OF JIMMA UNIVERSITY KINDLY INVITES STUDENTS OF JIMMA UNIVERSITY TO COMPETE FOR THE ETHIOPIAN DEBATE 2019/20 WHICH IS SPONSORED BY THE UNITED STATES' EMBASSY TO ETHIOPIA.', 'APPLICANTS CAN USE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING ADDRESSES:', 'IN PERSON: COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES, SECOND FLOOR, OFFICE NOS: 205 & 210', 'EMAIL: EYORNEGUSSE@GMAIL.COM', and 'TELEPHONE: 0838-01-44-61 / 0911-72-48-51'. The Jimma University logo is also present at the bottom left of the poster.

JIMMA UNIVERSITY STAFF MEMBERS WON
FOUR GRAND CHALLENGE ETHIOPIA AWARDS

To the other end, the page has also given coverage for the unanticipated death of the beloved staff member of Jimma University, Dr. Fessahaye Alemseged and the respected and famous

artist Hachalu Hundesa. The condolence and memorial events were also covered with Facebook page.



No	Content	You tube		Facebook	
		No of videos	percentages	No of posts	percentages
1	Academic issues	3	13.7%	18	26%
2	Promotion of lecturers	2	9%	3	4.5%
3	Community based activities(different kinds of support and awareness creation)	3	13.7%	17	24.5%
4	Job vacancy	-	-	3	4.5%
5	Expression of condolence	-	-	4	5.8%
6	Innovation, research and reward	-	-	9	13%
7	Events held at Jimma University	10	45.6%	6	8.6%
8	Image building posts(visits of different personalities in Jimma University)	2	9%	3	4.5%
9	Best wishes for students, staff and community	2	9%	6	8.6%
10	Total	22	100%	69	100%

Table 5: YouTube and Facebook contents in percentages.

As it can easily be grasped from the table above, the highest percentage is covered by “events held at Jimma University” which is represented with 45.6%. Among the videos uploaded on the You tube channel “The 4th International Conference on Oromo Studies” (4 videos), “Students’ Graduation” (4 videos), “Gadaa as a method of inquiry” (2 videos) are some of them. Whereas

Image building posts, which was supposed to be given due attention has only got 9% with only two videos (drone footage videos of Jimma University Sport Academy and Agaro campus construction)

On the other hand, the face book page of Jimma University mostly uses for two different contents about the university. “These are Academic issues” and “Community based activities (different kinds of support and awareness creation)” with 26% and 24.5%, respectively. Some sample photos posted regarding academic issues are distance education, virtual Ph.D. defense, students` registration and the 11th Annual research conference. When we see some of the photos posted for the Community based activities, we find “support of teachers and staffs for economically poor people”, “community mobilization campaign about covid-19”, “community based education in action” and “gift of hearing aid from Starkey Foundation”. Contrary to this, the University consumed only 4.5% of its face book page for image building purpose which is very least. These three posts were about “Buying new streaming equipment for Jimma University Community Radio F.M. 102.0, professors` visit from “Silesian University of Technology (SUT) Poland” and “ Drone footage – Bird`s eye view of Jimma University Agaro Campus”

4.2.3 Webpage

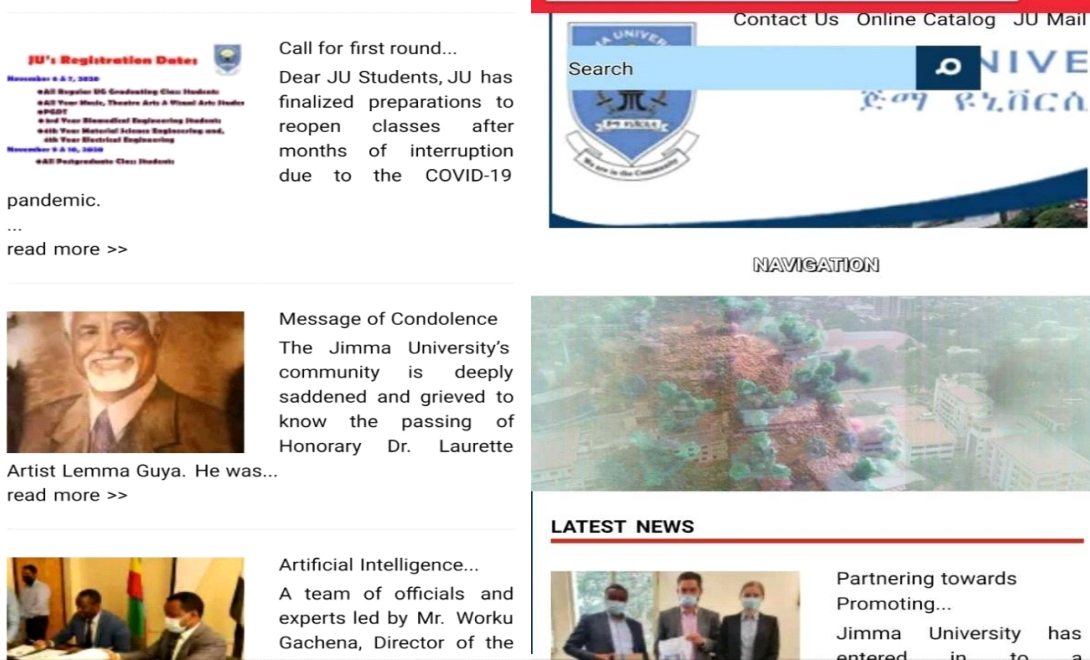



Figure 3: Jimma University official webpage

When the researcher visits the webpage at November 30, 2020 G.C, and 12,017,127 viewers visited the official webpage of Jimma University. The page has mainly given concern for the overall activities of the university. From these some of them are, about registrar office, programs, admission and academic calendar. In addition to these, facilities like community radio, external relations, ICT development and specialized hospital were incorporated in the webpage of Jimma University.

4.2.4 Magazine

As a higher education institution, Jimma University published different promotional materials. *“Gadaa Journal”* and *“innovation”* are among the publications.



CALL FOR PAPERS GADAA JOURNAL


Gadua Journal, a Multidisciplinary Bilingual Journal of the Institute of Oromoo Studies (IOS) invites interested contributors to submit scholarly manuscripts pertinent to Oromoo life and work (*Jirruufi Jireenya*) for publication for its **JUNE 2020 Issue** (Vol. 3, No.2)

The contributions can be in the forms of original articles, review articles, book reviews and short communications written either in Afaan Oromoo or English.

Papers from the following and related areas are required:


- ✓ Gadaa, an all-encompassing system of Oromoo
- ✓ Afaan Oromoo (Linguistics, Literature & Education)
- ✓ Astronomical Time Reckoning and Oromoo Calendar
- ✓ Oromoo Creative Industry: Arts, Music, Film, Theatre, Cultural Design & Architecture
- ✓ Identity, Discourse and Communication
- ✓ Indigenous Education and behavioral studies
- ✓ Development, Economy, Trade and Wellbeing
- ✓ Oromoo Folklore/Culture and Philosophy
- ✓ Oromoo Legal and Justice systems, dispute resolution mechanisms and survival strategies
- ✓ Oromoo History, Heritage, Values and Principles of Socio-political Governance
- ✓ Oromoo Institutions: Sinqee, Family, Marriage, Child Nurturing, etc
- ✓ Oromoo Wellness, Healthcare and Healing Practices/Medication
- ✓ Agricultural Practices, Human-Nature Interaction, Natural Resources Management and Environment

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JIMMA UNIVERSITY ጅግ ዩኒቨርሲቲ

INNOVATION

A BIENNIAL NEWSLETTER

Vol. 11 No. 1 Jun



We are in the community!

Published by the Office of External Relations and Communications, Jimma University

As we can easily understand from this promotional materials published by the office of external relations and communications, the publications mainly focus on events and activities which usually give emphasis on academic issues like new innovations, expansion of new field and promotion of academic staffs.

4.3 Discussion

4.3.1. Strategic plan in relation to image building of Jimma University

As the study revealed, there is a misconception among the PRs practitioners themselves. Some of them say there is a strategic plan and some of them say no, it doesn't have. The researcher has been able to clarify this misunderstanding after analyzing the study. Those coworkers who say there is a strategic plan are those practitioners who thought the general strategic plan which is designed for the entire institution is serving as a strategic plan for the public relations office, as well. But the reality is the public relations office is designing its own action plan on a monthly and annually basis.

On the other hand, those who have confirmed that the PRs office doesn't have its own strategic plan have at the same time asserted that the public relations office is formulating a specific strategic plan that directs only the public relations office of the university. As some of the informants, the strategic plan for the PRs office has passed all the process of formulation and only waiting the ratification stage.

4.3.2. PRs activities used for image building improvement

The role the public relations practitioners in the institute was supposed to be more of the managerial role as it plays greater role for image building. Whereas what is on the ground shows that more of the routine activities of the coworkers is performing technician roles like facilitating stages, coordinating events, creating media relations, publications of promotional materials, and so on.

Public relations is the art of managing communications between an organization and the public. Whether good or bad, people will always have something to say about the organization. Social media allows you to engage in the conversations taking place about the organization as they happen (Ponce, 2018).

The managerial functions include “programming and planning with other managers, determining needs, prioritizing ,defining publics, setting goals, and objectives, developing strategy and tactics, administering personal budgets and managing programs,”(Cutlip& colleagues as cited in

Tench & Yeomans, 2006, 31). The technicians role of PR includes activities like, press releases, newsletters, website content, speeches, blogs and social media posts. Managers handle the bigger picture, assessing the PR goals to accomplish or the problems to solve and determining the PR strategy required.

As one of the informants in this study, there is no favorable working environment to practice the right public relations activity. This means, while the PRs practitioners were supposed to engage themselves in the managerial position, they spend significantly on the technicians PRs activities. The major reason for this misfit is the little or no attention given for the PRs department by the institute.

4.3.3. PRs activities done to convince the public

PR campaign to address the public

Public relations campaign is one of the ideal methods performed in order to convince a specific public of a certain organization. But Jimma university public relations office has never done PRs campaign. Both the informants and respondents under this study have affirmed this. Public relation-oriented campaign communication strategies serve a pivotal role in building the identity of a health brand by helping to integrate the components of the brand that are implemented in the campaign (Hendrix, 2015).

On the other side, the institute has been performing the Developmental Team Training Program (DTTP) and Community Based Training Program (CBTP) as part of public persuasion. But this didn't result as it is expected. Regarding this issue, the public's reflection is more of uninviting.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study has focused on analyzing the role of public relations in image building: the case of Jimma University. In this study in-depth interview, questionnaire and document analysis were used to evaluate the finding.

The PR office under the study faced problem of exercising the role of image building. There was a problem of having specific strategic plan to the PR office, even if the strategic plan is relevant in image building of Jimma University. But, right now the PR office has been preparing strategic plan specific to the office.

The study has shown, the PR office of Jimma University has shortage of human resource in order to execute activities. The study also revealed that the PR office used different tools like; social media, media relations and promotional published materials and so on to build the image of Jimma University. As to the finding of the study, including the senior director the three directors and the PR practitioners primarily engaged in the technician role than the managerial one. As a result of this, the office is always busy by doing routine and detailed activities.

The study has also shown there is a gap in adopting appropriate strategy, choosing appropriate message, selecting media, disseminating information actively, and keeping analyzing the feedback of the public. Not only these, but also in issues regarding setting campaign in addressing public the PR office did not do outstanding work rather than event based jobs.

5.2 Recommendations

The university itself should give the necessary focus for the PR s office. This may be an attempt to employ skilled enough human resource. Hence, PR practitioners of Jimma University should focus on updating in professional skills of PR role for image building.

Not only this, but also, the office should work strongly with media. By buying air time from media like Fana Broadcasting Corporate (FBC), Oromia Broadcasting Network (OBN) and so on to enhance the institutions' image. In addition to the above recommendations, the PR office of Jimma University should give emphasis, in improving the flow of information, creating effective communication between employees and the management.

Regarding tools available to receive information from internal and external publics, easily accessible tools to get feedback like suggestion boxes, information desk that facilitate face-face communication, calling centers and the new technological feature like SMS should be there easily to get information. The office should use feedback from the public to strengthen the relationship between the university and publics in order to know what the public needs. Not only this, the office should, at least once a year hold an event; in addition the office should facilitate different meeting between the public and Jimma University to improve their understanding.

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Appendix I

Interview Questions for (Public Relations).

My name is Temesgen Alebachew Abitew, a postgraduate student at Jimma University College of Social Sciences and Humanities, **department of Media and communication Studies**. I'm undertaking a study on "Analyzing the role Public Relations for corporate image the case of Jimma University." Thank you in advance for your valuable time.

- What are the major tools you apply to achieve your strategic plan?
- What about skilled human resource?
- Do the practitioners have experience to undertake the PR activities?
- Which PR role are primarily used and why?
- Do you apply different tools to build image of the university?
- How do you think the external community perceives the university?
- What PR campaigns have been done to address the public?
- Do you have information about the people regarding their view towards Jimma University?
- What are the mechanisms do you use to collect feedbacks from the external publics?

Appendix II

Questionnaire for (public relations practitioners)

My name is Temesgen Alebachew Abitew, a postgraduate student at Jimma University College of Social Sciences and Humanities, **department of Media and communication Studies**. I'm undertaking a study on "Analyzing the role Public Relations for corporate image the case of Jimma University." Therefore, I kindly request you to provide information as required by this questionnaire; any information that you provide will be kept confidential and will be used only for the study and the results then will be available to the interested party afterwards.

Thank you in advance for your valuable time in filling this questionnaire. Kindly return the completed questionnaire.

1. Questions related to strategic plan for image building.

- Does the office have strategic plan specific to the PR office?

Yes_____ No_____

- If yes, on what issues it mainly focuses?

- How do you measure (evaluate) the strategic PR plan?

- What are the major tools you apply to execute your strategic PR plan?

- What about skilled human power to apply the strategic plan effectively?

2. Questions related to the role of PR activities in improving image building.

2.1 Do the practitioners have enough experience of the profession to undertake the PR activities?

Yes_____ No_____

2.2 If your answer for question no 2.1 is yes at what level?

Low_____ middle_____ high_____

2.3 Which PR role are they primarily executing? And why?

Managerial_____ technician_____

2.3 Do you apply a different role to build image of the university?

If yes like what?

2.4 Which PR activity (among others) do you think has brought significant improvement in the process of building Jimma University's image? Why?

3. Questions related to examining impact of PR activities in building corporate image.

3.1 What impacts did the mere presence of the PR office has brought to Jimma University in building its image?

3.2 How do you think the external community perceives Jimma University?

Positively_____ Negatively_____ Mixed_____

For either response explain it briefly

3.3 Do you have a mechanism to measure the public's perception of the university's image?

3.4 In order to evaluate the impact, what means of feedback collection options from the community and stakeholders do you have there?

4. Questions related to activities done to boost the public confidence on the university.

4.1 What are PR campaigns have been done so far to address the public?

4.2 Do you have information about the people regarding their view towards Jimma University?

Yes_____ No_____

4.3 If your answer for the question above is yes, then what is their attitude? Is it positive or negative?
