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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

School of Journalism and Communication

Department of Public Relations and Strategic Communication

**Professional Perceptions on the Practice, Challenges and Opportunities of
Private Public Relations Firms in Ethiopia:**

251 Communication Firm in Focus

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**PROFESSIONAL PERCEPTIONS ON THE PRACTICE, CHALLENGES AND
OPPORTUNITIES OF PRIVATE PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRMS IN ETHIOPIA: 251
COMMUNICATION FIRM IN FOCUS**

By

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Declaration

I herewith declare that this thesis is merely my own work that has been done after approval of title for this study and has not been presented for a degree in any other university. I followed research code of conduct throughout the work of this study and all reference or acknowledgment, for this thesis have been properly acknowledged.

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This is to certify that the thesis is prepared by Habtamu Teshome entitled “Professional Perceptions on the Practice, Challenges and Opportunities of Private Public Relations Firms in Ethiopia: 251 Communication Firm in Focus” and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communication. It complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Approved by Boards of Examiners and Advisor

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Acronyms

AAAA: - American Association of Advertising Agencies

AMA: - American Marketing Association

ARPA: - American Public Relations Association

CEO: - Chief Executive Officer

EPRDF: - Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front

EMMA: - Ethiopian Mass Media Authority

FDRE: - Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

ICCO: - International Communications Consultancy Organization

IMC: - Integrated Marketing Communication

MPR: - Marketing Public Relation

IPR: - Institute of Public Relations

PR: - Public Relation

Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to assess professional perceptions on the practice, challenges, and opportunities of private Public Relations (PRs) firms in Ethiopia taking the case of 251 Communications PLC. 251 Communications PLC is one of the few private PR firms in Ethiopia. The main objective of the PLC is to manage their international and local clients' communications, marketing, research, logistics, media, PR, branding and production needs. The study also attempted to explore the efforts and overriding challenges private public relations firms are facing. The research used mixed approaches which enable the researchers to use both qualitative and quantitate data and analysis. The main subject of the study was PR practitioners, CEOs and department heads. The researcher used in-depth interview as data collecting tool from the above subjects. The study was situated within the theoretical framework of Ludwing Von Bertalanffy's (later developed by Ross Ashby) systems theory. The finding of the investigation uncovered that, the private PR sector is untouched industry. Even though, there are many challenges facing the sector. Lack of knowledge and understanding of the practice of PR in the private sector, economic weakness of the private PR sector, absence of communication strategy/ institutional frame-work, under-development of the private PR sector, and lack of professionalism took the first line as challenges for the public relations practice in the private sector.

Key words: *Public Relation, Private Public Relation, Private Public Relations in Ethiopia, 251 Communication PLC*

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I. Introduction

1. Background of the study

Organizations, like people, must communicate with other organizations and their target publics because they do not exist alone. They must communicate to coordinate their behavior with people who are affected and are affected by them (Gruning, 2002). And hence the importance of PRs. They need public relations which is a management function that helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the preventing and solving problems or issues; helps organization to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion.

Cutlip, Center and Broom define PRs as a management function that establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the public on whom its success or failure depends (Cutlip, 2006).

It has been defined by others as the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both the organizations and the public interest (Theaker, 2001).

According to Hutton (1999), PR is a relatively new field of practice and scholarship. Hutton states that there is a need for general agreement in order for PR to grow as a scholarly and professional endeavor. In the attempt to reach this agreement, different perspectives need to be taken into consideration in order to fully understand the nature of this field. Most of the literature and empirical evidence found in the field of PR originate from countries with well-structured and established systems. As PR faces the challenges of the global and international arena, practitioners need to discover and understand macro-environmental changes and the impact thereof on business and on the practice of PR (Wakefield, 2000). According to Pratt (1992), PR practitioners from developed and developing countries fulfill different roles. Pratt further states that practitioners from the industrialized west are generally socially responsible, but in the third world PR practices are designed to be consistent with political ideologies, levels of development, and socio-political controls.

In Ethiopia PR has a history that has not been well-documented. One of the few studies is a report by Solomon (2000), which claims that a practice that more or less resembles modern PRs

is believed to have been started in the 1960s in Ethiopia. The emergence of the practice of modern PRs in the country came as a result of the establishment of the Ministry of Pen in the 1940s. The then media organizations such as Radio, News Agency, and Television services, were organized and administered under the ministry of Pen. After serving for some time, the ministry was replaced by the then Ministry of Information and tourism in the 1950s with the similar task of administering the media organizations in addition to carrying out the responsibility of culture and tourism-related issues. Later in the 1960s when the Ministry of Information replaced it, the responsibility of leading the media organizations was also transferred to the new ministry. The head of government public relations, around the final years of Emperor Haile Selassie, explained the practice at that time as routine occupied by activities, for example, gathering, and convention and, to some degree, caring for publications. In an interview about the public relations practice at that earliest time, the former head of public relations said that strategies about how to promote the country also, building agreements were unbelievable.

Based on the aforementioned facts, we can say that the 1960s was a milestone for the modern PRs practice. It was the existence of private-public relations practice. Alem public relations consultancy firm which was established by Sibhat Gebreigziabher and Dereje Deressa can be an example. During the Derg regime, those prosperous private public relations firms were shut down. Since then the private PR sector in Ethiopia is not well developed. Nowadays, public relations activities are mainly considered as the hub of developmental activities; thus, in each government office, there is public relations office. The practice in fact appears to be government-dominated and most studies have been carried out on the practice and challenges of the practice in the government sector. however, the practice and challenges of private PR sector is not well known. so, the purpose of this study is explore the practice of private PR in Ethiopia, and its challenges and opportunities: 251 communication firm in focus.

251 communication plc is a full-fledged communications and public relations firm with offices in the Washington DC, Metropolitan Area and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It was established by two PR professionals in 2010 G.C. under the legal framework of “Ethiopian Commercial Code Proclamation No. 1243/2001”. At 251 Communications, they manage their international and local clients’ communications, marketing, research, logistics, media, PR, branding and production needs.

2. Statement of the problem

Public relations is the key to success for any organization in the world. As the name indicates, it is the relationships of publics. These days, it is a worldwide phenomenon that the people of the world, especially governmental and business organization, see as the key of their success (Cutlip S. B., 2000). As a scientific discipline, public relations is relatively new and developing rapidly (Gruning, 1984). From this statement we can understand that public relations is emergent, but continually growing up due to its importance for the achievement of any organization. Thus, both government and business organization opening public relations department; or hire private PRs firms intending to build image and to serve the organizational and the public interests' in public relations practices (Ibid).

Public relations in Ethiopia looks like it is in the early stage of its maturity and formation. According to mihret (2018) public relations and media works the most misguided profession in Ethiopia. He also mentions that PRs is still in its low level when measured objectively from scientific point of view. when it comes to the private PR sector; it is barely practiced. There are few (not more than 5) private PR firms in Ethiopia (Solomon, 2000).

251 Communication Firm is one of those private PR firms in Ethiopia. It is a full-fledged communications and public relations firm established by two PR professionals in 2010 G.C. under the legal framework of “Ethiopian Commercial Code Proclamation No. 1243/2001”.

With this in mind, the actual practice of these private PR firms, the roles are constrained by multifaceted challenges. In Ethiopia, it has been a decade that private PR firms have started to proliferate (Solomon, 2000). From the time of their emergence, the private private PR firms have played their own positive roles in the development of the PR industry of the country.

However, the lack of well-organized and compiled information about the practice of private PRs firms in Ethiopia is the rationale of the study which imposes an impact on proper practices of public relations. Private sector public relations practices, tools, and models are still not studied. Additionally, the performance of the private PRs sector is not well known. The status of private PRs firms in Ethiopia, and also their challenges and opportunities are not known well.

This study intends to assess professionals peceptions on the practice, challenges and opportunities of the practice of private PR firms in Ethiopia taking the case of 251

Communications PLC, further more the study assess the challenges, and come up with recommendations that can be used to motivate private PRs firms. The issue of private sector PR is important and studying the associate challenges has an important role since the future of private Public relations lies in the industry's ability to deal with the challenges they are facing now.

3. Objectives of the study

3.1.General Objective

The main objective of this study was to assess professional perceptions on the practice, challenges, and opportunities of private PRs firms in Ethiopia as in the case of 251 Communications PLC.

3.2.Specific Objectives

The study has the following specific objectives

- To examine the status/performance of 251 Communications PLC.
- To investigate the challenges facing 251 Communications PLC., and its prospects.
- To explore in the pros and cons of hiring private PRs firms.

4. Research Questions

- How does the 251 Communications PLC. conduct PRs activities?
- What are the major challenges facing 251 Communications PLC. vis-à-vis its prospected opportunities?
- What are the pros and cons of hiring private PRs firms (from the professionals perspective) ?

5. Significance of the Study

This study analyzes the challenges and opportunities of private PRs firms in Ethiopia. The study benefits the private PRs sector to find out effective strategies to attract institutions to hire them.

The research is expected to indicate the challenges and prospected opportunities of private PRs firms in Ethiopia. Moreover, the research is also significant to indicate the gaps between what has been done and what is left undone regarding Private PRs firms of Ethiopia. Finally, the research serves as initial academic research in the area of private PRs firms.

6. Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is on 251 Communications PLC. It is the well-known private PR sector works for the last 10 years in the area of PR, Communications, Marketing, etc. one must also mention the fact that by choosing one single location the researcher may have the opportunity of a detailed analysis.

7. Organization of the paper

The study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter covers the background of the study, statement of the problem, objective, significance, and scope of the study. Chapter two will focus on related literature reviews and theoretical frameworks. Relevant books, publications, articles, researches, and other related literature will be reviewed. The third chapter will cover the theoretical framework and method to be used in the study. Besides, data presentation and analyses will be conducted under chapter four. Research findings, recommendations, and conclusions of the study will also be presented under chapter five.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

2.1. Introduction

This chapter discussed and evaluates the literature and other secondary sources related to the research topic to establish a deeper understanding of the private Public Relations sector and its challenges and prospected opportunities. In addition, a brief overview of the PR industry in Ethiopia will be presented.

2.2. What is Public Relations?

Public Relations has several definitions. One of the difficulties in PRs is getting an agreeable definition among scholars. Different scholars and practitioners give different definitions at different times. Public Relations is commonly considered to be a ‘young profession’ type of communications byproduct of 20th-century capitalism (Theaker, 2001).

According to Theaker, the most ambitious effort to come up with a universally acceptable definition of public relations was commissioned in 1975 by the foundation for Public Relations Research and Education. At that forum, more than sixty public relations leaders participated and about 472 (some say 500) different definitions were forwarded for analyses. Based on it the American academic Harlow produced the first all-inclusive definition of PRs.

In 1976, Rex Harlow scoured through 472 definitions of PRs to come up with the following paragraph.

Public Relations is a distinctive management function that helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance, and co-operation 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; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools. (Harlow, quoted in Wilcox et al. 1992)

Although this is useful – it contains many key concepts – and saves as ploughing through hundreds of definitions, it describes what PR does rather than what it is. Since then, of course, there have been many more attempts to capture its essence. The 1978 World Assembly of Public Relations Associations in Mexico agreed that:

Public Relations is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders, and implementing planned programs of action that will serve both the organization and the public interest (Wilcox, 1992).

Newsome and Carrel, on the other hand, defined PR as the art and science of analyzing trends, predicting consequences of those trends, counseling organization leaders, and implementing planned programs of action that will serve both the organizations and public interest (Newsome, 2001).

The understanding of the above-mentioned writers is that PR is a two-way process between an institution and publics based on mutual understanding.

PR can also be defined as a systematic promotion of mutual understanding between an organization and its public (Banik, 2006). Banik further said PRs include creating belongings' and winning employee cooperation, building goodwill, furthering mutual interest, and overcoming public misconceptions. The idea that is reflected in this definition is that public relations have an important role in creating teamwork, and a good reputation by using scientific methods and reducing the negative attitude of the public over the government.

The above-mentioned definitions of PR have a variety of aspects and roles. This shows that there are several studies in the field and efforts to define the profession. Thus, for this study, the definition of The Institute of Public Relations can be taken. The Institute of Public Relations (IPR) is the UK's leading professional body for public relations practitioners and was established in 1948. The definition framed by the IPR in 1987 is still useful:

Public Relations is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and understanding between an organization and its publics (Theaker, 2001).

There are several keywords worth noting here: 'planned' and 'sustained' suggest these relationships are not automatic or effortless. Indeed, they have to be 'established' and 'maintained'. Public relations work exists in time – it is not a series of unrelated events. Also

note that the aim is not popularity or approval, but goodwill and understanding. Many think that PR is just about promoting an organization, whereas most PR work involves ensuring the public has an accurate view of the organization, even if they don't like what it does. The definition also raises the strange word 'publics', which will be discussed more fully elsewhere. It is important, however, to stress that public relations is not about dealing with 'the public' as people often think. In PR we say there is no such thing as the public – there are instead many different groups of people – not just consumers, but suppliers, employees, trustees, members, local and national trade and political bodies, residents, among many others. One of the key concepts of PR is the idea that these groups – or publics – have different information needs and exert different demands on organizations. Understanding these differences is a vital skill of PR.

2.3. Historical Development of PR

Public relations is now a global occupation and implemented in many corners of the world in different ways. However, written histories of PR reflect the dominance of the United States in the academic field of public relations and tend to focus on its origins in the United States rather than in other countries (Benecke, 2013). The historical development of public relations is related to media and media science such as advertisement with the aim of marketing or business to promote the product of organizations' to the public.

According to Cutlip (2000), in the United States, the first actual use of the phrase "public relations" is thought to have been made in 1807 when President Thomas Jefferson, drafting his "Seventh Address to Congress" in his hand, scratched out the words "state of thought" in one place and wrote in "Public Relations" instead. It is the United State of America that had contributed to the modern development of public relations.

It was in the early twenty century that a demand for more ethics and communication between companies and the mass media set the stage for the emergence of a new type of communication professional: the public relations specialist. In particular, two individuals, Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays, are often identified as 'founding fathers' of modern public relations due to their influence on shaping the principles and practices of the emerging profession (Theaker, 2001).

Also according to Black (1995), public relations as practiced today are a 20th-century American phenomenon. Its fundamental elements which are today, persuading and integrating people were basic to the earliest societies as they are today. Over time, the tools, techniques, and ethical standards of public relations have been changed. For example, primitive leaders were using force or persuasive methods to control their followers.

On the other hand, as different scholars wrote, there is sufficient evidence in the records of the early Greek and Roman empires to show that great attention was devoted to the influencing of public opinion. Public relations in the earlier time appear to have been a central part of the government. While the far-away roots of public relations lie in the art of rhetoric practiced by the ancient Greeks, other notable development accompanied important political events throughout history. In medieval European society, both church and state sought to dominate public opinion and used preaching, painting, scripture, songs, rituals, events, and public announcements as forms of communicative influence' (Hendrix, 2001).

Whatever the case it is nowadays, public relations is a profession based on science with theoretical background, models, scientific reviews, journals, and professional competencies. Because of changes in societies and organizations like local developments, globalization, change in needs, and expectations of the organization and the publics' public relations show practices more develop.

In general, public relations as practiced today is peculiarly a 20th-century phenomenon though the origin of public relations is traced back to the early civilization. Its basic elements informing people, persuading people, and integrating people were vital to the earliest society as just as they are today relatively. Goals, techniques, tools, roles, and ethical standards of public relations practices modify from time to time. Contemporary, the goals, and practices of public relations targeted to build a harmonious relationship through strategic communication, to build a good image, to manage the relationship, and to manage communication between the organization and the public as one can understand from different scholars' statements.

2.4. Ethiopia's political system and PR

A country's political system influences its social structure. There is little doubt that public relations practice thrives on public opinion, which would lead one to conclude that only pluralistic societies offer an environment that is leading for practicing cardinal public relations. As the nation is a multi-ethnic and contains multi lingual societies whose political systems value public opinion, the nature of public relations is not sophisticated and tends to be one-way propagandistic in nature. Besides the political environment, which makes the country to be headed by one party system for three decades, the nature of public relations discipline tends to in propaganda way various government and private organizations.

Simon and Gartzke (1996) characterized between political situations on a bipolar continuum going from democratic based to tyrant one. Be that as it may, this classification is excessively oversimplified, making it impossible to give insights about the numerous subtleties and the different political and economic difficulties and encounters that numerous nations proof. The world has witnessed significant political changes in recent years. Thus, we should have a more accurate way to classify the political systems of nations. In fact, the 20th century has been a period of democratization of the world. According to the Freedom House, at the beginning of the 20th century, there was not a single country that could be labelled democracy! Even countries such as the United States and Britain were not true democracies because they did not have universal suffrage at the beginning of the 20th century. Closely linked to a country's political system, a country's economic development provides public relations professionals opportunities as well as challenges. There is little doubt that a more pluralistic political philosophy favors greater economic freedom. By extension, developed (market) economies tend to favor strategic public relations more than developing (managed) ones. However, public relations has yet to be widely considered a core organizational function in organizations of even developed economies. Instead, it languishes as a superfluous appendage in organizations around the world, including developed nations. As a result, the predominant mind-set is that scarce resources need to be spent on more pressing needs that are central to an organization's activities and bring tangible returns. Various Studies show that that the more developed an economy is, the greater the number of organizational players and the higher the level of competition among organizations. These multiple suppliers of goods and services obviously need to compete for public attention,

approval, and support—a prime reason to employ public relations professionals as in-house staff or as consultants.

As Ethiopia as a developing state, public relations' discipline has also a paramount importance so as to prophet and create as strong political, economic, social, cadmic ties with the internal or external organizations.

2.5. Public Relations in Ethiopia

According to Solomon (2000), a practice more or less resembles modern public relations is believed to have been started in the 1960s in Ethiopia. In fact, the emergence of the practice of modern public relations in the country came as a result of the establishment of the Ministry of Pen in the 1940s. The then media organizations such as Radio, News Agency, and Television services were organized and administered under the ministry of Pen (as cited in the study of Tesfaye Bezabih, 2018, p.28).

Dealing with modern public relations in Ethiopia, government practice has a wide coverage and more emphasis on public relations, because the government prepared a job specification in its offices. The major problem seen both in Government and NGOs seems that the practice is functioning by different departments and persons as additional practice, not as a separate self-governed sub organizational practice. The reason behind this may trace not only to the organizations' leaders and owners but also PR academicians too.

In the history of public relations in Ethiopia 1960s was also a period when private public relations practice came into existence. According to Zemedkun (2014:21) quoting Solomon; Alem public relations consultancy established by writers Sibhat Gebreigziabher and Dereje Deressa was the first public relations consultancy firm in the history of the country. Under this firm two publications:- Ethiopian mirror, a quarterly magazine taken over from Oscar Rampone, an Italian and subsidized by the ministry of information, and the Amharic edition of Mennen, a monthly magazine used to be prepared and distributed by this firm until the firm was closed after 7 years by the order of the revolutionary government (Tekle, 2014).

The Soviet model of socialism adopted by the military government led the public relations and the media practice to full-fledged propaganda. The media and the few government public

relations units fell under the strict control and guidance of assigned military officers. It was for this special mission that the then Ministry of Information and National Guidance came into existence. Public relations practices in government, as well as mass political organizations, were masterminded by political cadres especially assigned for this purpose. Solomon (2000) as indicated in Zemdekun (2014:24) has summarized the public relations practices at those two periods as follows.

Firstly public relations, which entered the Ethiopian scenario in the 1960s, remained to be government tutelage: secondly, except for their differences of political philosophy, public relations in both regimes were preoccupied with creating, preserving, and promoting images of their respective rulers: and thirdly, communication models employed in the public relations activities during this time falls under the press agency, propaganda and persuasion models, devoid of democratic substances.

After the coming of the Ethiopian peoples' revolutionary democratic front (EPRDF), a lot has been done at least in recognizing the flow of information and communication as a prominent aspect of the government. The decision of the government to establish the then ministry of information in 2002 was one of such an effort aimed to realize the effective dissemination of government information. The ministry was bestowed both with the information transaction and regulatory task. However, at that point, significant numbers of government offices were not having public relations units as well as practitioners, which make the development of the practice of government public relations nominal even those who were assumed to have public relations departments and practitioners were tied up with so many problems that would hinder them to function properly.

After serving for 6 years, the ministry has been established by Federal Government Communication Affairs with regulation number 158/2008. The very general objective of the office was to play a leading role in the government's information and communication system. Moreover, among the power and duties of the minister ensuring the employment and administration of communication and public relations officers of federal government offices was part of it.

Though the government has displayed the intention to keep on the effort of establishing an effective government communication system by organizing an office, the role the Public

relations unites and practitioners play has put the practice in query. The government has made these unites political with an agenda of using them as a tool for development communication, and made the public relations practitioners more politically committed individuals rather than professionals. This practice has made the development of the government public relations a stagnant position and seems that most of the public relations offices do not have clearly defined and professional roles and responsibilities.

Mekonnen (2001) asserted that PR in Ethiopia is less significant in the eyes of top-level management in an organization. As a result, the consistency of the public relations practices may not be on the right track. Despite significant changes in the focus and practice of public relations during the last decade in Ethiopia, the term is still misunderstood in many organizations (as Geremew, Chala, (2017) p.137).

According to Geremew Chala (2017), although the name public relations is expanding and growing rapidly in many organizations in Ethiopia, the profession is still suffering from many problems emanating from a misunderstanding of the clear roles and functions of public relations, low understanding of the difference between public relations as a discipline on its own, as a management tool, as a marketing expert and as a communication process in an organization. He continued to explain that the issue of public relations practices in different countries including Ethiopia has been controversial within the field of communication. The possible reason for this could be attributed to the lack of understanding of the role of public relations. At the same time, very few people know what public relation encompasses, what it aims to achieve and how it works.

When Van Heerden (2004) explains the practice of PR in Africa, he concluded that PR practitioners are individuals who currently occupy senior positions, mostly in the public sector. These positions were, however, not achieved through professional/educational merit but through mobility, therefore practicing what they have seen and not learned. These individuals experience a lack of knowledge and experience in the area of corporate strategy (Heerden, 2021).

2.6. Public Relations Strategies

Public Relations strategy could be seen as the thinking, the logic behind the actions (Robert, 1997). Organization's positioning for the future, deciding what should be done rather than how it should be done. Strategy requires choices—deciding what particular kind of value an organization wants to deliver to whom (Ibid).

Strategy is a plan that can be used by both governmental and nongovernmental organizations to build and maintain mutual understanding with the Publics. It is a tool which can be used to facilitate development in any country or organization that is desperate for social, economic, political and technological development.

Strategies are ways in which the organization objectives are to be achieved. The contemporary definition of strategic communication in the light of public relations theories has been offered. PR Strategies is about informational, persuasive as well as relational communication when used in context of the achievement of an organization's mission (Sriranesh, 2009). There for PR strategies means synchronize and integrate stakeholders' efforts to accomplish the strategic objectives of the organization.

On the other hand effective public relations strategies must be integrated in to all aspects of the organization's strategic objectives. It is integral to the strategy as well as essential to communication of that strategy. Effective public relations strategy informs and educates stake holders at all levels in the organization's strategy, and it also motivates and positions stakeholders to support the strategy and the performance goals. Even though strategies should be designed based on the nature of the organization's mission and objectives, public relations strategies focus on the Strategic objectives to reinforce the organization's strategic objectives.

There should be a one-to-one correlation between what the organization has established as its strategic objectives and what is listed as the objectives for the PR. Supportive management is also PR strategy. Top-level and mid-level management must be directly involved in and assume responsibility for effectiveness of PR practice in the organization. Targeted messages are PR strategy to address proper message for target audience. Targeted messages are simply information tailored to the audience that the information is relevant and meaningful, at the same time that it is consistent. Thus, PR must tailor the important messages to their employees, and if necessary, convert the overall message of the corporate actionable messages the employees can understand and act upon. Besides well-positioned staff is also PR strategy to achieve the intended goal. The communication staff needs to be close to the most important business issues, involved in the strategic and business planning processes. They must have a 'seat at the table'. PR staff should be a member of the senior management team which allows the senior PR officer to

understand the company's strategy and to participate in the decision making. In addition, the PR staff should be seen as facilitators of change not just as producers of publications. Ongoing assessment is also PR strategy. The effectiveness of the company's PR practice needs to be measured company-wide formally and frequently against clearly defined goals on an ongoing basis and throughout the key stages of any major change. In addition, PR effectiveness needs to be evaluated as part of each employee's individual performance appraisal with the appropriate recognition for excellence (M.Oliver ,2005).

The PR strategy demonstrates the linking relations PR activity to consequent result of the organization it works. Besides to the above pointed PR strategies mainly focused on analyzing the problem; establishing objectives; building the creative theme; segmenting target publics; positioning the organization; evaluating the results (Watson, 2007).

Therefore from the above listed strategies of PR the commonly stated are establishing objectives, segmenting target public, positioning the staff, monitoring and evaluating the result.

2.7. Functions and Techniques of PR Practitioners

To establish harmonious and balanced relationships with the organization's stakeholders, the public relations practitioner should have knowledge of and training in a wide range of public relations functions and techniques. Functions and techniques differ in that function is seen as the action used to achieve an objective, whereas the technique is the skill required to perform the function. For example, media relations is the function used to communicate a message, and writing the media release is the technique used. The level at which public relations is practiced will determine the depth of knowledge and extent of experience in these functions and techniques. There may be different concepts or ideas about the functions and techniques of PRs. Chris Skinner (Skinner, 2013), identified some functions and techniques of PRs.

2.7.1. Functions of Public Relations Practitioners

PRs practitioners have distinctive functions. Media relations is one of the most important responsibilities of public relations practitioners, and PRs firms should realize that practicing good media relations is an ongoing task, not a last-minute effort employed when publicity is required. According to Chris, Steps to be taken in drawing up a successful media strategy include: Researching the available media, Identifying key media contacts, Briefing these contacts

and providing them with detailed information, Arranging interviews and visits, Writing special articles and features, Encouraging debates on issues of importance, and Monitoring social media.

2.7.2. Techniques of Public Relations Practitioners

Chris Skinner (2013) stated the following key techniques of PRs practitioners.

The first one is business knowledge. An essential aspect of any organization is its business practices. The public relations practitioner needs to ensure that he or she relates to these practices and enhances their success. All the public relations activities need to be in line with the business strategy and add value to the profit prospects of the organization.

The second basic techniques of PR practitioners is writing. The public relations practitioner should be skilled at writing news releases, speeches, newsletters, correspondence, reports, booklets, texts, radio and television copy, film scripts, trade paper, and magazine articles, corporate advertisements, product information, social media messages, and website material.

In addition to researching and writing special features, practitioners are involved in editing special publications, employee newsletters, shareholders' reports, and other communications directed at internal and external stakeholders.

Another essential techniques of PR practitioners is production. Production is multi-faceted and can be very challenging. It involves creating communications using multimedia knowledge and skills, including art, photography; and design for brochures, booklets, reports, corporate advertisements and occasional publications; also recording, editing and preparing audio-visual productions, for example, corporate videos.

Public relations work requires skills in face-to-face communication and public speaking. Addressing groups and arranging platforms for others before appropriate audiences form an essential part of public relations activities. Even more so when dealing with the media where individual interviews are often required.

Another very important duty is the management of the public relations projects, which includes staff, finance, and processes.

2.8. Ethical Principles of PR Practices

Ethics is an important concept in people's lives. The American Heritage Dictionary offers that “ethics is the study of the general nature of morals and specific moral choices; moral philosophy; and the rules of standards governing the conduct of the members of a profession” (cited in Coskum, 2007).

Organizations' today because of economic, social situations operate in a competitive environment. Therefore, they constantly need the services of their public relations department to be effective. Public relations practitioners have an important role to communicate between various sectors in business and public communities.

Public relations is not just representing the organization to the public, they must also represent the public to the organization. For this reason, public relations practitioners should help employees to understand how the public perceives their organization's actions. If the profession of public relations is seen as ethical, then the public will be more likely to accept the actions of public relations practitioners. For this reason, professional public relations practitioners today are extremely sensitive about ethics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Therefore, depending on these values we can say that public relations is frequently seen as the ethical heart of an organization because they are making ethical decisions essential to establish relationships between the organization and its public. As a result, we can say that, ethics is an indispensable part of the organization. Therefore, public relations practitioners must be honest and trustworthy, acting at all times in the public interest (Seitel, 1998).

Public relations ethics is about how we communicate. Issues managers must identify potential problems, research must be conducted, both problems and potential solutions must be defined in an ethical manner. Therefore ethical principles be defined for public relations as how should decide, manage and communicate.

Ethics and professionalism of PR characterized by trust, public relation is about building and maintaining of relationship. Therefore trust is the key to successful relationship. Ethical principles and professionalism is core to have a good reputation. Responsibility for communicating policies and activity in the PR is also the issue of ethics. Community building and conflict resolution, social responsibility also about ethics and professionalism (Tench 2009).

On the other hand, Universal Accreditation Board (2010) elaborated the application of ethics to the practice of PR is critical to PR profession. Ethical principles of PR help the researcher to evaluate an ethical dilemma. According to this source the common ethical principle of PR practice are: act in the public interest ,which find the greater good for the majority of the people, use honesty and integrity as guiding ensure accuracy and truth which means do not disseminate misleading information, if make error correct it immediately and deal fairly with all publics.

2.9. Globalisation and PR

As the world continues to shrink and the people in the far corners of the earth are increasingly influencing each other in various ways, there is a need for increased planned communication amongst members of various nations and cultures. The world has developed into a global village with global citizens, where all boundaries between countries are erased. All communication lines are open and all economies are opening in order to make them more competitive and attractive to foreign investment. In short, globalisation can be explained as the transformation of economies and politics influencing cultures around the world. The developed countries dominate the world economy and the existence of an international economic order establishes a framework for the international economic system (M.S, 2002).

The driving force of globalisation is the spread of free-market capitalism to every country of the world. The drivers of globalisation are social (increase in global population, dividing rich and poor, changing work patterns etc), technological (global communication increases and IT revolution continues), economic (global market dominated by multinationals), political (democracy) and environmental (impact of diminishing of natural resources and global warming) issues. An understanding of these drivers is necessary to assist cultural introspection and adapting to new ways whilst preserving unique contributions to humanity and more importantly to improve the human condition. The transformation of economics and politics is influencing cultures around the world. The challenge imposed by globalisation is for countries and individuals to find a healthy balance between preserving a sense of identify, home and community while living and acting within a global economy (Ibid).

The term world economy refers to the capitalist world economy, which took on the configuration of a core of dominant countries and a periphery of dominated countries. The dominant countries

are the industrial capitalist West or better known as the First World. The dominated underdeveloped countries of the Third World in the South are called developing or “less developed countries”.

2.10. Factors Affecting the Effectiveness of Public Relations

According to Smith (2003), the public relations practitioners are expected to identify issues that may affect the organization. Liu and Horsley (2007) identified eight attributes that affect the government public relations. These are politics, focus on serving the public, legal constraints, extreme media and public scrutiny, lack of managerial support for PR practitioners, poor public perception of government communication, lagging professional development and federalism (Liu and Horsley, 2007).

Most Country’s political systems induced the PR of the country to be neglected for nation building. Governments in democratic system playing a positive role in the development of the profession, dictators such as Africa have used PRs profession as a propaganda tool (Ibid).

Focus on serving the public refers having a close relationship with the public. The PR profession is believed to have a close relationship with the people and the organization. However, in some places there is an imbalance of interest between the public and the organization. As a result, focusing on serving the public can only achieve the public interest rather than needs of the organizations (Ibid).

Legal constraints imply laws and regulations that hinder PR and communication activities. Some countries have laws that influence the media and information dissemination, which have a negative influence on the effectiveness of the PR profession. Federalism, on the other hand, is a factor that affects the PR profession. This is due to the existence of decentralized rules and regulations in which all spheres of PR work have had (Ibid).

Extreme media and public scrutiny means a high pressures and inspections that the media and the public face on PRs profession negatively influence its effectiveness. The general view of the community about the Government public relation knowledge and perception of the PR has also played its negative role in the development of PR profession (Ibid).

Institutional leaders and managers have little or no support for the professional ethos of the profession and the distorted views and expectations of the professionals. This has left an ineffective function in the organization (Ibid).

From the perspective of other professions, PRs profession has been negatively affected by the fact that public relations skills are not what they want (Ibid).

2.11. Misconception of Public Relations

The thinking and views about the profession of PR of the general public has been subjected to wrong perception of what a PRs person actually does. This misconception is also seen in experts in PRs. This has also contributed to the non-renewal of the profession. As Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg (2004) stated many people wrongly assume that PR are preoccupied with image-making in the sense of creating a false front or cover-up. Some of the misconceptions are courtesy, protocol, good will, well appearance, free gifts (Daramola, 2003).

Some people view PR profession as a discipline designed to honor other people. It is a good manner to consider the PRs practitioner with a good ethic, but it is wrong to respect of people, apart from other professions (Nwosu, 1997).

According to Daramola (2003), PRs professionals are connected to the protocol in the eyes of both the public and the organization management. Sometimes, there is only a need for the profession to organize and conducting certain ceremonies.

Daramola (2003) also stated that some people believe PR profession is the only way to create image building and promote the company's reputation. But PR profession is even more responsible and compulsory.

Many people and institutions require a PR expert to have complete fine appearance. They think that good attractive face is a must-have. As a result, some institutions set out different dress codes and rules for PR specialists. However, it is unnecessary to evaluate a PR expert by their physical appearance (Nwosu, 1997).

Many company executives in Africa in particular and around the world in general, believe in projecting their organizations as charitable and benevolent through the giving of free annual gift. Effective PR does not begin and end with gifts (Daramola, 2003).

2.12. Internal PRs Departments versus Outside PRs Firms

Nowadays, Many, if not most, organizations reorganized the public relations function, reduced department staff size, and tried to do more with fewer people. Many shifted part or all of the workload to outside counseling firms and solo practitioners (Glen M. Broom, 2013).

2.12.1. Internal PRs Department

The internal department is the most common organizational structure for public relations. A department may consist of only one person, as in a small community, or have a staff of hundreds, as in a major corporation. A public relations department may be concentrated in the organization's headquarters or scattered among many locations.

Whereas the public relations department's size, role, and place on the organization chart vary from one organization to the next, there generally is one public relations leader on an organization's leadership or management team. An internal PRs department has its advantages and disadvantages.

An internal PRs department has at least four factors working in its favor (Glen M. Broom, 2013).

1. Team membership
2. Knowledge of the organization
3. Economy to the organization for ongoing programs
4. Availability to associates

Team membership:- is the department's greatest advantage over outside counsel. In some organizations, the top public relations executive's office is next door to the chief executive's office. Frequent contact between the public relations department and top-line management is the rule rather than the exception. Surveys typically show that at least 60 percent of public relations executives meet with their CEOs at least once each week. Many meet or talk at the beginning of every day. Such a close working relationship between the public relations department and the CEO builds confidence, trust, and support. It can also position public relations as a key player on the management team.

knowledge of the organization:- means an intimate, current knowledge that comes from being an insider. Staff members know the relationships among individuals and departments and are aware of the undercurrents of influence and internal politics. They can call on key people to

make decisions and lend support. They are aware of who can serve as able and articulate spokespersons as opposed to those who do not perform well as representatives to engage stakeholders. Occasionally a trusted outside counselor can acquire such knowledge, but insiders are in a better position to do so and to apply their knowledge continuously. Because they are part of the organization, internal staff typically can advise, conciliate, and provide services while taking into account intimate details of organizational history, culture, and people.

Economy:- may occur from typically lower overhead costs and efficient integration in an organization. When the need for public relations is continuous—and in most organizations, it is then a full-time, permanent staff typically is more cost-effective than outside counsel. For example, the marginal costs of an internal department are usually a small portion of overhead costs in a large organization. The outside firm's overhead might be higher than that of an internal department simply because outside firms are typically smaller than the client organizations they serve. As a result, economies of scale are reduced on overhead—such as the costs of facilities, utilities, employee benefits programs, and supplies. Start-up costs for projects can be less because internal staff members already have the necessary background and access to managers and files. Routine work, such as daily and weekly news outlets, monthly publications, quarterly and annual reports, and so forth, is efficiently handled by those closest to the sources and other departments in the organization. Efficiency contributes to cost-effectiveness.

Availability:- of staff practitioners has several advantages. When things go wrong, practitioners are only a minute away from a face-to-face meeting with the organization's officers. And as deputies, they can be entrusted with delicate matters. Availability also means being on call for all other departments, divisions, and operating units. Staff members can be called into meetings on short notice. In organizations where public relations is largely decentralized, the on-site internal staff members are relatively handy for the rating unit. In others, a centralized function operates from headquarters much in the fashion of an outside firm, treating operating units and other departments as "clients." Even in these organizations, however, internal counselors have greater knowledge and stronger relationships with their client colleagues than is typically the case with outside counsel.

Despite their advantages, internal public relations departments have the following disadvantages.

Loss of objectivity:- can happen ever so slowly and unwittingly as practitioners are subjected to day-to-day pressure and workplace politics. In supporting and being supported, they can be unduly influenced and compromised by group views, to not “rock the boat.” Their ability to offer disinterested and outsider points of view gives way to the subjectivity that does not serve those they were hired to counsel. They lose their ability to do the boundary-spanning needed to avoid or solve problems in the organization’s relationships with others. In effect, practitioners run the risk of becoming part of the problem. After all, they work hard to become and stay a member of the management team.

Domination and subservience:- result when the function becomes co-opted, resulting in a group of yes-men and -women. Being team players and helping others is one thing; being diverted from goals, planning, and strategy to run errands for others is another. Practitioners walk a narrow line between providing professional services that are valuable, helpful, and appreciated and rendering low-level technical support that is easily replaced. Also, practitioners must guard against inaction based on fear of making what they perceive to be a career-threatening move or decision, as that undermines their role as a trusted counselor to top management.

Confused mission and roles:- can result from being readily available. Practitioners find themselves serving as stand-ins for top executives who make commitments but do not or cannot follow through themselves. For example, a CEO accepts an invitation to serve on a community charitable organization board but finds it difficult to attend the meetings. The practitioner gets a call to attend in the CEO’s place. One could argue this indicates that the CEO trusts the public relations officer to effectively represent the organization. External constituencies are seldom pleased, however, to have a public relations representative instead of the CEO. They accept the switch to maintain the organization’s support and permission to use the CEO’s name on the letterhead.

2.12.2.Outside PRs Firms

Public relations firms range widely in size and scope. O’dwyer’s Directory of Public Relations Firms lists uncountable thousands working as independent self-employed counselors or consultants across the globe.

International Communications Consultancy Organization (ICCO) promotes standards of professional practice in consultancies—The Stockholm Charter—and guidelines for media relations—Charter on Media Transparency. ICCO also promotes the quality accreditation developed by Public Relations Consultants Association (PRCA)—The Consultancy Management Standard—which has been adopted by more than 235 consultancies worldwide (ICCO, 2021).

The ICCO suggested six reasons why organizations retain outside PRs firms. These are:-

- ✓ Management has not previously conducted a formal public relations program and lacks experience in organizing one.
- ✓ Headquarters may be located far from communications and financial centers.
- ✓ The firm has a wide range of up-to-date contacts.
- ✓ An outside firm can provide the services of experienced executives and creative specialists who would be unwilling to move to other cities or whose salaries a single organization could not afford.
- ✓ An organization with its public relations department may need highly specialized services that it cannot afford or does not need on a full-time, continuous basis.
- ✓ Crucial policy matters require the independent judgment of an outsider.

In parallel with internal PRs departments; outside PRs firms has their own advantages and disadvantages. Cutlip and center's (2013) stated that in the last decade, a wide range of organizations, including government agencies and nonprofits, have cut in-house staff and increased the use of outside firms. There are several advantages to having outside counsel.

The flexibility of talents and skills:- according to outside counselors, is their greatest advantage over internal staffing. Counseling firms with large staffs emphasize the variety of their personnel and operations available to reinforce and upgrade a client's internal staff. In their offices, or their on-call network, are skilled researchers, artists, models, media specialists, editors, feature writers, media coaches, talk show experts, photographers, videographers, and legislative experts. A client can request a highly technical and specialized service, and an account executive can attend to the need immediately.

Objectivity:- relatively untrammelled by the politics within an organization, ranks second. In some situations, objective and disinterested counsel is the primary reason for retaining outside

counsel. Internal staff often seek an outsiders' perspective and feedback, free of internal relationships, history, and power bases.

Range of prior experience:- in the course of a year, counselors work on many different problems for several different clients. In effect, a public relations firm is a repository of living case histories. Each project adds to its fund of knowledge. The counselor approaches each situation bolstered by experience with similar situations and knowledge of the success or failure from previous encounters in various organizations and problem situations.

The geographical scope of operations:- is another component of flexibility. A firm based in New York, Washington, or Chicago can serve clients from Africa, or even Ethiopia through its branches or affiliates.

The counselor's reputation:- also can be a major advantage. Externally, a counselor's reputation among the press and government officials can work to the advantage of clients. Internally, outside experts can often introduce ideas that internal staffers have struggled unsuccessfully to place on the agenda. Paying a hefty fee increases top management's attention to public relations counsel. And from the client's point of view, knowing that the counselor's reputation and subsequent referrals are on the line also helps ensure performance.

Despite all those advantages. Hiring external PRs firms has some disadvantages. Bringing in outside counselors of any type constitutes an intervention, which introduces a range of "push-backs" and obstacles.

Internal opposition:- can range from nonacceptance to outright rejection. This is, at least in theory, the counselor's most serious handicap. Antagonism toward and resistance to outsiders and their recommendations are natural human traits. The old guard with their set ways resists change—the new idea, new approach, new look—and sees it as a threat to security and established ways of doing business. Their realm is being invaded; and by implication, their judgment is being questioned. The offended ask, "What does this outsider know about our organization, our way of doing things?" Then, under the guise of scrutiny and concern, they raise questions about cost, return on investment, or qualifications. Dealing with the internal staff and others in the client organization calls for special consulting skills.

Questions of cost and hours billed:- are the most common threats to client–firm relationships. As a result, most firms use sophisticated accounting methods to record and track staff hours and project expenses. Yet, the cost is overwhelmingly the most frequent problem with clients, according to counselors. Clients see monthly invoices with hourly rates as excessive, forgetting that fees must also cover overhead and expenses other than staff time.

Difficulties caused by distance and availability:- can contribute to friction and questioning. Public relations firms typically serve many clients, with staff dividing their time and attention across several clients. Clients expect, however, full attention and prompt response to their needs. Questions about meeting deadlines, keeping promises, and attention to detail become important criteria for evaluating the outside firm.

Despite internal PRs department, and outside PRs firms; there is also a new middle approach. Increasingly, organizations are using a combination of internal departments and outside counsel to fulfill the public relations function. Moreover, top management increasingly recognizes how essential public relations is to organizational success. High-level practitioners who have the knowledge needed for the manager role have joined the executive decision-making group or at least are consulted on major decisions. Practitioners in public relations firms increasingly serve as counselors and strategic planners, rather than mere press agents and communication technicians. In short, public relations has become an integral part of most organizations' management structure—the dominant coalition.

The pioneer of private PRs firms, Dan Edelman predicts these changes will affect both internal departments and the firms serving them:

Traditional, large, central PR departments will almost certainly become relics. Very tight, small, and expert departments are likely to become the norm, and outsourcing may be the word most commonly used. In many cases, the PR chief will use a broad array of consulting firms, rather than just one. He or she may conclude that it is far more effective to use a small, expert local company in a Third World country, rather than the local office of a U.S. multinational agency. The agencies, for their part, will need to find ways to demonstrate that they have a significant comparative advantage relative to these small, local rivals (Wisner, 2012).

Global markets, strategic planning, and the convergence of communication and technology have attracted other types of consulting firms to public relations. Management consulting firms have added “communications specialists” to their staff. Job descriptions read much like position descriptions in traditional public relations firms. Some large law firms also have started offering “public relations counsel” to complement legal counsel and services in high-profile cases that attract media coverage.

Regardless of the source of counsel and services, public relations has an impact on an organization when people begin to tell each other that candor in communication is the best policy and that socially responsible actions are in the best interest of the organization. This means that public relations consciousness is gaining ground and there is growing confidence in the internal staff and outside counselors.

2.13. Integrated marketing communications

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is the combination of all marketing communications efforts in an integrated way, to maximize the communication effect that promotes the company goal. Private business organizations need to create a good image on their publics that lead to doing more effective communication activities; according to American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) in 1989 (Caywood, 1996). A concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic role of a variety of communication disciplines, and then combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact.

Schultz (2006) states that; IMC is a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive marketing communications programs over time with consumers, customers, prospects, employees, and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences. This confirms that the goal of IMC is to generate both short-term financial returns and to build long-term brand and stakeholder value.

Most private business organizations have a strategy of communication; IMC is also focused to achieve specific objectives. Katrandjiev (2000) described two objectives of IMC; to achieve considerable sales and to build a strong brand image. Schultz (2006) said that the objective of

IMC is to influence the behavior of the target audience. The ultimate goal of IMC is to set up customer-oriented sensibilities, help in resource allocation, achieve competitive advantage and develop a business process in all directions of the organization and its operations that add value for its customer (researchandmarkets.com). Despite these major objectives, there are some common objectives like create brand awareness, favorable customer attitude, and driving business & revenue.

In other words, marketing and public relations, as well as integrated marketing communication, are both asymmetrical in nature, but, as Van der Meiden (1993) stresses, based on the apparent differences in their objectives, groups addressed and techniques used each still largely stands as a function on its own.

2.14. Business in Society and PR

The role of business in society has changed considerably. In the continuous attempt to make socio-economic systems function effectively, businesses are often faced with decisions involving the environment outside the organisation.

The relationship of an organisational institution to values and institutions outside the organisation is complex by nature. From a systems perspective, society should be provided with a better understanding of the mission organisations have as well as the criteria for determining how well the organisations are achieving their missions. Society is therefore viewed as a social system, involving people and their organisations in relationships, consisting of some observable whole, normally seeking certain human objectives (C.W, 1995).

Institutions are established by society for social purposes, and an organisation is one of these institutions. The challenge of meeting both economic and social expectations, which typically refers to the development and processing of economic values in society, is often overlooked from an organisational perspective. Organisations often overlook the fact that it is also a social institution, performing a social mission, influencing the way people live together. This institution is not in isolation nor does it serve a single purpose or a single constituency. It is linked to a broader social system. Organisations serve many stakeholders and these groups give and demand a lot; therefore, the need for an organisation to develop a reputation for the quality and integrity

of its behaviour is essential. A fundamental shift in the relationship of business towards individuals and to society is essential and should be managed in such a way that they are responsive to the legitimate expectations of their stakeholders (Ibid).

The relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders have become critical for the long-term success of an organisation. It has become necessary for organisations to integrate social and environmental issues into their core business strategies. This emphasises the fact that financial terms will not suffice for an organisation to be sustainable in the long term. The triple bottom line aims at balancing the needs of the organisation's prosperity, the human needs associated with the organisation and the needs of the environment, therefore referring to the triad of "people, planet and profit" (Ibid).

The evolution of business has influenced the structure of business. As a function of business, PR has also been affected and has evolved considerably. This evolution can be related to four trends: The increase in big institutions; the increasing nature of change, conflict and confrontation in society; the technological innovations in communications have created an informed society, and lastly, the increase in public opinion as democracy was introduced in the (Mersham, 1995). The role of businesses in society has changed. This can be ascribed to the fact that organisations sometimes behaved in an improper way. Legitimacy and social trust have become critical survival issues for organisations. From a strategic management perspective, PR therefore needs to be aware of and adapt to changes from the macro-environment because this have an impact on effective decision making and strategy formulation.

There is a need to professionalise the field of PR. If the field of PR wants to contribute to organisations and society it is critical for individuals to perform a professional role. It is through the identification of the intellectual traditions and research on the body of knowledge that a set of values can be defined. Grunig (2002) argues that in order to define PR as a profession, a set of values need to be developed. Core values define professions and the core value of PR is the value of collaboration, found in concepts such as "societal corporatism, collectivism and communal relationships". Therefore, PR practitioners must agree on what and who they are as professionals. They must be able to articulate their world-view before they can perform their professional role and contribute to organisations within a diverse global society (Ibid).

2.15. PR as a Profession

The idea of professionalism began during the 5th century B.C. when the Hippocratic oath of medical ethics was developed. At the end of the 19th century, discussions on professions were mostly limited to medicine, law and religion but recently this concept has also been made applicable to occupations such as “accountants, architects, artists, computer scientists, dentists, engineers, journalists, librarians, natural and social scientists, social workers and teachers”. The shared dominant factors in these occupations are public respect and autonomy to practice their professions (Grunig, 2000:25). It was generally agreed that the following criteria apply to all professions:

- Specialised education based on theory developed through research is needed in order to acquire a body of knowledge and skills, with the emphasis on knowledge over skill.
- A unique and essential service that the community can recognise.
- Public service and social responsibility is emphasised over private interests. Therefore, focussing on public good instead of private economic gain and special interests.
- Autonomy and responsibility is given to practitioners in order to have the freedom to decide and act, being individually accountable.
- Codes of ethics and standards of performance are enforced by self-governing association with colleagues where values are interpreted and enforced by disciplining those who deviate from accepted behaviour.
- Specialised educational standards are set by professional societies in order to prepare and determine individuals for practice

Wakefield in Vercic & Grunig (2000:48) identified five specific variables to determine the status of multinational PR. They are the political-economic system, culture (including language), the extent of activism, the level of development and the media system. In order then to reach a level of effective PR in specific countries, practitioners need to have a thorough knowledge base of the social system, its historical development as well as its cultural development. This will assist and prepare professionals for international performance responsibilities in order to facilitate international PR professionals and prevent major performance blunders. The following five areas of the social system’s development are of great importance:

- The government's performances – government of a social system will affect the performance of the entire organisation existing within the system. The structure and management philosophy of the governance structure will also determine the way organisations must operate and will influence the management styles of openness of organisations as well as values of the management teams operating within the social system.
- The communication advancement – refers to the public access to communication technology advancements, the degree of freedom of speech and the media, the degree of recognition on the part of the media of its third estate responsibility, the existence of a check and balance relationship between journalism and PR as well as the literacy level of the public and its knowledge of international language.
- Social system's attitudes towards social responsibility – refers to the citizens' and organisations' attitudes towards social responsibility and how individual and corporate demonstration is encouraged by the system.
- The level of democracy achieved – the world is becoming increasingly more democratic in social structure owing to global communication and people learning more about each other. PR is tied to the empowerment of public opinion as a force in society. Democracy increases the opportunity for public opinion to influence social system decisions and actions, and therefore PR as a profession can be directly related to the public opinion empowerment advancements. The development of open records laws, consumer protection laws, the restriction on lobbying and on political contributions and the development of unions have all increased the need for organisations to communicate within the social system of which they form a part.
- The economic system – economics has always been a driving force in societies. Investor confidence and public support for the economic system are essential for social stability. The existence of corporations with stockholders, the diversity of owners with diverse interests, the creation of annual reports, and the understanding of economic dependencies and interdependencies of social systems have created a need for communication that mandate PR practices.

Knowledge on the above-mentioned areas is essential in order for the PR practitioner to contribute to the effectiveness of society as well as organisations. It was stated before that

practitioners from developed countries and those from developing countries fulfil different roles. Pratt (1985:10) is of the opinion that in developing countries the political ideologies, the levels of development and the socio-political controls influence PR practices. On the other hand, Kruckeberg in Bruning & Ledingham (2000:145-154) is of the opinion that PR is best defined and practised when the focus is on restoring and maintaining a sense of community. A critical responsibility of a PR practitioner is building community, and for this purpose PR practitioners are called upon to define their organisations in a social manner. The African people have a strong sense of community and this cultural trait is intertwined into everyday activities and therefore also has an effect on the role PR practitioners play. It will therefore be interesting to assess if the cultural element will have an effect on the way in which PR is performed.

2.16. Development and Positioning of PR as a Discipline

The practice and education of PR have grown and changed and will continue to change in perspective, role and evaluation (Stack, Botan & Van Slyke Turk, 1999:9). As the practice of PR has developed, the growth of PR education has also developed. At the root of these changes are the ways the world has changed and continues to change. As PR faces the challenges of the global and international arena, practitioners need to discover and understand the influence of environmental factors and the impact thereof on the practice and education of PR (Wakefield, 2000:186; Zaharna, 2001:136).

From the historical analysis it is clear that PR has developed in the journalism and mass media departments (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Argenti, 1998:48). Currently, the American PR courses are offered in Schools of Journalism, while European PR is generally studied in mass communication and the majority of British courses are situated in business schools and departments of marketing or advertising. The debate of where PR education should be housed is still continuing but in reality each of these schools should offer PR as each addresses important issues of PR. The ideal is to place PR education in departments, which facilitate an interdisciplinary style of teaching, encompassing communication, media studies and cultural studies, management and organisation behaviour and PR theory and practice. This integrated and interdisciplinary approach will encourage students to be curious, play ‘devils advocate’, question received truths and develop moral courage, which are all qualities needed in practice (Seitel, 1995:39; L’Etang & Pieczka, 1996:10-13).

2.17. The PR Body of Knowledge

A close association exists between professionalism and a body of knowledge and the role of education in transmitting the body of knowledge (Ehling in Grunig, 1992:442). Over the years an American commission for PR education was formed to investigate the status of the body of knowledge and determine the gap between education and PR practice. The commission identified that the field of PR has a rich collection of thinking relating to PR education (Fischer, 2000:16).

The educational developments in PR have been dominated by the North American research findings and consequently a predominantly Western perspective has influenced this phenomenon. Considerable emphasis is placed on skill, business education and the legitimization of the profession of PR (L'Etang & Pieczka, 1996:10).

2.18. Marketing

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA): Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, marketing communication and distribution of ideas, products, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals. Marketing is the systematic planning, implementation and control of business activities to bring together buyers and sellers. On the other hand, a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others.

Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. Cant et al (2004) also define marketing as a combination of management tasks and decisions aimed at meeting opportunities and threats in a dynamic environment that its market offerings lead to the satisfaction of consumers' needs and wants in such a way that the objectives of the business, the consumer and society are achieved. In fact, the specific role of marketing is to assist in identifying, satisfying, and retaining customers.

2.19. Marketing Public Relations

The term marketing public relations (MPR) was coined in the 1980s to distinguish the use of public relations techniques in achieving marketing objectives from the general practice of public relations (Harris, 1997). It is an 'all-encompassing' term integrating concepts and tools from public relations, marketing, advertising, and research.

Harris stipulates that its growth was supported by the recognition of its intrinsic value by business executives and the ability of PR professionals to develop PR campaigns in support of marketing strategies. The use of what are traditionally seen as public relations tools media, free publicity within marketing programs; used to reach marketing objectives.

The foremost existing definition of MPR is that of (Harris, 1997); MPR is the process of planning, executing, and evaluating programs that encourage the purchase and consumer satisfaction through credible communication of information and impressions that identify companies and their products with the needs, wants, concerns, and interests of consumers; the effectiveness of MPR in winning consumers' trust and long-term relationships with the organization's stakeholders and customers in the selling of its products and/or services and also celebrating special occasions and sponsoring special events and programs.

2.20. The Major Challenges of Public Relations in Africa

There is no African country where public relation is in proper practice like South Africa. This is practically true, the long stay of the Europeans in this country made it possible for the nation to be bathed with the sponge and soap of absolute development (Joseph, 2017).

More so, South Africa has been established so well in public relations, as most of the businesses both governments and privately owned were first managed by their colonial masters. Some indigenous businesses borrow their operational practices from their colonial masters as well; it is therefore expected to have South Africa leading in the Practice of public relations in the African continent (ibid). Hence, the problems that hinder public relations successes in Africa are many.

According to Solomon (2000), Poor understanding of public relations concept is the major challenge of PR in Africa. Public relations practices are not well understood in the continent, that

is, many organizations and individuals do not understand the concept of the profession, though they engaged in it on a daily basis, yet they do not appreciate the role of public relations and hence do not have or consider public relations as an integral part of their daily activities.

Lack of specialization in the profession is another major challenge of the African PR. Many people or professionals do not consider this as an area that needs much expertise. Many would rather major in science disciplines or business and still finds themselves in a public relations job. Most of those who occupy the positions of public relations in both government and private organizations are not public relations majors. Some claim to be practitioners simply because they are practicing journalists. Come to think of it, even those who eventually had training in public relations refuse to specialize in a particular aspect of public relations, just because they want to keep every account that comes their way.

Even with specialized courses, many African countries speak in native tribes; hence, it is hard to define a common or national language to pass the information to the masses. It is just recently that most African countries are trying to settle down with one official language that will be suitable for everyone to communicate with. So language barrier is an obstacle for the practice of PR in African continent.

On the other hand the world is developing many types of machinery like Computers, Scanners, Printers, Faxes, iPods, Tablets, Midgets, Recorder, Blackberries, etc to fasten both the field and office work, but it is sad news that many Africans are not learned, they cannot effectively and efficiently operate these machines yet it. This is at the disadvantage of the profession in this continent. Those, who eventually can use them, rather preferred to flaunt them lieu of maximizing their technological potentials.

It is obvious that many African countries have Infrastructural limitations. These are majorly communication problems and lack of proper equipment to finance or fasten public relations duties. In case of a public relations function like sponsorship, such issues like bad or inaccessible roads can make your work a disappointment. Sometimes, you may want to convey your sponsors to the venue where a project is to be established, but if the road to the site is sick, then be sure that that campaign will surely be sick. Sometimes it could be power issues, in the case of Nigeria, power problem is inevitable. If you have packaged a media campaign that you want to get across to your targets at a particular belt of the broadcast schedule, when the time to

disseminate the information reaches, and power is interrupted, be sure that the effort on that program will be useless, as well as turning futile.

Many people who are in the practice of public relations abuse the office and don't give much effort to work. They sit in their offices waiting for their salaries at month-end, instead of brainstorming on how to boost their clients' reputation. Some organizations just designate their staff with the post of a public relations officer without knowing the job description of that office. They subject practitioners to errands and protocols, sometimes; they use them as personal assistants in the guise of a public relations officer. Hence, Lack of ethics by the existing professionals and organizations is major challenge of the practice of PR in Africa.

With this in mind, Cultural practices are held in high esteem in Africa cum religious beliefs. If you prepare a campaign that treads negatively on these tenacious testaments you may fail to reach a mutual understanding with them. This also goes with diverse ethnic groups and their various tribes which are characterized by the continent. Hence, as you plan a campaign or advertising method you have to ensure not to go against particular groups' believes.

2.21. Theoretical Framework

This section is devoted to the explanation of the various theoretical frameworks used in this study, to support the study's aim. The theoretical framework is essential as this is the foundation for the study in terms of how PRs will be described.

2.21.1. Systems Theory

Ludwig von Bertalanffy who established the field of study known as the general systems theory as it is known today best codified this theory (Littlejohn, 1999). According to Angelopulo in Lubbe & Puth (1994:41), the systems theory is a scientific approach and not a theory, which originated between the two World Wars. This theory was found to apply to many different disciplines. The eclectic nature of the theory led to a disparity in the constructs attributed to this theory because these theories originated in applied science; the theories emphasized the importance of equilibrium, balance and interdependence that construct society. Society is usually regarded as an integral whole, and the various subsystems work together to keep the whole in balance. The system's primary function is to maintain itself, therefore the interactions of the

system (mechanical, organic and social) and the environment, ultimately define the systems (Mersham, 1995).

There are three main systems perspectives that usually apply in a business context – mechanistic (closed), organic, and adaptive (open systems). All three provide PR with valuable insights (Mersham, 1995).

2.21.1.1. Open and Closed Systems

One of the first distinctions made by systems theorists was between open and closed systems. Open systems exchange energy, material, and information with systems in their environments. Closed systems seal their boundaries and do not exchange energy with their environment (Spencer, 1997).

The exchange of inputs and outputs through boundaries, allowing energy and/or information to pass through, is an explanation of an open system. It adjusts and adapts to counteract or accommodate environmental variations. A closed system, however, does not allow any energy or information through to its environment. It, therefore, does not adapt to external change and eventually disintegrates. This type of system is concerned with the internal work of an organization. The ultimate goal of the system is to survive and therefore interaction with the environment is necessary to maintain balance (Cutlip, 2006).

An organization can be viewed from a systems perspective. An organization as a whole is composed of interrelated subparts and therefore any single change in a subsystem will affect the entire system. Organizations exist in dynamic environments where it needs to modify its internal processes and restructure itself in response to the changing environment. Open systems adapt to accommodate environmental changes and therefore usually affect other units of the organization as well as the whole system, which is responsive to changes in the environment. The key elements of open systems, according to Katz & Khan in Gregory (1999:267), are input, throughput, output, interdependence, transactional relationship with the environment, and boundaries (Cutlip, 2006).

Systems receive inputs from the environment that affect its equilibrium and ultimately have an effect on the system's goal. These environmental inputs are often a reaction to a system's

outputs. This provides feedback within the system to adjust the structure and process of the system to reach equilibrium (Benecke, 2013).

The focus of systems thinking is on the interaction between the parts. An open system develops an inner dynamic using an exchange process with its environment. This system can change its state when its environment changes. This can be done without having to completely change the system's structure. Systems, therefore, control their inner state by their own inner dynamics. An important principle and prerequisite for the closure of the self-creation system is therefore its openness (Holmstrom, 1996).

2.21.2. The value of systems thinking to PR

Applying these concepts to PR, Gruning & Hunt (1984) are of the opinion that the press agency or publicity PR models operate as if they were in a closed system. Cutlip et al (2000:238) contends that closed systems react to outside events and therefore refer to reactive PR programmes. Buckley in Gregory (1999:268) is of the opinion that closed systems force a PR practitioner towards a technical role, implementing the decisions made by the dominant coalition. The two-way symmetrical model focuses on shared meaning, which will have behavioural and organisational consequences. In order for PR practitioners to apply the open systems approach, environmental scanning is essential so as to anticipate changes in the environment. These changes will influence the organisations and the relationships with the stakeholder groups. Cutlip et al (2000:239) contends that open systems use information gathered in order to make adjustments and refer to this as proactive PR programmes. Bell & Bell in Gregory (1999:269) conclude that open systems enable PR practitioners to fulfil a management role, participating in decision making.

According to Spicer (1997:57), the systems theory is important for PR based on three reasons:

- Organisations were previously very concerned with studying an organisation by largely focusing on the internal workings of the organisation. The systems theory moved this locus to a focus on the interdependence of an organisation and its environment.
- The systems theory guides research and theorising in scientific communities. This theory is very prominent in the PR definitions and the understanding of PR is encapsulated by an

emerging organisational view of the field through the general systems theory (Grunig, 1992:71; Pavlik, 1987 in Spicer (1997:58). PR concepts such as boundary-spanning activities and adaptation to the environment reflect a general systems theory approach to PR.

- The systems theory serves as a useful heuristic tool in assisting the PR function to conceptualise the complex nature of organisational interdependencies. It also provides a framework for thinking about aspects of importance in understanding organisational PR decision making and effectiveness. This type of thinking provides individuals with an understanding of the world as an interconnected whole.

Buckley in Gregory (1999:273) embraced the adaptive model where organisations are invited to engage with stakeholders, to create a process of shared meaning, which will change the organisation's current form. The organisation is part of a whole system which is interdependent and where the relationships between the organisation and its environment are subject to change.

According to Dozier in Grunig (1992:352) the definitions based on the systems theory address various roles that the PR function needs to fulfil. The systems theory provides an understanding of the importance of adapting to the increasingly unstable and threatening environments organisations function in. In the conceptualisation of the strategic role of the PR manager, Steyn (2001:24) concludes that the systems theory provides an ideal approach for the development of the strategist role. The author supports this statement by explaining that the various elements of the open systems mechanism emphasises the process input, throughput, output and feedback through binding the external and the internal environment with the organisation.

2.21.3. The relevance of systems thinking to this study

When referring to the macro-level, the globe is viewed as a system influenced by its interaction with the different parts as well as its environment. Ethiopia, being a part of the globe, therefore influences the equilibrium of the greater system, the globe. From an organizational perspective the function of PR and the level at which it is performing will influence the bigger system, namely the organization. The level at which the practitioners perform their activities will influence the success of the PR department. This will influence the organization that in turn will influence the country and ultimately the globe as a whole. It is clear that the interdependency of the different levels at which PR operates influences the bigger system, the globe. Systems

thinking has influenced the study in terms of a conceptual, theoretical as well as empirical framework.

2.21.4.Excellence Theory

Gruning and Dozier stated that the excellence theory of public relations specifies how public relations make the organizations more effective, how it is organized and managed when it contributes most to organizational effectiveness, the conditions in organizations and their environments that make organizations more effective, and how the monetary value of public relations can be determined (Gruning, 1984). The theory includes the four classic models of public relations. According to this, if an organization makes public relations a destinies senior management function, lets the PR executive fill both the management and administrative roles, considers public relations outcomes in policymaking, fosters an open corporate culture, generally practices two-way symmetrical communication the organization meets standards of excellence. This value is based on the quality of relationships an organization has with its stakeholder. Organizational effectiveness involves the entire organization, not just the communication function. However, the management of communication is an important part of helping the organization as a whole achieve greater organizational effectiveness. The most important variables for public relations in making contributions to overall organizational effectiveness. The common generic principles of excellence are here briefly revised why each of them generic principles of public relations is important to organizational effectiveness:

- The involvement of public relations in the strategic management function allows for more inclusive decision-making, better organizational policy from the perspectives of the public, and more enduring decisions. Higher levels of satisfaction with the relationship are reported by the public who were considered by an organization in its strategic management process.
- The public relations function must be empowered to report directly to the CEO to advise on matters involving the public, values, and ethical decision-making.
- An integrated public relations function has access to and authority in all levels and functions of the organization. It is not isolated or pigeonholed, and it is not encroached upon or subsumed by marketing or other functions but has its own degree of autonomy.

- Public relations need to be a separate management function in the organization to prevent encroachment by marketing or legal departments into the role and responsibilities of communication management. It is common for smaller or less strategic publics to be ignored in organizational decision-making.
- The public relations unit should always be headed by a professional public relations manager, rather than someone who is simply adept in the technical skill of writing.
- An excellent public relations department needs to use the two-way symmetrical model of public relations because a dialogue-based approach has been shown more effective than any other in resolving conflicts, preventing problems, and building and maintaining relationships with the public.
- An excellent public relations department knows necessary to manage public relations symmetrically in that it can conduct sophisticated research to understand the public, and it can also engage in negotiation and collaborative problem-solving.
- Dialogue-based systems of internal communication are important for building teamwork, increasing employee morale and job satisfaction levels, and decreasing employee turnover.
- Public relations departments need to have diverse professionals in all roles of the function so that decisions and communications will be inclusive of varying viewpoints.
- The excellence researchers added ethics and integrity as important considerations.

The excellence study has shown that these generic principles of excellence apply to any type of organization, size of pursuit, and across cultures. Therefore this research has gone through these principles of excellence.

2.22. Models of Public Relation

The most important helpful for public relations' practitioners have to know the existing different models and their concepts for the practices of public relations. It is useful to understand how those models are related to each other or differentiated from one another is important. Gruning and Hunt (Gruning, 1984) identified four models of public relations which are based on research. The four models of public relations are press agency/publicist, public information, two-way asymmetric, and two-way symmetric model.

- ❖ **Press Agency:-** was developed in the middle of the 19th century and it was explained by Grunig and Hunt as “public relations-like activities”. This model uses persuasion and manipulation to influence an audience to behave as the organization desires. The goal of practitioners of press agency is publicity and propaganda. Grunig proposed that those practitioners “seek attention for their organization in almost any way possible”
- ❖ **Public Information:-** is related to press agency in that one-way information dissemination is the purpose of the activity, but it is different from the press agency in that truth is fundamental to its purpose. The information has to be accurate, true, and specific. The central purpose of this model is informative. Practitioners operating under this model do slight research about their audiences beyond testing the clarity of their message (Gruning, 1984).
- ❖ **Two-way Asymmetric Model:-** is mainly focused on persuasive communications to generate agreement between the organization and its publics by bringing them around to the organization’s way of thinking. This model employs the social science research method to increase the persuasiveness of their messages. Feedback from the public is used to adapt communications strategies to be more persuasive, not to alter the organization’s position, or the organization is much more interested in having the public adjust to the organization’s interest than the reverse. Through this model, it is impossible to build a good relationship for mutual benefit (Gruning, 1984).
- ❖ **Two-way Symmetric Model:-** intended to generate mutual understanding. The two-way communications process should lead to changes in both the public’s and the organization’s position on an issue. Through this two-way model of communication, the organization and its publics adjust to each other to achieve mutual understanding and sustain a harmonious relationship (Gruning, 1984).

Furthermore, the two-way symmetrical model of communication is real as well as normative. It is a model that organizations can use but often do not use because an authoritarian dominant coalition sees the approach as a threat to its power. Two-way symmetrical public relations, however, epitomizes professional public relations and reflects the growing body of knowledge in the field. This ethical approach also contributes to organizational effectiveness more than other models of public relations. Practitioners of the two-way symmetrical model are not completely altruistic; they also want to defend the interests of their employers-they have mixed motives. A

substantial body of knowledge exists that provides practitioners with advice both on how to collaborate interpersonally with the public and on how to use media symmetrically to communicate with them. The two-way symmetrical model, as refined is a major component of excellence in public relations and communication management (ibid).

Likewise, linear communication models are ineffective but remain widely used by public relations practitioners. According to the European Commission Monitor, linking communication strategy and business is the number one challenge for today's communication/public relations practitioners. This is both good and bad news. The good news is that communication professionals are ambitious; they aim to support the organization in realizing its strategic goals. They are eager to make a difference. Whereas, the bad news is that they still struggle with the strategic element of their contribution, and the department is no more than a tactical entity providing lots of details that do not help them when strategically speaking (Ruler, 2016). Ruler stated that to improve the visibility and credibility of the Communications Department, it is time to fundamentally rethink how strategic communication/public relations is developed.

In general, the researcher understands that public relations practitioners would have to know the different model of PR and their purposes; and employ the model which compromises and serves both the organization's and the publics' interest for mutual benefit. Therefore, the two-way communication model contributes to PR practices effectiveness to create mutual understanding between both the internal and the external publics to achieve organizational goals, and meet the public interest. Furthermore, it helps to build harmonious relationships, to manage communication, and to build a good image of the organization among various publics.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The major purpose of this study is to assess professionals perceptions of the practice, challenges and opportunities of private public relations firms in Ethiopia as in the case of 251 communications PLC. Research methodology is the general term that stands for how and by what means certain studies should be conducted. This part of the study describes the research design, sampling techniques, instruments of data collection, data sources, data analysis, and ethical considerations. Fundamentally, there are three types of research approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Among these three approaches, the study employed a qualitative research approach. It uses words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data.

On the other hand, the study employed open system theory and excellence theory as a theoretical framework. These theories put into consideration the interests of both the organization and the publics for mutual understanding and benefits. Furthermore, these theories encourage a two-way symmetrical model of public relations towards mutual understanding and maintaining a harmonious relationship between the organization and the public which results in successful practices.

3.1. Research Design

The study will use a case study design; specifically exploratory case study design. It helps the researcher to conduct an in-depth study on a case of the organization. Also, this enabled the study to qualitatively collect, analyze, and make interpretation of the data. Likewise, the study employed qualitative data collection technique namely in-depth interviews with key informants.

A case study is more interested in getting large information but from very limited individuals; and it focuses on getting the as large body of information as possible but only from a single case (Belay, 2016). As a research design, the case study claims to offer a richness and depth of information not usually offered by other methods (Hancock, 2002).

3.2. Research Method

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research method is employed. Petersone (2004) supposed that qualitative inquiry was the most appropriate approach for assessing this complex and ambiguous subject. So, the researcher believes that the qualitative method is the most valuable method to generate a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities of private public relations firms in Ethiopia. So, the study followed a qualitative research approach. Besides, it employed research methods namely in-depth interview.

3.3. Source of Data

In an attempt to answer the research problem, research objectives were formulated. In order to address the research objectives of this study, it is essential to obtain the necessary information. The research objectives as stated in Chapter 1 are addressed in two ways: firstly, using a literature review and, secondly, collecting data in order to empirically verify the literature.

This study will use both primary and secondary data sources.

Primary source:- the study used mainly primary data obtained with qualitative techniques such as an in-depth interview.

Secondary source:- is refers to data that are already available that they refer to the data which have already been collected and analyzed by someone else. So this includes previous research work, public relations tools of the 251 Communications PLC, and other documents; such as the marketing strategy of 251 Communications PLC, and also review its performance.

3.4. Sampling Technique

The study will use the purposive sampling technique for an in-depth interview. This, purposive sampling technique will enable the researcher to choose key informants by their profession, position, experience, and relevance to the study will inclusion criteria. The researcher will conduct an in-depth interview with the general manager of 251 Communications PLC, and Heads/CEOs of governmental and non-governmental organisations.

3.5. Sample Size

The group of respondents will be composed of public relations experts, heads, and CEOs of an organisation who will be capable of clarifying complex issues concerning the practice, challenges, and opportunities of private PR sectors in Ethiopia.

Eight participants will be selected for this research. The sample size is based on the recommendations of McCracken (McCracken, 1988). Who suggested that a sample size of eight was sufficient for qualitative interviewing because it was essential to work in-depth with fewer participants than superficially with many. However, two additional participants will be added so as to reach what Rubin and Rubin (1995) described as “saturation”-the point at which few new findings are revealed.

The participants for this study will be selected based on purposive sampling strategy. So based on this the key informants are:

- CEO of the 251 communication PLC
- Head/CEO of governmental and non-governmental institutions.

The study will use qualitative data collection technique in-depth interviews. For data gathering, the researcher will prepare semi-structured interview questions with follow-up or probing questions and a document review checklist to obtain quality and sufficient data. The instruments will be prepared in English. Interviews were recorded using the voice recorder and were transcribed verbatim each day.

3.6. Techniques of Data Analysis

In the study, qualitative data analysis techniques will be employed. Qualitative data analysis methods namely transcription, coding, categorizing, thematizing, and narration will be employed. The data will be collected through in-depth interviews using a voice recorder, and through exhaustive available publication documents review. Therefore, the findings will be presented in narration based on thematic areas. Likewise, data triangulation will be used by comparing and contrasting the patterns and themes within the data during analysis. Analyzing qualitative data will typically involve immersing oneself in the data to become familiar with it,

then looking for patterns and themes, searching for various relationships between data that help the researcher to understand what they have, then visually displaying the information and writing it up (Kawulich, 2015).

Data validity will be assured by employing multiple data collection techniques. Documents of 251 Communications PLC will be exhaustively reviewed to collect data for content analysis, and also the study will triangulate the data by comparing and contrasting the reflections of interviews and the data obtained through available publications document that will be reviewed during analysis.

3.7. Ethical Consideration

In the process of data collection and interpretation, the researcher will assure the respondents that any confidential information they disclose will be kept confidential and convinced them the importance of the study was to help the private public relations sector; specifically the 251 Communications PLC.

The researcher will tell the participants that the study is only for academic purpose and no one would fall victim because of any adverse findings in connection with their professional duties. The consent of the participants will be obtained orally and confidentiality of the interviewees is secured by coding i.e. Interviewee 1, 2... named as I1, I2..., and also the organization secured. This is done to motivate them to give their responses without reservation. The interview guideline will clearly explain the purpose of the study. The guideline did not require the names of the interviewees; this is to protect their identity remain anonymous. The interviewees will aware from the beginning of what the study is doing, why and where the information is going and why it is being gathered.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

The results obtained from the interviews with 10 participants and the answers to the research questions are discussed in this chapter. The findings are divided into three main sections: first, the PRs practice of 251 Communications PLC; second, challenges and opportunities of 251 communications PLC; and, third, to the pros and cons of hiring private PR firms. So as to strengthen the findings the researcher's personal observation is integrated in the analysis.

In order to explore the practice of the 251 Communications PLC in detail, the researcher has chosen James Grunig and Todd Hunts Four Models of PR. The rationality behind choosing this model is that it allows the researcher to assess the practice thoroughly.

Data 1

How does the 251 Communication PLC conduct its activities

4.1. Public relation practice of 251 Communications PLC.

In this sub topic the researcher will try to assess the PR practice of 251 Communications PLC based on the vision statement, PR tools and techniques, PRs policy and strategy, and the implemented model.

4.1.1. Mission, vision and values

As it is stated in the background of the thesis: 251 Communications PLC is a premier PR agency in Ethiopia; established with the aim to connect their clients with their customers with access to a number of resources along with knowledge of government policy, public perception, and how to support marketing promotion strategies. In an interview with CEO of 251 Communications PLC, it was revealed:

The agency is opened by two professionals who have a love of public relations with the intention of creating an alternative PR consultant that satisfies the needs of an organisations. Firstly, it is to create an alternative PR consultant, and

secondly, it is to do a better and broad work in the profession (Interview with Ato Addis Alemayehu, CEO of 251 Communications PLC, August 30, 2021)

He further stated, in the contemporary world the practice of public relations has focused on a mission to manage and build the reputations of companies and individuals. It does this by aiming specific information at target audiences, such as the public, investors, partners, or employees, to introduce or maintain a particular perception of the company or individual. Two words closely associated with PR are image and spin. In terms of image, the way a company, brand, or person—and this can be anyone from a celebrity to a corporate executive or political figure—is portrayed in the media and perceived by the public is a strong determiner of popularity. Greater popularity can translate to increased product sales, greater company revenue, more fans, and even more votes. Spin is what happens when PR specialists emphasize information that puts clients into a more favorable light. For example, when a company or person faces a reputation-shaking crisis, it's the PR representative who strategizes what to write about the situation and where and when to share that message to make the client look as good as possible..

Particularly, we are practicing public relations to promote the image of our client organization to the internal and external public. Yes of course; communication skills is the power to bring attitudinal change and practicing public relations becomes something more than an infrastructural component of the organization. Indeed, as an external PR consultant, we did not participate in the decisional process with top management level to practice public relations as a problem solver, to persuading it through reflective activities of analysis and interpretation of the internal and external context to build the reputation and image of an organization to earn understanding with the general publics. (Ibid)

Newsome, (2004,15) stated that an organizational image is a direct reflection of its performance. That is why Public relations people have almost to win public acceptance. It is the responsibility of PR to make sure that the organization understood and accepted as well as loved by its publics. As many researchers supposed that, in the current world the practice of public relations focused on the reputation and image of organizations to earn mutual acceptance and support, and influence public opinion and behavior.

In view of the values of 251 Communication PLC, understanding the value of trustworthiness, making difference, continuous learning and development, and producing public relation works economically and efficiently are among the values stated by the CEO.

4.1.2. How 251 Communications PLC communicate with the public?

251 Communication serves as a liaison between the its client organization and the public. In this regard Ato Addis Alemayehu said:

We communicate with the public through media relation, press release, panel discussions with different parts of the society. We set guidelines for how to communicate with the media. Regarding the contents and forms of our news on social media, we collect and analyze feedbacks of the public from the page. They were monitored and evaluated. The monitoring and evaluation process is based on the standard that we have developed earlier. events that are hosted by the agency will also be monitored and evaluated (Ibid).

The researcher has also observed organizing an event is the major tool of communication which is used by the agency. 251 Communication organized various events regarding current issues, community based activities, development, agreements and others. There are also fliers, leaflets and magazines in the agency with a limited quantity.

According to Ato Addis Alemayehu, the agency has several media partners, journalists working for media organizations which are registered at the Ethiopian Mass Media Agency and have a good relationship with the agency to attend media events and briefings at the agency's client organization. The researcher observed that the media partners of the agency are from the print media, broadcast media, digital media and the international community. In relation to this Ato Addis Alemayehu said:

I feel we have a better relationship with local and international media. When our client organization makes a statement, we call on media outlets at the press conference. They will bring their questions directly to the organization. And also we send press releases to the press (Ibid).

Even though the CEO said that they have a good relationship with the media, the researcher observed that the media relation has engaged in one way communication, the agency simply send news and press releases to the media without any feedback gathering and issue clarifying ways.

The researcher believes that there are several issues that need clarification from the highest authority of an organization. Rather than setting up interviews with individual reporters, press conference allows an entity to interact with a roomful of journalists all at once and thus is an effective way to quickly disseminate PR messages.

From the above findings one can conclude that the agency uses different PR tools and techniques to reach the public. However, the agency has a gap on conducting enough amount of press conference, and helping their client organization to get clear information directly from the sources mouth.

4.1.3. The Public Relation Policy and Strategy in 251 Communication PLC

According to Ato Addis Alemayehu, 251 Communication has several clients such as ministers, regional states, NGOs, celebrities and others. All the clients need to be represented and get heard in matters that concern them. The agency therefore has a massive responsibility of representing the above mentioned and satisfy their needs.

PR scholars such as B. Van Ruler agreed that PR policy and strategy is prerequisite for effective PRs practice. Effective PR methods always need to be founded on structured communications, including both formal and informal exchanges, to keep stakeholders informed. When looked at the agency, they have no PR strategy so far. Regarding this Ato Addis Alemayehu said:

A team of PR professionals from the agency lead by the marketing manager of the agency had been sent to Kenya. The purpose of the visit was to share experience from the Kenyan “Safari PR Consultant”. I believe the team has got tremendous experience and has reached in a consensus to develop a comprehensive PR policy and strategy document where principles, objectives, procedures, and directives were articulated for both internal and external communication. To do so, we need a professional support from higher institutions and other researchers of PRs and strategic communication (Ibid).

The researcher has also found that there has not been specific written guideline for each practice of public relations. As Ato Addis Alemayehu confirmed the agency is in the process of developing the written guideline for PRs practices.

4.1.4. The Model of Public Relation Implemented by 251 Communication PLC

As the researcher closely observed the public relations practice in the agency, the main emphasis is on providing information as it is confirmed by both the head of their client organization. The researcher also proved that the PR model that the agency characterized by Public Information model. The press release and conferences of the agency are aimed at informing the public and creating awareness about their client organization decisions and stands. This kind of public relations resembles to public information model in which the big emphasis is on providing information rather than being open to accommodate the interest of the public. However as it is stated in the literature part of this research in the public information model the key role of the information is not to persuade rather it simply delivers the information which eventually leads to lack of clarity. In this regard Ato Addis Alemyehu said:

The primary responsibility of 251 Communication PLC is s to act as spokesperson for the client organization. The agency is responsible for communicating the client's organization reactions to local and international events, as well as providing information about actions of the organization (Ibid).

From the above result one can depict that the 251 Communication PLC is doing a role of spokes person. Disseminating information was one of the major reasons that client organizations needs from the agency. Giving clarity about the disseminated information through face to face discussion is hardly practiced in the agency. This practice contradicts with the PR principles in which persuasion is in the heart of PR profession which involves clarifying ambiguities and misunderstandings.

Data 2

Challenges of 251 Communication PLC

4.2. Public Relation Challenges and Opportunities of 251 Communication PLC

In relation of challenges that are faced by 251 Communication PLC, the researcher found from the indepth interview that restrictive laws, absence of PR strategy/institutional framework, lack of professionalism, economic weakness of private PR firms and weak development of private PR firms are the major challenges of 251 Communication PLC.

4.2.1. Restrictive laws

One of the areas in which government influence the private PR sector is regulation. The private PR sector as a business is not provided support from the government. Regarding on this, Ato Addis Alemayehu said there are restrictive laws impeding the private PR sector from playing their democratic roles.

The biggest challenges facing the industry today is that competition is coming from all sides. The advertising, interactive and marketing disciplines are all looking for new ways to reach the consumer and claiming expertise in the public relations space. There is no a clear demarcation between PR and Advertising or promotion. The government treats PR and advertising by the same looking. On the other hand as a professional agency , the government didi not give as a professional liscence; rather we treated as a business institutions (Interview with Ato Addis Alemayehu, CEO of 251 Communications PLC, August 30, 2021) .

From the above information, any one can conclude that, there is no distinctive legal framework that bind the working area of the private PR sector.

4.2.2. Absence of PR strategy/institutional framework

Marketers are frantically trying to reach their consumers with laser-like precision—attempting to engage them in “intimate” conversations that result in building brand equity, choice and loyalty. Advertising, online, promotion and public relations agencies are all trying to get a piece of the action. There’s a huge opportunity for public relations agencies to assume the leadership position

in creating innovative, integrated campaigns that start these conversations, keep them going, and result in a measurable up-tick in business for the brand.

The flip side of not stepping up to the plate and becoming engaged in the broader marketing mix is that public relations agencies will be left with smaller budgets, holding only the “media relations” bag. Marketers are looking for a lot more. Public relations agencies must reinvent themselves with the skills, knowledge, and people power to provide broader, more measurable services to stay relevant.

251 Communication PLC, according to Ato Addis Alemayehu, the whole structure of the agency is yet under construction and a full fledged restructuring is yet to be completed. Ato Addis further said the delay of developing the agency’s PR strategy made them paralyzed. He also said:

We believe that PR strategy and/or institutional frame work is very crucial for the agency. Activities need to be categorized based on urgencies and importance order. We believe the PR strategy and/or frame work addresses this issue. Therefore until we develop a PR strategy, 251 CommunicationPLC remains less effective. The agency is working on a non-technical basis. How to implement the strategic themes are not clearly identified in written way. As we all know, unclear strategy leads to inefficiency (Ibid).

Therefore, from the interviewee result one can conclude that the managers is aware of the importance of PR strategy and framework. As a result 251 Communication PLC is in the process of developing PR strategy and framework.

4.2.3. Lack of professionalism

Throughout the research process the researcher has observed that lack of PR professionals is the major challenge of the country. In this regard Ato Addis Alemayehu expressed his feeling as follows:

PR as a profession is a recent phenomena in the country. If I am not mistaken Addis Ababa University is the only university which trains PRs practitioners. As a result lack of professionalism in the field PRs strategic communication is not only the problem of 251 Communication PLC but also it is a problem in the entire government offices. We have lack of professionals especially in quantity. If you

see the qualification of the managers and the practitioners their educational background and work experience are directly related with the PR. (Ibid).

The above result shows 251 Communication PLC has highly challenged with the lack of professionals especially in the number of practitioners.

4.2.4. Economic weakness of private PR firms

With regard to economic weakness of the private PR sector as a challenge, Ato Addis Alemayehu believes that the private PR sector are economically weak that they could not fully accomplish their roles.

Ato Addis Alemayehu, further stated that, the private PR sector as a business is not provided support from the government. Globally Public relations is a nearly \$200 billion industry with a mission to manage and build the reputations of companies and individuals. But as Ethiopian context, the PR industry is not much developed, and has no a significance impact on the economy.

Ato Addis Alemayehu believes that, the public relations industry plays an important role in helping companies and individuals promote themselves, boost awareness (and sales) of products and services, and maintain their public reputation. While marketing budgets may be scaled down during a recession or slow economy, people will always find ways to allocate funds for public relations.

For a PR business such as ours, it is particularly exciting. Ethiopian consumers are coming of age at the speed of light and they have leap-frogged their global counterparts when it comes to technology. Technological advancements in Africa are evident - the country has skipped traditional landline connectivity to go online through mobile technology and this is creating a tipping point for the country. But the government did not recognize the value of private PR sector as a business, even as an instrument for the development of democracy (Ibid).

Hence, as to the above finding Ethiopian private PR sector has a big economicall challenge, and the government did not recognize the sector as a promising business.

Despite the above mentioned challenges, 251 Communication PLC has a number of opportunities.

Regarding on this, Ato Addis Alemayehu said that, the biggest opportunity for PR agencies right now is that the way marketers are marketing is totally changing. The days of using traditional marketing tactics—TV, radio, print ads, outdoor boards—is rapidly changing. Much more emphasis is being put on alternative ways of marketing. This shift has put a renewed evaluation of how public relations can take on a much bigger role in the marketing mix. We are also seeing a major merging of public relations and the Internet. We are seeing a major merging of public relations tactics and the use of internet marketing tactics. He further stated that,

We have the chance for the first time in history to be the primary source of ideas for our clients. For years, ad agencies have been the first stop for creative concepts, but given the changes in the media environment, that is no longer the case. The walls between the various communications functions are crumbling. Clients are looking for new ways to reach their audiences and they don't care where those ideas come from. This is a big opportunity for PR firms to move into the driver's seat and deliver thinking on a scale that transcends the media relations concepts that have always been our purview (Ibid).

PR agencies that are going to grow and succeed will build client confidence in their strategic counsel and their ability to project their clients' voices in an increasingly cluttered environment. On this regard, Ato Addis Alemayehu said that, as long as we are seen as media-centric, a fair criticism in many cases, our opportunities will be limited. Most firms have an opportunity to expand their capabilities and focus on problem solving for clients rather than media relations as a one-legged stool. Specialization will continue to be the fuel for growth at the most successful firms. Public relations firms have an opportunity to be trusted advisors to C-suite executives who don't know what to make of the world of fragmented media. Questions include: "Should I worry about this blog post?" "What about the YouTube video?" "How can the Internet change the way we operate and give us a competitive advantage?" Corporate communications departments may understand these issues. But they are increasingly stretched thin merely responding to internal requests. Agencies can be a step ahead by understanding this new world and being prepared to advise their clients on the threats and opportunities of it.

Generally, The agency business is booming. New opportunities abound. But along with the promise, potential and rewards of running a PR agency these days come significant new

challenges and risks. The good news is we're not facing these issues alone. We can learn best (and worst) practices from colleagues and, yes, competitors sometimes just by asking.

Data 3

The pros and cons of hiring PR firms

4.3. The pros and cons of hiring private PR firms

As it is explicated in the third chapter of this paper, the study is conducted based on qualitative data. An in depth interviews, which aimed at assessing the pros and cons of hiring external PR consultants (or outsourcing some PR activities), were conducted with 8 informants purposively selected from different organizations (4 from governmental and 4 from non-governmental institutions). The result is presented here under.

Outsourcing is a business strategy that moves some of an organization's functions, processes, activities and decision responsibility from within an organization to outside providers. Regarding on this one of the interviewee (I1) said:

When it comes to marketing and public relations efforts, small businesses can feel lost. There are dozens of different social platforms, traditional marketing efforts, digital marketing firms, SEO experts and other sources of information that can help a business with marketing and PR. Unfortunately, sometimes all of these channels and information sources are overwhelming. At times, it's easier to outsource PR and marketing efforts to take that trouble off your plate.

Although there are clear benefits to outsourcing PR efforts, there are also downsides to letting an outside entity handle your PR. If you're wondering whether you want to outsource marketing and PR, it's important to consider both sides of the equation (I1).

Another respondent (I2) said that, there are four factors considered in selecting private PR agencies/consultants; first, experience of the firm, second, budget/financial proposal of the firm, third, experience of the team on account, and fourth, network with global PR firms.

If you hire the right PR agency, your business should generate more media attention. PR agencies know what they're doing, and they're able to craft story pitches to media outlets that get your business in the news. Positive news clippings are great, as they are a free way to reach customers. While this is a nice concept, it is important to hire credible PR agencies that create good media pitches. Some PR companies create pitches that aren't ideal for media entities, and those efforts can easily be ignored or may even be annoying to media outlets. You don't want that situation. PR firms can also help handle customer service, which may include interacting with media sources. Answering questions from media entities can be a valuable service provided by some marketing firms (I2).

Outsourcing PR can be costly. In relation to this one of the interviewee (I3) said the following:

If you outsource marketing tasks rather than doing them yourself, you're going to pay for those tasks. For some businesses, the benefit of hiring an outside PR firm doesn't outweigh the reward of successful PR campaigns and efforts. Some businesses just don't need extensive PR and marketing help. On the other hand, the cost of outsourcing isn't much different from hiring a marketing manager. It's worth noting that spending on outsourcing can be viewed as an investment into your business rather than another expense (I3).

On the other hand, outsourcing PR is more advantageous. Regarding on this, one of the interviewee (I4) forwarded the following seven advantages of outsourcing PR.

- **Focus:-** The benefit of appointing a PR agency to manage and protect your reputation is that you can focus on your core business, secure in the knowledge that you have a team of professionals dedicated to driving your brand awareness.
- **Scale:-** An external agency can commit a team of PR experts to apply their combined knowledge and creativity to further the interests of your brand in line with your business strategy. Working with an agency gives you access to a wealth of talent.
- **Creativity:-** An agency is experienced in bringing your strategy to life in creative executions and campaigns that evolve and develop over time. Creative thinking and execution are what they do, what they thrive on and what they excel at.

- **Perspective:-** A PR consultancy not only brings an external perspective but a perspective through multiple lenses of expertise. They can and should challenge, inspire and guide based on their informed opinion. As an external, their perspective is not influenced by internal dogma.
- **Cost and Liability:-** There is no cost associated with appointing an agency. This allows you to avoid bringing an employee into the company, which saves you money on everything from benefits to training. Engaging with an agency's services is straightforward.
- **Influential network:-** Every individual within your agency comes with a proven network of media contacts, database subscriptions and business network to leverage your stories and brand awareness.
- **Speed of excellence:-** A PR agency will start delivering at pace as soon as you appoint them. Their focus is entirely on your brand and while there will be a short period of getting to know your culture, there will be no lengthy induction period holding up the process.

The above mentioned interviewee (I4), conclude that, there are always pros and cons to outsourcing any business activity. However, recruiting an internal resource to handle PR is not the equivalent of appointing a PR agency. It is not a like for like comparison. Appointing a PR manager demonstrates intent but appointing a PR agency is decisive action.

From the findings one can conclude that, an outsourced PR firm acts like a full-time employee, although an organisation don't have to provide health benefits and other perks to outsourced firms. These PR agencies can help an organisation's business, especially if they need guidance as they create a social media and public relations strategy. On the other hand, not every business needs outsourced help. Paying for a PR firm or expert should only be done if they can provide the organisation with value that moves its business in the right direction.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1. Summary of major findings

This study aims to explore the existing practice of PR in 251 Communication PLC, examine the major PR tools, techniques, and models used by the agency, and assess the pros and cons to hire external PR firms . The findings of the study are discussed as follows.

5.1.1. The PR practice in 251 Communication PLC

The staffs of 251 Communication PLC are well educated in the field of PR and other related fields. They also provide unique and specialized service which is recognized by both internal staffs and institutions who gives consultancy service for them. Moreover, they are good at public services and social responsibility. They are also claimed that they are the pioneer of modern private PR firms, inspite of “Alem public relations consultancy”, the first private PR firm in Ethiopia established by writers Sibhat Gebreigziabher and Dereje Deressa. It is therefore in line with Saunders & Perrigo’s five criteria that are necessary for public relations to gain professional status except for conducting scientific and problem solving research, which is neglected in the Press Secretariat.

Currently, 251 Communication PLC has no written communication/PR strategy; it is still using the PR strategy of the client company.

251 Communication PLC is vigorously doing a role of spokes person. Disseminating information is one of the major reasons the client company is hiring them. However, giving clarity about the disseminated information through face to face discussion is hardly practiced in the agency. This practice contradicts with the PR principles of James Grunig and Todd Hunts in which persuasion is the heart of PR profession which involves clarifying ambiguities and misunderstandings.

The concepts and constructs defining the models of the practice of PR as discussed in global theory exist in Ethiopian context and can be used to determine the level of the practice of PR. The respondents, specifically Ato Addis Alemayehu, CEO of 251 Communication PLC, is therefore of the opinion that the main purpose of PR is, with regard to the client organisation, currently focused on society and understanding society, as well as to influence the organisation

to act in a socially responsible manner in terms of the organisation's behaviour and decision making. The findings therefore prove that 251 Communication PLC clearly aware of the importance of society's power to influence the organisation's 'licence to operate'.

The other 2 models that were identified, namely the two-way asymmetrical/ symmetrical and the public information/ press agency models, are also found in 251 Communication PLC context. The purpose of the two-way asymmetrical/ symmetrical model, focused on research but predominantly, research regarding the PR programme. The purpose of the third model, the public information/ press agency model, is to provide information about the organisation. According to the literature discussion, these 2 models are regarded as models that are aimed at a more technical purpose. In 251 Communication PLC context, these models are performed at implementation level, therefore focusing on the functional level of an organisation but with a very strong strategic focus. This conclusion was made based on the correlations that were drawn between the models and roles identified in this study. The findings proved that each of these models had a relationship with the role of the strategist. This illustrates that even if a PR practitioner functions at the level of the strategist and needs to provide information about the organisation, using the public information/ press agency model, it is clear that this information needs to be structured and communicated in a strategic manner. The same applies for conducting research about the PR programmes, and in this case it is clear that a strong strategic focus is used. Therefore, although these models exist and form part of organisations in the 251 Communication PLC context the purpose it fulfils has a very strategic focus.

5.1.2. The major PR tools

251 Communication PLC uses different communication tools such as press release, press conference, media relation, photo exhibition, and others to reach the public. However, it has a gap on conducting enough amount of press conference on different social, political, and economic issues of the client organisation. This finding in lines with Ki and Hon (2006) ideas which says a variety of tools should be employed to communicate with the public effectively.

Press conference is seldom arranged by the 251 Communication PLC, they conducted only two press conferences per annum for the client organisation. It opposes with the thought of Wilcox (2005) which says press conferences need to be arranged as frequently as possible.

5.1.3. Major challenges of 251 Communication PLC

The researcher found from the in-depth interview that 251 Communication PLC, in general the private PR sector, has highly challenged with lack of awareness towards the existence of private PR firms, economic weakness of the private PR sector, absence of communication strategy/ institutional frame work, under-development of the private PR sector, and lack of professionalism are the major challenges of the 251 Communication PLC.

5.1.4. Opportunities of Ethiopian private PR sector

Ethiopia is clearly an important market for any business with global ambitions. Whilst the market is very exciting it has to be tempered with a deep understanding of the challenges of setting up a credible offer across such a diverse business landscape. However, the opportunity is most definitely there – Ethiopia is one of the six fastest growing economies in Africa and strong growth rates are predicted.

5.1.5. The pros and cons of hiring external PR firms

The findings from the in-depth interview it is revealed that outsourcing PR activities has its own advantages and disadvantages. Some of the advantages are; improved focus on core business activities, increased efficiency, controlled costs, increased reach, and greater competitive advantage. On the other hand, confidentiality and security, lack of flexibility, management difficulties, and instability are amongst the major disadvantages of hiring external PR firms.

5.2. Conclusion

This research has focused on the PR practice of 251 Communication PLC and its PR implementation, the challenges and opportunities in implementing PRs practice of 251 Communication PLC. It explores the pros and cons of hiring/outsourcing private PR firms.

This research used qualitative case study method. The case study research method is used to explore the existing PR practice in 251 Communication PLC. The research identified Grunig and Todd Hunts PR model, as the main dimensions of PRs. B. Van Ruler's strategic communication frame and Smith's perception theory have also been identified for further analysis. The finding of this research indicates that 251 Communication PLC is not fully engaged in most of PR activities like crisis management, conducting researches, and arranging press conferences on

different national issues of their client institutions. On the other hand, the understanding of internal stakeholders towards PR practice of the agency is considered as positively impactful.

The research also conducted to investigate challenges and opportunities of 251 Communication PLC. The finding of the investigation uncovered that, the private PR sector is untouched industry. So, there is a promising future for the private pr sector. Eventhough, there are many challenges facing the sector.

Finally, the research tried to explore the pros and cons of hiring PR firms/outsourcing PR activities. On this regard, the findings revealed that, it is better to hire PR consultancy, or, outsourcing some parts of PR activities.

In general, this study proved that very little is known about the practice of private PR in Ethiopia due to various reasons but an important issue is that of a lack of documented literature on the practice of private PR in Ethiopia. The limited information has created perceptions that there is not happening in the field of private PR in Ethiopia or if there is then it takes place at a very low technical level. This study proved that those perceptions are incorrect. Ethiopia is currently according to the opinions of the PR practitioner functioning at a very strategic level where the purpose of PR is focused on understanding society and the way in which it influences businesses.

5.3. Recommendation

So as to make 251 Communication's PR practice more professional, the agency needs to develop communication/PR strategic plan which embraces a clear vision and mission. For that to happen, the agency needs to work aggressively in partnership with academic institutions. And mostly 251 Communication PLC should sale itself to the market, every organisations should be aware of the importance of outsourcing PR activites. Besides, scholars must be motivated to produce research works and journal articles on private public relations in the Ethiopian context. Issues that will contribute to the development of private public relations should be identified and intellectual discourses be conducted on regular basis.

Higher educational institutions needs to give entrepreneurial courses integrated to Public Relations department. So that, graduates of PR will have a chance to open private PR firms.

The government needs to give a due attention for the development of private PR sectro. Doing on this, the journey of Ethiopia's democracy will flourished.

5.4. Further research

The writer of this research work doesn't believe that this research can satisfy the demands on Ethiopian private PR practices. Therefore, other similar research works will satisfy more question and demands on the study area. Thus, it is recommended that other studies on private PR practices will definitely fill the gap.

There are numerous opportunities for future studies in the practice of private PR in Ethiopia. Based on the limitations of this study a few recommendations can be made for future research:

- A comparison between different countries in terms of the practice of private PR could be interesting;
- Determining the PR curriculum that is taught at the formal and informal institutions in Ethiopia;
- The importance of culture in the practice of PR; Anthropology and sociology will contribute to a better understanding of the Ethiopian context.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

Letter of Solicitation

Dear Ms. / Mr.

My name is Habtamu Teshome. I am a master's student at Addis Ababa University. Currently I am conducting a study about Challenges and Opportunities of Private Public Relation Firms in Ethiopia: The Case of 251 Communication PLC. I am writing to invite you to participate in an interviews for this study. Your experience in public relations would be a great contribution to it. The goals of the study are, first, to explores how private public relations is practiced in Ethiopia; second, to assess the challenges and opportunities of private PR firms; and third, to investigate the pros and cons of hiring/outourcing private PR firms. Your participation in the study would include a 90-minute interview at time convenient for you between August 25 and September 5.

Your participation in this study will be confidential. Your name and the name of your organization will not appear anywhere in this study without your consent. I promise that I will respect your choice not to answer questions and share information that you find confidential. I truly hope that you will be able to participate in this study. I am convinced that your experience and achievements would significantly contribute to the study about public relations in Ethiopia. Please let me know if you are interested to assist me to learn about public relations in Ethiopia. I will be delighted to answer any questions regarding the study and my educational and professional backgrounds.

Thank you in advance! I look forward to hearing from you!

Gratefully,

Habtamu Teshome

APPENDIX 2
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION FACULTY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATION AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Organizational structure of 251 Communication PLC.

- Established in 2010 G.C. under the legal framework of “Ethiopian Commercial Code Proclamation No. 1243/2001”.
- Founded by: Addis Alemayehu (currently CEO of the plc.)
- Number of staffs: 10 (as of September 2021)
- Main role of the plc. is manage their international and local clients’ communications, marketing, research, logistics, media, PR, branding and production needs.
- Currently it advices (give PR consultancy service) for 2 organizations. And it manages a number of events for many organizations.

Services

- Design & printing
- Branding
- PR consultancy
- Advertising
- Promotional items

Mission

Connecting our clients with their consumers, Devoted not just to research alone, our teams dwell at the heart of consumers, and explore the market from within.

Vision

To be a leading PR firm in Ethiopia by 2025.

APPENDIX 3
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION FACULTY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATION AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Interview questions for Ato Addis Alemayehu, CEO of 251 Communication PLC.

1. What is your position and responsibility in your organization?
2. How does the 251 Communications PLC. Conduct PRs activities?
3. What are the major challenges facing 251 Communications PLC. Vis-à-vis its prospected opportunities?
4. What are the public relations strategies employed by your organization?
5. What kinds of public relations tools do you use in your organization? Which tool is more reachable to your target audience?
6. Do you have recommendations that to improve the development of private public relations firms in Ethiopia?

APPENDIX 4
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION FACULTY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATION AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Interview questions for Heads of Governmental or Non-governmental Institutions.

1. What is your position and responsibility in your organization?
2. Do your organization willing to hire external PR firm or outsourcing some parts of PR activities?
3. What are the major criteria's that your organization puts to select in order to hire external PR firm?
4. Do you have recommendations that to improve the development of private public relations firms in Ethiopia?