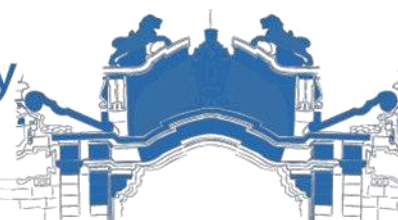




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**College of Humanities, Language Studies, Journalism and
Communications**

School of Journalism & Communications

**The Role of PR in Integrated Marketing Communication: The Case of Ethiopian
Airlines Group**

**A Thesis Submitted to School of Journalism and Communications in Partial Fulfilment of
the Requirement of Degree of Masters of Art in Public Relations and Strategic
Communications**

By Tsegaye Girma

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May, 2023

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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This is to certify that the thesis submitted by Tsegaye Girma Wubeshet under the title “The Role of PR in Integrated Marketing Communication: The Case of Ethiopian Airlines Group” in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Public Relation and Strategic Communication complies with the regulations of the University and notes the accepted standards for originality and quality.

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DECLARATION

I, Tsegaye Girma, hereby declare that the thesis titled “The Role of PR in Integrated Marketing Communication: The Case of Ethiopian Airlines Group” is my own work. I would also like to confirm that all the sources and materials cited in this thesis are properly identified and acknowledged. This study has not been submitted to any university or higher learning institution partially or in full form in previous times. The thesis is submitted to Addis Ababa University in partial fulfilment of the requirement for Master of Arts Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communications.

Abstract

This thesis aimed at examining the role of public relations in the integrated marketing communication of Ethiopian Airlines Group. Specifically, it sought to look into the integrated efforts of the Public Relations office and the Advertising and Sales Promotion department of the airline. The study used qualitative research method to find out how the Public Relations Office and the Advertising and Sales Promotion Department work jointly in marketing the services of the airline. The researcher used document analysis, interview and focus group discussion to gather qualitative data needed for the study. The researcher analyzed contents the airline disseminated online as well as media coverages of the airline's marketing initiatives. Additionally, he conducted interviews with 4 management staff and a couple of focus group discussions involving staff from the Public Relations office and the Advertising and Sales Promotion office. Based on the findings of the analyzed data, the researcher concluded that the Public Relations office plays a significant role in supporting the marketing efforts of the airline. The findings also showed that a lack of common working procedures and standards for managing the joint activities of the Public Relations office and the Advertising and Sales Promotion Office is a challenge which undermines the impact of their promotional activities. Campaign based implementation of the airline's integrated marketing communication arrangement, manpower shortage and lack of recurrent profession-based training have also been identified as additional challenges. The researcher recommended that Ethiopian Airlines should nurture the integration between the Public Relations Department and the Advertising and Sales Promotion Office further to maximize the impacts of its marketing efforts. He also suggested that the airline should adopt common working procedures for the two offices and implement the airline's integrated marketing communication arrangement on a regular basis to unleash the synergistic capacities of the offices. Addressing the gaps in relation to staff turnover and absence of recurrent training are also recommended as corrective measures.

Key words: *Public relations, advertising, sales promotion, integrated marketing communications*

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Table Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Figures.....	viii
ACRONYMS.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background of the study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the problem.....	4
1.3 General objective.....	7
1.4 Specific objectives.....	8
1.5 Research questions.....	8
1.6 Significance of the study.....	8
1.7 Scope of the study.....	9
1.8 Limitations of the study.....	9
1.9. Organization of the study.....	10
CHAPTER TWO.....	12
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	12
2.1. Introduction.....	12
2.2. Origin and definition of public relations.....	12
2.2.1. A glimpse into the history of public relations.....	12
2.2.2. Public relations defined.....	15
2.3. Public relations models.....	16
2.3.1. Press agency model.....	17
2.3.2. Public information model.....	17

2.3.3. The two-way asymmetrical model	17
2.4. The functions of public relations	19
2.5. Public relations in aviation industry	26
2.6. What is marketing?.....	27
2.7. Marketing versus public relations.....	29
2.8. Using public relations for marketing	29
2.8.1. Integrated marketing communications	30
2.8.2. Marketing Public Relations	31
CHAPTER THREE.....	38
Research Design and Methodology.....	38
3.1 Introduction.....	38
3.2 Research paradigm.....	38
3.3 Research method.....	40
3.4 Research design.....	43
3.5. Study site	433
3.6 Population of the study	433
3.7 Participant selection method.....	444
3.8 Data collection instruments	444
3.8.1. In-depth interview	455
3.8.2. Focus Group Discussion	455
3.8.3 Document analysis	466
3.9 Research ethics	466
3.10 Data analysis method.....	477
CHAPTER FOUR.....	488
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....	488

4.1 Introduction	488
4.2 Integrated efforts of PR and Advertising offices.....	488
4.3 The contribution of PR to marketing efforts	588
4.4. Perceptions of staff about PR's role in marketing.....	70
CHAPTER FIVE	777
Conclusions and Recommendations	777
5.1 Conclusions	777
5.2 Recommendations	799
5.3 Further studies	809
References.....	811
Appendices.....	855

List of Figures

Figure 1: Public relations models	19
Figure 2: Issues management strategies.....	23
Figure 3: Relationship of marketing and public relations.....	32
Figure 4: Relationship among epistemology, theoretical & methodology	39

Acronyms

AAU – Addis Ababa University

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

IMC – Integrated Marketing Communications

PR – Public Relations

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

Public Relations is a key function for organizations to maintain good reputation and create mutual understanding with their publics (Tench and Yeomans, 2013, 7). Public relations is also instrumental in tracking the opinions of the organization's key publics and consulting management in adopting policies and strategies to put the organization in a positive light.

However, in today's competitive operating environment in which organizations find themselves, the role of public relations is no longer confined to maintaining the organization's good image. Rather, public relations is playing a part in supporting the marketing efforts of organizations. Companies are leveraging the expertise of their public relations departments in marketing efforts to build their brands and maximize the sale of their products and services (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

Ethiopian Airlines Group, which is the focus of this thesis, also engages its Public Relations department in its marketing communication endeavors. As a vital element in the airline's integrated marketing communication (IMC) arrangement, the Public Relations department actively engages in the design and delivery of marketing communication contents. The department has close working relations with the Advertising and Sales Promotion department which is mainly tasked with managing the airline's marketing campaigns.

This study aims to shed light on the role of Ethiopian Airlines' public relations office in the integrated marketing communication of the airline.

1.1 Background of the study

Public relations is a critical function organizations can leverage to build a positive reputation and maintain smooth relations with their publics. Leading public relations theorists Gruning and Hunt (1984) define public relations as "managing communication between an organization and its publics" (p. 7). This simple definition captures the heart of what public relations refers to

although it is not a comprehensive one. A broader definition is put forth by the Institute of Public Relations:

Public relations is the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics (Tench and Yeomans, 2013, 7).

In simple terms, public relations allows an organization to establish and maintain smooth and mutually beneficial relationships with employees, media, shareholders and others.

Public relations plays different roles which are geared towards nurturing the positive reputation of the organization and maintaining smooth relationship with key publics. According to Broom and Sha (2013), the role of public relations covers a wide range of responsibilities which include tracking and analyzing public opinion towards the organization; advising management on adopting organizational policies and strategies with the public in mind; conducting research aimed at making the organization's communication successful; lobbying for policy changes in favour of the organization; and managing the resources needed for the public relations work.

Henslowe (1999) points out that the public relations department should also strive to generate public interest in the organization and its work, and create understanding and acceptance among the public with regards to situations which may tarnish the organization's image.

While public relations is a distinct function with the responsibilities discussed above, it can also support the marketing communication of organizations. The American Marketing Association defines marketing as:

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 (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

The ultimate aim of marketing is building a lasting relationship with customers and suppliers, with a view to pave the way for the organization's continued profitability (Boone & Kurtz,

2012). Companies use marketing communication to inform and convince their customers and prospects with regards to their products and services. Kotler and Keller (2012) highlight that organizations engage in marketing communication to promote their brands, products and services so as to drive sales and ensure sustainable profitability. In organizations which follow Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), such as Ethiopian Airlines Group, departments such as Public Relations and Marketing work in an integrated manner when it comes to planning and implementing the organization's marketing communication efforts. The role of public relations in the marketing efforts of organizations is more evident in such organizational contexts. This study focuses on identifying the support public relations provides for the marketing efforts of Ethiopian Airlines Group.

Ethiopian Airlines is the largest carrier in Africa which has been spearheading the growth of aviation in the continent. As of December 2022, Ethiopian Airlines served 131 cities around the globe and 22 destinations in Ethiopia, operating a fleet of 144 modern aircraft (Ethiopian Airlines Factsheet, December 2022). Established in 1945, the airline has been growing steadily over the decades and has expanded its business significantly. Today, the airline has grown into an aviation group encompassing seven business units, namely, Ethiopian International Services; Ethiopian Cargo & Logistics Services; Ethiopian MRO Services; Ethiopian Aviation Academy; Ethiopian ADD Hub Ground Services, Ethiopian Airports Services and Ethiopian Express Services (Ethiopian Airlines Factsheet, December 2022). According to Oqubay and Tesfachew (2019), the major factors for the airline's uninterrupted growth are management discipline, strategic approach, and relentless efforts for building technological capability.

Ethiopian Airlines has a dedicated public relations department, known as Public Relations and Corporate Communication, for managing the company's communication with its external publics. As per the organizational structure, the Public Relations and Corporate Communication Department has 15 staff members though the head count fluctuates due to staff turnover. The department is responsible for nurturing a favorable reputation for the airline and ensuring smooth relationship with the organization's publics. The positive brand of Ethiopian Airlines on the world stage is largely attributed to the efforts of the Public Relations and Corporate Communication Office which has been running successful publicity initiatives over the decades.

Per the organizational structure, the Public Relations and Corporate Communication Office is headed by a Manager who reports to the Director of the airline's Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) directorate. The office is structured into three sub-sections which handle the different areas of activities of the department: Content Development, Social Media Management, and Media Relations and Event Management. The department has very close horizontal relationship with the Advertising and Sales Promotion department which handles the airline's marketing communication campaigns, including commercials disseminated on mainstream media as well as promotional contents posted on the airline's websites and social media accounts.

Therefore, this study seeks to look into the role of the Public Relations and Corporate Communication Department in the marketing communication efforts of Ethiopian Airlines Group, and to assess the inter-departmental relationship between the Public Relations office and the Advertising and Sales Promotion office which is tasked with the responsibility of managing the airline's marketing campaigns.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Although Public Relations is mainly concerned with nurturing mutual understanding and smooth relations with the key publics of an organization, its role also extends to the realm of marketing communication. Kotler and Keller (2012) highlight that Public Relations has a critical role to play in generating publicity for the organization's products and services. This view indicates the leverage public relations can offer for the success of the marketing efforts of organizations.

As mentioned above, as Ethiopian Airlines carries out its marketing communications through an integrated approach which involves the Public Relations and the Advertising and Sales Promotion departments. However, the researcher, who is a member of the airline's PR team, has observed gaps in the integration of the efforts of the concerned departments across all phases of the communication process, starting right from the planning stage. Some irregularities and inconsistencies are observed in the joint efforts of the offices under the umbrella of the Integrated Marketing Communication directorate of the airline. The researcher believes that the matter should be investigated through a scientific study which uncovers the challenges the

airlines is facing in applying the integrated approach, and recommends solutions to address the bottlenecks.

The other reason for the researcher to conduct this study is the scanty body of prior studies on the subject. As it stands, there is lack of research focusing on the marketing communication of Ethiopian Airlines, the arrangements through which the airline's marketing communication is planned and executed, and the challenges in applying IMC as *modus operandi* in the airline's context.

Different studies have previously explored the role public relations plays in the marketing endeavors of companies. Most of these studies treated the subject through the lens of integrated marketing communication (IMC) or marketing public relations (MPR) concepts. Among the freely available studies published on international research websites, Naumovska and Blazeska (2016) examined PR based model of integrated marketing communications among companies in Macedonia. The study revealed that representatives of the surveyed companies emphasized the use of public relations in their integrated marketing communication mix unlike the traditional IMC practice which focused on advertising. According to the findings, the companies shifted their focus from advertising to public relations due to the high cost and decreasing effectiveness of the latter.

In their study titled 'The Accelerative and Integrative Use of Marketing Public Relations in Cyprus', Papisolomou, Kitchen and Panopoulos (2013) showed that the practice of marketing public relations (MPR) has been gaining momentum among businesses in Cyprus. The findings attributed the growing preference of MPR to its efficiency and effectiveness in meeting the objectives of marketing programs.

Among the locally published studies, Adugnaw (2010) looked into the marketing communication strategies of micro and small enterprises in Bahir Dar and whether the strategies were efficient in attracting customers. The study concluded that micro and small enterprises in Bahir Dar fell short of applying suitable marketing communication strategies which could move their business forward. It also revealed that the enterprises were inefficient in employing media publicity, exhibition and word-of-mouth as marketing communication instruments.

Fekadu (2011) assessed the practices and challenges of using public relations in promoting tourist attractions in the Amhara National Regional State. His study showed that the Culture and Tourism Bureau of the regional state uses a myriad of communication channels including local and international television stations, radios, print media as well as digital platforms such as YouTube to promote tourist destinations in the Amhara region. The researcher identified lack of awareness and resources as the major challenges the office faced in promoting the tourist attractions in the regional state.

As far as recent local studies focusing on this thematic area is concerned, a research by Lessan (2019) looked into the practice of marketing public relations (MPR) practices at DH Geda Trade and Industry. The findings of the study revealed that marketing public relations was not practiced at DH Geda Trade and Industry at the time the research was conducted. They also showed that the company did not use digital media for marketing its products among its current and potential customers.

Likewise, Metages (2020) explored the practice of integrated marketing communications in one of the leading state-owned enterprises in Ethiopia: Ethio Telecom. The research indicated that digital marketing, sales promotions and sponsorship are the main marketing communication tools Ethio Telecom uses to promote its offerings. According to the findings, the company did not make the most out of public relations, trade shows and packaging as marketing instruments. Moreover, the finding indicated that the practice of integrated marketing communications at Ethio Telecom was moving slowly when the study was conducted.

The other locally published study in the area of integrated marketing communications is conducted by Misganaw (2021). The researcher examined the status of integrated marketing communications at Derba MIDROC Cement PLC and MOHA Soft Drinks Industry S.C. The study showed that integrated marketing communications is fully implemented at the two companies of MIDROC Investment Group. The findings highlighted that IMC tools such as advertising and sales promotions are used frequently at these companies while public relations is among the less frequently used tools of IMC.

As mentioned above, the researcher of the current study could not find enough papers conducted on the role of public relations in marketing within the context of Ethiopian Airlines Group,

which is the focus of this study. In this regard, Ayele (2021) conducted an MA thesis which explored the status of the practice of marketing public relations (MPR) in Ethiopian Airlines Group. The study uncovered that marketing public relation is practiced in the airline in the form of integrated marketing communications. It also showed the perception of practitioners that PR has played a vital role in their marketing efforts since the introduction of IMC as the airline's marketing approach.

Although Ayele's study looked into the practice of marketing public relations in Ethiopian Airlines, it did not cover the full range of the support the Public Relations office offers to the airline's Advertising and Sales Promotion office and business units under the aviation group. In addition, the study did not deal with the symbiotic relationship between the two offices in the design and delivery of the airline's marketing communication. More importantly, the research did not capture PR's support to the Advertising and Sales Promotion office in its entirety, in the areas of message drafting, editing, narrating, and the like.

Minwuyelet Denekew (2021) also assessed how IMC is practiced at Ethiopian Airlines and what challenges are impeding its successful utilization. The study revealed the favorable perceptions employees have towards IMC and its benefits. It also showed the varying degree of application of individual IMC elements by the airline, highlighting that digital marketing is the most widely used tool for marketing communication considering the ever growing number of social media users.

The current study aims to examine the integration between the Public Relations office and the Advertising and Sales Promotion office in handling the marketing communication of Ethiopian Airlines. In addition to examining the efforts of the PR office in promoting the airline's services through PR contents, the study will also look into the joint efforts of the PR office and the Advertising and Sales Promotion office. At this juncture, it is worth mentioning that there are calls from the academic circle for more studies focusing on IMC (Kitchen, 2017 as cited in Samson and Angelopulo, 2021).

1.3 General objective

The general objective of the study is to examine the role of public relations in the integrated marketing communication of Ethiopian Airlines Group.

1.4 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the research are:

- To explain the integration between Public Relations and Advertising & Sales Promotion departments of Ethiopian Airlines Group in marketing endeavors
- To identify the areas where Public Relations provides support for the marketing efforts of Ethiopian Airlines Group
- To assess the perceptions of Public Relations and Marketing practitioners regarding the support the Public Relations office of Ethiopian Airlines Group provides in marketing the airline's services
- To identify bottlenecks in areas where the Public Relations and the Advertising & Sales Promotion departments work jointly

1.5 Research questions

- How do the Public Relations and Advertising & Sales Promotion departments of Ethiopian Airlines Group work in integration in the airline's marketing efforts?
- What support does the Public Relations office provide for the airline's marketing efforts?
- What are the perceptions of Public Relations and Marketing practitioners of Ethiopian Airlines Group regarding the support PR offers in marketing the airline's services?
- What bottlenecks are the Public Relations and the Advertising & Sales Promotion departments facing in their joint efforts?

1.6 Significance of the study

The researcher believes that the current study will have multiple merits for researchers, practitioners and organizations at large. The study will add to the existing body of literature and studies in the area of marketing communication, and specifically in the realm of integrated marketing communication (IMC) and marketing public relations (MPR) in the context of the airline industry. It can also serve as a trigger for other researchers who are interested in exploring the subject in greater depth and breadth.

The study is also believed to improve the dynamics in the joint efforts of the PR and the Advertising & Sales Promotion offices of Ethiopian Airlines through the implementation of the recommendations the study proposes.

1.7 Scope of the study

This study focuses on Ethiopian Airlines Group which has its headquarters in its home base, Addis Ababa. The researcher's work will be confined to the airline's head office in Addis Ababa. Although the Public Relations and Corporate Communications Department of Ethiopian Airlines is the main focus of the study, the researcher collected data from employees working in the Public Relations and the Advertising & Sales Promotion offices to find out their perceptions about the joint efforts of the two offices and the role of the public relations office in the integrated marketing communication of the airline. In terms of time frame, the research covers the year 2014 (Ethiopian Calendar).

1.8 Limitations of the study

The limitations of this thesis include the lack of previous studies focusing on the area of the current study. While the researcher found a few studies exploring the concepts of integrated marketing communication (IMC) and marketing public relations (MPR) in the local context, he could not find enough studies which examine these concepts in relation to Ethiopian Airlines Group or the local aviation sector. Moreover, the researcher did not include the voice of the target audiences of Ethiopian Airlines' marketing communication due to manageability issues. Other researchers can use this thesis as a starting point and conduct more extensive studies which incorporate the views of the airline's target audiences in addition to those of the airline's practitioners and managers.

1.9. Organization of the study

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the research and comprises key parts of the study including the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, the scope of the study and its limitations. Chapter two treats the related literature including books and previous studies which are relevant to the current study. The third chapter deals with the research design which is qualitative in nature, in addition to the methods of data collection and analysis. Chapter four focuses on the findings of the research while chapter five, which is the final one, presents the conclusions and recommendations of study.

Operational definitions

Integrated Marketing Communications: is a planning process which aims at ensuring the dissemination of consistent messages from an organization to its target audiences through an integrated use of different channels.

Marketing: is the organizational function and processes for creating, communicating, and delivering something of benefit to customers and organizational stakeholders.

Marketing Public Relations: refers to all the public relations activities an organization carries out to support its marketing objectives.

Public Relations: is an organizational function which is concerned with maintaining mutual understanding between the organization and its publics.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

This section will begin with a discussion of the origin and definitions of public relations. It will also deal with different models and functions of public relations. The concept of marketing, which is part of the focus of this study, will also be discussed in this chapter along with the areas where marketing and public relations share overlapping functions. The rest of the chapter discusses topics such as the use of public relations in the aviation industry, the theoretical framework of the research and a review of previous studies which are related to the title of this thesis.

2.2. Origin and definition of public relations

2.2.1. A glimpse into the history of public relations

Communicating with the general public is an old practice. Politicians in China used such communication even back in 770 B.C. to influence public opinion in their favor. An early form of public relations was also practiced in the political sphere in ancient India, where politicians used communication to disseminate messages that are aligned with the interests of the government. (Boom and Sha, 2013)

Philosophers in ancient Greece and Rome also made reference to the importance of the opinion and will of the public. “Vox populi, vox Dei”, which literally means “the voice of the people is the voice of God” was a popular line in Rome highlighting the importance of public opinion and the need to handle it properly through communication. Italian philosopher and theorist Niccolò Machiavelli also wrote, “Not without reason is the voice of the people compared to the voice of God.” He suggested that the people must be either “caressed or annihilated” (Boom and Sha, 2013, add page here).

Although an early form of public relations was practiced for centuries, public relations in its modern sense has been practiced only for a little over 100 years. The first known corporate public relations department was set up in 1889 by American entrepreneur and engineer George

Westinghouse. Westinghouse established a public relations department to promote his electric corporation which had its headquarters in Pennsylvania, United States (Boom and Sha, 2013, 105). Similarly, in the early 1900s businesses in the US turned to public relations to counter growing public pressure for government regulation of the businesses and the scrutiny of journalists who were probing the monopolistic tendencies of the businesses. (Tench and Yeomans, 2009, p. 10)

The businesses used public relations to convey their narratives and defend their interests. The advent and proliferation of mass media, especially newspapers which were popular at the time, laid the groundwork for the emergence of media relations as a key public relations tool for corporations. The increased demand for public relations, particularly among private companies including railroad and telecom companies, also opened the door for the proliferation of consultancy firms providing media relations and related public relations services. (Tench and Yeomans, 2009, p. 10) Here, it is clear that the companies were primarily interested in managing potential crisis through the use of mass media to shape public opinion rather than conducting regular public relations activities. (Grunig and Hunt 1984)

Public relations saw one of its earliest milestones in 1914. Ivy Ledbetter Lee, who has come to be known as “the father of public relations”, laid the ground work for the profession when he helped a coal company to successfully handle a crisis involving the massacre of miners. Lee advised his employer to be open and honest in his communication, and back his words with action. His advice was, *“Tell the truth, because sooner or later the public will find it out anyway. And if the public doesn’t like what you are doing, change your policies and bring them into line with what the people want.”* (Seitel, 2017, p. 54) Lee believed that businesses should engage in open communication to avoid skepticism and enable people to understand and accept their practices. He stressed the need for open and honest communication for businesses to earn legitimacy among the public. (Tench and Yeomans, 2009, p. 10) This trailblazer communicator is also credited for issuing the first press release to inform journalists, and also for upholding the principles of accuracy in communication which he included in his Declaration of Principles in 1906. (Ewen 1996; Cutlip et al. 2006).

During the World War II, public relations was also used extensively in the military circle to promote the interests of the warring sides. According to Tench and Yeomans (2009), the kind of public relations practiced during this time had the hallmarks of advertising and aimed at winning wide public support. This persuasive form of public relations seems to have laid the ground work for its application in today's marketing and communications strategies of organizations. (p. 11)

The advent and proliferation of broadcast media and its potentials for influencing the opinions of the masses also contributed for the growth of public relations. Over the decades, public relations became an increasingly established profession with the emergence of professional associations and the proliferation of consultancy firms. Academic discourse on the discipline also grew with the launch of different books and journals focusing on the field, such as the first public relations journal published in 1944 by Rex Harlow who was also key in the formation of the Public Relations Society of America in 1947. (Tench and Yeomans, 2009, p. 11) Thanks to the proliferation of public relations professionals during World War II, there were many practitioners in the peace period that came after the war.

Public relations has grown significantly in the 20th century in terms of ethics, contribution, responsibility and fine-tuning its essence (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). Today, public relations has become a crucial function in both business enterprises and not-for-profit organizations. It has also become part of what has come to be known as the dominant coalition (executive management) of organizations where it holds decision making power on strategic corporate matters (Boom and Sha, 2013).

Several factors have contributed to the growth of public relations in recent decades. The factors include the emergence of huge institutions which paved the way for the formation public relations departments that match the size of the organizations; the proliferation of mass media including broadcast, print and digital media and the increased interest of organizations to leverage publicity opportunities; major social changes and activism for different forms of rights which led to companies strengthening their public relations departments to counter growing activism; globalization and the increasing influence of public opinion; and increased access to the internet and the growth of social media sites, making public relations critical to protect and promote the reputation of organizations on the digital space as well (Seitel, 2017).

2.2.2. Public relations defined

Public relations is defined differently by different authors; hence, there is no universally accepted single definition of the concept. The earliest attempt to come up with a broad definition that combines different definitions was put forth by Harlow in 1976. After going through different published materials on public relations and interviewing more than 80 public relations professionals, Rex F. Harlow identified 472 definitions of public relations. Then, he blended the different elements of the definitions and came up with the following:

Public relations is the distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.
(Harlow, as cited in Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p. 7)

This definition is very useful in terms of clarifying the concept of public relations as a management function and the different roles it plays in maintaining smooth dialogue between an organization and its publics. Here, it is worth noting that the word ‘publics’ refers to groups or the subcategories of an organization’s stakeholders with whom the enterprise communicates. (Austin and Pinkleton, 2006)

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), which is one of the leading professional associations in the domain of public relations, defines the term as a strategic communication process between an organization and its key constituencies with a view to establish and nurture relations that benefit both sides. (Boom and Sha, 2013, p. 28) In addition to recognizing public relations as a management endeavor, this definition also stresses that feeding into the development of sustainable and thriving relationship between the organization and its key stakeholders is the alpha and omega of the profession.

The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) on its part defines public relations as a profession geared towards ensuring mutual understanding between an organization and its publics on issues of common interest. The definition also highlights the role of public relations in nurturing an organization's brand and influencing the opinion and behaviour of its publics in favor of the organization. (Institute of Public Relations 2004, as cited in Tench and Yeomans, 2009, p. 7) This point of view is also reflected in the definition of public relations proposed by White and Mazur (1996) who describe it as vehicle for influencing public opinion albeit through the use of dialogue rather than monologue (as cited in Tench and Yeomans, 2009).

Tench and Yeomans (2009) note that practitioners tend to define public relations in a way that shows the practical reality of how they carry out their daily activities. Their definition equates public relations with organizational (corporate) communication and stresses the persuasive nature of the job to influence the opinions of publics. It also states that the primary aim of public relations is manipulating the opinions of publics so as to advance the interests of the organization. This view is also similar to the perception many people have regarding public relations as a tool to influence public opinion (Botan and Hazelton, 1989 as cited in Tench and Yeomans, 2009).

In general, although practitioner definitions of public relations emphasize its persuasive side, academic definitions highlight that PR is all about managing the communication between an organization and its publics with a view to establish and nurture mutual understanding for the benefit of both sides.

2.3. Public relations models

Public relations models were initially put forth by leading public relations theoreticians Gruning and Hunt back in the 1980s. The models indicate the kind of philosophy organizations follow in communicating with their publics. The models also determine the nature of the communication in terms of two dimensions, namely the direction of communication (unidirectional or bidirectional), and the amount of truth the organizations reveals in the communication. (Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007) Four different models of communication emerge from the different combinations of the dimensions discussed earlier. Each model is discussed as follows.

2.3.1. Press agency model

This model, which is also known as publicity model, is aimed at putting the organization in positive light. In this model, the organization is not concerned about the accuracy of the information it disseminates as it targets publicity as its primary goal (Doorley and Garcia, 2007). It is a unidirectional (one way communication) where the organization sends the message to its audiences. In the press agency model, no dialogue takes place between the organization and its publics; rather, the organization sends its message with a view to present its point of view and influence the opinions of the audience (Tench and Yeomans, 2009). Press agency is similar to propaganda as it flows in only one direction and regards accuracy as secondary. This model may benefit the organization in the short term, but it could have detrimental consequences in the long term. It is this model of communication which leads to negative connotations of public relations among members of the public (Doorley and Garcia, 2007).

2.3.2. Public information model

This model is also a form of communication flowing in one direction, but with a view to provide the truth to the publics. (Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007) In this model, the organization is not primarily concerned about its self-interest. Unlike the press agency model, the main purpose of the public information model is to provide information to the audiences of the organization rather than convincing them. (Tench and Yeomans, 2009) Although both press agency and public information models are unidirectional, the latter differs in that it presents factual information to the publics. Delivering accurate information is key in the public information model. While this model falls short of being a dialogue with the organization's publics, the fact that it provides the truth makes it a better model than the press agency model.

2.3.3. The two-way asymmetrical model

As the name suggests, there is two-way flow of information in this model of communication. According to Tench and Yeomans (2009), the two-way asymmetric model of communication is concerned with persuading the publics of the organization by shaping the way they perceive situations. In this model, the organization seeks to influence the audience's way of thinking and creating agreement on its own terms by first identifying the perspectives of the audience through research (Doorley and Garcia, 2007). The bi-directional communication allows the organization

to adjust its messages based on the feedbacks of its publics so as to become more persuasive rather than change its position. (Tench and Yeomans, 2009) Apparently, due to the inherent asymmetry, this communication model is skewed in favor of the organization as it does not invite much feedback from the public (Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007).

2.3.4. Two-way symmetrical model

This model allows a company to engage in a two-way symmetrical communication with its publics. In this model, open and candid communication takes place between the organization and its publics. The dialogue is carried out symmetrically between the two sides, allowing the free flow of information so as to arrive at a common ground on issues of mutual interest (Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007). In this model, public relations practitioners carry out research to find out the views held by both parties and use the insight to find a way to fulfil the interests of all parties.

In this model, persuasion can also be pursued if the publics are also given the chance to influence and alter the perception of the organization. The primary aim of the two way symmetrical model is creating mutual understanding and compromise between the two sides through open, balanced and truthful communication. (Tench and Yeomans, 2009) The findings of a ten-year study conducted by leading public relations theoreticians including Grunig revealed that the two-way symmetric model is key for excellent public relations.

The approach allows public relations professionals to provide consultancy to the decision makers in the organization thereby influencing the way the organization deals with its publics. It also helps in minimizing potential crises as a result of the continuous environmental scanning the public relations professionals conduct. Ultimately, this model enables the public relations function to contribute for the success of the organization by enhancing the way it handles its publics (Tench and Yeomans, 2009).

Entirely true	Public information	Two-way symmetrical communication
Complete truth not essential	Press agency communication (propaganda)	Two-way asymmetrical communication
	One-way communication	Two-way communication

Figure 1. Public relations models by Van Riel and Fombrun

In general, two-way communication focuses on bi-directional flow of information to achieve mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. Although two-way communication is desirable for ensuring effective communication and the fulfilment of the interests of all parties involved, the one-way approach seems to be practiced dominantly in today's organizational communications (Boom and Sha, 2013).

2.4. The functions of public relations

Usually, organizations deal with different publics or stakeholder groups which have various interests. Given the diversity of an organization's publics, the functions of public relations are also multiple. According to Riel and Fombrun (2007), the stakeholders or publics of organizations include employees, consumers, investors, regulators and politicians, among others. It is the responsibility of the public relations department and practitioners of an organization to communicate with all the publics of the organization so as to create mutual understanding. Some of the key functions of public relations are discussed as follows.

2.4.1. Internal communication

Employees are one of the key publics of any organization and critical for its success. Organizations should first communicate with their employees effectively before they engage their external publics. According to Boom and Sha (2013), chief executives of organizations should communicate with employees as the “number one public” and “the organization’s most important asset” (p. 30). Many organizations have dedicated employee relations department to run the day-to-day communication of the organization with its staff. In some cases, the human resource department of the organization is involved in managing internal communication. (Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007) Specialist sections called “employee relations,” or “internal relations” can also be set up to manage internal communication in organizations.

Internal communication is a key vehicle for organizations to keep in touch with their staff and provide HR related information regarding employee benefits, wages, performance evaluation and others. Besides informing and motivating employees, internal communication can also be used to shape and nurture organizational culture. It also helps to establish smooth relationship between employees and the management of the organization (Boom and Sha, 2013). Organizations can use internal communication to better inform and motivate their employees and use them as their goodwill ambassadors (Seitel, 2017).

2.4.2. Publicity

One of the functions of public relations is generating publicity (media coverage) for their organization, products or services. According to Boom and Sha (2013), publicity is information which is offered to media outlets by organizations so as to get news coverage. Unlike advertisements, publicity is unpaid media engagement, and hence coverage is not guaranteed. The editors of the media outlet determine the newsworthiness of the information and its relevance to the audiences of the media. Media outlets get much of the news they disseminate from the public relations departments of organizations. Editors decide how and when the information is disseminated if it ever gets covered by the media (Boom and Sha, 2013). Public relations practitioners need to have a good sense of newsworthiness, audience interest, story angle and writing to maximize the chances of media coverage for their stories.

Authors such as Kotler regard publicity as ‘marketing-oriented public relations’ which is essentially promotional in nature:

[Publicity] is non-personal stimulation of demand for a product, service or business unit by planting commercially significant news about it in a published medium or obtaining favorable presentation of it upon radio, television or stage that is not paid for by the sponsor. (Kotler, 1988, as quoted in van Riel and Fombrun, 2007)

In addition to news about products and services, major events also attract media coverage for organizations. These include press briefings, inaugurations, signing of agreements, telethons, award ceremonies and other newsworthy events which target media coverage. Well planned publicity events offer good opportunity for media outlets to source photos as well as footage and sound bites on major happenings and corporate officials. (Boom & Sha, 2013).

2.4.3. Government relations

Government is one of the key stakeholders of organizations. Organizations liaise with government organs such as regulatory institutions, legislature, tax authorities and others. Private companies in particular have special interest in their relationship with government organs given their oversight authority over private businesses. This makes government relations one of the key functions of the public relations departments of organizations. Harris and Moss (2001) define government relations as “*the management of the often complex external relations between the organization and an array of governmental stakeholder groups.*” The main aim of government relations is maintaining smooth relationship with government organs to ensure the interests of the organization (Boom and Sha, 2013).

Government relations is also known as “public affairs” due to the government’s regulatory role to protect the public interest (Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007). As government relations or public affairs specialist, the role of the public relations officer is managing government related issues which present either an opportunity or a threat to the organization (Leyer, 1986, as cited in Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007). Effective government relations enables companies to have a smooth relationship with government agencies which oversee the activities of the organization.

2.4.4. Lobbying

Lobbying is yet another function of public relations which seeks to influence legislation in favor of the organization. According to Booma and Sha (2013), lobbying is *“the practice of trying to persuade legislators to propose, pass, or defeat legislation or to change existing laws”* (p. 38). Lobbying is usually practiced as an advocacy done in public on policies and legislative issues which have potential effects on the organization concerned. Although lobbying is abused in some cases, largely it remains a legitimate and lawful means through which organizations, associations and unions influence government regulations. (Boom and Sha, 2013)

Although companies hire public relations practitioners to lobby for a favorable government policy, independent lobbyists also handle lobbying assignments on behalf of organizations or different interest groups. According to Seitel (2017), lobbyists engage in gathering facts and figures from government sources, explain and predict government decisions and actions, advance the agendas of their organization or those of their clients, maximize publicity of the organization and its positions, and facilitate company sales to government purchasers leveraging their existing relations with government offices. Successful lobbying requires that the public relations practitioner has a good grasp of the legislative process, the workings of government offices as well as good relations with individual legislators and officials (Boom and Sha, 2013).

2.4.5. Issues management

As the primary personnel tasked with ensuring smooth relationship between an organization and its publics, public relations practitioners are also expected to respond to strategic issues which affect the organization. Public relations deals with issues to ensure that they are resolved smoothly before they deteriorate and turn into crises which could be more damaging to the organization. According to Dutton and Ottensmeyer (1987, as cited in Riel and Fombrun, 2007), issues management refers to the set of procedures and actions of an organization, which are targeted at detecting, evaluating and responding to the strategic issues of the organization.

Boom and Sha (2013) argue that issues management becomes tactical effort rather than strategic endeavor if it is used in the form of persuasive communication. However, if it is used to amend

the organization’s policies in such a way to meet the mutual goals of the organization and its publics towards creating a win-win situation for both sides, then issues management is regarded as a strategic endeavor. In managing issues, public relations professionals are supposed to carry out three activities, namely, spotting issues timely before they pose worse danger to the organization; mobilizing personnel and resources to analyze the issue at hand and prepare to resolve it effectively; and executing the organization’s issues management strategy to handle the issues properly (Riel and Fombrun, 2007).

Organizations put in place early warning systems as part of their efforts to manage issues before they turn into something worse. These systems enable the organizations to monitor issues as they emerge and resolve them at their early stage. Detecting issues early on allows enough time for the organization to address the issues in good time before they turn into crises. According to Van Riel and Fombrun (2007), organizations can address issues “through dialogue, through advocacy, through silence, or through crisis communication” depending on the level of traction the issue gains among the public and the level of the urgency it demands. (p. 203).

		Public activism	
		Low	High
Allowed response time	Low	Advocacy capability	Dialogue capability
	High	Corporate silence capability	Crisis communication capability

Figure 2. Four issues management strategies by Van Riel and Fombrun (2007)

2.4.6. Crisis management

Failing to manage potentially damaging issues in time results in the worsening of the situation into a crisis. According to Seitel (2017), crisis is “unplanned visibility” that can happen to any organization at any time. It calls on the implementation of the organization’s crisis response plan

including the crisis communication strategy. Through crisis communication, organizations respond to unfortunate circumstances strategically, and address the concerns and issues of stakeholders affected by the situation (Boom and Sha, 2013).

Crisis communication has achieved higher significance in today's world due to growing awareness about the value of organizational reputation, increased activism of publics, prevalence of internet based communication platforms such as social media, and legal consequences of failure to handle crises properly (Boom and Sha, 2013). This has also increased the desirability of competent public relations practitioners who are well versed in crisis communication.

According to Coombs and Holladay (2010), organizations should handle crises strategically and considering stakeholders' perception as to who takes the responsibility for triggering the crisis. The authors argue that the organization's crisis communication strategy should be aligned with the level of crisis responsibility of an organization, and should follow the core crisis phases, namely, pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis stages. In the pre-crisis phase, organizations monitor their environment to spot and prevent crisis from happening in the first place. In the crisis stage, organizations face the challenge and take measures to limit the damage and facilitate recovery while in the post-crisis stage they try to figure out how the crisis occurred and what lessons could be learned to avoid similar incidents (Boom and Sha, 2013).

2.4.7. Media relations

Media relations is the process of establishing long-lasting relationship with media outlets and journalist through the use of press releases, press conferences, exclusive interviews, newsworthy events and others (Tench and Yeomans, 2009). Public relations practitioners establish and nurture relationship with media in order to get publicity for their organization, products, services or initiatives. Hence, public relations practitioners engage in pitching, i.e., an attempt to win the hearts and minds of editors and journalists to place the organization's story in the news package of media outlets (Seitel, 2017, p. 216).

Public relations practitioners attach high significance to news coverage of their organization and products because editorial endorsement of media outlets is considered more persuasive than paid advertisements. Stories which get news coverage in print, broadcast or digital media are regarded

by audiences as impartial and objective (Tench and Yeomans, 2009, p. 412). On the contrary, company messages presented in the media as paid advertisements tend not to be regarded as credible as those messages which are packaged as news stories. While advertisements are tailored based on the preference of the organization which pays for it, news stories are written or produced by a third party (the journalist or media house), and hence enjoy better credibility compared to the advertisement.

In this regard, one of the major roles of public relations practitioners is to try to create favorable relationship with journalists and editors so as to influence news coverage and ensure that the organization's story appears on air, in print or online as news (Tench and Yeomans, 2009). The relationship organizations establish with media organizations should not be manipulative, since such efforts may lead to the rejection of the organization's stories. Instead, the media relations policy of an organization should be based on honesty and geared towards earning news coverage by virtue of the newsworthiness of the event or initiative (Seitel, 2017, p. 215). Given the importance of how an organization is portrayed in the news media, most organizations conduct regular media monitoring to ensure that their reputation is favorably highlighted in the press (Oliver, 2008).

2.4.8. Investor Relations

Investor relations is the process of communicating with shareholders and other stakeholders in the financial circle whereby a business organization seeks to maintain win-win relationships with those stakeholders (Tench and Yeomans, 2009). Business organizations use different communication channels including newsletters, briefings, events and annual reports to keep shareholders informed about the performance of the organization and maximize its value in the market. According to Boom and Sha (2013), investor relations is a key tool of publicly held corporations to increase the corporation's value in the stock market.

Investor relations also helps a corporation to boost the confidence of shareholders and highlight the corporation's performance and success among individual and institutional investors who could be interested in purchasing stocks of the corporation. The investor relations role of public relations practitioners also entails monitoring market trends and financial and investment

contents published online and on mainstream media, providing expert advice to the corporation's management, and handling requests for financial information (Boom and Sha, 2013).

2.4.9. Event management

Managing events is also one of the key functions of public relations practitioners. Public relations professionals play the leading role in planning, organizing and managing corporate events such as press briefings, annual conferences, exhibitions, trade fairs and inaugurations (Tench and Yeomans, 2009). In addition to offering publicity opportunities, events also serve as platforms for the organization to meet and engage with consumers and other publics face to face. Major corporate events attract media and offer publicity opportunities to organizations. The events can be a one-off occasion or something that is held periodically (Pickton and Borderic, 2005).

Although the list of public relations functions discussed above is not exhaustive, they highlight some of the key functions (roles) of public relations. As this thesis aims to assess how public relations is used in Ethiopian Airlines to support marketing efforts, it is appropriate to briefly discuss public relations in the context of the aviation sector.

2.5. Public relations in aviation industry

As one of the major actors in the aviation industry, airlines carry out continuous publicity and marketing efforts to attract customers and perform better than their competitors. Dilenschneider (2010) points out that airlines engage in promoting destinations, new routes, holiday packages and tourist attractions to grow their business by maximizing the number of their passengers and the cargo tonnage they transport from one place to another.

Before the advent of digital media, public relations practitioners in the wider travel industry targeted journalists, especially those who focus on tour and travel, to provide coverage on newspapers, travel magazines as well as radio and television programs. With the proliferation of internet-based media such as blogs and social media, and the active roles bloggers and independent journalists are playing through the World Wide Web, online coverage is becoming increasingly important for airlines to promote their services (Dilenschneider, 2010).

In an effort to get publicity for their products and services, it is common for public relations practitioners of airlines to organize press familiarization tours whereby journalists visit different destinations and provide media coverage about the places they visited. In the event of plane crashes, public relations staff of airlines are usually at the forefront of executing the crisis communication plan of the airline, and engaging key stakeholders through the use of wide ranging communication tools (Deuschl, 2006).

The public relations staff at the head offices of airlines carry out various functions in the absence of crises as well. The regular activities of the public relations practitioners of airlines include participating in promotional campaigns, arranging different events including press tours, and supporting other departments of the airline. In some airlines, the public relations department is also responsible for managing internal communications (Deuschl, 2006).

Airlines consider their employees as one of their key audience groups because they serve as the interface between the airline and passengers, and hence they need to be informed well to ensure that they deliver the airline's message properly. Moreover, given that employees of most airlines are members of labor unions, they need to be kept up-to-date on major developments at the airline so that the company can earn their support for its initiatives or reforms (Deuschl, 2006). In the context of Ethiopian Airlines, the Human Resources department is responsible for internal communication instead of the public relations department.

Having dealt with some of the key public relations concepts this study focuses on, it is appropriate to briefly discuss key marketing concepts which are relevant to this study. Hence, the following sections will try to define and explain what marketing is and how it is used in integration with public relations to optimize the marketing efforts of business organizations.

2.6. What is marketing?

The concept of marketing goes beyond selling goods and services and focuses on the achievement of an organization's business objectives by offering better value to customers than its rivals. According to Theodore Levitt (as cited in Kotler and Keller, 2012):

Selling focuses on the needs of the seller; marketing on the needs of the buyer. Selling is preoccupied with the seller's need to convert his product into cash; marketing with the idea of satisfying the needs of the customer by means of the product and the whole cluster of things associated with creating, delivering, and finally consuming it. (p. 40)

Similarly, Boone and Kurtz (2012) state that marketing is the combination of organizational functions and systems which are geared towards “creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers” in a manner that establishes and nurtures long-lasting relations which are in the best interests of both the organization and its publics (p. 7). In light of this, identifying an organization’s customers and their needs is key to design the products and services of the organization in such a way that satisfies the needs of consumers and win their loyalty which is critical for the sustainable success and profitability of the organization.

To satisfy the expectations and preferences of consumers, organizations have to design their marketing mix, i.e., product, price, promotion and distribution, in a competitive manner. Well thought-out marketing mix enables the organization to attract and retain customers in a sustainable manner. Boone and Kurtz (2012) argue that the concept of marketing is not confined to profit making enterprises only. The authors point out that not-for-profit organizations such as the Red Cross and government agencies also engage in marketing activities so as to deliver and communicate value in such a way that meets the expectations of the people and institutions they serve.

In the business context, the marketing environment encompasses various actors which play different roles in the production, delivery and promotion of goods and services. These actors include suppliers, distributors, dealers, advertising companies, insurance firms and transportation companies among others. All these actors play their respective roles in a marketing environment with specific demographic, economic, social, technological, and political characteristics (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

2.7. Marketing versus public relations

As stated in the sections above, organizations are putting more emphasis on public relations to gain publicity for their products, services and initiatives. Tench and Yeomans (2009) note that many marketers consider public relations as an effective means of getting their messages to consumers and shape their perception and behaviour in favor of the organization (p. 410).

There are debates about the relationship between marketing and public relations. Some consider one as part of the other and vice-versa. Boom and Sha (2013) note that some vacancies for public relations practitioners end up being more appropriate for marketers or sales people. Some organizations even assign the same employee to handle both its marketing and public relations activities. Such situations tend to blur the difference between marketing and public relations.

Marketers generally consider public relations as a means for getting free media coverage although public relations actually has a broader role than that. While public relations focuses primarily on nurturing long-lasting win-win relationship between an organization and its publics, marketing aims at attracting and satisfying customers continuously so as to fulfil the economic goals of the organization. Marketing emphasizes the profit an organization gains in its dealings with customers while public relations focuses on the value of building lasting relationships with the organization's publics (Tench and Yeomans, 2009).

In recent decades, the marketing and public relations roles of organizations have been converging especially when it comes to designing an organization's communication. This has led to the emergence of the practice of integrated marketing communication (IMC) where public relations is used with other marketing and communication tools and channels to complement the organization's marketing communications.

2.8. Using public relations for marketing

According to recent literature on public relations and marketing, public relations is used to achieve the marketing objectives of an organization in different ways (Oliver, 2008). In today's world, most organizations are aligning their public relations departments and activities with their strategic business plans. This shift is also manifested in the renaming of their public relations offices as 'Corporate communication' department. The public relations strategy of organizations

is also aligned with the overall strategic roadmap of the organization, highlighting the fact that the mission of public relations is essentially tied to the objectives of the organization.

Public relations plays a role in supporting the marketing efforts of an organization, primarily under the umbrella of integrated marketing communication (IMC) which is discussed as follows.

2.8.1. Integrated marketing communications

In today's world, integration has become common in the communication initiatives of organizations to maximize the impact of the messages disseminated. According to the American Marketing Association, integrated marketing communications (IMC) refers to:

'a planning process designed to assure that all brand contacts received by a customer or prospect for a product, service, or organization are relevant to that person and consistent over time' (as cited in Kotler and Keller, 2012, p. 517).

IMC brings together the different elements of marketing communication such as public relations, advertising, sales promotion, and direct marketing in a synchronized way to deliver clear and consistent message from the organization with a view to optimize the impact of the message.

Integration is about combining the activities of departments concerned with marketing and communication from the point of view of key publics to ensure loyalty. Schultz (as cited in Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007) notes that integration should be planned through in a top-down approach where it gets cascaded down to the relevant teams and practitioners for implementation. He also suggests that IMC should be carried out through joint planning and target setting by marketing and public relations departments, and should be implemented from the customer's perspective. Such integrated approach is believed to make messages of an organization consistent and free of internal discrepancies.

The planning stage is key to ensure consistency of the marketing communication of an organization. At the preparatory phase, thorough discussion of managers and specialists in marketing and public relations departments is important to make sure that there are no contradictions in the organization's messages (Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007). This will ensure

harmonious interplay among the various elements of IMC. According to Moore and Thorson (1996), IMC planning should begin with identifying the audiences of the message, segmenting the audiences based on their phase in the purchase decision cycle, identifying messages and channels appropriate for reaching each identified segment of the audiences, and finally providing the resources required for implementing the plans (as cited in van Riel and Fombrun, 2007). Knowing the audience, their wants and needs is key to the success of any IMC campaign. The messages should also be customer-centric rather than product centric (Boone and Kurtz, 2012).

2.8.2. Marketing Public Relations

Marketing public relations (MPR) is another related concept which highlights the role of public relations in supporting the marketing efforts of organizations. According to Shimp (2000), MPR is “*the marketing-oriented aspect of public relations... involving an organization’s interactions with consumers and other publics regarding marketing matters*”. Similarly, Harris (1993) elaborates MPR as:

The process of planning, executing and evaluating programs that encourage purchase and consumer satisfaction through credible communications of information and impressions that identify companies and their products with the needs, wants, concerns and interests of consumers (as cited in Pickton and Borderic, 2005).

These definitions identify consumers as the primary audiences for MPR and the end beneficiaries of the products and services the organization offers.

With the decreasing impact of advertising which targets mass audiences, organizations are embracing MPR as a means to promote their brand, products and services in a more targeted manner. According to Kotler and Keller (2012), MPR allows companies to reach targeted audience segments in a more efficient and cost-effective way compared to mass advertising. MPR is key for companies to get publicity when launching new products and services, redesigning an existing product or service, handling customers’ issues regarding product and service, as well as influencing target groups and building the image of the organization.

Pickton and Borderic (2005) state that although MPR may not necessarily lead to the sale of the organization's product, it can influence perceptions and lead to better outcomes in shaping their satisfaction or minimizing the negative effects of crises. While marketing public relations is critical for achieving the marketing goals of the organization, its impact can be maximized when planned with the advertising department (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

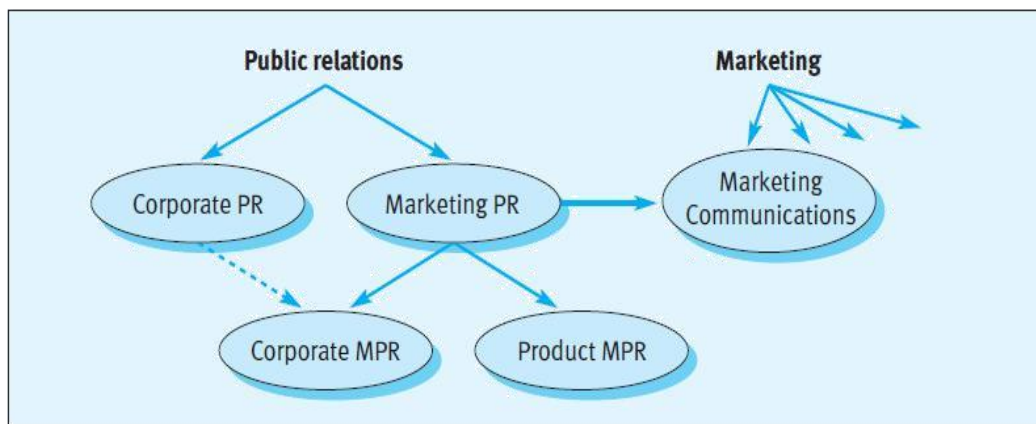


Figure 3: The relationship of marketing and public relations by Pickton & Borderic (2005)

MPR can be executed in both proactive and reactive ways. When used proactively, MPR is used for promoting the desirable features of a brand alongside other marketing communication instruments like advertising and sales promotions. In Shrimp's (2007) words, proactive MPR is 'opportunity seeking rather than problem solving'. On the other hand, reactive MPR is applied as a response to pressures from the external environment. MPR can be employed reactively in response to competitions as well as changes in consumer perception, government regulations, and other factors in the operating environment (Shimp, 2007).

2.9. Theoretical framework of the study

Theory is an integral part of research as it provides theoretical foundation for any scientific study. Robert K. Merton (as cited in Swedberg, 2014) defines theory as 'logically interconnected sets of propositions from which empirical uniformities can be derived.' These uniformities are then ascertained through practically tested assumptions.

Theories enable us to draw generalizations about the world and allow us to describe different phenomena which take place around us (MacRaild and Taylor, 2004). Theories are packaged as structured generalizations which researchers use to explain the characteristics of social phenomena and the world around us (MacRaild and Taylor, 2004). Theorization or theory formulation can take different approaches such as deduction, induction, generalizing, model-building, and using analogies, among others. The process is also closely related to experiments, observation and inferring meanings (Swedberg, 2014).

In the context of public relations, theory is very useful in elaborating and forecasting causal relationships. However, unlike in natural sciences, complete explanation of all phenomena is hard to achieve in public relations studies. Hence, general concepts and central tendencies are employed in such studies.

The researcher of this study tries to examine the integrated efforts of the public relations and advertising departments of Ethiopian Airlines through the lens of integrated marketing communication (IMC). Gronroos (2015) defines IMC as:

a strategy that integrates traditional media marketing, direct marketing, public relations and other distinct marketing communications media as well as communications aspects of the delivery and consumption of goods and services and of customer service and other customer encounters. (p. 313)

IMC combines a myriad of marketing communication tools and instruments to reach existing and potential customers. Keller (2016) uses painting as an illustrative metaphor that sheds light on what marketers do to draw a favourable image of their brands and products in the minds of customers. Just as a painter uses diverse colours and brushes to come up with a beautiful painting, marketers also employ different marketing communication tools, including public relations, advertising, sales promotion, and the like to put their brands in a positive light thereby attracting and retaining customers.

Companies stand better chances of achieving long lasting success by nurturing a favourable relationship with their customers. Gronroos (2015) highlights that well planned communication and interaction processes are key to ensure successful relationship marketing. In this regard, the

marketer should aim for long-term commitment from customers by using well integrated marketing communication efforts and programs.

According to Keller (2016), organizations should consider seven IMC choice criteria, which he calls “Seven C’s”, to run a marketing communication program which drives not only sales but also sustainable brand equity. Each of the seven criteria are briefly explained as follows.

Coverage: refers to the amount of the target market covered by the communication instrument employed. Coverage also describes the extent to which a certain marketing communication option overlaps with other communication instruments to bring about the desired marketing impacts.

Cost: is a key factor in determining the most efficient and effective combination of IMC instruments to meet the marketing communication goals of a brand.

Contribution: is concerned with the effects of a communication instrument in bringing about favourable responses from consumers, enabling the organization to meet its marketing goals.

Commonality: refers to the extent to which a given marketing communication instrument blends seamlessly with other communication options to maximize the attractiveness of the brand being marketed.

Complementarity: is related to how well the desired brand associations are highlighted in the various communication instruments an organization employs as part of its marketing communication programs.

Cross-effects: describes the extent to which a given communication instrument enables the attainment of optimum effects across various communication options.

Conformability: is concerned with how well a marketing communication instrument creates the desired effect across diverse consumer groups with various timings in getting exposed to the marketing communication of the organization.

Determining the optimum IMC program in light of the above-discussed seven IMC choice criteria enables organizations to maximize their chances of running effective and efficient marketing communication campaigns for their brands (Keller, 2016).

2.10. Empirical review

The researcher has gone through different studies which are freely available online to look into studies which were conducted previously on topics which are related to this research. The review has revealed that different researchers have conducted and published studies both locally and internationally on the role of public relations in facilitating the marketing endeavors of organizations. A summary of some of these studies which are published locally and internationally is presented below.

International studies

i. ‘Public relations based model of integrated marketing communications’

This research is conducted by Naumovska and Blazeska (2016) and published in the Journal of Economics of the University of Tourism and Management in Skopje, Macedonia. The study sought to test the validity of the theoretical proposition that marketing communication efforts can be more impactful in campaigns where public relations takes the dominant from advertising. To test their hypothesis with empirical data, the researchers interviewed leaders of 20 companies in Macedonia. This theoretical and quantitative research revealed that restructuring the marketing communication mix and assigning the leading role to public relations leads to increased marketing and business results for companies because of the less cost and higher persuasive power of public relations.

ii. ‘Public relations as part of integrated communication oriented on enterprise-consumer’

This study, which is conducted by Fatos Ukaj (2016), assesses how public relations is used as part of the promotional mix in the context of enterprises in Kosovo. The researcher gathered data from managers of five enterprises in Kosovo using interviews. The conclusion revealed that public relation is a powerful element of the promotional mix of enterprises as it has unique merits especially when it comes to keeping in touch with the loyal customers of the company.

The study also highlighted that the irreplaceable role of public relations as a marketing communication tool is underappreciated among enterprises in Kosovo, and suggested that organizations should adopt a specific model of public relations management which takes into account its uniquely impactful role.

iii. ‘The accelerative and integrative use of marketing public relations in Cyprus’

This study, which is conducted by Papasolomoua, Kitchenb and Panopoulosc (2013), deals with the development of marketing public relations (MPR) and its usage, relevance and significance among businesses in Cyprus in the context of the economic crisis in Cyprus which began in 2012. The researchers interviewed 13 advertising and public relations agencies in the country and found out an increase in the application of marketing public relations (MPR) by companies so as to achieve campaign objectives in a more cost-effective and impactful manner.

Local studies

i. ‘The practice of integrated marketing communications: The case of Ethio Telecom’

Among the papers published in Ethiopia, Metages Masresha (2020) looked into how IMC is practiced at Ethio Telecom. The researcher used qualitative data gathering tools such as interview, document analysis and observation. The analysis of the data revealed that Ethio Telecom uses digital marketing, sales promotions and sponsorship as the major IMC instruments while public relations, trade shows and packaging are less frequently applied promotional elements. The study also stated that there is a slow implementation of IMC at Ethio Telecom, and revealed gaps in the areas of staff training and the absence of marketing communication plan, among others.

ii. ‘The practices and challenges of public relations on marketing and promoting tourist destination sites in the case of ANRS cultural and tourism bureau’

This research, conducted by Fekadu Gedif in 2011, aimed at assessing the status and challenges of public relations in promoting tourist sites in Amhara region’s culture and tourism bureau. The study employed mixed research method and analyzed the data gathered through questionnaire and interview. The study showed that the regional culture and tourism office used both traditional and digital media to promote the tourist attractions in the region. However, it

highlighted challenges such as lack of managerial skills among public relation practitioners and the availability of limited resources which affected the contribution of public relations in promoting the tourist attraction sites in the Amhara region.

iii. ‘The practice and challenges of integrated marketing communications: The case of Ethiopian Airlines’

In a master’s thesis conducted in 2021, Minwuyelet Deneke assessed how IMC is practiced at Ethiopian Airlines and what challenges are impeding its successful utilization. The researcher applied mixed research method and gathered data through questionnaires, in-depth interview, document analysis as well as observation. The study revealed the favorable perceptions employees have towards IMC and its benefits. It also showed the varying degree of application of individual IMC elements by the airline, highlighting that digital marketing is the most widely used tool for marketing communication considering the ever growing number of social media users. Lack of well-developed marketing communication plan and absence of technical training have been mentioned as some of the challenges in the implementation of IMC at Ethiopian Airlines.

iv. ‘The practice of marketing public relations in Ethiopian Airlines Group’

The other study conducted on the marketing and public relations practice of Ethiopian Airlines is conducted by Ayele Legesse in 2021. The study applied qualitative research method and analyzed data gathered through document analysis, key informant interview and focus group discussion. The findings showed that marketing public relations (MPR) is practiced in Ethiopian Airlines in the form of IMC, and that public relations has irreplaceable role in the airline’s marketing communications. The challenges highlighted in the study include the lower position of the public relations department in the organizational structure and the absence of proper research for public relations practitioners. Lack of manpower and training have also been identified in the study as additional challenges.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design and Methodology

In the preceding chapters, the researcher has articulated what this study seeks to achieve, and the theories and concepts which underpin the research. This chapter deals with the research design and methods employed in the study. The discussion will shed light on the research design applied in this study and the soundness of the design in meeting the research objectives. This chapter also discusses the philosophical perspective that underlies the choice of the research design in addition to explaining the sources of data, the population of the study, the participants used and the participant selection criteria applied as well as the ethical considerations the researcher upheld throughout the study.

3.1 Introduction

The major objective of the current study is assessing the role of public relations in the integrated marketing communication of Ethiopian Airlines. The specific objectives include explaining the integration between Public Relations and Advertising & Sales Promotion departments of Ethiopian Airlines Group in marketing endeavors; identifying employees' perception regarding the integration between the two departments; and shedding light on the challenges these departments face in their joint efforts.

In light of the objectives stated above, the researcher believes that the study requires qualitative research approach whereby the required data is gathered and synthesized in the form of description, analysis and interpretation so as to draw the conclusions of the study. According to Daymon and Holloway (2011), qualitative research methods are very useful in gaining deep understanding in the realm of communication and culture. Qualitative research approach allows researchers to make sense of the views of research participants, and understand matters which are related to the communication among an organization and its publics.

3.2 Research paradigm

The selection of research design and methodologies for any given study depends on the worldview or philosophies of the researcher and how the given subject should be studied. With

this in mind, it is important to have a brief overview of worldviews and philosophies in relation to research.

According to Daymon and Holloway (2011), there are three facets related to a research paradigm, namely, ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontology is the study of being, and is concerned with issues such as existence and reality. It seeks answers to questions such as ‘What is existence, and what does exist?’

The other aspect related to research paradigm is epistemology, which refers to the study of knowledge. Epistemology is concerned with questions like ‘What is knowledge’, ‘How can the world be known?’ and ‘How is knowledge attained?’ (Daymon and Holloway, 2011, p. 100). A researcher’s ontological position influences his epistemological views and the methodology that should be employed in his research. The researcher’s views lead him to employ qualitative, quantitative, or mixed research methods in his study.

According to Creswell (2014), there are different worldviews which determine the research approach a researcher employs in his study. Few of these worldviews are discussed briefly as follows.

Positivism, which is also known post-positivism, holds that objective reality exists out in the world and can be discovered with scientific research. Positivists believe that reality exists independently irrespective of people’s opinions. In this paradigm, the researcher’s job is to bring to light universal laws, and uncover reality as it is found in the world (Daymon and Holloway, 2011, p. 100). According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research design is the most suitable approach for studies which are grounded in the positivist worldview (p. 7).

Interpretivism, which is also known as anti-positivism, holds that meanings are diverse and are formed through the interaction of humans. For interpretivists, meanings are subjective and depend on the individual because they have no independent existence separated from the individual (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). Hence, interpretivists believe that there are various realities which are constructed socially. They also regard reality as something that is subject to change through people’s interactions (Daymon and Holloway, 2011, p. 102). This worldview lends itself

to qualitative research approach which is better suited to treat the inherent complexities of multiple realities through broad and open ended questions (Creswell, 2014, p. 8). The current study follows the Interpretivist worldview.

Pragmatism, which is a hybrid type of worldview, brings together the positivist and Interpretivist philosophies. According to Daymon and Holloway (2011), pragmatism is a more practical worldview that is primarily concerned with meeting the research objective by employing a mixed approach tailored to the study at hand. It focuses on making sense of a research problem and employing a blend of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches to solve the research problem (Creswell, 2014).

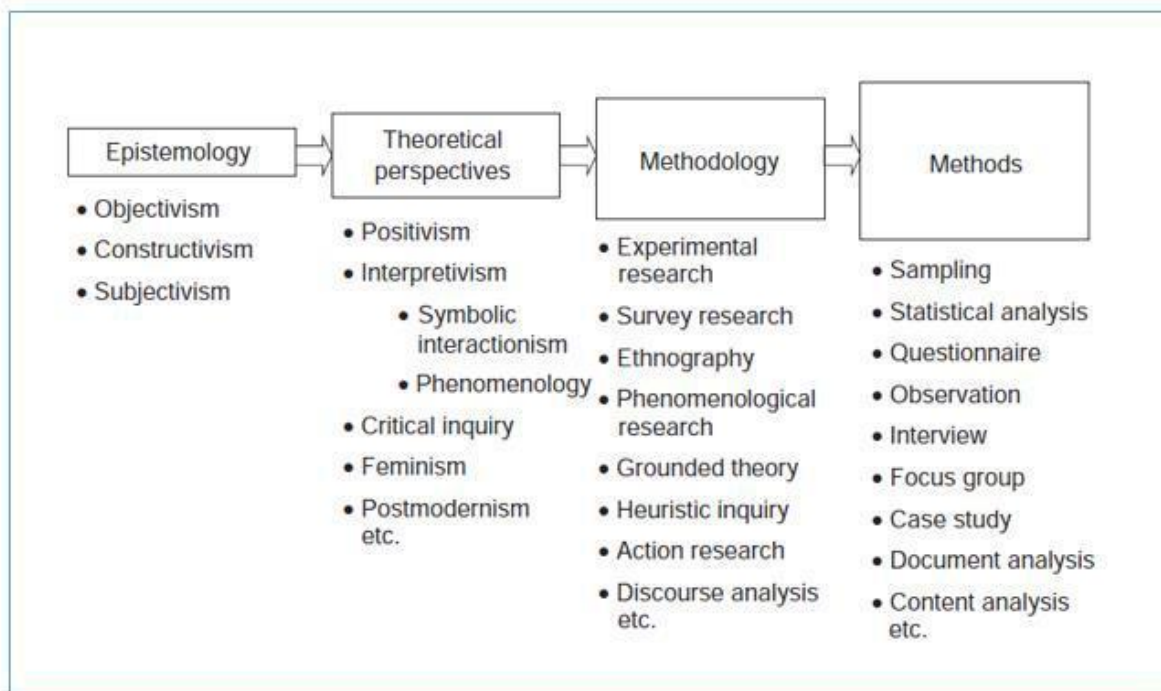


Figure 4. Relationship among epistemology, theoretical perspectives, methodology and research methods (Gray, 2004, p. 16)

3.3 Research method

Researchers employ different research methods to gather and analyze data. Research methods are the processes and tools used for gathering, analyzing and interpreting data for a given study. Daymon and Holloway (2011) define research methods as the procedures and techniques

researchers use in a systematic way to collect data and draw meaning out of it. Data collection tools and the way they are employed in the research are matters dealt with under research methods. Researchers employ different data collection tools such as questionnaires, interviews, observation, document analysis and others depending on the nature of the research and the data required for the study (Creswell, 2014).

Researchers choose their research methods after considering whether the process the study follows to draw conclusions is deductive or inductive. Moreover, the choice of research methods takes into account the nature or form of the data ranging from statistical data to qualitative data such as texts, audio as well as still images and footages. The nature of the data dictates whether qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods should be used in the research at hand (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative research methods are employed to gather qualitative data through document analysis, observation, structured interviews, focus group discussions and others. They are better suited to comprehend complex matters deeply and holistically through the use of open ended questions (Daymon and Holloway, 2011). Accordingly, the current study follows the qualitative research approach.

As elaborated in the previous chapters, this study deals with how public relations is used to support the marketing efforts of Ethiopian Airlines. Hence, the researcher has gathered and analyzed diverse qualitative data needed for the study. Data collection instruments such as document analysis and focus group discussion have been used in the study. The researcher also conducted in-depth interview with employees working in the airline's Public Relations and Corporate Communications Department, Advertising and Sales Promotions office as well as the Sales and Marketing and Communications staff stationed in Ethiopian Skylight Hotel which is managed separately as a business unit of Ethiopian Airlines Group. As this study focuses on the entire company (Ethiopian Airlines Group), the practice of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel which operates from a separate location, has also been covered in the research.

3.4 Research design

Zikmund (as cited in M. Pandey and P. Pandey, 2015) defines research design as “a master plan specifying the methods and procedures for collecting and analyzing the needed information” (p. 18). Research design guides the course of the research by articulating the procedures for

conducting the study. It allows the researcher to think through the study and select the procedures and techniques which are appropriate for gathering data for the research.

The essence of the research and the problem it seeks to address are key determinants of which research design is appropriate for a given study. Creswell (2007) notes that research design encompasses philosophy and the strategies to be employed in the research along with specific techniques.

Well thought-out research design helps reduce the likelihood of bias thereby maximizing reliability. A research design is considered best and efficient when it is suitable to consider the various dimensions of the research problem (M. Pandey and P. Pandey, 2015, p.20).

Research designs are broadly classified as qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. According to Leavy (2017), qualitative approaches allow the researcher to gain deeper insight into the subjective views and experiences of the research participants. It facilitates in-depth investigation through the use of broad and open ended questions which allow respondents to provide detailed qualitative data. Qualitative research uses data in the form of texts, image, videos and others, and follows qualitative approaches of data analysis (Creswell, 2007).

On the other hand, quantitative research relies on numerical data and focuses on objective and precise measurement. It is deductive in nature and the conclusions are generalized to the entire population of the study (Leavy, 2017, p. 87). Surveys and experiments are some of the examples of quantitative research design. According to Creswell (2007), some studies require mixed research designs that combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a pragmatic way. In such studies, the researcher uses all tools available to gather the required data to meet the objectives of the study.

The current research employs the qualitative approach as it is the most suitable research design to investigate the case of Ethiopian Airlines when it comes to using public relations for the airline's marketing efforts. The researcher believes that the qualitative research design is appropriate for addressing the research problem through in-depth investigation using data to be gathered from documents and respondents who participate in in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. As this study follows the inductive approach, the findings will highlight the case of the airline in using PR for marketing; the findings will not be generalized to other organizations.

3.5. Study site

This study centers primarily on the Public Relations and Corporate Communications Department of Ethiopian Airlines. The Advertising and Sales Promotions department based at the airline's headquarters as well as the marketing office stationed in Ethiopian Skylight Hotel (which is owned by the airline) will also be the subjects of this study, in order to assess the company-wide practice of using public relations to support marketing efforts. Ethiopian Airlines is a leading carrier in Africa which has been providing uninterrupted service for nearly eight decades now. As of March 2023, the airline is serving around 130 destinations around the world, 63 of which are in Africa. As an aviation group, Ethiopian Airlines owns seven business units, namely, Ethiopian International Services, Ethiopian Cargo & Logistics Services, Ethiopian MRO Services, Ethiopian Aviation Academy, Ethiopian Ground Services, Ethiopian Airports Services, Ethiopian Express (Domestic) Services, and Hotel and Tourism.

The Public Relations and Corporate Communications Department of Ethiopian Airlines is responsible for managing the public relations activities and campaigns of the airline and all its business units. The office is housed within the head office of the airline near Addis Ababa Bole International Airport.

3.6 Population of the study

The population of this study comprise of the Public Relations & Corporate Communications as well as the advertising staff working at Ethiopian Airlines head office and Ethiopian Skylight

Hotel. There are around 36 employees working in these departments including team leaders and managers.

3.7 Participant selection method

The researcher has used purposive or judgmental approach to select managers who have better information and more experience compared to the officers working in the public relations as well as the advertising and sales promotion departments.

According to Daymon and Holloway (2011), the purposive approach allows the researcher to select participants using his judgment in line with the purpose of the study. The purposive method, which is common in qualitative studies, enables the researcher to gather deep and rich data for the study.

The researcher of the current study selected the managers of the Public Relations & Corporate Communications Office, the corporate Advertising and Sales Promotion department as well as the Sales and Marketing and Communications office of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel. The researcher selected the participants purposively to ensure that employees who have deeper insight into the subject matter are involved in the study.

As far as other employees of these departments are concerned, the researcher selected available staff from the Public Relations & Corporate Communications Office and the Advertising and Sales Promotion department to participate in separate focus group discussions organized for each team. Due to the limited number of staff available on the day the focus group discussions were held, the researcher involved three and four employees from the Public Relations & Corporate Communications Office and the Advertising and Sales Promotion department, respectively.

3.8 Data collection instruments

The data used in this study are gathered through various qualitative data collection instruments including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. The application of multiple qualitative data collection tools enables the researcher to triangulate the data and come up with solid findings thereby ensuring the validity and credibility of the findings. Through triangulation, the researcher can minimize the limitations of each data collection instrument and

avoid potential bias. Each of the data collection instruments employed in this are discussed below.

3.8.1. In-depth interview

According to Leavy (2017), interviews are one of the data collection tools in qualitative studies which enable the researcher to gather rich data through conversation with the research participants. It is an instrument which enables the researcher to elicit deep, qualitative data through the use of open-ended questions which allow the informant to provide rich data. The interviewer's skills and experience are very crucial in order to elicit useful data from the informants (Gray, 2004).

Interview reveals many things about the informants including their perceptions, motives, emotions and other background information (P. Pandey and M. Pandey, 2015). This, in turn, facilitates appropriate interpretation of the data provided by the informants. The researcher conducted the interviews to get deeper insight into how public relations is used for supporting the marketing efforts of Ethiopian Airlines. Specifically, interviews were conducted with members of the management staff under the IMC directorate to answer all the four research questions which focus on the joint efforts of the PR and Advertising departments, the contribution of the PR office in the marketing efforts, the perceptions of the participants about the support the PR department offers in the marketing endeavours, and also the challenges faced by the PR and Advertising departments in their joint efforts.

3.8.2. Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is a very useful data collection tool in qualitative studies, as it enables the researcher to get diverse perspectives from the discussion participants. The researcher plays the role of a facilitator of the discussion by spurring the participants to provide their points of view to the discussion (Gray, 2004).

Focus group discussions enables the researcher to gather detailed data with anecdotes and illustrations the participants provide citing their experiences. The researcher can moderate and guide the discussion by raising key open-ended questions which induce the participants to maximize their inputs for the discussion (Leavy, 2017).

The researcher of the current study arranged two separate focus group discussions for the PR office and the Advertising department to gather data which enable the researcher to answer all four research questions by triangulating the data gathered through the other data collection instruments. The focus group discussion for the PR office involved three staff working in the office, while the other one involved four employees working in the Advertising department.

3.8.3 Document analysis

Document analysis is one of the data collection tools widely used in qualitative studies. It is a means by which the researcher examines the contents of documents available on the web or offline. According to Daymon and Holloway (2011), the data acquired through analyzing documents are more comprehensive compared to those gathered through other data collection instruments particularly when it comes to assessing the case of a given organization. Such data also allow the researcher to track past events precisely and gain better insight through analysis and interpretation.

The researcher of the current study used document analysis to answer the first two research questions which focus on how the airline's PR and Advertising departments work in integration, and the contribution of the PR office to the airline's marketing efforts. The researcher went through different contents published on the airline's website and social media pages during the year 2014 (Ethiopian Calendar), including press releases and promotional social media contents. The researcher also examined media coverages the airline got during the same year for contents which help promote its services. The contents the researcher selected for analysis are those which have marketing dimensions, i.e., contents which seek to put the airline in a positive light by promoting its brand and services.

3.9 Research ethics

The researcher has taken different measures to ensure that the study is conducted ethically following standard norms and discipline. The researcher has submitted a formal letter from Addis Ababa University addressed to Ethiopian Airlines Group requesting cooperation to

provide the researcher with the data required for the study. The researcher embarked on the data collection process after securing permission from the airline.

Additionally, the researcher requested the consent of research participants before engaging them in the interviews and focus group discussions. He elaborated the procedures followed in the interviews and focus group discussions, and what is expected from the informants and discussion participants. The researcher also assured all those who participated in the interviews and focus group discussions that their identities will be kept anonymous and that the information they provide is used only for the purpose of the study. They have also been briefed about the data analysis and interpretation processes the research follows to ensure that all ethical requirements are strictly observed.

All participants are also given a transcription of their responses so that they could ensure that they are not misquoted or that their responses are not interpreted incorrectly.

3.10 Data analysis method

This study follows qualitative data analysis approach which includes description and explanation of themes which are framed around the research questions. In qualitative studies such as this one, themes can be considered as units of analysis (Leavy, 2017). Accordingly, the researcher has analyzed the data gathered through document analysis, interviews and focus group discussions based on key themes that the research questions focus on, such as the integrated efforts of the PR and Advertising departments of Ethiopian Airlines, the perceptions of staff regarding the integrated efforts, and the challenges faced in the joint activities of the PR and Advertising offices.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the preceding chapters, this study aims at examining the practice of using public relations as an element of the marketing efforts of Ethiopian Airlines Group. Accordingly, the researcher framed research questions which enabled him to find out what role Public Relations and Corporate Communication Office of the airline is playing to contribute to the company's marketing efforts.

Through the use of qualitative research design, the researcher has employed different data collection instruments to gather and analyze relevant data which allowed him to address the research questions properly. Accordingly, the researcher used interview, focus group discussion and document analysis to gather data for the study. The data gathered through the above mentioned data collection tools have been thematically analyzed and presented with the findings.

4.2 Integrated efforts of PR and Advertising offices

The first research question this study aims to address is “How do the Public Relations and Advertising & Sales Promotion departments of Ethiopian Airlines Group work in integration in the airline's marketing efforts?” The researcher employed interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis to address the question.

The interviewees include the Director of Integrated Marketing Communications directorate of Ethiopian Airlines, Acting Manager of Public Relations and Corporate Communication, Team Leader in the Advertising and Sales Promotion office as well as the Acting Manager of Communications and Sales office of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel.

The responses of the Director of IMC, who oversees the activities of both the Public Relations and Corporate Communication office and the Advertising and Sales Promotion office of the airline, indicates that the airline conducts its marketing communications in an integrated manner in which the Public Relations and Advertising offices play significant roles.

Accordingly, the director has shared his insight on the integrated efforts of the Public Relations and Advertising offices in promoting the airline and its services (See Appendix I for the interview questions addressed by the Director of IMC). As someone in charge of the Integrated Marketing Communications Directorate, the Director of IMC believes that PR works jointly with Advertising & Sales Promotion department in marketing the airline and its services. It channels messages which have commercial elements using the owned media of the airline such as its website and social media pages.

According to the Director, PR also uses earned media such as local and international new channels (both print and electronic) to deliver clear and consistent messages about the airline and its services. He adds that through the use of earned media, “PR creates the highest trust between our brand and customers. The fact that the brand's message gets communicated through a third party raises the credibility of our messages.”

The Acting Manager of the Public Relations and Corporate Communication office, who has a key role in leading the PR team and shaping the marketing activities of the airline, also agrees with the view of the Director of IMC. (See Appendix II for interview questions the manager tackled.) The Acting Manager says the PR office plays a key role in the promotion of the airline’s services using non-paid media such as the digital platforms of the airline including its website and social media pages.

According to Acting Manager, “The Advertising office handles the paid communication of the airline such as commercials which run on radios and TVs while the PR office works on the non-paid media activities and contents such as media coverage, press releases and social media messaging.” He says the two offices work jointly in marketing the airline’s services though there is room for improvement in their joint activities.

As far as the integrated efforts of the PR and Advertising offices are concerned, similar views were also reflected by the participants of the focus group discussions the researcher held. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the researcher conducted separate focus group discussions for staff working in the Public Relations office and those in the Advertising office.

Four employees from Advertising and Sales Promotion office have participated in the first focus group discussion while three employees took part in the focus group discussion held for the

Public Relations and Corporate Communication office. As far as participants of the first group are concerned, there is a consensus when it comes to the integrated marketing efforts between the Public Relations office and the Advertising department. (See Appendix III for discussion points the group deliberated on).

The discussion participants agree on the significant contribution of the Public Relations and Corporate Communication office for the promotional activities carried out by the Advertising & Sales Promotion office. Participant 1 says there is strong working relationship between PR and Advertising offices in jointly marketing the airline and its services.

Participant 2 reiterates, “We have strong relationship. We work jointly in many areas including social media marketing and other promotional campaigns.” Participants 3 and 4 stated similar points highlighting that the two offices are like the two sides of the same coin, and that it is difficult to treat one without considering the other as their missions and responsibilities are overlapping.

Participants from the second focus group, which is held among three employees of the Public Relations and Corporate Communication office due to unavoidable limitations, also echoed the views of the first focus group participants regarding the integration between the two offices (See Appendix IV for the discussion points the group tackled).

Like the participants of the first discussion, those who participated in the second focus group discussion also stated that there is a close working relationship between the Public Relations and Corporate Communication office, and the Advertising and Sales Promotion department of Ethiopian Airlines. P1 said the integration of the two offices emanates from the overlapping nature of the works the two offices handle especially when it comes to promoting the services of Ethiopian Airlines and its business units.

P1 added that the two teams collaborate with each other on marketing activities without the need to liaise through their respective supervisors per the organizational procedures. She said, “Sometimes, we don’t even exchange emails to handle marketing assignments. We just call each other or walk into each other’s offices which are in the same building.”

P2 stated that the two offices feed each another with the contents they need for their work, while P3 pointed out that it is hard to talk about either of the offices without considering the other. P3 added, “We both need each other for sharing inputs to promote the airline and its services. We source photos and other graphics [from the Advertising office] for posting on our social media pages to market a certain product or service of the airline. On the other hand, the Advertising office gets written contents from our team to include in their artworks or other promotional items.”

The researcher also analysed published contents on both the airline’s owned media as well as earned (news) media to examine how the integrated efforts of the two offices are manifested in the airline’s marketing communication messaging.

Press release is one of the communication tools used by the Public Relations Department of Ethiopian Airlines to disseminate messages to audiences. The department issues press releases on major events in the airline such as launching of new flights and facility inaugurations, among others. The press releases are emailed to local and international media and are also uploaded on the website of the airline for media outlets and the public to access. The links of the uploaded press releases are also shared through the social media pages of the airline including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Ethiopian Airlines releases dozens of press releases every year using its official website (<https://corporate.ethiopianairlines.com/media/Press-Release>). The researcher has analyzed selected press releases and social media posts issued within the time frame of this study (i.e. 2014 E.C.)

The first press release selected for discussion was released on January 12 under the headline *‘Ethiopian Cargo and Logistics Services Avails Online Air Cargo Booking Platform’* (see Appendix V). The press release announces that the cargo and logistics wing of Ethiopian Airlines has unveiled an online booking system for customers to make reservations for cargo services using the new platform. It also elaborates the various features of the new online platform and how it enables customers to check the availability of cargo flights and book flights on their preferred schedules.

This press release doesn't just inform audiences about the launch of cargo flight booking system but it also encourages cargo customers to take advantage of the new platform. As a background, the message also included information regarding the multi-channel service Ethiopian Airlines offers for booking cargo flights in real time.

In addition to promoting the new cargo flight booking platform, the press release also mentions the capabilities of Ethiopian Cargo and Logistics Services which is the cargo wing of the airline. The message also highlights the state-of-the-art technologies that Ethiopian Cargo and Logistics Services is using including the full automated facilities and sophisticated IT systems to become more customer-centric.

The above analysis highlights the integrated efforts of the Public Relations and Advertising departments of Ethiopian Airlines in packaging contents in such a way that they not only inform audiences but also promote the airline's services. The above-mentioned press release puts the cargo wing of the airline in a positive light and promotes its technology leadership, indirectly encouraging existing and potential cargo customers to use the airline as their preferred cargo service provider.

The other press release which demonstrates the joint marketing efforts of the two offices was released on June 1, 2022 under the headline *'Ethiopian launches new flight connecting Lomé with Washington DC'* (see Appendix VI).

The press release states that Ethiopian Airlines started passenger service connecting Addis Ababa and Washington DC with a stopover in Lomé, Togo. It mentions the weekly number of flights and the days on which the flights are operated. The press release also points out that the airline deploys one of its modern Boeing B787 airplanes on the new route, in addition to reminding audiences about the airline's existing flights between Addis Ababa and other cities in the United States.

In addition to providing information, this press release also has a marketing dimension which aims to attract passengers who want to fly from Addis Ababa to Washington DC or vice-versa. It highlights the options passengers enjoy to travel between Addis Ababa and the other destinations Ethiopian Airlines serves in the United States. Through a quote imbedded in the press release,

the airline's CEO indirectly encourages tourists and members of the African community residing in the US to use the flights of the airline saying:

We are very pleased to launch a new passenger service connecting [Addis Ababa and] Lomé with Washington DC. The U.S. is one of our most important markets due to the presence of a large African community and the growing business and tourism ties with Africa. (Ethiopian Airlines, 2022)

In addition to the main body of the press release, the boilerplate (template of the press release) also highlights that the passenger and cargo service Ethiopian Airlines offers cover more than 130 cities around the world. This part also promotes the other services Ethiopian Airlines offers under its diverse business units focusing on aircraft maintenance, aviation training, catering and others.

In short, from the content of the press release, one can see how the joint efforts of the PR and Advertising offices are manifested in the press releases the airline disseminates to its audiences.

Analysing the social media posts of Ethiopian Airlines further highlights the integration in the marketing communication of the airline. Facebook is one of the social media channels the airline uses to disseminate contents. The Public Relations office runs both the Amharic and English Facebook accounts of Ethiopian Airlines (<https://www.facebook.com/ethiopianairlineset> and <https://www.facebook.com/EthiopianAirlines.official>).

The first post to analyze was released on the Amharic Facebook page on December 6, 2021 and focused on the discount Ethiopian Airlines offered to members of the Ethiopian diaspora who planned to travel to Ethiopia from different parts of the world to celebrate Christmas and Epiphany in their home land (Appendix VII).

The post highlighted that up to 30 percent discount is offered to members of the diaspora who are interested in travelling back home to celebrate Christmas and Epiphany with their family and friends. The post also indicated the deadline for the discount offer and encouraged Ethiopians residing abroad to take advantage of the discount. This clearly highlights that Ethiopian Airlines leverages its social media accounts to promote and market its services.

The other social media content selected for analysis was posted on the Amharic Facebook page of Ethiopian Airlines on May 27, 2021 (See Appendix VIII). The post announced that the airline had been included in the list of the most admired brands in Africa by a non-profit ranking organization called Brand Africa. The Facebook post stated that Ethiopian Airlines won one of the top ranks for its impressive performance and contribution in the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines in Africa and the rest of the world.

This post puts Ethiopian Airlines in a positive light by articulating the airline's cargo shipment capabilities and service excellence. It also attempts to influence the perceptions of audiences positively and attract more business for the airline. Once again, the posts reveal the integrated marketing communication efforts at play in Ethiopian Airlines.

Analysis of selected tweets of the airline mirror a similar situation. Ethiopian Airlines uses Twitter as one of the social media platforms for reaching its audiences. The airline's Public Relations and Corporate Communication Department tweets contents in English through its Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/flyethiopian>). One of the tweets selected for analysis was put out on December 9, 2021 (See Appendix IX). The tweet announced the launch of daily passenger flights to Semera, the capital city of Afar region in Ethiopia as of December 11, 2021. This tweet clearly has a marketing side as it announces a newly launched service for which the airline seeks passengers.

In addition to the tweets of the Public Relations and Corporate Communication Office, those contents put out by Ethiopian Skylight Hotel, which is owned by Ethiopian Airlines, also have marketing elements imbedded in them, highlighting the integrated approach the airline pursues in marketing its services.

A tweet put out by Ethiopian Skylight Hotel on December 10, 2022 promoted a package offering Christmas Eve dinner and Christmas day lunch the hotel organized at one of its restaurants. (See Appendix X) The content highlighted that those taking part in the celebration will also be served Christmas cocktail.

The way the above mentioned tweets are packaged reflects that the airline follows an integrated approach in its marketing communication work, where the efforts of PR and Advertising departments converge.

The researcher has also examined the LinkedIn posts of Ethiopian Airlines as part of the data analysis. The airline uses LinkedIn as one of the social media channels for sending out information to its audiences and promoting the airline's services. Most of the airline's messages shared on Facebook are also posted on its LinkedIn and Instagram accounts. Just to highlight how LinkedIn serves as a tool for the PR office to promote the airline and its services, the researcher analyzed the contents of two selected posts shared on LinkedIn.

The first post picked for analysis was posted in November 2022, and announced the new passenger service of Ethiopian Airlines connecting Addis Ababa and Doha, Qatar to attract passengers flying to Qatar for the world cup 2022 to fly on board the airline's flight. (See Appendix XI) The content is pure promotion of the new flight, and highlights how the PR office uses LinkedIn for marketing the services of Ethiopian Airlines just like the other social media sites.

Similarly, in August 2022, Ethiopian Airlines posted a promotional message on LinkedIn announcing that it has started flights to the city of Bulawayo in Zimbabwe. (See Appendix XII) The post also mentions that Bulawayo is the third city Ethiopian Airlines serves in Zimbabwe, next to Harare and Victoria Falls. Once again, this post is testimony to the integrated approach the airline follows to get its marketing communication contents through the channels it uses to reach its customers.

The airline's communication through Instagram also reveals a similar situation. The researcher selected a couple of posts published on the Instagram account of Ethiopian Airlines for promoting the airline's services. The first Instagram content selected for analysis was posted on Ethiopian Airlines' account on July 30, 2022. (See Appendix XIII) The post promoted the aviation academy of Ethiopian Airlines which was recently upgraded to the level of a university. It used a promotional line which reads, "*The future is bright as your dedication! Join Ethiopian Aviation Academy.*" The post further markets the university and its programs by including the website address and other details for interested people to get additional information about the university.

The other Instagram post selected for analysis was posted on August 5, 2022. (See Appendix XIV) The content announced a Meskel celebration tour package prepared by ET Holidays, which

is the tour operation wing of Ethiopian Airlines. The post included an artwork which blended a colorful picture of celebrants of the holiday at Meskel square, along with a label showing the tour package options and their rates.

The Instagram post highlights that the Public Relations and Corporate Communication Department of Ethiopian Airlines leverages Instagram like the other social media pages to promote the services of the airline and its business units.

In addition to its own channels, Ethiopian Airlines also uses mass media to get its promotional contents to audiences. Media relations is one of the key responsibilities of the Public Relations and Corporate Communication Office of Ethiopian Airlines. The office tries to promote and nurture the airline's brand through non-paid media coverage of the different initiatives of the company in an integrated manner which involves the Advertising office.

The PR office also engages local and international media through press conferences and exclusive interviews to maximize positive coverage of the airline's brand and services. It disseminates newsy contents such as press releases and photo releases to local and international media organizations hoping to put the airline's brand in a positive light and encourage audiences to buy the airline's services.

The researcher examined a couple of selected news items with elements that portray the airline and its services in a positive way. The first media coverage selected for analysis was published by Fana Broadcasting Corporate (FBC) in January 2022. (See Appendix XV) The news was prepared using contents from a press release the airline released about a new online platform the airline released for its cargo customers to book cargo services digitally. The news highlighted that the new platform allows customers to '*check flight schedules and book space for their shipments in real-time*'. The content also included information about the other features and affordances of the online system saying:

Customers also have the option of using Ethiopian's new chatbot to conduct online conversations via text or text-to-speech conversion, thereby gaining access to real-time 'spoken' information and shipments tracking via Facebook Messenger and/or the Telegram cloud-based business messaging system... Taking out paper from the logistics value chain is not only a convenient and

hassle-free service for customers but it also delivers more efficient operational excellence and achieves long term sustainability goals. (Fana Broadcasting Corporate, 2022)

FBC's news coverage also provides background information about Ethiopian Airlines, its vast network of international destinations as well as its modern airplanes. It also mentions the capability of the airline's maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) wing as well as the opening of a center for converting passenger airplanes into freighters to reconfigure old model passenger airplanes into cargo planes and introduce modern airplanes for passenger service.

Generally, FBC's news promotes Ethiopian Airlines as a tech-savvy company which leverages cutting-edge technology to further digitize and modernize its service delivery thereby elevating customers' experience. Hence, the news puts the airline's brand in a positive light and likely helps attract more passenger and cargo customers for the airline.

Similarly, the Public Relations Office of Ethiopian Airlines takes advantage of its favorable relationship with international media organizations as well to promote the airline and its services on the world stage. A case in point is a news coverage of in New Telegraph which featured the SKYTRAX 2022 World Airline Awards Ethiopian Airlines won in October 2022. (See Appendix XVI)

The news mentioned that the airline received multiple SKYTRAX 2022 Awards including 'Best Airline in Africa 2022', 'Best Business Class Airline in Africa 2022', 'Best Economy Class Airline in Africa 2022' and 'Best Business Class Onboard Catering in Africa' titles. The story also added a background information about the globally reputed brand of the airline and the awards it won in the past, including the 26th place it won in the World's Top 100 Airlines in 2022 based on the votes of passengers surveyed globally.

The news story also included a quote of Ethiopian Airlines CEO issued through a press release, saying:

It gives me great pleasure to witness such a rewarding event to the hard work Ethiopian Airlines employees and management team put in order to provide our valued passengers the best quality service. 'I would like to assure our

customers and everyone who casted their votes in favor of Ethiopian that we will continue to provide a world class service tailored with African flavored Ethiopian hospitality. (New Telegraph, 2022)

This story highlights the award-winning performance of the airline in multiple categories which made it the most preferred airline compared to other carriers in Africa. The story highlights the excellence of the airline's service in terms of business class and economy class service including in catering. The news story puts the brand of Ethiopian Airlines in a positive light among the audiences of the media organization. This, in turn, helps promote the airline and its services with the potential to generate more business for the carrier.

The favorable news coverage once again indicates the role of the Public Relations and Corporate Communication Office in marketing the airline and its services in integration with the Advertising and Sales Promotion office.

The story is yet another manifestation of the integrated efforts of the two offices in marketing the airline's services as explained in the responses of the interviewees and the focus group discussion participants at the beginning of this section.

4.3 The contribution of PR to marketing efforts

The second research question this study aims to address is "What support does the Public Relations office provide for the airline's marketing efforts?" The researcher will discuss the responses of interviewees and focus group discussion participants as well as the contents of the airline's published communication and media coverage, to answer the research question indicated above.

In his response, the Director of the Integrated Marketing Communication Directorate of the airline stated that the Public Relations and Corporate Communication office communicates with the publics of the organization with a view to promote and nurture the airline's reputed brand and also to generate business for the airline to sustain its continued success and profitability. He says, *"PR provides support in the efforts to enhance the brand of Ethiopian Airlines Group as an organization. It also helps in sales promotion as well."*

The Team Leader in the Advertising and Sales Promotion office also shared a similar insight. He said that the Public Relations office is the major contributor of written contents for the Advertising and Sales Promotion department. He says that the Public Relations office provides contents for all the marketing items and messages the Advertising office prepares including banners, radio and TV advertisement scripts and taglines for artworks, among others.

Likewise, the Acting Manager of Sales and Communication office of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel which belongs to Ethiopian Airlines highlighted the contribution of the Public Relations office for promoting the airline and all its business units, including Ethiopian Skylight Hotel. (See Appendix XVII for the interview questions the Acting Manager addressed.)

According to the Acting Manager of Sales and Communication office of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel, the hotel gets support from the corporate Public Relations office to market its services successfully, especially because the hotel's Sales and Communication office was in its formative stage when this interview was conducted. Interviewee 4 says that the PR office provides support to the Hotel's Sales and Communication department to promote its services using different marketing communication channels.

The contribution of the Public Relations office in the integrated marketing efforts of the airline is also highlighted by the focus group discussion participants. One of the participants (P1) from the first focus group (the group of Advertising and Sales Promotion office employees) stated that the contribution of the Public Relations office is manifested, among other things, in the written contents it provides for the promotional activities and products developed by the Advertising & Sales Promotion office.

Another participant (P2) from the same group also stated that the Public Relations office offers marketing support by disseminating contents through social media, press release and other tools it manages, to promote the airline and its services. Another participant (P3) reiterates the role of PR in promoting the airline highlighting that the office is using its digital platforms such as its website and social media pages to market new flights, new on-board services and the like. P4, on his part, highlights the contribution of the Public Relations and Corporate Communication office

by providing well-crafted write-ups to advertise the airline's services on social media, mass media and other promotional items such as banners and posters.

Most of the participants in the second focus group also shared similar views while one of the participants (P2) highlighted that the Public Relations office is not making the most out of the communication tools and platforms at its disposal.

The researcher also analysed some selected contents on the airline's digital communication platforms and the websites of some of the news media, to draw out data which would help answer the second research questions mentioned at the beginning of this section.

As far as the press releases of the airline are concerned, on August 5, 2022, the Public Relations and Corporate Communication office issued a press release whose headline read '*Ethiopian Launches Tour and Activities Services in Partnership with GetYourGuide*'. (See Appendix XVIII) The press release sounds more like a marketing message than one which is sent out to provide information.

The content is full of emotive phrases such as "unforgettable travel experience" and aims at promoting the partnership Ethiopian Airlines formed with an online booking platform called GetYourGuide to provide customers to enjoy tours and recreational ventures as a side activity at their destinations.

As cited below, the press release highlights the benefits passengers gain through the partnership the airline forged with GetYourGuide:

This partnership provides Ethiopian Airlines' customers easy access to book travel activities alongside their flight. Passengers will have the option of booking high quality and well-curated tours and activities online either immediately after booking flights or at a later date. (Ethiopian Airlines, 2022)

The press release also states that passengers can book any of the tours and activities mentioned using the webpage of the airline. As background information, it also mentions the subsidiary services Ethiopian Airlines offers besides its core services to elevate customer experience.

Apparently, this press release is indicative of the contribution and support the Public Relations office provides for the success of the marketing campaigns of Ethiopian Airlines. The other press release selected for analysis announces the launch of a new passenger flight to Amman, Jordan by Ethiopian Airlines (See Appendix XIX).

Published under the headline, “*Ethiopian to Welcome Amman to its Extensive Network*”, the press release indicates that the flight is operated three times a week. It also highlights that passengers flying to/from Amman can connect seamlessly to the vast Africa-wide network of Ethiopian Airlines through the airline’s main hub, Addis Ababa. The press release goes on to market the new flight in an attempt to lure passengers to travel to Amman, saying,

Located between the desert and the fertile Jordan Valley, Jordan’s capital Amman, where the old meets the new, is an ideal location for holidaymakers. With an astonishing scenery of ancient civilization and modernity, the city has plenty to offer for visitors. As part of its strategic plan, Ethiopian is growing its network stretching to more destinations, widening its reach and providing more options to its passengers. (Ethiopian Airlines, 2022)

Like the above-mentioned press release, this one also promotes the diverse capabilities and services of Ethiopian Airlines through the information contained in the boilerplate of the press release. The press release manifests the contribution of the Public Relations office in marketing the airline’s brand and services.

The last press release selected for analysis goes by the headline ‘*Ethiopian Airlines Opens a Five-Star In-Terminal Hotel Inside Addis Ababa Bole International Airport*’. The press release was published on September 13, 2022 (see Appendix XX) on the airline’s official website and distributed to local and international media organizations.

In addition to providing basic information about the hotel, the press release takes on a commercial tone and promotes the new facility using words such as ‘lavish’, ‘luxurious’, and ‘convenient’. The quote of Ethiopian Airlines CEO, embedded in the press release, also reveals that the airline uses press releases to promote its services:

The construction of an In-Terminal Hotel takes transit at Addis Ababa to the next level. It addresses the industry's demand and leads us to plan and create efficient and seamless connectivity to enhance the comfort of passengers. We want passengers to depart from their origin city without a single worry about their transit time at Addis Ababa Airport should they choose to stay there as we are waiting for them with a comfortable space where they can freshen up before boarding their next flight. (Ethiopian Airlines, 2022)

As indicated in the above-mentioned press releases, the Public Relations office of Ethiopian Airlines contributes for the marketing efforts of the airline by developing promotional contents and disseminating them on its digital platforms.

The analysis of selected social media posts of the airline and Skylight Hotel (one of its business units) confirms the statements made by the Sales and Communications office of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel, which are mentioned above. The Sales and Communications office of the Hotel gets all its contents reviewed by the Public Relations and Corporate Communication Department of the airline before they are posted on social media. In a post published on the Facebook account of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel (<https://www.facebook.com/etskylight>) on December 31, 2021, the hotel announced that it has started offering brunch service on Sundays by the Pool Bar in the hotel. (See Appendix XXI) The post also adds that the brunch is accompanied with 'live piano performance and complementary kid's buffet.'

This post, which is reviewed by the Public Relations and Corporate Communication Department, is yet another testimony that the Public Relations office supports the marketing efforts of all business units of Ethiopian Airlines Group by participating in the crafting and recrafting of the messages the business units disseminate.

Similarly, Ethiopian Skylight Hotel posted a content on November 25, 2021 announcing its package called 'Skylight Kids Dine & Stay FREE' (See Appendix XXII). The post highlighted free meal and room service for children to enjoy for services booked by adults (their parents). The content aims at promoting the sale of the hotel's meal and room service by providing free offers for kids as incentives.

Like the other social media contents posted by Ethiopian Skylight Hotel, this one is also reviewed and polished by the Public Relations and Corporate Communication Department of Ethiopian Airlines, highlighting the support the PR office provides for the marketing endeavours of the airline and its business units.

The researcher has also analysed selected tweets Ethiopian Airlines and Skylight Hotel put out in 2014 E.C as part of the data analysis to address the second research question. A tweet was posted by Ethiopian Skylight Hotel August 28, 2022 to promote the hotel's new year package. (See Appendix XXIII) The tweet announced Ethiopian New Year special offer from the hotel with discounted room rates which lasted until the end of September 2022.

As mentioned earlier, all social media contents put out by Ethiopian Skylight Hotel are reviewed and signed off by the Public Relations and Corporate Communication Department before they are published. This indicates the support the Public Relations office provides to the marketing efforts of the airline and its business units, such as Skylight Hotel.

Likewise, on October 13, 2021, the Public Relations office tweeted a content which encouraged members of the frequent flyer program of Ethiopian Airlines, called ShebaMiles, to travel more and accumulate miles, which enables them to buy tickets with their miles when the miles they collected reaches a certain level.

The tweet said, *'Earn 1 Status Mile for every 5 Award Miles you buy or receive as gift online until October 31, 2021. Don't miss this chance!'* (See Appendix XXIV) As can be seen from the tweet, the content is a promotional one aiming to get ShebaMiles members to travel more, earn more miles and also achieve their next tier level in their ShebaMiles membership. The tweet is yet another manifestation of the contribution of the Public Relations office to the marketing efforts of Ethiopian Airlines.

The LinkedIn posts of Ethiopian Airlines also highlight the contribution of the Public Relations office to the marketing campaigns of the airline. For instance, in October 2022, the airline posted a content on LinkedIn to promote the duty free items it offers on board for passengers to purchase. (See Appendix XXV) The post announced new duty free item arrivals along with an artwork depicting the new items. The content also included a link which leads to the web page dedicated for promoting the duty free items the airline offers for passengers. The post aimed at

driving sales of the duty free items of the airline by promoting the new arrivals through the social media channels of the airline.

The other LinkedIn post published by the Public Relations office was released in September 2022, announcing the award Ethiopian Airlines won from the Global Travel Magazine. (See Appendix XXVI) The prize was awarded to Ethiopian Airlines for being voted as “Favorite Airline in Africa” in 2022 based on customers’ survey conducted by Global Travel Magazine.

The post included a photo of the regional manager of Ethiopian Airlines in the United States receiving the award. In addition to informing audiences about the award the airline won, this post also highlights that the airline has been rated the most favored African airline by passengers, which, in turn, would likely attract more customers for the airline.

The marketing role of the Public Relations office is once again manifested in this post. The Public Relations office developed the content of the post and shared it on its social media pages, as part of its support to build and nurture the airline’s brand thereby increasing the possibility of attracting more customers for the company. Like the other social media posts of the airline, this one also demonstrates the contribution of the Public Relations department to promote the airline and its services.

Analysing selected Instagram posts of Ethiopian Airlines and Ethiopian Skylight Hotel further highlights the contribution of the Public Relations office to the promotion of the airline and its services using all available channels including social media pages. On September 4, 2021, Ethiopian Skylight Hotel posted a content which promoted the hotel as a preferred venue for hosting meetings and conferences (See Appendix XXVII).

The post also states that the dedicated staff of the hotel are ready to support customers who want to organize meetings and conferences at the hotel, as indicated in the following quotation of the content:

Our staff understand the importance of connecting at your next meeting. We make it easy to plan and book your meeting space so you can focus on creating moments that matter. Have questions about having your event at

Skylight Conference Center? Get answers to your questions by contacting one of our event specialists. (Ethiopian Skylight Hotel, 2021)

Similarly, at the start of the Christmas season of 2022, Ethiopian Skylight Hotel posted a content on Instagram to promote a dinner package at one of the restaurants of the hotel in celebration of the Thanks Giving holiday (See Appendix XXVIII). The content starts with a catchy quote about gratitude and a photo of a delicious looking roasted chicken served with wine and other delicacies, to attract the audiences to be part of the Thanks Giving celebration.

Like the other social media posts of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel, the above mentioned Instagram post was also reviewed and approved by the corporate Public Relations office of Ethiopian Airlines. This highlights that the contribution of the Public Relations office to the marketing efforts of the entire company is not confined to posting contents on the social media pages it manages. It indicates that the office also contributes its share by providing professional support such as reviewing and editing the contents of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel before they are shared on social media.

The data analysis of the researcher to address the second research question also includes media coverages the airline enjoyed during the year 2014 (Ethiopian Calendar). Accordingly, news items published by in Addis Standard Magazine and Air Cargo News have been selected for analysis. In May 2022, Addis Standard Magazine published a news story that focused on the announcement Ethiopian Airlines and Boeing made regarding an order the airline placed with Boeing to purchase five B-777 Freighters (See Appendix XXIX).

The story quoted the CEO of Ethiopian Airlines Group as saying that the new freighters will help the airline to increase the number of its freighters thereby expanding the air cargo service it delivers to customers. The news story, which is based on a press release the airline issued, also highlights that the continued acquisition of modern airplanes shows Ethiopian Airline's leadership in Africa in terms of introducing the latest aviation technology. Revealing the marketing element of the communication, the CEO's quote in the news story also stressed that the airline is expanding its fleet to satisfy its customers:

We always strive to serve our customers with the latest technology aircraft the aviation industry could offer. Our cargo terminal is Africa's largest, coupled with fuel-efficient freighters and well-trained cargo handling professionals will enable our customers get the best quality shipment service. Customers can rely on Ethiopian for wide-ranging cargo services across five continents. (Addis Standard Magazine, 2022)

Considering that Ethiopian Airlines got this new coverage as a result of a press release the Public Relations office released, one can see that the office contributes to the promotion of the airline's services through news media as well, by leveraging its smooth relationship with local and international media outlets.

Similarly, Ethiopian Airlines was featured in a news coverage by Air Cargo News back in March 2022 for partnering with International Djibouti Industrial Park Operation and Air Djibouti to provide multimodal sea-air transport between China and Africa. (See Appendix XXX) The news story indicated that the partnership enables the airline and its partners to provide cheaper and faster service to cargo customers who have been relying on sea transport for cargo shipment between the two regions.

The news coverage, which is based on a press release issued by the airline, indicated that African businesses, multinational companies, Chinese companies and other business people will benefit immensely from the new partnership among Ethiopian Airlines, International Djibouti Industrial Park Operation and Air Djibouti.

The above-cited news published by Air Cargo News helps market the multimodal transport service to be delivered by the airline and its partners, and potentially attract customers such as multinational corporations and businesses both in China and Africa to use the services of Ethiopian Airlines and its partners for their cargo transport needs. The news story, which is delivered to Air Cargo News by the Public Relations and Corporate Communication Office, clearly shows the contribution of the office towards the promotion of the airline and its services.

4.4. Perceptions of staff about PR's role in marketing

One of the research questions this study set out to answer focuses on the perceptions of staff working in the Public Relations and Advertising departments of Ethiopian Airlines. The question reads, "What are the perceptions of Public Relations and Marketing practitioners of Ethiopian Airlines Group regarding the support PR offers in marketing the airline's services?"

This is one of the questions the researcher tried to address by analysing the responses of the interviewees and focus group discussion participants who took part in the research. Responding to the question, the Acting Manager of the Public Relations office of Ethiopian Airlines shared his belief that the PR office plays a key role in the marketing endeavours of the airline.

He mentioned that the office feeds written contents to the Advertising & Sales Promotion department to be used in different promotional materials the Advertising office produces. The Acting Manager adds, "PR provides written contents for the commercials and other promotional tools the advertising office prepares, such as banners. PR supports the marketing wing very well."

The Team Leader in the Advertising and Sales Promotion office also shared his views which highlighted the crucial role the Public Relations office plays in terms of supporting the branding and marketing activities the airline carries out. The Team Leader says,

The PR office has a vital role in branding and reputation building for the airline through press releases and continuous social media messaging. As far as marketing efforts are concerned, PR and Advertising offices have complementary and somewhat overlapping objectives. (Personal interview, May 2023)

He added that the two offices work jointly in promoting new initiatives of the airline, such as the launch of new flights, and use the communication channels at their disposal to promote the initiative.

Likewise, Interviewee 4, who is the Acting Manager of Sales and Communication office of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel, shared her belief that the corporate Public Relations office plays

irreplaceable role in supporting the hotel to promote its services. She stressed that the PR team provides technical support in developing written contents for the weekly newsletter the hotel sends out to customers.

The Acting manager added:

As the Corporate PR team is better staffed with professionals, we just tell them the concepts and agendas we want to include in the newsletter and they craft it accordingly. These contents could be for promoting our services such as meals, or they could be seasonal offers we come up with. So they provide us with well-crafted contents per our request. (Personal interview, May 2023)

According to her, the Public Relations office also provides support in reviewing contents developed by the hotel's Sales and Communication team. The Public Relations office also assisted the hotel in updating its website to highlight the recent inauguration of the second phase hotel facilities which increased number of rooms. Interviewee 4 adds, "The PR office also supports us with our social media contents whenever we seek their assistance."

Similar views were also reflected by participants from both focus group discussions. The first participant, P1, from the focus group which involved Public Relations staff, expressed her belief that the Public Relations team is doing its best to provide colleagues in the Advertising & Sales Promotion office with world-class contents that match the globally reputed brand of Ethiopian Airlines.

P1 adds:

The airline is a reputable airline which operates globally and it is supposed to put out contents which are high quality, so as to promote its services at the expected level. I believe that the PR team is supporting the Advertising & Sales Promotion office to increase the quality of our marketing communication. (Personal interview, May 2023)

P1 also stressed that her team contributes its share for the promotion of all business units by developing and editing contents based on the requests of the different departments in the airline. This includes translating promotional contents based on the requests of different departments.

P2 from the same group also stressed that PR is like the backbone of the airline's marketing work. According to P2, whenever a certain department or business unit wants to promote its initiatives and services, it forwards its request to the Public Relations office and the office handles the requests in collaboration with the Advertising & Sales Promotion department.

P3, from the same group, also highlighted that the Public Relations team is making vibrant contributions in the marketing efforts of the airline. She cites the written contents the PR office feeds to the Advertising & Sales Promotion office as an example of the support the office provides in the area of marketing. P3 adds, "PR's main aim is promoting and nurturing the brand of the airline, and it makes key contribution towards that end."

Participants in the focus group discussion involving employees from the Advertising and Sales promotion team also shared similar viewpoints regarding the contribution of the Public Relations office to the marketing campaigns of the airline.

The accounts of the interviewees and focus group discussion participants presented above show the predominant perceptions of the participants which highlight the key contribution of the Public Relations office to the marketing endeavours of Ethiopian Airlines.

4.5. Challenges in joint efforts of PR and the Advertising offices

The last research question of this study is, "What are the challenges in the collaboration between PR and Advertising & Sales Promotion departments?" Like for the above research question, the researcher analysed the responses of interviewees and focus group discussion participants to address the question.

The Director of IMC who oversees the activities of both the Public Relations and Corporate Communication office mentioned no major challenge in the collaboration between the Public Relations office and the Advertising & Sales Promotion department. He indicated that the two sections are working jointly as per their respective missions to promote the airline and its services. He said,

The airline has clear working procedures for PR and Advertising and Promotions, i.e., roles are clear and they work in collaboration. For example, PR prepares content, whereas Advertising section prepares artwork. In so doing, they are enhancing brand and sales of our airline. (Personal interview, May 2023)

However, other interviewees and focus group discussion participants have mentioned challenges that are limiting the integration of the Public Relations and the Advertising & Sales Promotion departments in their joint efforts.

For instance, the Acting Manager of the Public Relations and Corporate Communication office of Ethiopian Airlines, mentioned that there are irregularities when it comes to the joint promotional activities of the two offices. He stressed that the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) arrangement of the airline lacks consistency in its implementation. He also mentioned that project based marketing campaigns tend to get more attention than regular marketing activities, resulting in inconsistent implementation of IMC in the airline.

Despite the joint efforts of the Public Relations and the Advertising offices in the implementation of marketing campaigns, Interviewee 3, a Team Leader in the Advertising office, says there is lack of regular, formal consultations between the two offices on planned promotional activities such as influencer marketing initiatives of the Public Relations office, starting from the planning phase. He adds,

The Advertising office is not asked to comment on the impact of a certain influencer on the brand of Ethiopian Airlines. We don't audit that, and this may negate our marketing efforts due to unwanted brand associations with the selected influencer. (Personal interview, May 2023)

The Team Leader also stated that the absence of common target for the Public Relations and the Advertising teams has posed a challenge when it comes to measuring the impacts of the joint marketing efforts of the two offices.

Some participants of the focus group discussions have also suggested that similar challenges. P4 from the first focus group, which involves Advertising and Sales Promotion staff, alluded to the lack of common working procedures which embody the notion of integration intended in the IMC arrangement of the airline.

P4 pointed out that the absence of such procedures undermine the quality and impact of the joint marketing efforts of the Public Relations and the Advertising offices. He stressed that the adoption of common standards and checklists helps elevate the quality and impact of PR's contribution for marketing endeavours.

This view is also shared by P2 from the second focus group that involves staff from the Public Relations office. She pointed out that the activities of the two offices should be streamlined better through the use of common standards such as service level agreements, so as to increase the quality and impact of PR's contribution for marketing communication.

Likewise, P1 from the Advertising team's focus group highlighted that performance evaluation targets for measuring the contribution of the Public Relations staff may lead the PR team to consider their support to the Advertising team as secondary especially when the PR team is overwhelmed with assignments. P1 firmly believes that making the support PR offers to the Advertising team part of the performance evaluation target of the PR staff could address this challenge.

The other challenge mentioned by the interviewees and focus group discussion participants has to do with the lack of staff in the Public Relations office, who are assigned to handle content development and editing requests. Interviewee 4, who is the Acting Manager of Sales and Communication office of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel, says,

As the contents the hotel puts out have deadlines for preparation, sometimes the PR team struggles to meet the deadlines due to multiple urgent request. When the PR team is overwhelmed, we face challenges. As it stands, there is one PR officer dedicated to support us with our content needs. When that officer is busy with other assignments, we struggle to find another staff who can help us. (Personal interview, May 2023)

P1 from the second focus group involving Public Relations staff, also pointed out that the workforce in the Public Relations office is small considering the sheer size of Ethiopian Airlines and all its business units. She says, “Ethiopian Airlines is a big company with multiple business units, and there is marketing need for each business unit. But the Public Relations team is not large enough to provide support at the expected level.”

P1 added that the lack of manpower in the Public Relations office is causing delays when it comes to handling urgent requests. This, in turn, has led to a tendency whereby some business units develop contents by themselves for disseminating on mass media without the oversight of PR.

Similarly, P3, from the focus group of Advertising and Sales Promotion office, believes that manpower shortage is a critical challenge which is limiting the support the PR office could provide for the marketing efforts of the airline. He adds that lack of staff is also posing a problem in the Advertising and Sales Promotion office, and causes delays when it comes to providing promotional artworks for the Public Relations team to post on social media.

She adds, “The Advertising team handles a flood of requests from the airline’s offices all over the world for producing artworks to print on banners and other promotional materials. Due to this, they struggle when it comes to ensuring timely delivery artworks for the Public Relations team to share on social media.

According to P2, from the second focus group, the relatively higher turnover in the Public Relations office is depriving the office of the manpower it needs to support the airline’s marketing efforts as expected. P2 added that recruiting new staff on time to replace those who quit is critical to boost the support the PR office provides to the Advertising & Sales Promotion department.

Interviewee 3, a Team Leader in the Advertising & Sales Promotion office believes that the uncompetitive salary is partly to blame for the relatively higher turnover in the Public Relations office. He said highly qualified staff in both departments, and especially in the PR office, are leaving the airline due to less competitive salary and benefits.

In addition to the above mentioned challenges, limited staff capacity and skill gaps has been raised as an impediment that is affecting the quality of the joint efforts of the Public Relations and Advertising departments. Interviewee 2, the Acting Manager of the Public Relations office, stresses that the airline is not investing enough on upskilling and capacitating its staff.

He added that employees under the Public Relations and Advertising offices are not receiving the trainings they need to fine tune their skills and contribute better to the airline's marketing efforts.

Interviewee 3, the Team Leader in the Advertising office, on his part said,

There is lack of recurrent trainings which help the staff to develop their skills and perform better in marketing the airline's services. I also see a gap in exploring best practices globally in the realm of PR and marketing, and benchmark the best practices to improve our performance. (Personal interview, May 2023)

From the above discussion, one can infer that there are different challenges that are affecting the joint marketing efforts of the Public Relations and Advertising offices.

4.6. Discussion

As discussed thoroughly throughout this chapter, this research aimed at examining the practice of using public relations to support the marketing efforts of Ethiopian Airlines Group. The researcher has gathered and analyzed the required data in line with the research questions which focus on three thematic areas: the collaboration between PR office and Advertising & Sales Promotion office; the support PR offers for marketing the airline's services; and challenges in the collaboration between PR and Advertising & Sales Promotion departments.

The data gathered through document analysis clearly demonstrate the contribution of the PR office to the marketing efforts of the airline. Contents published online reveal that the PR office uses both owned media and earned media to promote Ethiopian Airlines and its services. Analyzed samples from the Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram pages of the airline as well as its website have shown that the airline uses its digital platforms to disseminate contents

which have marketing elements such as the launch of new flight routes, inauguration of new facilities and awards the airline won.

The interviewees and focus group discussion participants also stressed that the social media pages and the website of the airline are useful platforms for the PR office to disseminate contents which promote the airline and its services. The relevant management staff interviewed, including the director of IMC, highlighted that the airline's website and social media pages are key channels for marketing its services and business units.

To show the company-wide marketing support the PR office offers, the researcher also analyzed samples from the social media pages of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel which is owned by Ethiopian Airlines Group. The acting manager of the sales and communication office of the hotel confirmed that the social media pages are useful platforms for the hotel to promote its services including room service and seasonal offers and packages.

The document analysis also showed that the PR office contributes to the marketing efforts of the airline and its business units by providing written contents to disseminate through digital platforms. The sales and communication office of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel has benefited immensely from the support of the corporate PR office in terms of obtaining written contents and translated texts for its marketing communications.

This contribution of the PR office is also confirmed in the interview with the acting manager of the sales and communication office of Ethiopian Skylight hotel. The other interviewees and focus group discussion participants also stated that the PR office plays a critical role in marketing efforts by crafting texts to include in the promotional items prepared by the Advertising and Sales Promotion office including banners, posters and digital artworks.

The interviewees and focus group discussion participants also stated that the PR office and the Advertising and Sales Promotion office have close working relations because of the overlapping nature of their roles. The participants highlighted that the PR office provides written contents for the artworks and other promotional items prepared by the Advertising and Sales Promotion office. They stated that the PR office also gets images and digital artworks for its social media communication from the Advertising and Sales Promotion office. This indicated the collaboration and team work of the two offices in marketing Ethiopian Airlines and its services.

The above discussion addresses the first two focus areas of the research questions which are related to the support PR offers for marketing the airline's services, and the collaboration between the PR department and the Advertising & Sales Promotion office. The other focus area of the research questions is related to the challenges in the collaboration between the two departments. As explained by the interviewees and discussion participants, although the two offices are collaborating with each other, their cooperation is sometimes hampered by the lack of manpower.

The discussions have showed that high turnover in the PR office is particularly putting pressures on the existing employees and causing delays when it comes to handling requests from the Advertising & Sales Promotion department. The number of staff in the Advertising & Sales Promotion office is also small compared to the company-wide support the office provides. This, in turn, is causing delays in providing the artworks the PR office needs for disseminating through its digital platforms.

The other challenge the participants pinpointed is related to the lack of common working procedures and standards which govern the joint promotional activities of the two offices. Some participants believe that adopting common procedures and standards is important to maximize the quality and impact of the joint promotional efforts of the two offices. One participant has also pointed out that including common activities in the performance evaluation targets of staff in the two departments is critical to ensure effective and timely collaboration.

The loose bond among departments which come under the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) directorate and gaps in the implementation of the airline's IMC arrangement, are also challenges highlighted by the participants. One of the interviewees stressed that although IMC campaigns have been conducted to promote some initiatives of the airline, the IMC arrangement is not implemented on a regular basis to synchronize the joint activities of the PR office and the Advertising & Sales Promotion office.

Full implementation of the IMC arrangement could solve the problem some participants mentioned regarding the absence of regular consultations between the two offices starting from the planning phase to the execution of joint promotional activities.

Lack of recurrent profession-based training is also another challenge mentioned by focus group discussion participants. Some participants stated that recurrent trainings are crucial to address the skill gaps of staff and ensure world-class marketing communication that matches the reputation of Ethiopian Airlines. According to the participants, continuous trainings enable staff to benchmark and adopt global best practices thereby maximizing the impacts of the airline's marketing campaigns.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Based on this study, the researcher set out to find out the practice of using public relations to support the marketing efforts of Ethiopian Airlines Group. The researcher used qualitative methods to gather and analyze the required data so as to determine the contribution of PR in promoting the airline and its services. The data collected from different sources have been analyzed thematically in line with the focus areas of the research questions laid out in the first chapter.

The analyzed data and the findings point to the following conclusions.

1. The Public Relations and Corporate Communication office of Ethiopian Airlines plays a key role in supporting the marketing efforts of the airline.

The PR office uses both its own digital media, such as website and social media pages, to put out contents that promote the brand and services of the airline. The PR office also uses earned media including local and international media outlets to disseminate contents which put the airline in a positive light and add to its favorable reputation.

2. The Public Relations and Corporate Communication office and the Advertising and Sales Promotion office of the airline work jointly in promoting the airline and its services.

The two offices support each other closely due to the overlapping nature of their roles. Despite challenges, they feed each other with the contents they need so as to collaboratively promote the airline and its services through social and mass media as well as other promotional tools such as banners, posters and digital artworks.

3. Although the two offices work jointly in implementing marketing campaigns, there is lack of well-developed formal procedures and standards to properly guide their joint promotional activities.

Some irregularities are observed in the joint promotional activities of the two offices due to lack of binding working standards to effectively synchronize their activities and maximize the impacts of their promotional endeavors.

4. Gaps are observed in the implementation of the IMC arrangement of the airline on regular, non-project based promotional activities of the PR department and the Advertising and Sales Promotion office.

Though IMC is adopted by Ethiopian Airlines as the means for implementing the airline's marketing communication, there are no well integrated marketing communication activities among the sections which come under the IMC Directorate. These gaps deprive the airline of the synergistic benefits it could gain through full implementation of IMC in the airline.

5. There is manpower shortage in both the PR office and the Advertising and Sales Promotion office.

The relatively higher staff turnover in the PR office has put pressure on the existing employees working in the office in addition to causing delays in handling the requests of the Advertising and Sales Promotion office and other departments. The small staff size of the Advertising and Sales Promotion office is also causing delays in the provision of images and digital artworks to the PR office, due to the high number of requests the Advertising office receives from multiple departments.

6. There is lack of recurrent profession-based training tailored for employees working in the PR office and the Advertising and Sales Promotion office.

The lack of such training deprives the staff in these offices of the current global trend and best practices in marketing communications, and ultimately undermine the impact of the marketing endeavors of the airline and its business units.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions elaborated above, the researcher came up with the following recommendations.

1. Ethiopian Airlines should nurture the integration between the PR department and the Advertising and Sales Promotion office to maximize the impacts of its marketing efforts. The airline should look into the existing integration between the two offices and address bottlenecks which prevent them from contributing their best for the success of the airline's marketing efforts.
2. Ethiopian Airlines should put in place enforceable common working procedures and standards to streamline the activities of the PR department and the Advertising and Sales Promotion office. The airline should explore ways to better synchronize the joint activities of the two offices in marketing the airline's services.
3. To make the most out of IMC, the airline should overhaul its IMC arrangement and ensure that it is implemented on a regular basis. The full implementation of IMC will likely unleash the synergistic capacities of the offices under the IMC directorate, and elevate the impact of the airline's marketing communication.
4. To address staff turnover, the airline should look into the root causes of the turnover, especially in the PR office, and make necessary measures to address the challenge. The airline should also work on its employee retention schemes including by revising its enumeration scale and benefit packages to become employer of choice.
5. Fine-tuning the skills of employees through recurrent trainings is critical to keep pace with the ever-evolving global marketing trends. Hence, Ethiopian Airlines should pay attention and allocate resources to continuously provide profession-based training to employees working in the PR department and the Advertising and Sales Promotion office.

5.3 Further studies

The researcher believes that the current study provides a glimpse into the current practice of using public relations to support the marketing efforts of Ethiopian Airlines. Future studies could broaden the methodological scope of the study and further investigate the framework within which the PR office is contributing to the marketing efforts of the airline. They could, then, provide recommendations based on global practices on the best arrangement for the PR office to maximize the impact of its contribution in promoting the airline and its services.

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Appendices

1. Appendix I: Interview questions for Director of Integrated Marketing Communication

- a) How do the PR and Advertising & Sales Promotion departments collaborate under the IMC directorate to promote Ethiopian Airlines' services?
- b) In which areas of marketing does the PR office provide support?
- c) What challenges are PR and Advertising & Sales Promotion departments facing in their joint efforts?
- d) What solutions do you recommend to address the challenges?

2. Appendix II: Interview questions for Managers and Team Leaders

- a) How do the PR and Advertising & Sales Promotion departments collaborate in the airline's marketing efforts?
- b) In which areas of marketing does the PR office provide support?
- c) What challenges are PR and Advertising & Sales Promotion departments facing in their integration?
- d) What solutions do you recommend to address the challenges?

3. Appendix III: Focus Group Discussion points for Public Relations office staff

- e) How would you describe the integration between PR and the corporate Advertising & Sales office/the Sales and Communication office of Skylight Hotel?
- f) What are your perceptions about the support PR offers in marketing the airline's/the hotel's services?
- g) What bottlenecks do you see in these joint efforts?
- h) What remedies do you suggest?

4. Appendix IV: Focus Group Discussion points for Advertising & Sales office staff

- a) How would you describe the integration between PR and the corporate Advertising & Sales office/the Sales and Communication office of Skylight Hotel?
- b) What are your perceptions about the support PR offers in marketing the airline's/the hotel's services?
- c) What bottlenecks do you see in these joint efforts?
- d) What remedies do you suggest?

5. Appendix V: Press release about the launch of online booking system for cargo customers



Ethiopian Cargo and Logistics Services Avails Online Air Cargo Booking Platform

Addis Ababa, 12 January 2022

Ethiopian Cargo & Logistics Services, Africa's largest network operator has launched a new feature that enables customers to make online reservations for their cargo.

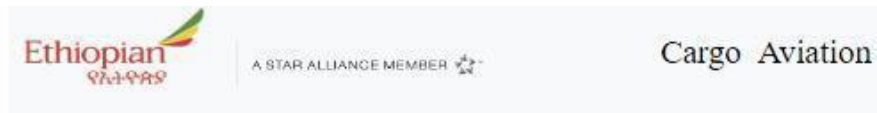
The platform enables customers check flight schedules, space availability, loadability of freight and make real-time booking of their shipment in single and convenient way on cargobooking.ethiopianairlines.com.

Ethiopian Cargo & Logistics Services is rolling out the online booking subsequent to its introduction of the mobile application to heighten its customer's experience. The Mobile App which is available for Android and IOS, brings convenience to customers with a real-time update through a range of self-service features. On the Mobile App, customers can check flight schedule, submit enquiry, receive notifications when the shipment is ready, book charter flights and track shipments.

Ethiopian Airlines GCEO Mr. Tewolde GebreMariam said "We are pleased to offer our customers with convenience in their experience of air cargo booking. We are committed to start walking the long walk of taking out paper from entire air cargo process by digitalizing the logistics value chain. Taking out paper from logistics value chain is not only convenient and hassle free service for customers but also it delivers more efficient operational excellence and achieves long term sustainability goals. Our online booking platform will be crucial in empowering direct cargo customers and forwarders with reliable access to our cargo capacity inventory. Besides, our cargo division has proved to the world that it is a genuine partner in times of dire need by delivering lifesaving PPE's (personal Protective Equipment) and hundreds of millions various vaccines to all major continents of the world."

Ethiopian provides its customers with fully automated cargo service using the latest technologies for data, information and market intelligence with 100% e-AWB from its main hub in Addis Ababa. Ethiopian Airlines has transformed its cargo operations and provides fully automated cargo service with one of the latest Cargo IT systems by adopting the latest aviation systems and technologies.

6. Appendix VI: Press release about the start of new flight to Washington DC through Lomé



Ethiopian launches new flight connecting Lomé with Washington DC

Ethiopian launches new flight connecting Lomé with Washington DC

Addis Ababa, 01 June 2022

Ethiopian Airlines, Africa's leading carrier, commenced thrice-weekly passenger service to Washington DC via Lomé, Togo as of 01 June 2022. The new flight increases the frequency of Ethiopian Airlines' flights to Washington DC to 10 from the existing seven weekly flights it operates via Dublin. The new flight is operated with B787-800 as per the below schedule.

Flight number	Frequency	Departure airport	Arrival airport	Aircraft type
ET 0516	Mon, Wed, Sat	ADD	LFW	B787-800
ET 0516	Mon, Wed, Sat	LFW	IAD	B787-800
ET 0517	Mon, Wed, Sat	IAD	LFW	B787-800
ET 0517	Tue, Thu, Sun	LFW	ADD	B787-800

Commenting on the launch of the new flight, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mr Mesfin Tasew remarked, "We are very pleased to launch a new passenger service connecting Lomé with Washington DC. The U.S. is one of our most important markets due to the presence of a large African community and the growing business and tourism ties with Africa. The new flight further enhances the air connectivity between Africa and the U.S. and helps in fostering the economic, trade, tourism and diplomatic ties between the two regions. Going forward, we will continue to tap into opportunities for growing our services to more destinations in the U.S."

7. Appendix VII: Facebook post on ticket discount for the great homecoming

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December 6, 2021 · 🌐

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👤 Nahom Abera, Samrawit Fekadu and 1.7K others 59 comments · 295 shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share ⚙️


8. Appendix VIII: Facebook announcing the top rank Ethiopian Airlines got in Brand Africa's rating









































የኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ May 27, 2021

የኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ በ #BrandAfrica እ.ኤ.አ በ 2021 በአፍሪካ እጅግ በጣም ከሚደነቁ አገልግሎት ሰጪዎች መካከል ተካተተ። አየር መንገዱ ኮቪድ-19ን ለመከላከል በአህጉርና በዓለም አቀፍ ደረጃ የህክምና ቁሳቁሶችንና የኮቪድ-19 ክትባትን በማማኃገዝ ላስመዘገበው አስደናቂ ስራ የአምስተኛ ደረጃን አግኝቷል።

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYso0CByNXg>
<https://twitter.com/AfricanBizMag/status/1397130147250253833>

MOST ADMIRED AFRICAN BRAND



PROMPTED			UNPROMPTED		
Rank	Brand	Country	Rank	Brand	Country
1	 DANGOTE		1	 SABIC	
2	 MTN		2	 DANGOTE	
3	 DStv		3	 SABIC	
4	 Safaricom		4	 DStv	
5	 Ethiopian Airlines		5	 Safaricom	
6	 Safaricom		6	 Ethiopian Airlines	
7	 Safaricom		7	 SABIC	
8	 JUMIA		8	 JUMIA	
9	 glo		9	 MASECO	
10	 MASECO		10	 glo	

2021 Brand Africa 100 @BrandAfrica #MostAdmiredBrand2021 www.brand.africa

259 3 comments 7 shares

9. Appendix IX - Tweet about the launch of flights to Semera, Afar



10. Appendix X: Tweet promoting Christmas eve dinner and Christmas day lunch package of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel

 Ethiopian Skylight Hotel @etskylight · Dec 10, 2022 ...
JOIN US TO CELEBRATE THE JOY FULL CHRISTMAS AT ADD RESTAURANT!

Celebrate Christmas with a delicious Christmas Eve dinner on the 24th and amazing lunch on the 25th of December 2022 with a glass of Christmas cocktail.

[#EthiopianSkylightHotel](#) [#SkylightHotel](#)



11. Appendix XI: LinkedIn post promoting the flight of Ethiopian Airlines connecting Addis Ababa and Doha



12. Appendix XII: LinkedIn post promoting the start of flights to Bulawayo, Zimbabwe



13. Appendix XIII: Instagram post promoting Ethiopian Aviation University



14. Appendix XIV: Instagram post about Meskel celebration tour package offer from ET Holidays



The image shows an Instagram post from the account 'fly.ethiopian'. The main visual is a photograph of a Meskel celebration parade, featuring participants in white robes with red and green sashes, carrying large wooden horns. A text overlay in the top left of the image reads: 'MESKEL CELEBRATION', 'Monday, September 26, 2022', 'Starting from USD 345', '2 Nights', and '3 Days'. The post text on the right says: 'fly.ethiopian Ethiopian Meskel Festival will be celebrated on September 26 & 27, 2022. Join us in Addis Ababa to celebrate this colorful and truly remarkable event! Don't miss out - Book Now and be a part of this wonderful celebration!'. Below the text are several hashtags: '#Landoforigins #Meskelcelebration #Truecross #Festivity #AddisAbaba #Meskelsquare #EthiopianHolidays #FlyEthiopian #ETHolidays'. At the bottom, there are icons for heart, comment, share, and a location pin, along with the text '232 likes' and 'AUGUST 5, 2022'.

15. Appendix XV: FBC's coverage about the new online platform Ethiopian Airlines launched for cargo customers



HOME NEWS BUSINESS SPORT **LIVE** LANGUAGES ARCHIVE



Ethiopian Cargo Launches Capacity E-Bookings Platform

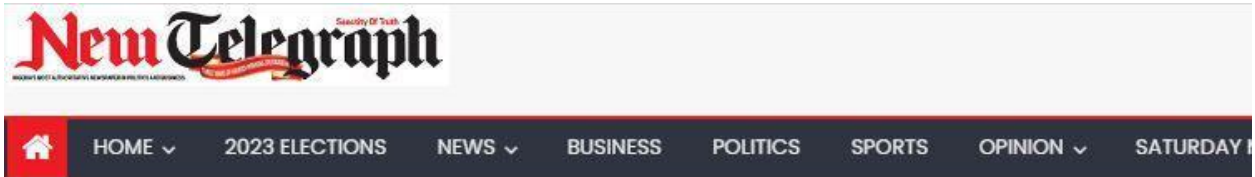
On Jan 12, 2022 285

Addis Ababa, January 12, 2022 (FBC) –Ethiopian Cargo and Logistics Services has adopted an online e-bookings platform.

Customers will now be able check flight schedules and book space for their shipments in real-time utilizing the platform on the African airline's website.

The move follows the airfreight division introducing a mobile app which allows customers to check flight schedules, track their airfreight shipments and activate requests for charter flights.

16. Appendix XVI: The New Telegraph's coverage on the SKYTRAX 2022 World Airline Awards Ethiopian Airlines won



Travel & Tourism

Ethiopian Airlines wins big at SKYTRAX 2022 World Airline Awards, earns higher global rating

October 8, 2022 Andrew Iro Okungbowa Comment(0)

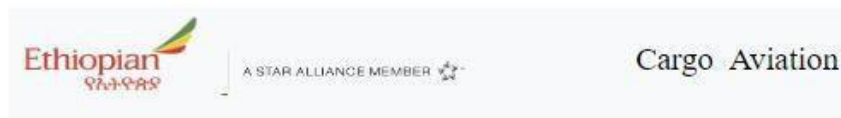
Ethiopian Airlines, which is globally recognised as the largest Aviation group in Africa and a leading global airline, has scooped multiple awards as it clinched four awards in the recently held SKYTRAX 2022 World Airline Awards in London.

This is coming on the heels of its moving 11 place higher in the world's top 100 airlines rating recently released as it placed 26th in the World's Top 100 Airlines for 2022 as voted by airline customers around the world. Ethiopian won in the categories of; Best Airline in Africa 2022 for fifth consecutive years; Best Business Class Airline in Africa 2022 for

17. Appendix XVII: Interview questions for Managers and Team Leaders

- a. How do the PR and Advertising & Sales Promotion departments collaborate in the airline's marketing efforts?
- b. In which areas of marketing does the PR office provide support?
- c. What challenges are PR and Advertising & Sales Promotion departments facing in their integration?
- d. What solutions do you recommend to address the challenges?

18. Appendix XVIII: Press release about the launching of tour services through a partnership of Ethiopian Airlines with GetYourGuide



Ethiopian Launches Tour and Activities Services in Partnership with GetYourGuide

Addis Ababa, 05 August 2022

Ethiopian Airlines, the largest aviation group in Africa, has partnered with the globally leading online booking platform GetYourGuide, to offer passengers an unforgettable travel experience. This partnership provides Ethiopian Airlines' customers easy access to book travel activities alongside their flight. Passengers will have the option of booking high quality and well-curated tours and activities online either immediately after booking flights or at a later date.

Regarding the partnership Ethiopian Airlines Chief Commercial Officer Mr. Lemma Yadecha said "Ethiopian strives to offer passengers a service beyond just travel and its ancillary services are its tools in doing so. The new partnership with GetYourGuide will be the new stream of convenience our leisure passengers can enjoy. Putting our vast network and GetYourGuide's services in major cities around the world into consideration, our passengers will have a great number of exciting experiences to choose from."



19. Appendix XIX: Press release about the start of new flight to Amman, Jordan



Ethiopian to Welcome Amman to its Extensive Network

Addis Ababa, 29 August 2022

Ethiopian Airlines, the largest network operator in Africa is pleased to announce that it has finalized all preparations to commence a passenger flight to Amman, Jordan as of September 19, 2022.

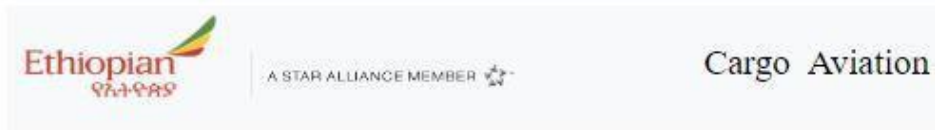
The thrice weekly flight will be operated as per the below schedule.

Flight Number	Frequency	Departure Airport	Departure time	Arrival Airport	Arrival Time	Sub Fleet
ET 428	Mon, Wed, Sat	ADD	22:30	AMM	02:05	737
ET 429	Tue, Thu, Sun	AMM	03:05	ADD	06:44	737

Regarding the new flight Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mr. Mesfin Tasew remarked, “We are truly pleased to further deepen our presence in the middle east with our new flight to Amman, Jordan, and our pleasure is doubled since we are able to do it at such a difficult time for the aviation industry. With the commencement of our new flight to Amman, passengers departing from/to the middle east can enjoy the extensive Ethiopian network worldwide with convenient connectivity and smooth transfer at Addis Ababa. Our new flight will also further strengthen the economic ties between Ethiopia and Jordan.”

Located between the desert and the fertile Jordan Valley, Jordan’s capital Amman, where the old meets the new, is an ideal location for holidaymakers. With an astonishing scenery of ancient civilization and modernity, the city has plenty to offer for visitors. As part of its strategic plan, Ethiopian is growing its network stretching to more destinations, widening its reach and providing more options to its passengers.

20. Appendix XX: Press release about the inauguration of Ethiopian Airlines' Five-Star Hotel in Addis Ababa Bole International Airport Terminal



Ethiopian Airlines Opens a Five-Star In-Terminal Hotel Inside Addis Ababa Bole International Airport

Ethiopian Airlines Opens a Five-Star In-Terminal Hotel Inside Addis Ababa Bole International Airport

Addis Ababa, 13 September 2022

Ethiopian Airlines Group, the largest aviation group in Africa, has completed the first phase of its In-Terminal Hotel construction. In a continuous effort to ensure the convenience and comfort of passengers, crews and airlines using Addis Ababa as a hub, the In-Terminal Hotel construction began in December 2020. The Hotel is physically connected to Addis Ababa Bole International Departure Terminal 02 with a short walking distance from departure gate and will be managed by Ethiopian Skylight Hotel as Ethiopian Skylight In-Terminal Hotel. The two-phased project reached the completion of the first phase, availing 41 rooms for guests.

The lavish Ethiopian Skylight In-Terminal Hotel accommodates 97 modern, spacious, and luxurious rooms, including a restaurant and other facilities. It incorporates various categories such as an executive suite, a premium room for the differently abled, 12 interconnected rooms, 30 twin rooms, and 53 double rooms. The new Ethiopian Skylight In-Terminal Hotel will cater to passengers and crews who do not wish to leave the airport for any reason, enabling the airport to provide the most convenient travel experience possible and making it preferable for seamless connections.

Following the completion of the first phase, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mr. Mesfin Tasew said, “The extensive Ethiopian network brings millions of passengers through Addis Ababa each year. As a customer-focused airline, we want our passengers to enjoy every minute they spend with us, even their transit hours at the airport. The construction of an In-Terminal Hotel takes transit at Addis Ababa to the next level. It addresses the industry’s demand and leads us to plan and create efficient and seamless connectivity to enhance the comfort of passengers. We want passengers to depart from their origin city without a single worry about their transit time at Addis Ababa Airport should they choose to stay there as we are waiting for them with a comfortable space where they can freshen up before boarding their next flight.”

21. Appendix XXI: Facebook post promoting Ethiopian Skylight Hotel's brunch package

 Ethiopian Skylight Hotel
December 31, 2021 · 🌐

Pool Brunch is Back!

Enjoy Sunday Brunch @ Aquarius Pool Bar from 12:00-15:00 with Live piano Performance, in the house Cocktails/Mocktails, and complimentary Kids' Buffet.

For more information or to book your table, please call +251 116 818 181 or email add.restaurant@ethiopiaskylighthotel.com.

[#ethiopiaskylightethiopiaskylight](#) [#etskylight](#) [#ethiopiaskylighthotel](#) [#skylighthotel](#) [#Brunch](#) [#Ethiopian](#) [#sundaybrunch](#)



Indulge yourself
at our *Sunday Brunch*

Ethiopian  SKYLIGHT HOTEL

22. Appendix XXII: Facebook post promoting ‘Skylight Kids Dine & Stay FREE’ package

 **Ethiopian Skylight Hotel**
November 25, 2021 · 🌐

Skylight Kids dine & stay FREE
Ethiopian Skylight Hotel is dedicated to delivering family-friendly holiday opportunities. So, it's time for your kids to have fun while you relax and rejuvenate.

Terms & Conditions
Children aged 12 and under dine for free when they choose from the Children Dine Free Menu and are accompanied by a paying adult. Up to 4 children may eat for free.

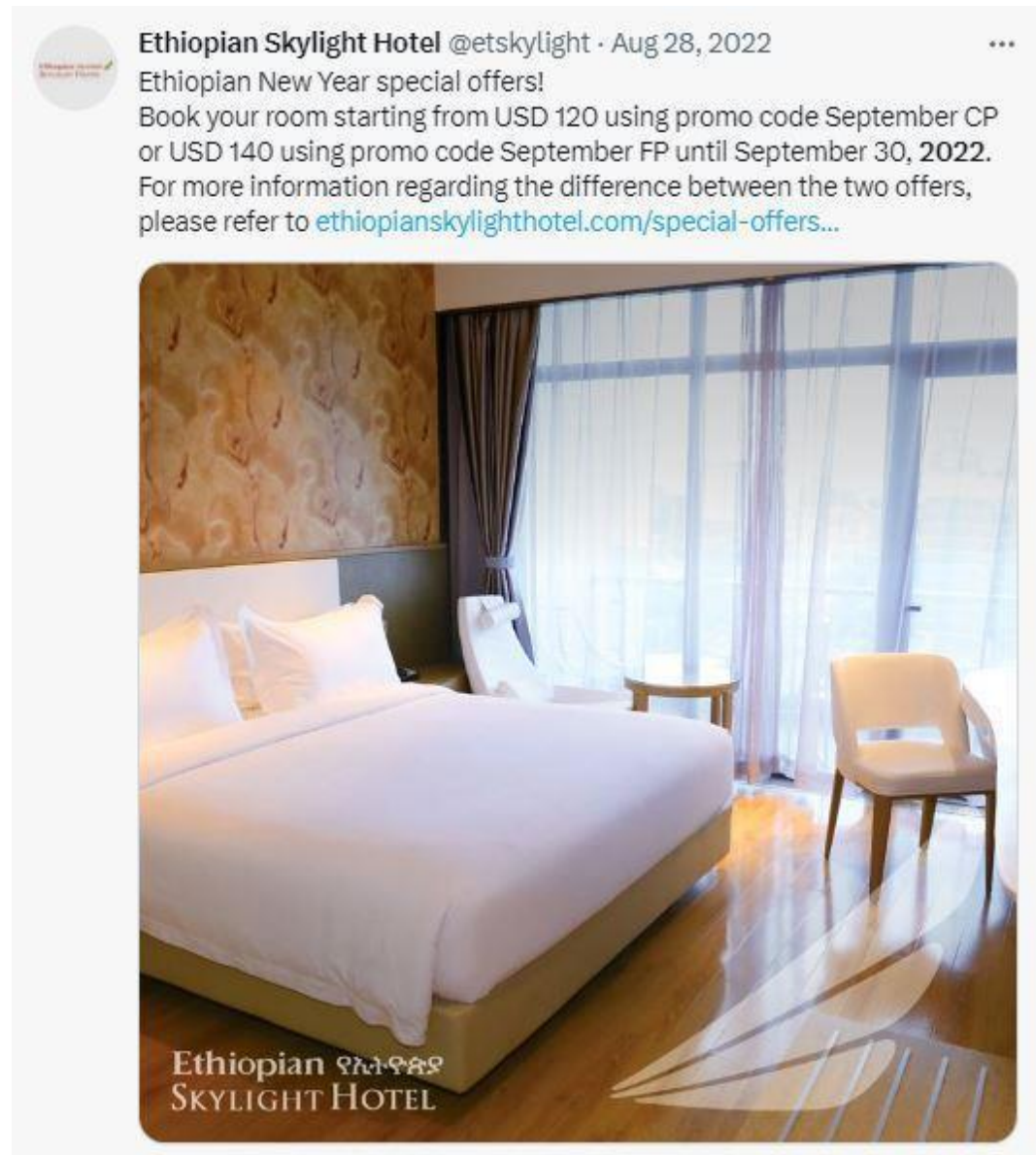
Up to two (2) children stay free when sharing a suite room with up to two (2) adults, and up to one (1) child stay free when sharing a standard room with up to two (2) adults, subject to maximum room occupancy restrictions and subject to availability. Baby cot is complimentary; rollaway beds are chargeable (extra beds are always complimentary for children 12 and under).



SKYLIGHT
KIDS ZONE

Ethiopian SKYLIGHT HOTEL

23. Appendix XXIII: Tweet announcing Ethiopian New Year special offer from Ethiopian Skylight Hotel



24. Appendix XXIV: Tweet promoting Award Miles for ShebaMiles members



25. Appendix XXV: LinkedIn post promoting duty free items



Ethiopian Airlines
200,436 followers
8mo • Edited •

New Arrivals! The Onboard Sheba Duty Free shopping experience just got even better!

Check out the new items on Sheba Duty Free: <https://lnkd.in/e4AzASxc>

New Arrivals Onboard Sheba Duty Free

shebadutyfree.ethiopianairlines.com

Sheba Duty Free

STAR ALLIANCE | 25 YEARS

BOOK | PAY | CHECK-IN ONLINE
www.ethiopianairlines.com

Ethiopian
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The image shows a LinkedIn post from Ethiopian Airlines. The post features a collection of duty-free items including Versace perfume, sunglasses, jewelry, and Mercedes-Benz merchandise. The background is a light green gradient with a white diagonal line. The text is in a clean, sans-serif font. The Ethiopian Airlines logo is visible in the bottom right corner.

26. Appendix XXVI: LinkedIn post announcing the award Ethiopian Airlines won from the Global Travel Magazine



27. Appendix XXVII: Instagram content marketing Ethiopian Skylight Hotel meeting and conference facilities



28. Appendix XXVIII: Instagram post promoting Thanks Giving dinner package of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel



29. Appendix XXIX: Addis Standard's coverage on Ethiopian Airlines announcement for ordering five B-777 Freighters



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#ASDAILYSCOOP EDITORIAL NEWS FEATURE IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OP/ED COMMENTARY OPINION

Business: Ethiopian Airlines, Boeing announce order for five 777 Freighters

MAY 25, 2022



30. Appendix XXX: Air Cargo News' coverage about the multimodal transport partnership

Air Cargo News Awards

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aircargo NEWS

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Ethiopian targets sea-air in Africa with Djibouti partnership

08 / 03 / 2022

By Damian Brett

A photograph of an Ethiopian Cargo Boeing 747-400 aircraft on a tarmac. The aircraft is white with red lettering that reads "Ethiopian Cargo" on the side. The tail features the Ethiopian flag's colors. The plane is parked on a wet, reflective surface, likely after rain. The sky is clear and blue. In the background, other aircraft and airport infrastructure are visible.