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**INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN REGIONAL IMAGE
BUILDING: THE CASE OF OROMIA COMMUNICATION BUREAU**

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Olansis Mulugeta Wolde, titled “Investigating the Role of Public Relations in National Image Building: The Case of Oromia Communication Bureau” submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communications complies with the regulations of the University and meets accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role and practice of public relations in national image building taking the case of Oromia Regional state Communication Bureau. The study's main focus is the organizations Communication strategy 2020 -2030.

The researcher employed qualitative methodology to gather data. This included deploying purposeful sampling to select key interviewees in relevant organizations as well as systematic review of the OCB strategic communication plan 2020 -2030.

The findings of this study reveal that the current communication strategy deployed by the bureau lacks significant elements pertaining to national image building. The findings have showed conclusively that despite having the mandate to engage in image building activities, the OCB has tailored its communication strategy solely for political communication purpose. This practice has put at risk the image of the region as a whole and the reputation of the organization as the public relations arm of the region.

Based on these findings, the author of this paper has recommended that Oromia Communication Bureau amend its communication strategy and prioritize national image building works along political communication.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis: “Investigating the Role of Public Relations in National Image Building: The Case of Oromia Communication Bureau” is my own work and I have duly acknowledged the sources I have used in this paper.

Name: Olansis Mulugeta Wolde

Signature _____ September, 2022

List of Acronyms

OCB -Oromia Communication Bureau

OTB – Oromia Tourism Bureau

ORS- Oromia Regional State

PR- Public Relations

NESH- National Committee for Research Ethics

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CHAPTER I

1.1 Background of the study

The concept of nation branding is a recent phenomenon in its current form though its genesis has been present for quite some time. The gist of nation branding is creating a positive image of a nation to the outside world by using the history, culture, economy, and politics of that nation (Li, 2016).

The task of building an image, be it a private organization or a government institution, is at the center of its public relations department.

Dinnie (Dinnie, 2008) considers nation branding as an approach employed for establishing a favorable image of a country. He notes that nation branding, and the reputation of a nation are interrelated. On the other hand, Anholt, a reputable scholar in Public relations, explains nation branding as a coordinating act among a country's governmental and non-governmental institutions, tourism agencies and cultural organizations so as to establish a favorable view of the nation (Anholt, 2007).

Organizations, including government bodies often hire PR consultancies to get an insight on how they can maximize their potential in building the image, brand, and reputation of their institution. On the other hand, other organizations prefer to establish in-house PR department to oversee branding and image building.

High level government agencies set up communication departments or bureaus at a high-level position. Often, the people tasked to run these organizations are in par or at least directly accountable to the highest authority within the organization.

Public and, more specifically, government communication involves considerable complexity in terms of goals, needs, audiences, definition, and resources as compared to the corporate sector (Silva, 2007)

Government communication operates in a multilayered and organizationally diverse environment. In relation to the issue of goals, for example, government communication often has to juggle what appear to be conflicting objectives set by political masters.

Communication goals related to Image building are considered problematic by many scholars, particularly by those working in the political communication tradition (Jackson as cited by José Canel, 2013).

In relation to image building, government communication operates on a multilayered level, considering a diverse group of stakeholders including other politicians, service users, minority groups, regulatory bodies, and the like.

The Oromia National Regional State is one of the regional states in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. It shares borderlines with all the Regional States in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, except Tigray. It also shares international borderlines with the Republic of the Sudan (with 66 km borderline) in the west and Kenya Republic (with 521km) in the south (Tombora, 2015).

It is the largest regional state in terms of area with 363,136 km², accounting for about 34.3 percent of the total area of the country. Administratively, the Region is divided into 20 administrative zones, 365 woredas and 20 first level cities (Tombora, 2015).

The Oromia Regional Government Communication Affairs Bureau is one of the sectors, which was established in 1995 as Oromia Culture and Information Bureau. Later, since 2000 named as Oromia Information Bureau then changed its name to Oromia Regional Government Communication Affairs Bureau since 2008. The Bureau has structural departments and offices from regional level up to districts. Nowadays, the bureau is implementing several communication strategies with the purpose to create awareness and develop attitudes of the public on government policies, strategies, and programs through the set of structures (Tombora, 2015).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

A review of much of the government communication literature shows that it is often used to refer solely to top-level executive communication at the presidential or prime ministerial level (Sanders&Canel, 2012).

However, in a country like Ethiopia, where administrative powers are relevant on regional levels, it is imperative to extensively investigate how regional communication bureaus are conducting their public relation affairs to build their image, attract investment and tourism and stand out as the most favorable region to do business.

The practice of administrative regions within a given country implementing PR as a tool to build their own image is not something new and is widely used by administrative provinces, semi-autonomous regions in many countries around the world. Iacuone and Zarrilli for instance have explored extensively how the province of Guangzhou in the Peoples Republic of China effectively implemented a branding strategy to building the image of the province in all sorts of sectors (Iacuone&Zarrilli, 2018)

Similarly, almost all states in the United States, and Germany have their own public relations strategy they implement and regularly update in order to build their image and attract tourists and businesses to their respective state.

This goes to show that in today's competitive and globalized world, nations are encouraged and increasingly obliged to create a "good image" of themselves to cope up with the rapidly changing socio-economic activities. Many scholars agreed that establishing a unique national identity is becoming a matter of significant importance to contend with the ever-increasing new world order.

The examples aforementioned above even go to indicate that a "unique national identity" is not enough anymore to promote one's nation. Administrative Provinces also have to come up with their own unique "regional" identity in order to stand out in the international arena.

As it is the case in Ethiopia, the government agency tasked to develop a communication strategy to build the image of a given region along with other sector bureaus in Ethiopia are regional communication bureaus.

Unfortunately, sufficient studies have not been made to explore how the public relations strategies implemented by regional communication bureaus contribute (positively or otherwise) to the development of a regional brand and image building.

This paper aims to investigate this unexplored yet important area in public relations with specific focus in image building by focusing on Oromia Communication Bureau. The researcher of this paper also hopes that this paper will serve as a basis for future studies that aim to explore and build up on this topic focusing on other regional states.

1.3 Objective of the study

1.3.1 General objective

The main objective of the research is to study the role of public relations for image building and branding in Oromia regional State government communication affairs bureau. It also examines the PR strategies that are employed by the organizations which this study is based upon. In accordance with the overall objective, the research will have the following specific objectives.

1.3.2 Specific Objective

The objective of this paper will be: -

- to investigate to what degree the PR strategy of Oromia – the largest region in Ethiopia plays an image building role in Oromia regional state.
- to analyze how effective this strategy and its role has been in building the image of the region.
- to develop recommendations on how to enhance and effectively utilize the bureau's communication strategy in building the region's image.

1.3 Research questions

The following are research questions this paper aims to investigate.

- Does the Oromia Communication Bureau has a PR strategy to build the image of the region?
- How effective has the strategy been in building the image of the region?
- What further improvements can be made at policy as well as execution level to further enhance the bureau's PR capability in building the region's image?

1.4 Significance of the study

This research attempts to examine the role and practice of public relations for image building and branding in Oromia regional State government communication affairs bureau. The outcome of this research will have the following contributions:

- The Oromia Regional State Communication Affairs Bureau is considered to be first beneficiary of this work as the findings of this research and recommendations that will

be put forward by the researcher are expected to enhance the role the communication bureau plays in the building of the region's image and a reputable brand

- This paper will serve as an input for future researchers who aim to investigate the topic in other regional states.
- PR experts working in other regional states can build on the findings of this paper to adopt the recommendations in their respective regional states.

1.5 Limitation of the Study

Geographically: -The research is conducted in one governmental institution. The governmental institution in focus is Oromia Regional State Communication Affairs bureau located in Addis Ababa. All relevant data gathering will be conducted at the head office of the organization.

Thematically: Exploring Public relations, national image building, and branding is tricky as it is interrelated and influenced by various factors. However, in order not to get out of topic and get the most of out of the findings, this paper focuses only on the role of public relations in national image building with specific focus on Oromia communications Bureau. Key focus areas will be image building, branding and public relations.

Methodologically: This study is delimited to implement a qualitative research approach, with the hope of acquiring the necessary relevant primary and secondary data. Therefore, in-depth interviews are conducted with key informants of public relations professionals using purposive sampling technique in the abovementioned organization, Oromia Communication Bureau.

A systematic review method with limited data extraction approach is also used to gather relevant data from the Oromia Communication Bureau Strategy 2020 -2030

CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

2.1. Public Relations: Definition

C. V. Narasimha Reddi, one of the prominent scholars in Public Relations defines PR as “the management of a two-way communication between an organization and its public to promote the corporate vision, mission, products, services and gain public understanding.” (Reddi, 2019)

On the other hand, the UK’s main body of PR professionals, the institute of public relations, defines PR as “the Planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain good will and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics” (Harrison, 1995) This description incorporates the numerous tasks of a public relations professional as well as the broader purpose of working with the public. Public relations, according to this definition, is the process of creating or establishing mutual understanding between an institution and its constituents. It also implies that public relations isn't a random process. Public relations operations must ensure that not only the organization understands its audiences, but that the audiences understand the organization as well.

Another widely accepted definition of what Public Relation is articulated by the proclaimed scholars Cutlip, Center and Broom. According to them public relation is the “management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics upon whom its success depends.” (Cutlip&Center&Broom, 1985). According to this definition, the public is at the core of PR functions because it is through the public that a specific organization's aims can be accomplished. The success or failure of a corporation is largely determined by its relationships with its numerous stakeholders.

The recent conference of Public Relations Society of America held in 2019, on the other hand defined PR as “a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics” (Pedersen, 2020)

Looking at the above definitions, one cannot help but wonder if there are any other definitions that have been put forth by scholars with specific focus on PR practice as it relates to government. Robert L. Heath, in his contribution to the Encyclopedia of Public Relations described PR in government saying “At the state level, the structure of public relations is

generally the same, with a combination of political appointees in management jobs staffed by a group of civil servants at the executive level.” (Heath, 2004) Even though Heath’s argument certainly has its place when it comes to PR in government, other scholars have also put counter arguments. These arguments are explored in detail in “PR Practice in government section.

2.2 The Concept of Nation, Image Building and branding

When it comes to national image and nation branding, there are a number of scholars who have put for the various definitions and theories. Kunczik for instance, defines it as “the cognitive representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a nation and its people” (Kunczik, 1997) Melissa Aronczyk on the other hand, defines Nation branding as “the interaction between commercial and public sector interests to publicize a national agenda among domestic and international audiences for different mutually related reasons.” (Aronczyk, 2014)

The concept of national image building revolves around two key terminologies: Nation and Image. It also encompasses to some extent the concept of branding. In order to have a full understanding of what the concept entails, it is important to look at how scholars have defined these terms.

2.2.1. Nation

According to Rogers and Smith, as cited by Garrad, et. al., A nation can be defined as “a group of people with a common language, culture and history who identify with each other as belonging to a common political entity” (Garrad_et.al, 2014).

On the other hand, Sarah Smith, a reputable political scholar on the concept of nations defines nation as “collective of belonging, defined through language, religion, ethnicity, place- based ties, shared history, or some combination of these.” (Smith, 2020)

Another scholar on the concept of nations, Maryann Cusimano Love defines nation as “group with a common cultural, linguistic, ethnic, racial, or religious identity— such as the Sioux nation of the US plains or the Kurds in Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Armenia, and Syria.” (Love, 2019).

Mccann and Seung-Kyung, on the other hand provide an elaborate definition of nation articulating it as “as a group whose members, on the basis of some combination of beliefs in a common origin, a common history, and a common destiny, constitute themselves as a community and lay claim to a specified territory and political representation, ranging from cultural autonomy to political statehood.” (MCCANN&Seung-kyung, 2013)

Further arguments have been made by scholars to illustrate that the concept of “nation branding” is not limited to define the branding of a given country. Szoldi for instance, citing Anholt argues that nation branding, state branding and country branding are used interchangeably. Nation branding remains the most popular and widely used form, followed by country branding and state branding. Wilder, as cited by Szoldi also affirms this position stating that “distinction between nation-as-state and nation-as-people is vague and it is not clear what exactly is branded in the course of ‘nation branding’. The nation is a group of people with a common identity, history and destiny which seeks statehood but can also exist independently (Szondi G. , 2008)”

2.2.2 Image

When it comes to the concept of image, there are several definitions put forth by scholars. One definition that stands out and cited by various scholars is the one provided by Nimmo and Savage. They define image as a human construct imposed on an array of perceived attributes projected by an object, event, or person (Nimmo&Savage, 1976)

In the context of National image, Okoroafor and Dike take the definition further and explain it as “the way a nation is popularly perceived or regarded by the public. According to them, it explains the public impression about a nation and its people. It is the picture or perception attributed to a nation by both its nationals and other nations. Put simply, it is the image of a nation as seen in the eye of the citizens of that nation as well as in the eye of others i.e the international public. National image implies a general impression about a nation or country to the public. It includes the reputation and mental picture or idea that is commonly associated with a nation or known of a nation at a point in time.” (Okoroafor&Dike, 2010)

Xiufang Li (Leah) & Naren Chitty, citing Manheim & Albrit-ton further divide the concept of national image into two categories, i.e. perceived images and projected images. (Li&Chitty, 2009)

2.2.2.1 Perceived images of other nations

Perceived images of nations can be identified as the pictures of other nations in the minds of people from the perspective of social psychology. Such an image is tied up with the attributes of the object and those of its beholders. (Li&Chitty, 2009)

The famed scholar on public opinion, Lippmann also elaborates on perceived images describing them as “images are the pictures in people’s head.” He maintains that people define first and then see, rather than see first and then define. The real environment is so

complicated that human beings reduce it to a simpler model, characterized by Lippmann as a pseudo-environment. Gradually a trustworthy picture is formulated by individuals inside their minds of the external world; and a triangular relationship with ‘the scene of action, the human picture of that scene, and the human response to that picture working itself out upon the scene of action’ is set up (p. 11). So he stresses that people respond to situations by experiencing them through pictures drawn previously by themselves or presented to them, rather than directly. (Lippmann, 1922)

Other scholars also elaborate the concept of perceived national images from the social-psychological angle as well. Boulding for instance identifies perceived images as the ‘total cognitive, affective, and evaluative structure of the behaviour unit or its internal view of itself and the universe’ (Boulding, 1959). Boulding, citing Deutsch&Merritt, further elaborates that It is the ‘organized representation of an object in an individual’s cognitive system. The core of an image is the perceived character of the object with which it associates’ The ‘object’ can be an organization or a nation.

2.2.2.2 Projected images of other nations

According to Kunczik, as cited by Li and Chatty (Li&Chitty, 2009), Images arising from an individual’s cognitive systems will not become visible until they are communicated. Mass media acts as a key player in formulating and disseminating the images of nations (Kunczik, 1997)

Hence, it is also vital to include this second dimension when examining a country's image: projected media pictures of other nations.

Images of objects are embedded in the minds of individuals, limited by external and internal factors. Media as the essential channel for people to get information on international issues, contribute heavily to national image projection. “Every public image begins in the mind of some single individual and only becomes public as it is transmitted and shared” (Boulding K. E., 1956). Additionally, From the media angle, national image refers to ‘a representation of a country’s positive or negative standing in media, in terms of historical, political, economic, military, diplomatic and religious context’ (Saleem, 2008)

Furthermore, Noshina, as cited by Saleem, points out that the examination of portrayed media images of a given nation needs to be cognizant of multi-dimensionality. Portrayed media image can be discussed ‘in terms of political, economic, military, diplomatic and religious relations in the changing domestic, regional and international scenario and its effects on the

thoughts, behavior, feelings, and inclinations of the owners of the media organization' (Saleem, 2008)

2.2.3. Branding

Another key concept that has to be defined here is branding, since Image building and branding can be same sides of a different coin. According to Teemu Moilanen and Seppo Rainisto, A brand is an impression perceived in a client's mind of a product or a service. It is the sum of all tangible and intangible elements, which makes the selection unique (Moilanen&Rainisto, 2009)

From a commercial perspective, The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors (Kotler, 2008)

2.2.3.1. Nation Branding

With a specific emphasis to nation branding, it is hard to find a specific, all bounding single definition. For instance, (Aronczyk, 2014) defines Nation branding as the interaction between commercial and public sector interests to publicize a national agenda among domestic and international audiences for different mutually related reasons. Whereas Gudjonsson, as cited by (Nebiyu, 2020) argues that nation branding is a process monopolized by the government which uses its power to change a nation's image.

Despite the lack of a comprehensive definition, there are some key valid viewpoints that can be attributed to the concept of nation branding. A couple of these viewpoints, as pointed out by (Nebiyu, 2020) are firstly, nation branding is that, it is a technique to raise capital by coordinating public and private sector potentials with the aim of assisting the nation-state to contend for global markets, such as tourism, foreign direct investment, import-export trade and skilled man-power. The second notion is that; Nation branding is a useful tool in facilitating a conducive environment for states and state leaders to access a seat at powerful multinational organizations in order to influence decisions. (Aronczyk, 2014) adds a third viewpoint arguing that Nation branding is an activity conducted to "generate a positive foreign public opinion" and nurture national pride.

Gudjonsson as cited by George Szondi also argues "nation branding occurs when a government or a private company uses its power to persuade whoever has the ability to

change a nation's image. Nation branding uses the tools of branding to alter or change the behavior, attitudes, identity or image of a nation in a positive way" (Szondi G. , 2008)

Gudijonsson also rejects the widely held belief that nation branding is a process to brand a nation, contending that governments and other public institutions can employ branding techniques but that nations or their governments cannot be brand per se (Szondi G. , 2008).

Whereas some writers have accepted the concept of "a nation brand", others have expressed their skepticism of the concept of branding as it applies to a nation. For example, Dinnie distinguishes between a national brand and a nation-brand, the latter of which he defines as "the distinctive, multidimensional combination of features that provide the nation with culturally based distinction and relevance for all of its target audiences. (Dinnie K. , 2008)"

George Szondi however, argues that nation branding can be thought of separately from branding. It can be characterized as a nation's strategic self-presentation with the goal of building reputational capital through domestic and international promotion of economic, political, and social interests. When the brand is embraced by the populace, nation branding is successful (Szondi G. , 2008).

2.3 PR practice in Government

The American society for public relations states that for government media relations practice, or for that matter for all kinds of media relations, there are few laws or statutes, regulations or rules that must be followed or must be obeyed—unless, of course, one wants to step over the line into criminal activity. The practice of media relations is not like the practice of law with statutes and court decisions or math with geometric and trigonometric proofs. What we have in media relations in order to succeed are parameters of good and empirical public relations (PR) knowledge, of good media relations writing and practice, and of good and acceptable approaches of working with the media. (Sadow, 2012)

Given the above premises, it is important to dive down and look extensively how other scholars have tried to frame when it comes to defining Public Relations practice in government and strategies that follow in that regard.

The quality of government communication matters for human well-being. Governing necessarily involves constant exchanges of information and communication about policies, ideas and decisions between governors and the governed (Sanders&Canel, 2012)

2.3.1. Defining government communication

Public and, more specifically, government communication involves considerable complexity in terms of goals, needs, audiences, definition and resources as compared to the corporate sector (Batista&DaSilva, 2007)

Jackson as cited by Sanders and Canel also indicates that government communication operates in a multilayered and organizationally diverse environment. In relation to the issue of goals, for example, government communication often has to juggle what appear to be conflicting objectives set by political masters. Communication goals related to persuasion are considered problematic by many scholars, particularly by those working in the political communication tradition (Sanders&Canel, 2012)

In relation to publics, government communication operates on a multilayered level, considering a diverse group of stakeholders including other politicians, service users, minority groups, regulatory bodies, and the like. Heads of communication, for example, in government ministries, agencies and institutions may be appointed on the basis of partisan rather than professional criteria.

A review of much of the political communication literature shows that it is often used to refer solely to top-level executive communication at the presidential or prime ministerial level (Sanders&Canel, 2012)

Indeed, the great majority of government communication research has tended to focus on topics like media management and officeholder rhetoric exclusively in respect to senior national government officials. However, the term "government communication" can also refer to communication carried out by executive entities at the regional and municipal levels. (IPSOS, 2008)

The challenge of defining government communication can be handled on various levels, such as by examining its activities (what it does) or by examining what it is. For example, Howlett regards government communication as a policy tool or instrument to give effect to policy aims; to influence and guide policy activities by the release or withholding of information or knowledge from societal actors, as defined as a policy tool, thus meaning what it accomplishes (Howlett, 2009).

It is plausible that definitions of government communication from the perspective of what *it does* could be restrictive in the sense that they look at activities which are part and only part of what government communication *is*. For instance, in Pfetsch's analysis, government news

management is understood as a strategic variant of public information whereby governments manage communication in order to influence public opinion by controlling the news media agenda (Pfetsch, 2008)

2.4 Public Relations Role in National Image building

According to Kaneva and Popescu (Kaneva, 2011), the purpose of nation branding is to showcase a nation's image by projecting and expressing its distinctive qualities, as well as by enhancing collective memories and a sense of self-identification. Therefore, in this sense, nation branding appears to be significantly influenced by public relations and strategic communication methods. According to Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (Grunig J. D., 2002), public relations programs are essential for assisting any entity in achieving its goals by developing relationships with strategic publics and influencing how both the public and members of the organization perceive the organization. As a result, it can also serve as a significant profession in nation branding by fostering ties between a country and its constituents.

Public relations contributions, which could have further refined nation branding's theoretical underpinnings, have been ignored (Szondi, 2010). Because academicians primarily focus on the significance of public relations at the corporate level rather than the national level, many nation branding studies fail to focus on the strategies employed in nation branding, in particular the public relations techniques. As a result, they ignore the role that public relations can play in nation branding, even though this is essentially a management job (Li, 2016)

Public relations undoubtedly helps build powerful companies, but it takes time to establish a strong brand, and robust brands require PR to maintain their market position. With its resources, public relations is vital to building and maintaining brands (Kotler, 2008) There are several tools used in public relations. These methods can be used by any nation-branding initiative to connect with its intended audience. In order to establish the required connection between a national brand and its stakeholders, PR tools including press releases, advertorials, social media, newsletters, and media relations are crucial.

There aren't many studies that systematically analyze the role of public relations in national branding initiatives (Szondi, 2010). PR can be used in a variety of ways to build and maintain relationships with key players in nation branding. By fostering cooperation between institutions and the domestic population, PR makes it possible to design a national branding

project in a local context. This is important since incorporating the local population in branding activities ensures the brand's longevity.

The function of PR in media relations and media monitoring is another contribution to the nation branding project. By forging strategic ties with media outlets, who can control any Nation branding action, PR aids a campaign for national branding. Similar to this, PR supports nation branding by monitoring the media to evaluate the main issues made and debated in both domestic and international media (Szondi, 2010).

Additionally, PR enables a nation branding endeavor to develop an updated version that adapts the continuing environmental instances of a particular Nation through its environmental scanning capabilities. By carefully classifying stakeholders, it also helps to create more focused and realistic goals, as it is impossible to address the entire population of the target country. Furthermore, PR can locate problematic issues through its issues management role and resolve them before they develop into a crisis that will undermine the nation's branding efforts.

Furthermore, PR's relationship-building function promotes public participation and fosters "brand communities," which enable people to organize and participate in national branding. The diaspora community living abroad is one of these "brand communities," and it should be encouraged to take part in branding activities (Szondi, 2010). Since many nation branding initiatives are short-lived due to financial limitations, PR can also help secure funding and sponsorships. Additionally, PR makes it possible for nations to plan significant cultural, sporting, and political events because it helps them build relationships with influential decision-makers (Szondi, 2010).

2.5 Effective Communication Strategies in Nation Branding

2.5.1. What is an Effective Communication Strategy?

There is a growing evidence that effective communication is the key for keeping an enterprise, as a system of individuals, working together for objectives, successful and integrated. In the 21st century, charged with challenge and change, an organization needs the ability to respond fast. In order to be aware and effective, organization members need clear, pertinent, and full information. Research suggests that effective communication is seen of prime importance at any organization today, since securing open interaction with a free flow of information, managing organizational communication processes, and creating an open and

adaptive communication system does bring large-scale organizational benefits (Blazenaite, 2011)

Effective communication strategy is an approach to the design and implementation of programs that increase their impact on behavior and social change. An effective communication strategy encompasses systematic approaches that are well designed, audience centered as well as theory and evidence based (Gemed, 2014).

Another scholarly definition of what an effective communication strategy means is put forth by McKee et. al, as cited by Gemed, which suggests that the choice of proper communication goals and the identification of the particular brand awareness and brand altitude approach constitute an effective communication strategy. This overall strategy needs to be taken seriously and connected to the core of the organization (Gemed, 2014).

. Other scholars take the definition of effective communication strategy one step further and link it with implementation. Benita Steyn for instance argues that implementation strategies that are designed as a part of a communication plan are effective communication strategies. Additionally, these strategies focus on the tasks performed by the communication function, which uses efficient communication techniques to address crucial strategic and communication problems in interactions with stakeholders and to coordinate communication with organizational objectives, thereby contributing to organizational effectiveness (Steyn, 2002).

Denhardt et. al. further elaborate the scope of effective communication strategy by pointing of the aim and objective. According to them, effective communication strategy in public organizations, as elsewhere, aims at transmitting information accurately, honestly, and in such away that the receiver will understand, accept, and use that information. But effective communication also must help to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships, specifically by enabling people to express and accept differences in how they feel. (Denhart, 2008).

Denhardt et. al.'s further adds what he describes as *supportive communication* as an important extension of effective communication. Supportive communication refers to an approach to communicating with others that recognizes both of these purposes of communication: to convey needed information and to enhance interpersonal relationships in the group or organization (Denhart, 2008)

Another important factor with respect to communication strategies in terms of national image building is effective media relations. As pointed out by Glory Amah, the effectiveness of a program or campaign often depends upon the level of marketing efforts implemented before the program actually launches, and well after it ends. Media relations is a cost-effective marketing tool to reach a target audience on a small or large scale using the broad reach and influence of the media (Amah, 2018).

2.5.2 Components of Effective Communication within the context of National Image Building

The Guidelines and tools for developing communication strategies for joint UN teams on AIDS show designing effective communication strategies of an organization focus on what is needed to achieve the goals of the organization and focus on the communication recipient rather than the information provider. These focus areas need to be clearly defined with regard to the effective communication strategy (Gemedo, 2014).

Productive communication strategy stems from the inside and the beliefs of the employees which follow those of the main organization missions that can be easily portrayed the public. Designing the two twigs of an effective communication strategy. goals and important self-checks are intertwined and dependent upon each other. The goals of the organization area set of ideas that must be checked regularly. To begin with, it has to be understood the audience that the organization is trying to reach, since it is ineffective to market to the wrong target audience (Gemedo, 2014).

According to framework on effective rural communication for development designing effective communication strategies need clear objectives, identification and assessment of audience groups, careful message design and choice of channels, monitoring and feedback. Moreover, developing effective communication strategy requires setting goal, assessing resources, identifying target groups, partners and monitor performance. These steps highlight that a clear sense of objectives, key actions and decision points, major players, timing, available and organizational commitments are pillars of effective communication strategy (FAO, 2006)

Gemedo further states that an effective communication strategy contains three communication components: advocacy, social mobilization, and behavior change communication around each communication target. This is revealed through a communication plan for development initiatives. Communication aimed at the leadership and those with the authority to take action in support of goals is called advocacy. Advocacy involves more than

just bringing about widespread or executive-level understanding. Always go beyond raising awareness and encourage a specific course of action via advocacy (Gemed, 2014).

2.5.3 Media Relations and National Image

Continuing the review of Glory Amah's literature, which highlighted the importance of media relations in national image, Amah further elaborates the relationship between the two components saying most government officials, especially in poorer countries, are inexperienced in the ways of the media. Their training is usually political sciences or economics: most will have little direct experience of the private sector, and will know nothing of the arcana of advertising, public relations, media sales and brand management (Amah, 2018).

Amah continues to describe the challenge for governments to cement long lasting relationships for the purpose of national image building. She argues that it is incredibly difficult for any government during its normal term of office to produce any measurable impact on their nation's international reputation; these things can take generations to shift (Amah, 2018)

The reality is that it is incredibly difficult for any government during its normal term of office to produce any measurable impact on their nation's international reputation; these things can take generations to shift. The temptation to spend a lot of money on something as appealing, as tangible, as modern, and as uplifting as an international advertising campaign is a strong one, but it is not just the inexperience or innocence of the government officials (Amah, 2018).

Geremew, in his analysis pertaining to challenges of public relations with respect to governmental institutions in Ethiopia and their relations with the media also cites lack of knowledge in the field for the grumpy relationship between the media and government PR organizations. He further puts forth his analysis saying: -

The subject of public relations methods in several nations, especially Ethiopia, has generated debate among the communication community. The failure to comprehend the function of public relations may be the root cause of this. However, relatively few people are aware of what public relations is, what it seeks to accomplish, and how it operates. Public relations is perceived by some as propaganda (Geremew, 2017).

Image building are typically not considered to be a crucial component of organizations and their public relations departments. Organizations typically don't take public relations seriously until something goes wrong or a crisis arises. In order to remedy the situation, public relations professionals apologize to the audiences of the organizations. They accept the duty of ensuring that everything will be handled and the crisis is under control. The roles of public relations are overlapping and connected to those of other fields (Geremew, 2017).

2.5.4 Media Relation Strategies for National Image Building

To the backdrop of the challenges outlined above, a number of scholars suggest various frameworks and strategies which can be utilized by public relations professionals in government communication organizations for the purpose of national image building. Glory Amah in this regard suggests three key strategies for PR professionals in government organizations (Amah, 2018). These strategies are: -

Building strategic messages into media interviews: Media interviews offer a fantastic opportunity to spread important strategic messages to the nation. It's challenging to conduct this in a casual manner when the interview may have been scheduled to cover another subject. Therefore, communicators can benefit from the opportunities by crafting a core message and acting as a corporate spokesman or preparing managers for media interviews (Amah, 2018).

Persuasion: The media is viewed as a potent weapon for using persuasion to steer people's behavior in a certain direction. Therefore, the function of the mass media in providing the public with the knowledge required to accomplish development or change objectives is seen. The power and aptitude of the media to inform, educate, manipulate, sensitize, and mobilize people is what gives them these responsibilities in national development. This suggestion is also shared by Ucheanya, as an ideal strategy for national building (Ucheanya, 2012)

Preparing Media Relations Campaign: This is yet another strategy for enhancing a nation's public image. A campaign needs to be well planned and prepared for in order to succeed. It is often the case that when a media campaign is planned for, things rarely go wrong and proper preparation guarantees success (Amah, 2018).

2.5.5. Public Diplomacy as an effective strategy for national image

2.5.5.1. Public Diplomacy

Dennis Kinsey and Myojung Chung, citing several literatures define public diplomacy as the process of opening doors of communication and building positive international relationships. The objective of public diplomacy is to improve the understanding of a specific country,

construct an appealing national image, and ultimately influence the policies of foreign governments by affecting their citizen's opinion towards the nation.¹¹ In sum, public diplomacy aims to win “the hearts and minds of people around the world (Kinsey, 2013)

Mladen Andrić on the other hand defines Public relations as Public diplomacy traditionally “government to government” communication aimed at foreign audiences to achieve changes in the “hearts or minds” of the people. It also becomes a tool for building favorable public environment to pursue specific or particular interests (Andrić, 2012)

2.5.5.2. What Makes Public Diplomacy different from Traditional Diplomacy?

Jan Melissen puts forth this distinction arguing that the basic distinction between traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy is clear: the former is about relationships between the representatives of states, or other international actors; whereas the latter targets the general public in foreign societies and more specific non-official groups, organizations and individuals (Melissen, 2005).

Kelamu, on the contrary to Melissen's point of view, argues that Public diplomacy is something that should be considered a sub-set of traditional diplomacy. He articulates that within diplomacy, we can find public diplomacy and is viewed both in its traditional and modern perspectives. The classical definition of public diplomacy was focused on a one-to-one communication between the political elites of government of different countries. It was limited to state-to-state relations especially before the cold war (Kelamu, 2018).

Nevertheless, multiple scholarly literatures written on this contentious argument considerably tilt to the point of view that the so-called intertwined age of traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy is nearing its end with the rise of contending global interests, the influence of media, as well as the rise of social media, which some scholars see is becoming the prime form of medium for public diplomacy communication and national image building (Potter, 2003) (Cull, 2008) (Ross, 2010).

2.5.6. Public Diplomacy and National Image/Branding

Falk Hartig describes the linkage between public diplomacy and national image arguing that Public diplomacy is the engagement and communication of a nation with foreign publics for the purpose of disseminating specific narratives and images of the nation in order to advance its soft power and thus national interests. Listening and advocacy, international broadcasting and exchange, cultural diplomacy, and other facets of strategic communication including media/psychological warfare are tools to accomplish those goals (Hartig, 2016).

Simon Anholt, who coined the term first in 1996 also recognizes the importance of public diplomacy in national image building. Anholt applied the concepts of reputation management and identity construction for goods and organizations in order to revitalize the image of a nation. He argued that positive image can be established if public the public diplomacy work is effective enough in terms of communicating dimensions such as tourism, investment, economic development, people development and cultural promotion (Anholt, 2007)

Kalamu, following up on Anholt's and Melissen's point also argues that the prime task of public diplomacy is linked mainly to the promotion and branding of a nation's image (Kalamu, 2018)

There are also scholars on the other side of spectrum arguing that the concept of nation branding and Public diplomacy are separate and distinct. According to one argument raised in Szoldi's literature, "A core idea of nation branding is to identify the 'uniqueness' of the country, its people, culture or landscape to identify and draw on features that distinguish and differentiate 'us' from 'them', as opposed to public diplomacy, which often tries to identify those elements of the history, culture or people that unite, rather than separate, 'us' (Szondi G. , 2008)

These scholars affirm their position arguing that in contrast to public diplomacy, which is a more covert operation that relies more on behavior than symbolism, nation branding is more visible because it places a heavy emphasis on visuals and symbols, making it easier for target audiences to recognize when they are exposed to another country's branding campaigns. However, there are times when nation branding is more open and accountable than public diplomacy.

In the era of the post-modern world and digital era, the scholarly argument for the similarity or in the least, recognition of public diplomacy as intricate part of public diplomacy seems the one that has momentum. The most popular view advanced by branding practitioners and scholars is that public diplomacy constructs a fully integrated part of nation branding, which is a much broader concept (Szondi G. , 2008).

Lewis and Szondi argue that the adoption of branding-oriented approach to public diplomacy and vice-versa presents notable advantages. These include making nation branding more strategic, improve the competitiveness of the nation's image in the globalized world, generate effective domestic as well as international media coverage for the nation and visualize engagement (Lewis, 2003) (Szondi G. , 2008).

Public diplomacy was viewed by Simon Anholt as a component of nation branding in his early writings, a perspective that has had a significant impact and stuck in the minds of many branding experts and practitioners.

Anholt's position in this regard is well illustrated by his famous brand hexagon, which has become an established measure of brand of nations.

2.6. Image building on a regional level: Comparative Literature review

Out of intuition, and from some of the concepts reviewed above on Public diplomacy, one might make the honest mistake of assuming that Public diplomacy might be “too much” of a tool to be deployed for the image building of a specific region, as compared to a “country.” To counter this argument, the researcher of this paper presents literatures written on this topic with specific case to Catalonia, the semi-autonomous region in northwest Spain as well as the case of Bali, a province in Indonesia.

2.6.1. Catalonia's case

Ginesta and Eugenio, in their 2020 literature have showed that the concept of nation branding doesn't apply to just countries. The Autonomous Community of Catalonia, located in northeastern Spain, is a prime illustration of how public diplomacy tactics and governments' desires to establish place brands are treated equally, depending on the political needs of each actor (local or regional government (Ginesta, 2020)).

Being a region within the great Spain nation did not stop Catalonia to develop a comprehensive public diplomacy strategy for the purpose of national building. In the case of Catalonia, public diplomacy strategy includes the internal public as a direct target. The strategy attempts to foster the pride of belonging and the satisfaction of allegiance and to strengthen the internal image. It also promotes a certain lifestyle and value system in cultural terms (Eugenio&Xifra, 2015).

Numerous Scholars have observed and documented public diplomacy strategy of Catalonia tailored for the purpose of national image building (Garcia, 1998)

Among the various strategies the nation of Catalonia has deployed, the most studied one is the strategy developed for implementation between 2010 -2015 known as *the 2010-2015 Foreign Action Plan* (Eugenio&Xifra, 2015)

public diplomacy strategy execution that propagates Catalonia's image around the world was founded on the description of five important job areas: (i) encouraging constant

communication with opinion leaders; (ii) supporting Catalan activities foreign organizations; (iii) creating Catalan communities acting as public diplomacy agents overseas; (iv) highlighting language and culture as strengths vital to the image of Catalonia; and finally (v) creating synergies with international activity by regional and municipal governments, as well as public entities in Catalonia (Eugenio&Xifra, 2015)

On top of the key areas mentioned above, the *2010-2015 Foreign Action Plan* also added cultural diplomacy as a key aspect of national image building for Catalonia. Catalonia has used the showcase of culture to project its identity to the world in recent years (Nogué, 2004)

Some examples are the book fairs in Guadalajara (Mexico) in 2004 and Frankfurt (2007), music and theater festivals in Guanajuato (Mexico) in 2008 and Bogotá in 2010, or the *Expolangues* in Paris in 2010.

This is the efficient use of cultural diplomacy through the projection of culture, which is recognized internationally and equated with national image building action by any state recognized as such. Cultural diplomacy is the strategy, and the projection of culture is the tactic or, better put, a set of different tactics (Eugenio&Xifra, 2015).

The 2010-2015 Foreign Action Plan has also served as the bed rock foundation for the new (and currently) running Public Relations Strategy for Catalonia. Endorsed by the Public Diplomacy Council of Catalonia and titled *Strategic Plan of Public Diplomacy 2019-2022*, it aims to reinforce on previous strengths, identify weaknesses and layout specific roadmap to maintain the national image of Catalonia (PDC, 2019)

2.6.2. Bali's Case

Even though it is a province within Indonesia, Putra has argued that the reputation of Bali as the ideal tourist destination and overall popularity has exceeded that of Indonesia. He further asserts that a number of people are aware of Bali, but not Indonesia due to Bali's tailored national image building process that is imbedded within its public relations activities (Putra, 2010)

As it became evident that Public relations is a critical factor in maintaining the image of the ideal tourism destination, a research was then conducted with a purpose to investigate Bali tourism Public Relations strategy by using SWOT (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and

Threats) along with external factors of economic, politics, social, legal, technology, industrial environment and competitor (Putra, 2010).

The following table shows summary of the PR strategy Bali devised

EFAS	IFAS	STRENGTHS (S) - Event Management - Business to Business Communication - Issue and Crises Management - Media Relations	(WEAKNESSES) - Public Affairs - CSR - Investor Relations - Publication Management - Strategic Communications
OPPORTUNITIES (OP) - Tourists' Income - Tourists' Attitude & Behaviour - Currency Rate - Visa On Arrival - Development of		STRATEGISO - Maximizing Events - Extensive Media Relations - Develop relations with tourism Organizations - Strengthen Intern	STRATEGI WO - Improving Publication Management - Attracting Investors - Maximizing tourism's strategic communications
THREATS (T) - Political Stability - Government Policy - Development of Technology - Bumber of Competitors - Travel Warning		STRATEGIST - Developing Issue and Crises Management - Improving destination's quality - Adapting Technology advances	STRATEGI WT - Developing relation with Government - Socializing needs for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Source: Dwi Cahaya, as cited by Putra

This carefully tailored Public relations approach to build the image of Bali has contributed significantly to the image of the island province as the ideal tourist and recreational destination in the world. The island has won global awards as the best island for recreation and tourism (Putra, 2010).

Bali is also ranked as the Number #1 choice among Trip Advisor readers, the global travel adviser platform. The award ranking survey has been in operation since 2002. It is derived from “millions of reviews and opinions” from global travelers covering service, quality, and customer satisfaction for hotels, accommodation providers, destinations, attractions, restaurants, and travel experiences.

The Island of Bali and many of the Island's tourism operations have managed to prevail during the continuing global pandemic, receiving numerous mentions in the 2021 Trip advisor Readers' Choice Awards (Advisor, 2021).

2.7. Theoretical Framework

Theories are formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena and, in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions. The theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists (Abend, 2008).

Hence, the researcher of this paper deems it important to introduce three theoretical Frameworks through which the research questions raised under chapter I, i.e. the issue of an effective Public relations strategy and image building are addressed. These theories are drawn from multi-disciplinary definitions and scholarly literatures as they are deemed applicable within the context of national image building.

2.7.1. Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda setting theory is perhaps popular within the media sector, as compared to the Public Relations sector of the government. The theoretical framework was first introduced by Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in their 1972 paper titled *The Agenda Setting Function of Mass Media*. In their paper, the two describe Agenda setting arguing that “The mass media force attention to certain issues. They build up public images of political figures. They are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about, have feelings about (McCombs&Shaw, 1972)

Nevertheless, a number of scholars have expanded the framework to include agenda setting as a key theoretical framework by public practitioners (Akpabio, 2005).

Practitioners of public relations are frequently referred to as a business's voice, putting statements in the media to guarantee that the organization is viewed as helpful, pertinent, and reliable. Setting the agenda involves deciding which social issues will predominate in public debate, and framing refers to how each subject is communicated to the general public (Dearing, 1996)

Dearing and Rogers also argue that agenda-setting is driven by “issue proponents,” (e.g., public relations practitioners, media representatives) aiming to direct public attention to a social problem (Dearing, 1996)

Public relations experts must consider three crucial factors influencing subject selection in order to push their intended agenda: media influence, organizations/people with competing messages, and current events affecting public life (Zoch, 2006).

Akpabino puts forth three key ways Public Relations experts use to get the out of their work within Agenda setting framework. These are: -

1. **Image Management:** Public relations experts invest time and effort into presenting an immaculately clean and extremely positive picture of people they serve because they are fully aware of the influence of public opinion. In some cases, the public image that is presented may not be accurate in an effort to gain undeserved benefits or goodwill, as in high approval ratings, voter support, purchase decisions, and so on. (Akpabio, 2005).
2. **Choice of Words:** Even if words—both written and spoken—are included in the entirety of cues given, image still deserves its own category because public relations professionals go to great efforts with their language usage and choice. Media workers frequently regurgitate the wording of press conferences, press statements, video news releases, and press releases without question. As a result, the media successfully achieves the initial aim of persuading or imposing a favorable perception and image on various publics. (Akpabio, 2005)
3. **Publicity:** "Public relations professionals can use the media's influence to plan PR for people, businesses, events, things, and services. The use of compelling and expertly prepared press releases, statements, and product launches, as well as picture opportunities, are techniques that can be useful in accomplishing publicity goals. This means that via the work of public relations specialists, a relatively obscure person, organization, product, or service can become well-known. a form of PR agenda that has an impact on the media and, consequently, the public agenda (Akpabio, 2005)

2.7.2 Excellence Theory

The “excellence theory” is the name James E. Grunig and his colleagues gave to an integrated collection of middle-range theories that they used in a 15-years' study sponsored by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation. These integrated theories, developed in the 1970s and 1980s, helped them explain the value of public relations to an organization and to identify the characteristics of a public relations function that increase its value (Grunig E. J., 2008)

Excellence theory puts forth four characteristics that can be measured for a maximized Public relations value. As Grunig puts it, these are: -

- The senior public relations executive is involved with the strategic management processes of the organization, and communication programmes are developed for strategic publics identified as a part of this process. By scanning the environment to identify publics affected by decision implications or who could have an impact on the outcome of decisions, public relations contribute to strategic management. An excellent public relations team interacts with various audiences to include their voices in strategic planning, enabling the public to influence organizational decisions that have an impact on them. (Grunig E. J., 2008)
- Communication programmes organized by excellent departments to communicate with strategic publics also are managed strategically. These programs must be managed strategically if they are to be grounded in formative research, have quantifiable goals, be implemented using novel methods as opposed to the same old ones, and be subject to formal or informal evaluation. Additionally, the public relations team may offer proof that these programs accomplish their short-term goals and strengthen the organization's long-term relationships with its target audiences (Grunig E. J., 2008).
- The senior public relations executive is a member of the dominant coalition of the organization or has a direct reporting relationship to senior managers who are part of the dominant coalition. Unless the senior public relations executive is a member of or has access to the group of senior managers with the most power in the organization, the public relations function will rarely be involved in strategic management or have the authority to affect important organizational decisions (Grunig E. J., 2008).
- Diversity is embodied in all public relations roles. According to the concept of required variety, businesses need to be as diverse internally as they are outside in order to properly interact with all of the strategic components of their environment.

2.7.2.1. Roles of Communicators

On top of laying out the characteristics of a maximized public relation function value, excellence theory also goes into detail when it comes to the roles of communicators.

The theory argues that the majority of the daily communication tasks performed by public relations departments must be handled by communication technologists, and many practitioners fill both positions. However, in less effective departments, every communication

specialist—including the senior specialist—is a technician. Public relations cannot be empowered as a management function if the top communicator does not hold a managerial position. There are three managerial-related qualities of public relations excellence (Grunig E. J., 2008).

- **A strategic manager rather than a technician or an administrative manager heads the public relations unit.**

“Excellent public relations units must have at least one senior communication manager who conceptualizes and directs public relations programmes. If not, other members of the dominant coalition who have little knowledge of communication management or of relationship building will supply this direction. In addition, the results of the excellence study distinguished between two types of senior managers: a strategic manager and an administrative manager. Administrative managers typically manage day-to-day operations of the communication function, manage personnel, and manage the budget. They generally are supervisors of technicians rather than strategic managers. If the senior public relations officer is an administrative manager rather than a strategic manager, the department usually will not be excellent (Grunig E. J., 2008)”.

- **The senior public relations executive or others in the public relations unit must have the knowledge needed for the manager role or the communication function will not have the potential to become a managerial function.**

“Excellent public relations programmes are staffed by professionals – practitioners who have gained the knowledge needed to carry out the manager role through university education, continuing education, or self-study (Grunig E. J., 2008)”.

- **Both men and women must have equal opportunity to occupy the managerial role.** “The majority of public relations professionals are women. Research also has established that female practitioners are the best educated in this field and most likely to take advantage of professional development opportunities. If women are excluded from the managerial role, the communication function may be diminished because the majority of the most-knowledgeable practitioners will be excluded from that role. When that is the case, the senior position in the public relations department typically is filled by a technician or by a practitioner from another managerial function who has little knowledge of public relations (Grunig E. J., 2008)”.

The last point Excellence theory points out is Organizational Function. The theory relates two key organizational functions to an effective Public relations structure.

- **Public relations should be an integrated communication function.**

“An outstanding public relations function creates a system for coordinating programs run by many departments or unifies all public relations programs into a single department. Public relations can only create new communication strategies for shifting strategic publics within an integrated system, allocating resources from outmoded strategies created for shifting strategic publics to the new strategies (Grunig E. J., 2008)”

- **Public relations should be a management function separate from other functions.**

“Even while the public relations department is well integrated into the overall structure of a great company, it shouldn't be housed in a different department whose main focus is on management rather than communication. Many businesses divide the role of public relations by using communication as a supplementary tool for other divisions like marketing or human resources. Because it is unable to shift communication resources from one strategic public to another, the public relations function cannot be strategically managed when it is subordinated to other functions (Grunig E. J., 2008)

2.7.2.2. Symmetrical Model of Communication

In terms of model of communication, Proponents of excellence theory also advocate for symmetrical model of communication, which is defined as persuasion that goes both ways and success is determined by whether understanding is gained by both parties, better to produce long-term relationships with publics than do the other models of public relations (Willacy, 2016).

Grunig also reinforces the argument of Willacy arguing that excellent departments design more of their communication programmes on the two-way symmetrical model of collaboration and public participation than on three other typical models: press agency (emphasizing only favorable publicity), public information (disclosing accurate information but engaging in no research or other form of two-way communication), or two-way asymmetrical (emphasizing only the interests of the organization and not the interests of publics (Grunig E. J., 2008)).

Chapter III

Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

Under this section, the methods used in the research to gather data, interpret and analyze are presented. Hence, the research methodology includes the research method and instrument, the design, and data analysis of the study are presented in detail.

3.2. Description of the Organization in Focus

One of the departments that was founded in 1995 as the Oromia Culture and Information Bureau is the Communication Affairs Bureau of the Oromia Regional Government. Originally known as the Oromia Information Bureau, since 2000, it was renamed the Oromia Regional Government Communication Affairs Bureau in 2008. From regional levels up to districts, the Bureau has structural departments and offices. The bureau is now using a variety of communication tactics to educate the public and change their perceptions of government policies, initiatives, and programs through a variety of structures.

Since its establishment, the OCB has seen a number of structural and organizational reforms that aimed to optimize the operations of the organization and effectiveness in implementation of its programs.

The organization has implemented a comprehensive communication strategy in 2020 that will govern the OCB's communication strategy until 2030 . The document encompasses everything from strategic communication of government policies to action plans tailored to gain favorable view among the public. Furthermore, the bureau also conducts annual evaluation report that evaluates the performance of the bureau against the communication strategy.

The bureau is also mandated to oversee the performance of communication bureaus that exist at zonal, woreda, and Kebele levels. Even though OCB does not peruse a top down approach of operation, i.e. dictating every single communication activity from its bureau in Addis Ababa, the organization nevertheless provides a thematic framework of communication activities. Communication sectors at Zonal and Woreda level are expected to follow the guide sent from OCB and operate within that framework.

3.3. Research Design

There are essentially two different forms of research methodologies: qualitative and quantitative. When a study tries to investigate, clarify, and explore the ideas, opinions, perceptions, and attitudes of a particular group of people about a certain issue, the qualitative approach is used. The techniques used to acquire data are adaptable and changing (Wodimagegn, 2020).

Qualitative method is better suited to comprehend ideas, opinions, or experiences. It entails gathering and evaluating non-numerical data (such as text, video, or audio). It can be utilized to uncover intricate details about a situation or to spark fresh study concepts (Bhandari, 2022)

The quantitative approach, in contrast, necessitates the quantitative acquisition of pertinent information, and its data collection techniques are more strict, more structured, and fixed than its qualitative counterpart (Kumar, 2011).

Accordingly, this research used a qualitative approach with the aim of exploring the role of public relations in image building with specific focus on Oromia Communication Bureau. As this research tries to analyze the OCB strategy 2020 -2030 to examine if the strategy has elements pertaining to national image building, the qualitative research approach is more suitable than the quantitative one, as the former is effective for content analysis and thematic analysis in exploring the opinions and attitudes of the PR professionals.

3.4. Data Type

Data types are classified into two major categories – The Primary data and Secondary data. . Primary data are gathered through the constant interaction with the relevant bodies of the research using in-depth interview and direct observation (Wodimagegn, 2020).

Hox also expands the definition of primary data arguing that they are collected for a specific research program at hand, using procedures that fit the problem best. Hox also argues that on every occasion that primary data are collected, new data are added to the existing store of social knowledge (Hox, 2005)

On the other hand, secondary data are found in documentary sources in the form of Written (publications such as books, journals, advertising copy and so on), Unwritten (TV and radio programs, tape recordings, documentaries and so on) and Survey data (economic data, population census,). In addition to providing supplementary evidence to the research, such

data are crucial as they “cut out the need for time consuming fieldwork” (Walliman, 2011). The student researcher of this paper believes the use of both primary and secondary data will be in line with the definition and purpose outlined above and conducive for the research questions this paper is trying to address. Hence both primary and secondary data are utilized.

In this study, to gather the primary data, an in-depth interview with 12 key informants of those who hold position and have the knowledge about the subject matter of the study is conducted. The researcher has also employed systematic review of the Oromia Communication Bureau communication strategy 2020- 2030 to gather primary data.

All the informants are from the headquarters of the organization.

As far as secondary sources are concerned, it is evident that the analysis of such sources is vital in extracting the necessary data from these documents for the research to corroborate research with documented sources. Accordingly, this research also used available secondary data sources, including communication documents, newspapers and, printed materials and online sources to analyze the nation branding activities of the concerned organization using Public relation as the main tool for nation branding.

3.5.Data Collection Instruments

3.5.1. In-depth interview

In qualitative research, there are mainly two types of interview approaches, the *unstructured* and the *semi-structured* interview types. In an unstructured interview, questions are not preplanned apart from the initial stage of the interview, where a general question is being asked about the broad area of the research. Unstructured interviews are highly flexible and demands the constant follow up of the interviewer to keep the interviewees from getting out of the subject area under study (Wodimagegn, 2020).

On the other hand, in the semi-structured interview, questions are predetermined focusing on the subject matter of the research. Interviewees are allowed to express their views openly but guided to concentrate on the main issue of the study by the interviewer. It is less flexible compared to the unstructured interview type (Daymon&Holloway, 2002).

Hence, for this research, to fulfill the objectives of the research and to gather the relevant primary data, the interview questions will be organized in a semi-structured way, as it helps to address specifically the research problem being investigated.

The in-depth interviews are conducted in English language. The student researcher offered to conduct the interview in both Amharic as well as Afaan Oromo languages. Nevertheless, the respondents proceeded with the English option understanding that they can express themselves well in English. The researcher has taken advantage of the respondents' willingness as it reduces the cost of translation.

3.5.2. Systematic review of OCB Communication Strategy

A qualitative systematic review brings together research on a topic, systematically searching for research evidence from primary document and drawing the findings together (Seers, 2015).

In qualitative systematic review of a given document, there are two approaches to extract data. The first one is inclusive extraction of data which is the extraction of all relevant data presented in the paper including authors interpretations. This type of extraction is useful when extracting data from an academic research. The second approach to data extraction is limited core set of items, which is the extraction of limited data that is influenced by the purpose of the review or research questions. This approach is useful to extract data from non-academic documents (Lewin, 2011).

As the research question of this paper specifically focuses on the OCB communication strategy and given that the OCB strategy is a non-academic document, the researcher has opted to deploy limited extraction approach with specific focus on national image building.

3.6. Sampling Technique

Sampling can be used to make inference about a population or to make generalization in relation to existing theory. In essence, this depends on choice of sampling technique. In general, sampling techniques can be divided into two types: *Probability or random sampling and non-probability or non-random sampling* (Taherdoost, 2016)

Zikmund, as cited by Taherdoost states that in probability sampling, every component of the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample. Creating a sampling frame first, then selecting samples from it using a computer program that generates random numbers is one method of conducting random sampling (Taherdoost, 2016).

Contrary to random sampling, Yin, as cited by Taherdoost states that non-probability sampling is frequently connected to qualitative research and case study research design. Regarding the latter, case studies frequently concentrate on small samples and are meant to explore a real-world occurrence rather than draw conclusions about the general population based on statistics (Taherdoost, 2016).

In this regard, Merriam concludes that non-random sampling is the most preferred sampling technique among qualitative researchers with its common form of sample selection, which is purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2009)

To the backdrop of the above scholarly justifications, the student researcher of this paper pursued the selection of informants for the in-depth interview in a purposeful or intentional sampling technique to generate appropriate, detailed and reliable data from suitable sources.

Non-random sampling is further classified into four categories classified as: -

➤ **Quota Sampling**

Sampling method that selects participants based on predetermined criteria so that the sample as a whole will have the same distribution of characteristics as the larger population (Davis 2005 as cited by (Taherdoost, 2016).

➤ **Snowball Sampling**

A non-random sampling technique called "snowball sampling" uses a few cases to help persuade more cases to participate in the study, hence boosting the sample size. This strategy works best with small populations that are hard to reach because they are locked off, such secret societies and exclusive professions (Brewerton&Millward, 2011)

➤ **Convenience Sampling.**

Convenience sampling is selecting participants because they are often readily and easily available. Typically, convenience sampling tends to be a favored sampling technique among students as it is inexpensive and an easy option compared to other sampling techniques (Taherdoost, 2016)

➤ **Judgmental Sampling**

Judgmental sampling is a strategy in which particular settings persons or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that cannot be obtained from other choices (Maxwell, 1986)

The student researcher of this paper has deployed quota sampling as the key informants needed for this particular research are in one organization and is expected to be reflective of the larger population, which is PR professionals working in OCB and Public relation scholars. The author has also used judgmental sampling as some of the key informants interviewed are in a position to offer information that cannot be obtained publicly or from other resources.

3.7. Key informant interview

Two criteria are used to choose the key informants for this study. They are initially selected based on the role they now hold within the relevant organization. When analyzing the application and function of PR in Nation branding operations, the position they have acts as a backdrop. It is appropriate to collect information from the organization's PR specialists since the research's goal is to analyze the function of PR in nation branding.

Hence as per the sampling technique mentioned above, two senior officials at high level leadership in OCB positions have been selected on judgmental sampling and five communication experts on mid management level have been selected on quota sampling basis.

Another five Public relations scholars active in the industry and who have published papers in relation to PR and nation branding are also selected for in-depth interview.

3.8. Data Analysis Method

In analyzing the data, this research opts for two separate methods of data analysis in order to give meaning to the generated data acquired through the in-depth interview of key interviewees as well as systematic review of the Oromia Communication bureau Communication strategy.

In analyzing data collected through in-depth interview, the researcher used thematic framework of data analysis, as it allows qualitative research to identify and analyze data in accordance with the key concepts and themes of the research (Ritchie&Lewis, 2003).

With regard to analyzing data obtained through systematic review, the research employs content (document) analysis to analyze relevant documents concerning the research theme, as content analysis is the best way to draw meanings from documented materials (Kothari, 2004).

Description of Content analysis

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text, which in this case is the OCB communication strategy). Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings, and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts. As an example, researchers can evaluate language used within a news article to search for bias or partiality. Researchers can then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of surrounding the text (Berelson, 1952).

There are two general types of content analysis: conceptual analysis and relational analysis. Conceptual analysis determines the existence and frequency of concepts in a text. Relational analysis develops the conceptual analysis further by examining the relationships among concepts in a text (Palmquist, 2022).

In analyzing OCB document, the researcher has opted to examine existence of key concept of “national image building” in OCB for conceptual analysis and referencing literatures reviewed in chapter II for relational analysis.

Objectives of Content Analysis

Content analysis is used to identify intentions, focus or communication trends of an individual, group or institution, describe attitudinal and behavioral responses to communications, reveal international differences in communication content as well as reveal patterns in communication content (Palmquist, 2022).

In the case if this paper, content analysis is employed to examine the intention of OCB communication strategy with respect to national image building. To begin a conceptual content analysis, first identify the research question and choose a sample or samples for analysis. Next, the text must be coded into manageable content categories. This is basically a process of selective reduction. By reducing the text to categories, the researcher can focus on and code for specific words or patterns that inform the research question (Palmquist, 2022).

General steps for conducting a conceptual content analysis:

As discussed above, content analysis takes two forms, i.e. conceptual and relational analysis. A guideline developed by the University of Columbia on steps of conducting a conceptual content analysis puts forth the following steps: -

1. *Decide the level of analysis: word, word sense, phrase, sentence, themes*
2. *Decide how many concepts to code for: develop a pre-defined or interactive set of categories or concepts. Decide either: A. to allow flexibility to add categories through the coding process, or B. to stick with the pre-defined set of categories.*
3. *Decide whether to code for existence or frequency of a concept. The decision changes the coding process.*
 - *When coding for the existence of a concept, the researcher would count a concept only once if it appeared at least once in the data and no matter how many times it appeared.*
 - *When coding for the frequency of a concept, the researcher would count the number of times a concept appears in a text.*
4. *Decide on how you will distinguish among concepts:*
 - *Should text be coded exactly as they appear or coded as the same when they appear in different forms? For example, “dangerous” vs. “dangerousness”. The point here is to create coding rules so that these word segments are transparently categorized in a logical fashion.*
 - *What level of implication is to be allowed? Words that imply the concept or words that explicitly state the concept? For example, “dangerous” vs. “the person is scary” vs. “that person could cause harm to me”.*

Reliability and Validity in Content Analysis

Reliability

Coding errors will never be completely eradicated; instead, they can only be decreased due to the human character of researchers. Guidelines set by the university of Columbia comprise the following criteria of content analysis as the following:

- **Stability:** the tendency for coders to consistently re-code the same data in the same way over a period of time.
- **Reproducibility:** tendency for a group of coders to classify categories membership in the same way.

- Accuracy: extent to which the classification of text corresponds to a standard or norm statistically.

Validity

When it comes to validity, the same guideline set by the University of Columbia sets out three criteria comprise the validity of a content analysis:

- **Closeness of categories:** this can be achieved by utilizing multiple classifiers to arrive at an agreed upon definition of each specific category. Using multiple classifiers, a concept category that may be an explicit variable can be broadened to include synonyms or implicit variables.
- **Conclusions:** What level of implication is allowable? Do conclusions correctly follow the data? Are results explainable by other phenomena? This becomes especially problematic when using computer software for analysis and distinguishing between synonyms.
- **Generalizability of the results to a theory:** dependent on the clear definitions of concept categories, how they are determined and how reliable they are at measuring the idea one is seeking to measure. Generalizability parallels reliability as much of it depends on the three criteria for reliability.

3.9. Ethical Declaration

The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH) sets out a number of ethical guidelines that must be followed when conducting a research. These guidelines are advisory and are intended to contribute to developing ethical judgement and reflection, clarifying ethical dilemmas, promoting responsible research, and preventing misconduct. They elaborate on various considerations and obligations, and they specify the responsibility of researchers, research institutions, and other research actors. In research projects, the guidelines should be considered throughout the entire process – from planning and execution to publication and dissemination (NESH, 2022).

This paper has adhered to all guidelines relevant to the study. In order to do comply with the guidelines, the author has

- Informed beforehand the participants about the purpose of the study
- Identity revealing elements have been omitted
- Where appropriate, the names of participants have been changed to pseudonyms to conceal their identity

Chapter IV

Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is where data gathered by the researcher through the methodologies discussed in the third chapter are analyzed, discussed, and findings are presented. The main objective of this part is to examine the role of Public Relations in national image building in Oromia Regional State Communication Bureau (ORSCB.)

In order to adhere to the ethnical declaration articulated in chapter three, the researcher has decided to use codes instead of real names. Accordingly, the researcher has used a combination of letters and numbers to identify each interviewee. Accordingly, the letter “I” has been designated to represent the word “Interviewee” and the letter “1” has been designated to represent the person. So, for instance, “I1” will stand for interviewee one, whereas “I2” will stand for “Interviewee two.

The researcher has also decided to use pseudonyms for two interviewees at their request. Hence the name “Eyasu” and “Marta” will be used to represent two interviewees who are experts within the organization in focus.

4.2 Analyzing national image building

As it is reviewed extensively in chapter two of this paper, it is quite very hard to find a single, overarching definition of what national image building is what its processes look like. Nevertheless, one can clearly see overlapping points of agreement among scholars such as Aronczyk (2014), Szondi (2008), Dinnie K (2008) whose literatures have been reviewed in this paper. This key overlapping point can be characterized as seeing national image building as a holistic, all-inclusive project that nations to deploy to obtain positive gains in various sectors – be it political, economic, cultural or a combination of these.

To this backdrop, all interviewees from Oromia Communication Bureau (OCB) seem to agree to the scholarly analysis. I1 for instance, who is a high-level official within the bureau said:

“Nation branding is an all-encompassing project to build a favorable image of our region, our organization is cognizant of this fact and has deployed a comprehensive strategy that engages with all relevant sectors to build the image of Oromia”

Marta, who is a higher official at Oromia Tourism Bureau – an organization that is also engaged in promoting the tourism sector of the region concurred with the scholarly definition. She described the activity of national image building as an activity that is more than “promoting attraction sites.” She elaborated her statement stating that: -

“I can honestly say that I believe national image building is a broad concept that – at the center of it – focuses on promoting the overall reputational standard of a given nation. Of course, for the sake of bureaucracy, one organization has to be mandated to take the charge and set policies. In the case of our region we share this mandate across two main regional government organizations, i.e. Oromia Communication Bureau and Oromia Tourism Bureau”

I4 who works as a senior public relations expert at Oromia Communication Bureau reinforced Martha’s point saying that the process of nation building and PR within the context of Ethiopia in general and Oromia in particular is one that is shared among different agencies. He stated :

“The scholarly definitions are something our organization shares and abides by as it is our mandate to promote the image of the region. After all, we are the mouth that speaks on behalf of the region. But I’d also like to note that Oromia Tourism Bureau is also an important stakeholder when it comes to building the image of Oromia. I would even dare to state that they are the organization in primarily focused with the image of the region. Our bureau deals with more of the political aspect of national image building. We have tailored communication strategy to reflect that”

Eyasu who is a high-level official seem to also have concurred with the scholarly definition of national image building. He stated:

“As the official Public Relations bureau of the regional government, our mandate certainly includes building the image of Oromia in a favorable way. We tailor each and every single communication we put out to achieve that. The Oromia Communication bureau is not just a spokesperson’s office. We oversee the operation of communication bureaus in every single woreda and towns in Oromia. The communication strategy we devised at the bureau level is tailored to ensure that an image building element is included in every activity”

Therefore, despite few semantics, these officials, seem to agree on scholarly definition of what national image building is and its broad scope in terms of desired outcome. On the other

hand, there seems to be a difference in agreement when it comes to mandate of the organization in focus.

Key interviewees such as I4, indicated that the mandate of building the image of the region is something that primarily falls within another organization, i.e. Oromia Tourism Bureau. Marta has also touched on this point as she put it saying:

“..In the case of our region we share this mandate across two main regional government organizations....”

This begs the question of if all officials within the bureau are on the same page when it comes to mandate and what the literature reviewed above says about that. But first, before analyzing the issue of mandate (which is analyzed in the next section below) against scholarly analysis and organizational mandate, it is important to first see what the respondents said about which organization is the public relations arm of the Oromia Regional Government.

In order to clarify this point, the researcher followed up this question to all respondents who have raised Oromia Tourism Bureau as the organization sharing a mandate or having a sole one when it comes to national image building.

On this point, all respondents unanimously responded that Oromia Regional Government Communication Bureau is the only regional government organization that can be considered the PR branch of the regional government.

The Head of the communication bureau for instance is a member of the regional government president cabinet. This is consistent with scholarly literature reviewed in this paper of Anholt (2007) that PR should be considered at a managerial level.

I5, who is an independent PR consultant and one of key interviewees also affirmed this saying:

“If you look at the organizational structure of the Oromia Communication Bureau, its communication strategies, as well as governance structure, you can easily know that it is the PR arm of the regional government. It would be ideocratic to suggest otherwise. The OCB communication strategy lays out public engagements, identifies target audiences by demographics and aims at achieving a favorable view of the regional government. I am not saying it is the perfect communication strategy or all details are there. But it is more than enough to know that when you are talking to Mr. Eyasu, you are talking to the regional Public Relations official. It is semantics really...”

Hence, considering the fact that all interviewees unanimously agreed as to whether OCB is the sole PR arm of the regional government, organizational structure of OCB, its communication strategy, as well as scholarly reviews such Grunig (2007,) It is clear to see that OCB is indeed the sole regional government organization worthy to be called the Public Relations arm of Oromia regional state government.

Now that we've established OCB is indeed the PR branch of the regional government, We can proceed to critically examine its mandate and as to whether there might be overlapping areas in terms of national image building.

4.3 Analyzing Mandate of OCB

When it comes to analyzing the mandate of OCB, the student researcher proceeded to examine the primary legal instrument that stipulates the mandate of the organization. The Oromia Communication Bureau mandate is coded in Oromia regional state legislature proclamation No. 242/2014.

Titled as “a proclamation to define mandate of the executive branch of the Oromia Regional state,” the legislation clearly defines the mandate of the bureau.

The proclamation, under Article 31, stipulates 26 mandates the bureau holds. Among these, Sub-section (5) refers stipulates the following:

“The bureau is mandated to draft, promote, and announce programmes that will create good image of the region.”

The remaining 25 mandates pertain to government specific communications the bureau is endowed by law. In other words, with exception to the above single mandate, the rest refer to solely communication specific tasks the bureau is trusted to carry out with an emphasis on one-way communication model.

From analyzing proclamation No. 242/2014 as it pertains to the role and mandate of Oromia Regional State Communication Bureau, we can then logically deduct that the bureau has indeed a mandate to engage in national image building activities as per Article 31, Sub-section (6) of the legislation. It is another question whether this mandate is sufficient enough to provide the legal framework needed to carryout national image building activities. We will critically analyze this in subsequent sections. However, since some of the researcher's key interviewees have raised that the mandate of national image building falls under the jurisdiction of Oromia Tourism Burau, it is important to critically examine that as well.

4.4 Analyzing Mandate of OTB

When it comes to the provision of mandate, the same proclamation mentioned in 4.3 is the one that also legislates the mandate of Oromia Tourism Bureau. Article 35 of proclamation No. 242/2014 articulates 26 sub-sections on which the mandates of the bureau are clearly stipulated.

All 26 sub-sections of the proclamation that state the mandate of the organization are attached in the appendix of this paper.

The researcher of this paper employed five checklist items to investigate the mandates and review if they align with image building practices. The checklists are: -

- **Do the mandates give an-all-inclusive authority to OTB around national image building?**
- **Are there any specific sub-sections that relate to image building?**
- **Are the mandates open-ended, i.e. allow for inter-organizational collaboration to promote the image of the region?**

Looking closely at each of these mandates and evaluating them against the above checklists, we can clearly see that they are specifically designed to deal with promoting tourism and cultural practices. Now, without going deep into literature one, could be easily be mistaken to conclude that these mandates may, in one way or another, amount to “national image building.” After all, as reviewed in Chapter II, national image in Ethiopia in general and Oromia in particular is often mistaken to mean promotion of cultural sites.

Nevertheless, as scholarly literatures of Aronczyk (2014), Szondi (2008), Dinnie K (2008) suggest, National image building is not just about tourism or promoting specific element of culture. Rather, it is a holistic approach that is multi-sector in nature and aims to promote the national image in all areas of engagement.

From the above analysis, it is clear that Oromia Tourism bureau has been mandated to carry out some elements of national image building, which is promotion of Oromia in tourism and culture. However, the proclamation has created a legal deadlock since it clearly articulated “national image building” as a mandate of the communication bureau, but preceded to attribute other elements to Oromia Communication bureau.

When challenged with this legal predicament and whether it has posed deadlocks at policy level, I2, who is a senior public relation expert within OCB recognized the problem. He stated:

“Indeed, this legal predicament is a big problem. OTB is the organization that appears to be leading the task of national image building. But they are only working in the area of cultural promotion. It is us who do the political side of things. By separating the tourism, as well as cultural aspect from the political side of national image building, the proclamation has effectively created a deadlock. It is not the mandates that are the problem. It is the fact that OTB is an independent organ doing its own work. The proclamation clearly stipulates that we are the ones tasked to oversee national image building.”

I8 on the other hand, who is also an expert in OCB, sees the legal problem from a different perspective. He stated:

“I wouldn’t call it a legal deadlock. The proclamation has to be amended with a minor legislation that will put the work of OTB under OCB oversight. That would close the loophole. It will also help us amend our communication strategy to include more national image building items.”

Whether it needs a minor amendment or a complete rewriting, both key interviewees seem to agree that something has to be done to bring the legislation predicament.

As it stands, even though Oromia Communication bureau is the sole PR arm of the regional government and solely mandated organization to oversee national image building activities, the fact that it does not have a legal mandate to oversee the activity of Oromia Tourism Bureau as it pertains to its cultural and tourism works has limited its capacity to engage in national image building tasks.

The legislation has created basically two mandates; one pertaining to political national image building which is attributed to OCB and cultural/tourism national image building which is attributed to OTB. However, it has not created any form of institutional linkages for these organizations to coordinate their work.

Literatures reviewed in chapter II, especially pertaining to the case of Catalonia and Bali indicate that national image building is a cohesive task that must be guided either by one or multiple but complimenting legal frameworks.

In the case of Oromia, the legal framework lacks these complimentary attributes. Nevertheless, I6 who is a public relations expert and legal professional argued that even though there is room for legal framework improvement, the current existing framework does

not limit OCB from carrying out national building activities in full force since the proclamation clearly attributes it as its mandate. He stated:

“The regional legislature has the right to give one mandate to one or more agencies as appropriate. In this case, the mandate of national image building is clearly given to OCB. The organization could have expanded on that in its communication strategy instead of blaming the proclamation”

In reference to the proclamation and reviewed literatures, this argument seems to hold water. Clearly As per proclamation No. 242/2014 sub-section (5), OCB is mandated to draft, promote and announce programmes pertaining to national image building activities. Additionally, just because the proclamation established Oromia Tourism Bureau to carryout cultural activities does not mean OCB should relinquish its mandates.

To this backdrop, even though there might be a room for the proclamation to be ‘clear’ on language and mandate delamination, it still cannot be an excuse for not carrying out its mandate of carrying out national image building tasks.

This brings as to the communication strategy of OCB. Which has been the guideline of the organization since 2020 and is expected to be in operation until 2030.

4.5 Conceptual analysis of OCB Communication Strategy 2020 -2030

The Oromia Communication bureau implemented a comprehensive communication strategy that guides the organization’s activities for the next 10 years beginning from 2020 – 2030. The communication strategy titled “The 10-year strategic communication plan 2020 – 2030” is written in Afaan oromo language and has 51 pages.

The introductory section of the strategy begins by stating the rationale behind the formulation of the strategy. According to the first paragraph of the introduction section, the strategy is devised “to merge victorious in terms of reputational gains in areas pertaining to politics, business, industry, sport, conflict, etc.. (OCB, 2020)”

This preliminary statement in and itself gives a good indication that the strategy, at least in principle, recognizes the holistic engagement required to build a national image.

The strategy, in the next section, which is titled as “foreword” expands on the introduction. It states that the reasoning for to draft the strategy is primarily “the need to recognize development and growth policies of the regional government can only be achieved with effective communication strategy (OCB, 2020)

Analysing the first two sections, it is plausible to conclude that the communication strategy, at least in its first introductory and foreword sections recognizes national image building elements as a core element of the Strategy.

4.5.2. Shortfalls of OCB Communication Strategy 2020 – 2030

Continuing the analysis of OCB Communication strategy 2020 – 2030, the researcher evaluated Oromia Communication Bureau’s communication strategy’s succeeding sections to see if the strategy builds up on its introduction as well as foreword section and elaborates further how the bureau intends to carry out tasks that are specific to national image building projects.

Accordingly, the researcher evaluated the following sections in detail.

- Section 3 titled “the need for communication strategy”
- Section 4, titled “Mission, Vision and Values”
- Section 5, titled “Goals and Purpose”
- Section 6, titled “Analysis of Government Communication”
- Section 7, titled “Target audience”
- Section 8, titled “Strategic Issues”
- Section 9, titled “Mission and Responsibility of Stakeholders”
- Section 10, titled “Crisis Communication”
- Section 11, titled “Communication plan”
- Section 12, titled “key messages”
- Section 13, titled “Capacity building of Communication practitioners”
- Section 14, titled “Communication task directives”
- Section 15, titled “Structure and relationship between government communication organs”
- Section 16, titled “Monitoring and Support Mechanisms”
- Section 17, titled “Applicable jurisdiction of the strategy”

With exception to the first two sections, i.e. the introduction and the foreword, we can see that not a single chapter is dedicated to national image building or anything that pertains to that.

Almost all of the sections, including sub-sections focus on one-way communication that aim to persuade the target audience described on section 7.

The analysis of the communication strategy clearly indicates that its tailored more to be a strategy for “spokesperson” office rather than for a government organ that assumes the power of public relations office.

One plausible explanation for this could be the fact that the organization is still using a communication strategy that precedes its foundation proclamation. As discussed above, Oromia Communication Bureau is created by Proclamation 242/2014 E.C. or 242/2022in Gregorian calendar. On the other hand, the communication strategy it is still using was created in 2020 G.C.

In order to clarify this point, the researcher followed up this question with I9, a key informant who is an employee of OCB within its legal department. I9 stated:

“Indeed, the communication strategy we have now precedes the proclamation. As you might know, the government had to overhaul all regional bureaus and thus the need to be re-established under the new proclamation. Nevertheless, the communication strategy we have is not a law. We can amend it any time we want if our management decides. We do not need the approval of the regional council to amend the strategy. The reason we have not amended it is because we still consider it relevant. Proclamation 242/2014 E.C. has not made significant changes to our mandate for us to amend the strategy”

From the response of I9, we can clearly see that OCB has the mandate to amend the strategy and bring it into alignment with proclamation 242/2014 E.C. In fact, the testimony shows us that the organization does not need an approval from any external body to amend the strategy.

So, it is logical to conclude that organization left the strategy as it is, not because it can not amend it, but it because it considers is relevant enough even though there is a new proclamation.

4.6. Findings

A critical analysis of Oromia Communication Bureau establishment proclamation 242/2014 E.C., its current communication strategy introductory sections, scholarly literatures reviewed in this paper, as well as the case of regions such as Catalonia, and Bali clearly indicate that the organization is indeed the Public relations arm of the region and that it is mandated to oversee and execute national image building tasks.

However, the organization has opted to focus only on one-way communication effectively rendering it a spokesperson office. The organization’s communication strategy has not been updated to be inline with its proclamation. Hence there is a mismatch between the strategy

and the proclamation when it comes to national image building. The proclamation mandates the organization to lead the task on national image building where as the communication strategy have side-lined this important task.

Secondly, the analysis of OCB communication strategy, as well as interview conducted with its senior leadership point that the organization has abandoned its mandate to Oromia Tourism Bureau without any legal rationalisation.

The leadership of OCB seem to operate under the impression that all activities pertaining to national image building are being carried out by the Tourism bureau. However, as interview conducted with officials at the Oromia Tourism Bureau shows, the organization is only focused on the promotion of cultural and Tourism aspects.

As the scholarly reviews show us, culture and tourism – albeit being a critical element of national image building – do not constitute the definition of national image building in and of themselves.

Scholarly literatures reviewed in this paper have established that national image building is more than promoting few cultural and tourism sites. It is a holistic endeavour that aims to build a favourable national image – in all aspects, be it political, economic, social, etc.

Needless to say, the findings obtained through critical analysis of scholarly literatures in this paper, interviews, as well as review of Oromia Communication Bureau communication strategy show that, the strategy has separated the process of national image building into two branches.

Accordingly, at the moment, Oromia Regional state image building project has two faces – one that is led by the tourism bureau that focuses on cultural and tourism aspects and another one that focuses on political national image building led by the OCB guided by the communication strategy.

After reviewing notable literatures on this subject, interviewing relevant stakeholders, as well as reviewing the document in question, i.e. the OCB communication strategy, the author of this paper has found that separating the process of national image building in to two, i.e. political image building and cultural image building has resulted in poor engagement of national image building work being carried out.

The author of this paper has also found that the existing communication strategy in its form will do little to advance the image of Oromia as it assumes the work is being done by another organization.

Chapter V

Conclusion, and Recommendations

5.1. Summary of Findings

This research initially sought out to investigate the role of public relations in national image building focusing on the case of Oromia Communication Bureau. In order to investigate this premise, the researcher focused on analysing the organization's communication strategy to see if there are elements that are tailored to advance national image building. In order to guide the researcher perspective and to stay within a well-defined lane of theoretical framework, the researcher in chapter I of this paper put forth three basic questions. These are: -

- Does the Oromia Communication Bureau have a PR strategy to build the image of the region?
- How effective has the strategy been in building the image of the region?
- What further improvements can be made at policy level as well as execution level to further enhance the bureaus PR capability in building the region's image?

Through content analysis of the organization's communication strategy, related literature review, key informant interviews, as well as investigating the case of two regions in other countries, i.e. Catalonia in Spain, and Bali in Indonesia, as well as referencing literatures written on regions such as Guangzhou in China and Bavaria in Germany, the author of this paper has found the following logical answers to the three questions raised in Chapter I if this paper.

Does the Oromia Communication Bureau have a PR strategy to build the image of the Region?

- The Oromia Communication Bureau does not have a PR strategy to build the image of the region. What the organization has is a communication strategy that has few elements of national image building in its introductory section but largely is a one-way communication guideline that is aimed at political communication.

How Effective has the strategy been in building the image of the region?

- The communication strategy of the bureau has poorly contributed in building the image of the region since it is largely a political communication document that has neglected the holistic nature of national image building. It has outsourced national building elements pertaining to culture and Tourism to another organization. While this

might not be a bad thing in and of itself, the lack of institutional linkage and cohesive cooperation has rendered the effectiveness of the strategy in terms of national image building to be visibly poor.

What further improvements can be made at policy level as well as execution level to further enhance the bureaus PR capability in building the region's image?

There are a number of improvements that can be made to further enhance the bureau's capability in building the region image. These improvements are discussed in this chapter under 5.3 section.

5.2. Conclusion

The image of a nation, i.e. how it is perceived by external audiences is critical to its development and sustained growth. There is no nation without a perceived image in this world. Some are perceived in a favorable way while others struggle to maintain a good image. There is a reason why even though there are more than 12,000 islands in Indonesia, the island of Bali stood out as the most preferred tourist destination in the world.

As we have seen from the case of Catalonia and Bali, a successful project in terms of national image building comes down to how the state Public Relation's arm devises a comprehensive, flexible and up-to-date strategy that focuses on holistic image building.

The cases the author reviewed as well as scholarly literatures indicate that the project of national image building is going to be successful when it is led by the Public Relations arm of the government and when it takes on an all-inclusive approach.

Unfortunately, in the case of Oromia Communication Bureau and its guiding communications strategy, this is not what is being done. The project of national image building has been split between two organizations that are not working in cooperation.

This is why according to the Tourism Bureau of the region, the number of tourists going to the region has significantly decreased even though the bureau has been working to promote tourism sites in the region.

Henceforth, to restore confidence and bolster the role of OCB in the image building project of Oromia, the author puts forth the following recommendations which are laid out in the section below.

5.3. Recommendation

As discussed in the conclusion section of this paper, how a nation is perceived by its internal/external audience is critical to a sustained development and engagement with the world. The region of Oromia has immense resources on which it can capitalize on to build its image. However, before going down that path, it has to ensure that its governance structure aligns with scholarly literatures and best practices around the world. To this end, the author of this paper puts forth the following recommendations: -

- As the analysis of OCB's communication strategy has found, the guideline predates proclamation 242/2014, the proclamation that re-established the bureau. This effectively makes OCB communication strategy 2020 -2030 an outdated document that is need of revision. Hence, the author of this paper recommends that the document be amended to be up-to-date.
- Secondly, as the findings of this paper indicate, the communication strategy deployed by OCB is largely a one-way communication document that seems to be more of a guideline for "spokesperson's office" rather than the PR arm of the region. Hence sections of the communication strategy need to be amended to include more strategic goals, missions, visions as well as organizational priorities pertaining to national image building.
- Thirdly, as key-interviews conducted with the bureau official, shows, experts of the bureau, including those who are high officials are operating under the existing guideline not because they lack the mandate to update it, but they think it is relevant enough. However, the finding of this research has shows that the OCB strategy is not relevant enough since it is 1, outdated and 2, is not tailored to national image building tasks. This might be lack of skill on the side of these professionals/officials in understanding how Public relation is important in national image building. Hence, the author of this paper recommends a training to make sure that staff at OCB understands this critical aspect of Public Relations.
- Lastly, this paper has showed that there is a lack of institutional linkage between OCB and OTB. This paper has also established that the PR arm of government must take the led when it comes to national image building tasks. Hence, the author of this paper recommends that OTB should be under the oversight of OCB to establish institutional linkage and proper oversight.

Appendix

Interview Guide

Interview Guide – for key interviewees purposefully sampled for this research

1. How do you assess your organization's Public Relations strategy within the context of building the image of Oromia?
2. Do you believe your organization is the rightful agency mandated to promote the image of Oromia?
3. Are there any agencies you collaborate with in building the image of the region? If that is the case, how do you assess institutional linkage of your organization with other regional agencies?
4. Your organization communication strategy has now been operational for the last two years. How do you assess its effectiveness in terms of building the image of the region?
5. what policy or execution level gabs are there that have posed challenges to your strategy in terms of image building?
6. How do you assess the organization's planning department in terms of its capability to come up with a comprehensive strategy?
7. How do you assess your organization's working culture?

Oromia Tourism Commission Mandate and Responsibility

Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau was established in 1998 E.C by proclamation No' 132/2000 of Oromia National Regional State Council called Chafe. Currently, this mandate has undergone some revisions and updates to redefine roles and responsibilities of the Bureau by proclamation No' 213/2011 E.C of the region's council. Accordingly the Bureau has the following mandates, roles and responsibilities:

1. Primary, work to develop Oromos' language, history and art; support those who conduct study on Oromos' language, history and art; work in collaboration with concerned bodies to incorporate in regular curriculum.
2. Work in collaboration with those who participate in standardizing Afan Oromo to minimise dialect differences, with and support any body which works to make Afan Oromo a universal language by minimizing dialect difference in Afan Oromo,
3. Create awareness within the society to avoid harmful practices and co-operate with other bodies to do so,
4. Work on the expansion of the tourism industry to contribute to the economic development of the country and enhance community participation;
5. Establish a system to collect, record, classify archives in the region and make them accessible for research and study. Work on the historical archive system of the region by collecting, registering, organizing historical archives; make them accessible for research and studies, and to improve potential touristic values of the region,
6. Collect, organize and disseminate information regarding culture and tourism in the region,
7. Promote and encourage Oromo's art and skills such as performing art, literary art, visual art; and give licences to art producers;
8. Conserve and preserve palaces, historical heritages and memorial monuments and also deliver necessary support;
9. Provide training and consultation for culture and tourism organizations to enhance their work undertaking capacity,
10. Support and facilitate condition for foundation and self-reliance of music bands;
11. Follow any tourism activities carried out in the region; co-operate with concerned body to create conducive tourism service;
12. Follow, control the promotional materials in the region in line with ethics and custom of Oromo; avoid writing errors and take regulation-based decisions,

13. Ensure that pictures, names and symbols of trade marks do not conflict with the ethics and values of historical heritages of the region.
14. Work with governmental and societal cultural organizations to develop museums, cultural centres, archives and libraries, theatre and film halls and facilitate conditions to register and licence these institutions,
15. Create a system to make research and registration of natural and man-made heritages; rank, develop, conserve, repair, licence and control the movement of heritages,
16. Encourage other bodies those contribute to the development of the Oromo Culture and Tourism sector; give recognition and awards,
17. Demarcate the boundaries of historical, cultural, religious places and natural resources; Conserve, develop and work with concerned bodies,
18. Facilitate conditions to establish councils, associations and clubs of culture and tourism at different levels and support them;
19. Survey and identify natural and man-made tourist attractions and demarcate their boundaries according to zonal tourism; formulate regulations for their development,
20. Formulate criteria for service rendering culture and tourism organizations; issue, renew and cancel licences, provide training services with concerned bodies, technical support and supervision, control, and rank them within concerned bodies,
21. Create favourable conditions for society to participate in the tourism services so that society gains benefits from tourism; support them;
22. Expand infrastructure and facilities for tourist attraction and historical heritage sites; work with concerned bodies for their success;
23. Work with concerned bodies to promote culture and tourism resources of the region at national and international level,
24. Create awareness of protection of cultural and natural tourism resources of the region; promote investment opportunities and work with concerned bodies,
25. Evaluate culture and tourism investment projects; provide technical support and comments for the concerned bodies ; follow-up their activities,
26. Make assessments on the names of junctions and streets found in zones, towns, districts, kebeles and Organizations with concerned bodies to revert to their original (prior) names; take corrective measures and follow-up its implementation,
27. Provide suggestions for concerned bodies regarding the income and fee for special tourist attraction sites; take into action after assured.

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TRUST COMPUTER & TRANSLATION OFFICE

Emblem

Oromia Regional State Government
Communication Bureau

Communication Strategy 2020 – 2030

8/7/2020



0911-609023

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occasional contradiction, conflict, and order of release are squeezed, interpreted and added by other parties at will, creating confusion. This undermines the credibility of government information kangad.

The main source of the shortcomings in the implementation of government policies, strategies and plans is not from their preparation, but from the work of promoting the right attitude and thinking. Inefficiency and weakness of communication work. The reason for this is that the government communication work is not managed strategically enough.

3. Importance of Communication Strategy

The communication strategy directs that the flow of information between the government and the public should be done in a systematic, timely and mature manner in line with the overall policies and strategies pursued by the country.

This facilitates the government to proactively coordinate its strategic policies and development and good governance plans to ensure timely and rapid flow of information to the community. The communication strategy is used to ensure that government information is organized and available for various media inputs.

The strategy organizes and directs the body that generates, disseminates and manages government information. Support and monitoring strategies shall ensure that this body works in an accountable, transparent, participatory and fair manner to fulfill the right to public information and the needs of the government to inform the public.

This communication strategy will indicate the direction of the research that identifies the focus of government communication. It lays the foundation for the structure and relationships of communications bodies of government institutions so that government communications can be organized as a source of priority and forecast information.

Overall, the strategy shows how the gaps in organizational, procedural, knowledge and communication skills of the government have been reinforced.

4. Mission, Vision

4.1. Mission

It aims to establish a modern, timely and effective communication system to ensure a clean flow of information between the government and the people, develop a national view, increase the participation and benefits of the people of the region and build the reputation of the region.

The image shows a handwritten signature in blue ink. Below the signature are two official stamps. The first is a rectangular stamp with the text "ABP T&T", "PS P&ADP", and "LEUD TEFFERA GENERAL MANAGER". The second is a circular stamp with the text "Trust Computer & Translation office" and a date "09/11/2023". There are also some handwritten numbers and symbols within the circular stamp.

4.2. Vision

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4.3. Traditions

- Quality
- Transparency and accountability
- Honesty
- Participation
- Selected source of information
- Foresight/ farsightedness/proactivity/
- Readiness for change



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