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**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, LANGUAGE STUDIES, JOURNALIS
AND COMMUNICATIONS**

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

PUBLIC RELATIONS & STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

THE PRACTICES OF USING PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS:

THE CASE OF ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES

BY: DEREJE WUBIE ID. GSE/1465/12

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND
COMMUNICATION IMPARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN PUBLIC
RELATION AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

ADVISOR: GASHAYE BELEW (Ph.D.)

OCTOBER 2022

ADDIS ABABA ETHIOPIA

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION

I, Dereje Wubie, hereby declare that this research study entitled “The Practice of Using Public Relations Tools: The Case of Ethiopian Airlines” is my original work, and that all the sources of materials used for this study have been identified and duly acknowledged. This research study has not been previously submitted in full or partial fulfillment for any degree in this university or any other recognized education institution. The research is submitted to the School of Journalism and Communication at Addis Ababa University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for Master of Arts Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communication.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date of submission: October /2022

Place of submission: Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia

APPROVAL

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Dereje Wubie Desta with the title “The Practice of Using Public Relations Tools: The Case of Ethiopian Airlines” and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Public Relation and Strategic Communication complies with the regulations of the University and notes the accepted standards for originality and quality.

EXAMINING BOARD:

Advisor Signature Date

Internal Examiner Signature Date

External Examiner Signature Date

Graduate Program Coordinator Signature Date

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATION

PR&CC=Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Marketing public relations= MPR

PR=Public relations

CC= corporate communications

EAL=Ethiopian Airlines

KI= key information

P= participant

FGD=focus group discussion

IMC =Integrated Marketing Communications

SoPs =Standard Operating Procedures

MoU= Memorandum of understanding

MRO= Maintenance, repair, and overhaul

AFRAA= African Airlines Association

CEO= Chief Executive Officer

CHRM=Corporate Human Resource Management

ET= Ethiopian airlines

VP= vice president

ABSTRACT

This study aims at assessing the usage of public relations tools by the Public Relations and Corporate Communication department of Ethiopian Airlines. The study assessed the use of both new media and traditional media by the airline through the lens of the Excellence Theory which highlights how to make the best use of public relations for organizational success. The research employed mixed research approach to gather and analyze data. A mix of different data gathering tools were used in the study including document analysis, interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires which were distributed to all 30 members of the population of the study . The respondents of the research are management members and staff of Ethiopian Airlines who work under Public Relations and Corporate Communication department as well as the Advertising and Sales Promotion Department which works very closely with the PR department. The findings showed that Ethiopian Airlines PR office uses both traditional media and new media effectively, the dominant ones being new media tools. The study also uncovered gaps in staff capacity, communication symmetry, the PR office's empowerment and the absence of annual PR audit. Based on the conclusion, the researcher recommended capacity building, initiation of annual audit, a more balanced two-way communication between the airline and its publics, as well as better empowerment of the PR office.

Key terms: public relations practice, public relations tools, excellence theory, communication models

CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

The public relations work is unthinkable without proper utilization of public relations tools which are of the print, broadcast and digital channels of communications (Tench & Yeomans, 2009, p.308-314). There are a number of PR tools or techniques available like press release, press conference, brochures, newsletters, magazines, social media platforms and the like. Therefore, this research investigates how much and how properly Ethiopian Airlines Group uses the public relations tools.

Ethiopian Airlines, as a global aviation company serves diverse customers with diverse economic, education, culture, technological background. This calls for the use of the right mix of public relation tools and techniques so as to communicate with its customers, and to sale its products and services. The world is taken by the wave of the new media, which is the outcome of web revolution. This digital multimedia is redefining PR and communications. Unlike the traditional media, this PR 2.0 tools enable organizations to communicate genuinely and directly as a good option of the traditional media channels. (Broom, 2006)

This research is therefore conducted to observe how both the traditional and the digital media tools are practiced at the PR and Corporate Communications of Ethiopian Airlines.

1.1 Background of the study

Ethiopian Airlines (Ethiopian) is the flag carrier of Ethiopia and the leading aviation group in Africa. In the past few decades, the airline came at the forefront of Africa's aviation landscape, outpacing its competitors in operational efficiency and profits. Today the airline is spearheading the acquisition of aviation technology in Africa. (Ethiopian Airlines Factsheet, March 2022)

Ethiopian currently serves 129 international and more than 62 local destinations in Africa. The Airline operates 139 ultra-modern and youngest aircraft to serve its destinations in the five continents. Ethiopian Airlines has become one of the few global airlines who managed the COVID-19 crises successfully (Ethiopian Airlines, 2021).

As the researcher observed, Ethiopian Airlines communicates with its diversified local and international public through the use of different PR tools. In order for Ethiopian Airlines to be successful in achieving its grand objectives, it should have smooth and mutually beneficial relations especially with its strategic publics – the media, passengers, aviation regulatory bodies, aircraft manufacturers, aviation organizations, the government, etc.

In today's world, organizations use a wide range of public relations tools to get their messages to their publics. Tench & Yeomans (2009) categorize the PR tools organizations have at their disposal and old media tools and new media tools. Old media tools include PR instruments such as television, radio, newspaper, magazine, billboard, brochures, and the like, while new media include all forms of digital media including social media, websites, blogs, email and the like. The contemporary practice of organizational public relation shows that companies are embracing digital media as their main channels for communicating with their publics directly and maintaining their reputations on the digital space. (Broom and Sha, 2013, 245)

Taking advantage of the available public relation tools, Ethiopian Airlines uses both new and old media to disseminate its messages to its target audiences. The student researcher wants to study the implementation of the public relations tools to check whether they are appropriate and reflect the theoretical and scientific literature.

The PR and Corporate Communication department of Ethiopian Airlines is primarily tasked with the responsibility of maintaining and protecting the reputation of the airline and ensuring that the company has favourable image in the eyes of all its key publics including passengers, governments and regulatory bodies among others.

Although the airline has been communicating with its key publics since its inception nearly eight decades back, its public relations department was formally established in 1998. (Rahel, 2013) Over the years, the office has seen a series of restructures which shifted its place in the organizational chart from time to time.

When the office was first set up back in 1998, it had the name 'Public Relations and Publications Office' and it reported to the Director of Advertising and Promotion which was under the Commercial Division of Ethiopian Airlines. Later on, the office was brought under the Director Corporate Communications and International Affairs who reported to the Vice

President of the Alliances and Corporate Strategic Planning division of the airline. During this time, the office had very close contact with the Chief Executive Officer's office while it remained answerable to the Director Corporate Communications and International Affairs under the Alliances and Corporate Strategic Planning division.

Later on, the office was renamed as 'Public Relations and Corporate Communications office' and was moved back to the Commercial division. This time, the office was brought under the Director of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), and started working closely with the Advertising and Sales Promotion office under the IMC directorate with the aim of sending a unified message to the airline's publics. Currently, the Public Relations and Corporate Communications office has continued its work under this arrangement.

The Public Relations and Corporate Communications office of Ethiopian Airlines has a team of around 15 employees. The team is categorized into three sub-divisions along functional lines: Content sub-team, Social Media sub-team, and Media Relations and Event Management sub-team. The Content sub-team is in charge of producing all the contents the airline needs to send out to media and other key publics. The contents include press releases, photo releases, email marketing contents, speeches, interview talking points, written interview replies, statements, and social media contents, among others.

The social media sub-team is responsible for managing the social media accounts of the airline which include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Telegram and TikTok as well as its YouTube account. This sub-team is also tasked with sourcing, sharing and monitoring the circulation of the contents on the social media pages, increasing the number of followers of the airline's accounts as well as drafting, implementing and monitoring the social media plans of the airline. The sub-team is also responsible for regularly monitoring the cyberspace and alerting the manager of the Public Relations and Corporate Communications office whenever negative coverage about the airline is spotted online. Per the direction of the manager, the sub-team also disseminates replies to the negative contents which circulate on the internet.

Managing corporate events and the airline's relations with local and international media fall under the functions of the Media Relations and Event Management sub-team. This sub team runs major corporate events the airline organizes for its external publics including flight inaugurals, aircraft delivery events, anniversaries, press conferences, workshops, facility

inaugurations and the like. The sub team also handles media requests and nurtures a healthy relationship between the airline and the press.

Generally speaking, the Public Relations and Corporate Communications office of Ethiopian Airlines has been discharging its responsibility of building and protecting the airline's reputation using a mix of media including mainstream media, its website and social media pages.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The statement of the problem of this research emanated from the practical observation of the student researcher. As a globally operating successful flag carrier of Ethiopia, Ethiopian Airlines is regarded as a role model for local companies in many ways including in communicating with its publics. The researcher has been working as communications officer in the PR and Corporate Communications office of Ethiopian Airlines for more than five years.

During his long service in the PR and Corporate Communications office, the researcher has been observing certain practices which seem to deviate from the contemporary PR practices in terms of the practice of using PR tools and continuous evaluation of the office's work. Due to this, the student researcher has always become curious to compare what he observes in the PR and Corporate Communications office of Ethiopian Airlines with the contemporary public relations literature, particularly in light of the Excellence theory of PR which is an empirically tested and effective theory for guiding the PR activities of organizations. Hence, the research is conducted with the objective of assessing the practice of the public relations tools in the PR and Corporate Communications office of Ethiopian Airlines.

As part of the study, the researcher has reviewed local and international studies conducted previously in relation to Ethiopian Airlines and the practice of using PR tools by its Public Relations and Corporate Communication office. Accordingly, the researcher came across previously studies in the areas of the use of PR for the marketing purposes of Ethiopian Airlines. However, the researcher couldn't find a study which looks into the practice of using PR tools for communicating with the airline's publics in a broader context. Hence, the researcher believes that the title of this research is appropriate for exploring through an in-depth research.

1.3 Objective of the study

This study aims to assess whether Ethiopian Airlines PR and Corporate Communications office uses PR tools as per the principles of the Excellence Theory. The study seeks to investigate the airline's actual practice of using public relations tools to reach its publics around the world. Accordingly, the general objective of this study is to assess the practice of using Public Relations tools by Ethiopian Airlines PR and Corporate Communications department.

1.4 Specific Objectives

- To identify the strong sides of the practice of implementing PR tools at Ethiopian Airlines PR and Communications office,
- To dig out the gaps observed in using PR tools in terms of the available literature for a recommendation.
- To investigate whether the PR office evaluates the effectiveness of its implementation of PR tools (since evaluation is very crucial for continuous improvement the office's PR activities)
- To look into the appropriateness of the PR tools used in terms of the Excellence Theory

1.5 Research questions

The following basic research questions which are based on PR models and theories are expected to be answered later in the research (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p.22). Asking which public relations tools - press release, social media platforms, press conference, public speaking, events and etc. are used at the office. Therefore, the study was expected to answer the following research questions:

- What are the strengths of Ethiopian Airlines Public Relations and Corporate Communications office in its practice of using the PR tools?
- What are the gaps of Ethiopian Airlines Public Relations and Corporate Communications office in using PR tools?
- Does the Public Relations and Corporate Communication office of Ethiopian Airlines evaluate the effectiveness of its implementation of PR tools?

- Are the PR tools implemented by the Public Relations and Corporate Communications office appropriate to effectively communicate with its publics?

1.6 Significance of the study

This research is believed to have a number of significances. The first one is it will be indicative of the tradition of PR tools implementation of the PR and Corporate Communications of Ethiopian Airlines against the literature. The researcher also believes that the research will uncover important findings for the Public Relations and Corporate Communication office of Ethiopian Airlines to learn from and improve its performance. Likewise, it will offer useful insights for business organizations aspiring to excel in their communication with their key publics.

The study will also add to the body of research conducted in the area of the application of PR tools in business organizations, and especially in relation to the aviation industry. In addition, the study is believed to be a springboard to motivate other researchers to dig more on the issue, so that they would come up with constructive comments and suggestions for using public relations tools effectively.

The study also allows the researcher to contribute to the improvement of the PR practices of the Public Relations and Corporate Communication of Ethiopian Airlines where he serves as a PR practitioner.

1.7 Scope of the study

This study is limited to the headquarters of Ethiopian Airlines Group which is located around Bole area in Addis Ababa. The research focused primarily on the Public Relations and Corporate Communications department of the airline. However, the Advertising and Sales Promotion department of the airline which works closely with the Public Relations and Corporate Communications office was also involved in the study to gather data from the advertising practitioners who are well informed about the activities of the PR office. Regarding the time scope of study, it is limited to the 2014/15 (2014 E.C) for the sake of manageability.

1.8 Limitation of the study

Lack of previous research works related to the topic of the study was one of the challenges the researcher faced. There are only a few studies conducted locally and internationally on the practices using public relations tools in the aviation industry. This has made the research work tough for the researcher. The other limitation of the study is the absence of the audience's perspective. Due to manageability constraints, the researcher couldn't include the responses of Ethiopian Airlines' publics (audiences) in the study. Future studies may come up with richer study which combines the feedbacks the airline's publics in addition to that of its practitioners.

1.9 Organization of the study

This research includes five chapters. Chapter one presents the introductory section which embraces the background of the study, statement of the problem, the objective of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study, and limitations of the study. The second chapter deals with a review of related literature.

The third chapter indicates the methodology of the research which integrates both qualitative and quantitative research methods. This part also includes research approach, design, method of data collection, data analysis, and ethical consideration. In chapter four, the researcher deals with the results and findings derived from the analyzed data. Finally, chapter five presents the conclusions, recommendations and future research directions.

1.10 Operational Definitions

Public Relations: Public relations is a management function which helps organizations to communicate with their publics. Public relations includes resolving the issues of the organization's publics and keeping up-to-date with public opinion.

Public Relations Tools: PR tools are instruments organizations use to disseminate messages to their key publics. They include traditional media and new media channels through which organizations communicate with their audiences.

Public Relations Models: Public relations models are the orientations and philosophies of organizations or public relation practitioners that guide the nature and tactics of their

communication with their publics. The four public relations models are press agency, public information, two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric models.

Excellence Theory: Excellence theory is an empirically developed theory which highlights the importance of sustainable win-win relationship between organizations and their publics through symmetrical two-way communication. The theory stresses the need for dialogue between the organization and its publics for building a balanced and mutually rewarding relations between the two parties.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Review of Related Literature

As discussed in the previous chapter, this thesis assesses the practice of using of public relations tools by Ethiopian Airlines Public Relations and Corporate Communication office in light of the Excellence theory. In this chapter, the researcher will provide definitions and explanations on key concepts treated in the thesis including public relations, public relations tools, models of public relations and roles of public relations. This chapter also discusses the Excellence theory, which forms the basis for the theoretical framework of the study. The chapter also reviews previous studies which are related to the topic of this research to highlight the research gap this thesis is aiming to bridge.

2.2 Definition of Public Relations

There are many definitions of public relations which are put forth by different scholars. (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p 6). Though it is hard to single out one definition from the various available definitions, it is important to present a working definition in the context of this study.

Public relations is most commonly referred to as management of communication between an organization and its publics (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p 6). To be more specific, public relations has been defined as the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends. (Golan et al. 2015, p2).

Similarly, Cutlip (2000:4) defined public relations as a management function used for monitoring the perceptions of the company's key stakeholders. He also pointed out that public relations has a contribution in shaping the policies of an organization vis-à-vis its stakeholders, considering the interests of both the organization and the publics. The PR

function is also concerned with articulating and implementing programs which are geared towards earning favorable engagement from the publics.

According to Thaecker (2012), public relations encompass an abroad set of communication efforts used to establish mutually beneficial relations between an organization and its stakeholders. The public relations office is the channel through which the organization engages its internal and external stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, employees, stockholders, the media, potential investors, government officials, and the public at large.

In addition, Solis and Deirdre (2009) also define the term PR as a management function; it is always meant to measure public attitudes, define policies, procedures, and interest of organization; and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance.

In spite of the number of definitions, one of the workable definitions for public relations has been given by Thaecker (2012, p5) who defined public relations as:

a distinct management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and its publics; it involves the management of problems and issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest.

From these definitions, we can conclude that Public Relations is a management function which works to bring about mutual benefit and understanding between organization and its public.

This definition seems to be a good fit to this research. Firstly, it emphasizes that public relation has a management mission, not only technical missions like writing the press release, organizing events, and implementing PR tools and techniques. The second point emphasized in this definition is public relation works to bring about mutual understanding and benefit for both the organization and its public. In addition, the definition underlines the importance of public relations in solving organizational problems through research.

2.3 Public Relations in Aviation Industry

The public relations function is vitally important for airlines as is the case with other businesses and organizations. The aviation industry has benefited immensely from the public relations function in terms of creating publicity for destinations, flights and the holiday packages airlines offer for travelers. According to Dilenschneider (2010), the contribution of public relations in this regards is critically important especially for countries which rely heavily on travel and tourism. (p. 136)

In today's digital age, airlines have even better chance of disseminating their messages to diverse audience groups thanks to the emergence of a myriad of digital communication platforms including websites, blogs and social media. Deusch (2006) Airlines get a chance to better publicize the opening of new routes and the roll out of new products and services for travelers using digital technology including social media. These platforms have made it possible for like-minded people, including travel enthusiasts, to engage in active online discussions about destinations, routes and their travel experiences.

Dilenschneider (2010) says social media and video sharing sites such as Instagram and YouTube lend themselves for effective communication campaigns by the public relations practitioner to promote destinations using visually appealing videos and photos.

Regarding the mainstream media, there are different avenues for the public relations department of airlines to work with the traditional media including television and radio channels, newspapers and magazines. Concerning the areas where media people could be interested in airlines, Deusch (2006) says:

For example, environmental media are most interested in noise/pollution issues associated with flying. Wine and food writers often show an interest in airline food offerings. And the consumer advocacy media are very interested in airline accommodations for physically disabled flyers. (p. 87)

Airlines use public relations both proactively and reactively. The public relations practitioners of airlines engage in active publicity campaigns during major events such as inauguration of new routes, roll out of new services, aircraft delivery ceremonies, and community outreach activities, among others. (Deusch, 2006, p.87)

Usually, airlines engage in reactive communication efforts during the occurrence of incidents and crises. According to Dawit (2019), crises are inevitable in the aviation business in spite of the ceaseless efforts of different actors in the industry to avoid such unfortunate

circumstances. The complexity of aviation technology and human factors are some of the causes which make crises unavoidable in the airline business.

Crises seriously affect the brand, sales as well as the revenue of airlines. Unless crises are managed properly and timely, they can inflict even worse damage on the airline involved. (Dawit, 2019) During crisis situations, especially plane crashes, the public relations office is responsible for handling the crisis communication of the airline affected. The public relations practitioners put out statements and provide information about the airplane, passengers and flight crew.

According to Deusch (2006), crisis situations also put the chief executive officer of the airline in the spotlight. Under the guidance of a senior press officer, the CEO provides details about the accident and the airline's safety record, in addition to sending out condolence messages to the families of the victims.

The public relations office of airlines plays a critical role in shaping the opinions of the airline's key stakeholders when such incidents happen. Hence, airlines need to brace themselves for any eventuality before it happens, and develop a robust crisis communication plan which will enable them to react quickly in the event of accidents. In this regard, the public relations office is immensely important in preparing emergency response strategies to minimize the reputational and other damages airlines face when crises occur. (Dawit, 2019)

2.4 Types of Public Relations tools

There are so many kinds of public relations tools and tactics these days. Understanding the concept of public relations tools and techniques is crucial to discuss the whole matter of the review of the related literature. Tench and Yeomans (2009) divide PR tools and techniques as old and new media. They say that it is time to declare an end to press relations and all its offshoots – press officers, press releases, press conferences, press packs. Using 'the press' as a collective noun for the media makes it easy to ignore all the radio stations, TV programs and Internet news sites and weblogs that should also be considered in any media relations activity. Yet many people are reluctant to move on.

We can list a number of PR tools and techniques organizations utilize including press and photo releases, promotional materials such as give-away items, leaflets and posters; corporate

website and magazines. (Kenix, 2011) Events such as press briefings, media day, donations and facility visits are also used as public relations tools of organizations.



Figure 1: PR tools

Source: <https://www.openpr.com/news/1562555/public-relations-tools-market-scenario-highlighting-major-drivers-trends-2019-2025-google-business-wire-salesforce-meltwater-cision-ab.html>

The following table shows a list of Old PR and New PR tools of Public Relations. (Tench and Yeomans, 2009, p. 314)

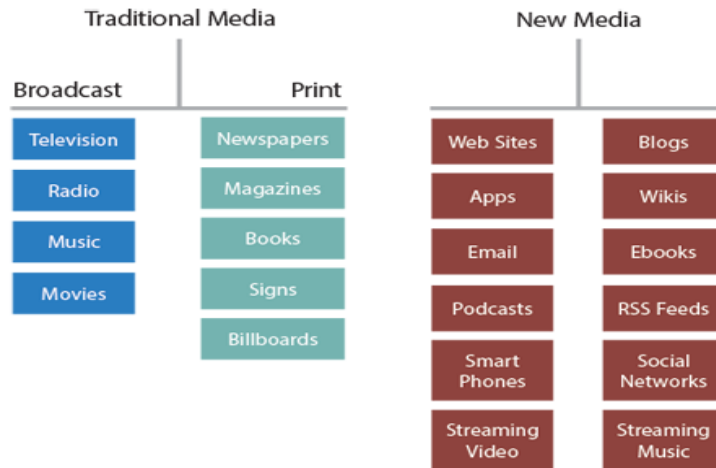


Figure 2: New and old media

Source: <https://thoughtfullearning.com/inquireHSbook/pg246>

According to Cote (2022), new media is a catchall term used to define all that is related to the internet and the interplay between technology, images and sound. That's in contrast to old media, which is defined as all forms of communication that came before digital technology, including radio and TV and printed materials such as books and magazines. These include: websites, blogs, email, social media networks, music and television, and streaming services etc. (Quinn and Filak, 2005) These two categories of media are discussed in a more detailed manner as follows.

2.5. Traditional Media and Public Relations Practice

Public relations practitioners used to rely on traditional media such as television, radio, newspaper and the like before the emergence of new media, i.e., communication tools which employ digital technologies. Broadcast media such as television and radio as well as print media including newspapers and magazines were the primary tools public relations practitioners targeted to get their messages to their publics. (Broom and Sha, 2013, p. 234)

Employing these channels is still considered effective for reaching many people in a relatively short space of time, in combination with the digital communication tools of the day for maximum impact. Public relations practitioners are supposed to have the skills and

experience to select the most fitting media platform for reaching their publics with appropriate messages.

Getting messages to audiences through traditional media is of great value to public relations practitioners due to the reach and the credibility of the independent media. The fact that the message is broadcast or published as news rather than an advertisement is a key source of influence for the organization sending out the message. Both Advertising and Public Relations seek publicity, informing audiences about something though they take different approaches to do so. While advertising is ‘the use of paid-for media to inform and persuade’ and PR as ‘the use of third-party endorsement to inform and persuade’. (Broom and Sha, 2013, p. 32)

The advertiser pays for the disseminating the message and controls what is said and how. However, the public relations practitioner aims to convince the media practitioners (journalists) to deliver the message for them in a favorable way (‘endorsement’). As veteran public relations consultant Fred Hoar put it, advertising is ‘pay for play’ while public relations is ‘pray for play’. (Tench and Yeomans, 2009, p. 296) According to Kotler and Keller (2012), through paid media companies get press coverage for their advertising, publicity, or other promotional efforts. However, earned media (free media) is the publicity a company gets without paying anything for getting its message across through the media.

Companies sometimes use a hybrid message called ‘advertorial’ to have their story published or broadcast as an independent editorial coverage though they pay for disseminating the message. Such contest are attempts to ‘soft sell’ a product or service, however journalistic ethics require the editorial team to clearly identify such messages as advertisements so that the audience know that they are paid-for messages. Tench and Yeomans (2009, p. 298) Public relations practitioners seek free publicity for their stories owing to the greater persuasive power of editorial compared to advertisements. Hence, influencing reporters to write or talk on air about a company or its product is the aim of many consumer public relations campaigns. (Smith, 2008)

For public relations practitioners, engaging the media and having their messages published or broadcast is not an end by itself. The ultimate goal of their media relations efforts is to enhance the reputation of their company or its products among the target audience, thereby

sustaining a favorable, lasting relationship with its publics. (Tench and Yeomans, 2009). Some of the traditional media used for public relations are discussed briefly as follows.

Newspapers

Newspapers are one of the major traditional mass media although their popularity has been declining over the years. According to Broom and Sha (2013), newspapers usually serves as the source of much of the news covered in other media. Newspapers served as the main source of information and entertainment since early twentieth century. Most locally published papers focus mainly on the stories that are of primary concern to the local communities. And hence they are intimately followed by the local people though newspaper readership has been diminishing over time. (Broom and Sha, 2013, p. 236).

Magazines

Magazines are suitable for in-depth analysis and detailed discussion, and allow eh presentation of the same topic from different perspectives. Quinn and Filak (2005, p 26) Unlike in broadcast media, people can go back again and refer magazines, and also newspapers, if they miss the details the first time they read a writ-up. They are more durable information than newspapers and can be archived as historical documents. They are suitable for readers who share common interests. (Broom and Sha, 2013, p. 240).

Radio

Radio is a mobile medium which people can carry anywhere. It is less restrictive than television in that people can tune in while driving, cooking or doing other things. (Broom and Sha, 2013) According to Henslowe (1999), this channel is also adaptable and quicker to produce with few facilities. Like television, illiterate people can also tune in to radio. It is also suitable for covering issues relevant to local communities. Henslowe (1999, p. 84) Radio can covey a lot of information in short space of time. However public relations practitioners should be careful in selecting messages to be aired via radio as people may not have the chance to listen again once if they miss some information. (Quinn and Filak, 2005)

Television

Television is an exceptionally powerful media in that it can convey the sights, sounds, and feelings of the televised story. “Television combines the printed word, spoken word, video, color, music, animation, and sound effects into one message, making it a powerful medium.” (Broom and Sha, 2013, p. 242). It also enables journalists to cover stories live from anywhere. Despite its richness, television may not be suitable for any kind of message. Henslowe (1999) warns that public relations practitioners should be careful in selecting the messages that are appropriate for disseminating through television as it. (p. 81)

Cable and Satellite Television

Besides publicly accessible broadcast networks, television is coming through cable and satellite. According to Broom and Sha (2013), the growth of cable and satellite television has enabled people around the world to access to hundreds of high-definition television channels with high-definition capabilities. Depending on the market reach of the company, public relations practitioners can consider cable and satellite television to reach their target audiences.



Figure 3: Traditional media

Source: <https://zeqingfeng.wordpress.com/2014/09/19/changes-of-news-dissemination-pattern-in-the-new-media-era/>

Overview of social media

The Internet has revolutionized the entire public relations and communication profession and how PR practitioners do their jobs.

With the advent of the internet, almost all traditional media have gone online and achieved online presence. Broom and Sha (2013) note:

For public relations practitioners, the new media environment offers at least four challenges:

- (1) Staying abreast of changing technology,
- (2) Responding to the demand for transparency,
- (3) Dealing with new media players who communicate directly with organizational stakeholders, and
- (4) Representing organizations in the new social media environment. (p. 245)

Digital and media have changed the way and the speed at which speed information is disseminated and how companies interact with their audiences. These changes allow practitioners to communicate directly and efficiently with their publics. But they also necessitate constant monitoring of the digital space to continuous scanning to ensure that negative messages about the organization do not circulate online. It also means that organizations need to engage their publics in the virtual place for better chance of maintaining their reputations online. (Broom and Sha, 2013, 245)

Social networking websites

Social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram offer don't only individuals but also organizations to communicates their messages in a cost effective and flexible ways. Social networking sites which people can use for free include platforms such as Facebook (www.facebook.com), MySpace (www.myspace.com), LinkedIn (www.Linkedin.com), Ecademy (www.ecademy.com), Plaxo (www.plaxo.com) Xing (www.xing.com), Yorz(www.yorz.com), Ryze (www.ryze.com) and others. Wright and Hinson (2009). Some of these sites have been discussed briefly as follows.

Facebook

Facebook is the leading networking website in the world. Although it was initially created as a communication platform for Harvard University students, over the years it has grown into a global social media giant with hundreds of millions of users around the world. It is particularly popular among young people as a platform for communication and networking. The platform allows users to share content including text, photos and video. It also enables users to send virtual gifts to people who have Facebook accounts. It also supports different applications that can be synchronized with it. (Brown, 2009, p.165)

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a networking and communication platform for business-oriented people. It is also a preferred tool for companies to share business-oriented content and to hire people. Launched in 2003, the site is popular among business executives and professionals with different qualifications Wright and Hinson (2009). The site also allows users to share job listings and provides opportunities for users to discover job opportunities through their connections.

Twitter

Twitter is the leading micro-blogging site which is suitable for sharing short messages having up to 140 characters. Twitter allows users to network with influential users. It is also a preferred site for sharing news content. The platform is used regularly by influential people in digital public relations. (Brown, 2009, p.165)

YouTube

YouTube is the leading video sharing platform on the internet. It allows users to share videos on the platform while earning money for a huge number of views. Companies can promote their products and services by sharing videos including explainer content. (Brown, 2009, p.165) Besides the videos shared on the platform, there is also an archive and a place to watch teasers and trailers of future videos.

Instagram

Instagram is a platform for visuals. It is suitable for sharing videos and photos. Owned by Facebook (Meta), the visual sharing platform offers various features for quick and easy photo sharing among users. Users can take pictures using their mobile devices and upload them to Instagram to boost the brands of their companies or promote their offerings for customers.

The platform also allows users to add hashtags in the same way as used in twitter and other social networking websites, which is useful in running digital campaigns and creating viral content. (Motion et al, 2016, p.20)



Figure 4: Social media platforms

Source: <https://digitalmarketinginstitute.com/blog/8-tips-for-content-optimization-for-every-social-media-platform>

2.6 Major Roles of Public Relations

Roles are the collection of tasks that people perform. Public Relations play significant roles in achieving ones organizational communication goals. The roles of Public Relations range from being communication manager to communication technicians. Broom and Sha (2013) have presented major roles of PR practitioners.

Most practitioners of PR begin their jobs as communication technicians. The role includes applying strategies with the communication tactics of new releases, newsletters, media relations(placements), website contents, speeches, blogs, and social media interactive messages.

Practitioners at this stage are involved in identifying problems and seeking solutions they rather spend their time on applying tactical activities like technical writing skills. The communication facilitator serves a critical purpose by bringing the organization and its publics together. He strives to establish a common ground between the two sides with regards to decisions which affect both parties. (Broom and Sha, 2013)

Regarding solving problems, the public relations practitioner liaises with the movement of the organization to address issues pertaining to the organization. This assumes that the PR

head has a seat in the management boardroom and discusses matters with other managers on equal terms.

The communication role takes two forms: technician role where the practitioner handles the daily routines of public relations, and managerial role which includes giving direction to the overall PR activities. Having a good grasp of the roles of public relation is critical for any PR practitioner so as to discharge his responsibilities well.

One of the major functions of public relation practitioners is conducting studies on issues relevant to the organization and its publics. Such studies are key to identify public perceptions, scan the environment, get inputs for planning PR activities, and forecast what the future may hold for the company and its publics.

According to Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000: 36), “research also includes monitoring programmed implementation and assessing program impact to evaluate program effectiveness.” The other role of PR is strategic planning. Public relation practitioners map out the future of the organization along with the higher management team of the organization. Educating employees of the organization on critical matters is yet another role of PR. This enables the organization to adequately inform its internal public and rally them towards achieving the organization’s vision. In addition to educating employees, the PR function is also responsible for counseling managers to have a good grasp of the organizational plan and act accordingly. (Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007).

Communicating planned activities and assessing the execution of the plans are also vital roles of public relation practitioners.

The other critical area, which falls under the role of public relation practitioners, is media relations and placement. The media relations role encompasses duties such as liaising with media outlets and practitioners with a view to secure positive coverage for the organization. Handling media queries also comes under the media relations function of PR. According to Cutlip (2006), the other domain of the PR function is organizing corporate events such as media conferences, seminars, sponsored events and fairs among others.

Tench and Yeomans (2009) also mention a number of major roles of Public Relations which overlap with the above detailed functions

2.7 Types of organizational publics

It is known that the nature of the public of an organization can dictate the kind of PR tools the organization makes use of. (Smith 2003, p. 261) Under this part, the definition of the public and stakeholder in the context of this research will be given, and the kind of public in terms of who internal and external publics will be discussed based on the available literature.

First, it is wise to identify what stakeholders or publics are as the two terms are used interchangeably. The marked difference between the two, according to (Tench and Yeomans, 2009) is that people are stakeholders because they are in a category affected by decisions of an organization or if their decision affects the organization. Many people in a category of stakeholders – such as employees or residents of a community – are passive. The stakeholders who are or become more aware and active can be described as publics. Publics form when stakeholders recognize one or more of the consequences (of the behavior of the organization) as a problem and organize to do something about it or them. Publics are more important than stakeholders.

2.8 Models of Public Relations

Models of public relation are press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical models of communications.

Before dealing with each of the models, it is worth to introduce what each model means based on the literature. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984), the first model, Press Agency is one-way communication model in which no dialogue with the intended audience is required and the main objective of this model is to transmit one particular view of the world through communication channels. (p.22)

The second one, public information model of public relations, shares common features with press agency. They both follow unidirectional (one-way) information dissemination approach. However, truth is fundamental to the goal of the public information model, which may not always be the case with the press agency model. The main aim of the public information approach is to inform rather than persuade. The third model of PR model, Two-way Asymmetric communication is rooted in persuasive communications and aims to generate an agreement between the organization and its publics by bringing them around to the organization's way of thinking. (Tench & Yeomans, 2009)

Feedback from publics is used to adapt communications strategies to be more persuasive, not to the position of the organization. Finally, in the Two-way Symmetric communication, the aim is to generate mutual understanding – the two-way communications process should lead to changes in both the public’ and the organization’s position on an issue.

2.8.1 Press Agency

As far as the understanding of the student from the literature and classroom discussions, Press Agency is the least acclaimed model of public relations as it is obsessed in promoting self-interest and one-way communication. According to Browning (2010), this model seems to be utilized mostly in less developed and developing socio-economic setting. (p. 6) The model would also be appropriate in some context like in church sermons, election campaigns, in the military hierarchy, coercive institutions and etc. Press agency totally ignores the place of public, and mostly hails its own sides. Press agency model is still applicable in all countries in spite of the question of proportion.

From the practical experience of the student, as a public relations practitioner, Press Agency is mostly dominant in theories of persuasion and social influence, as well as in mass communication, especially in traditional media channels like radio, television, and print media. The model is also utilized during crises time.

2.8.2 Public Information Model

Even though public information model of public relations is relatively better ethically as we have seen above, it still suffers from a severe communication imbalance. It conducts little research to produce a planned and filtered message which is disseminated in one way to the public to fulfill the interest of the source only, not the receiver. The message is not usually accompanied by the feedback of the message receiver. (Grunig and Hunt, 1984) The government, non-profit organizations, minister offices, and etc. implement this model of public relations.

Theories of persuasion and social influence as well as mass communication in traditional channels which mostly make use of the public information model of public relation. Situational crisis communication theory is also observed using the model in defending itself against the responsibility of the crises. (Browning, 2010) The consecutive press releases of

Ethiopian Airlines Group during the crises of ET 302 crash could be a good example of the public information model.

2.8.3 Two-way asymmetrical

Two-way asymmetrical communication is the better one than the previous press agency and public information in that it allows discussion and feedback in two-way communication. It also conducts researches, scans the environment, and prepares planned and targeted messages. No matter how hard the model knows its public, it still has a communication imbalance between the organization and its public. (Tench and Yeomans, 2009, p.257)

All the communication is targeted to fulfill the need of the organization, not mutually beneficial. As we see in the above table, competitive business companies utilize this model as their very existence depends on their public; their communication determines their funding, their number of members, and their level of credibility.

2.8.4 Two-way symmetrical model

This PR model of public relation is the perfect one in that it conducts research for the best selection of message, the channel of communication, and good interaction of the public. All these things are to achieve mutual understanding and benefits for both the organization and its public. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984), in the two-way symmetrical model, communication is balanced and public relations practitioners scan the environment and facilitates dialogues and discussions between parties. (p. 23)

Two-way symmetrical model in theories of public relations is the outcome of developed and modern society. The communication in this context satisfies both parties – organization and the public. Excellence theory, as we have seen above, uses this model of public relations.

Models of PR

4 Models of Public Relations by J.Gruning & T.Hunt

Characteristic	Publicity	Public Information	Two-Way Asymmetric	Two-Way Symmetric
Purpose	Propaganda	Dissemination of information	Scientific Persuasion	Mutual Understanding
Nature of Communication	One way, complete truth not essential	One way, truth important	Two way, imbalanced effects	Two way, balanced effect
Nature of Research	Little, Counting, House Survey	Little, content analysis, readability, readership	Formative, evaluative of attitudes,	Formative, evaluative of understanding

Figure 5: Models of PR

Source: <https://media.cheggcdn.com/prep/259/259448e0-49cc-44b3-8629-5f79bd6c6424/bildschirmfoto-2021-06-23-um-16-52-48.png>

In light of the different public relations and communication theories discussed above, the researcher would like to stress the merits of the Excellence Theory as an effective lens to evaluate the communication practices of the organization under consideration, i.e. Ethiopian Airlines.

It is worth reiterating that the Excellence Theory emerged through an empirical study of PR practitioners who have firsthand insight into PR and communication. The theory highlights the importance of public relations practitioners' participation in strategic management and decision-making process to ensure that the organization's publics are kept in mind when organizational decisions are made. (Browning, 2008)

Tench and Yeomans (2009) note that Excellence theory also advocates a balanced, two-way communication between the organization and its internal and external publics to build lasting and mutually beneficial relationship. These are some of the qualities which make the Excellence Theory a useful framework for evaluating the public relation practices of Ethiopian Airlines as well as its place in the organizational hierarchy.

To assess the symmetry and balanced nature of the communication between the organization assessed (Ethiopian Airlines) and its publics, the researcher believes that the models of public relations are also useful for evaluating the extent to which the PR practice is balanced

and bi-directional. Hence, the researcher will blend the Excellence Theory and the models of public relations to weigh how effective the PR practices of Ethiopian Airlines are when it comes to nurturing win-win and quality relationship between the organization and its strategic publics.

2.9 Theories of Public Relations

Before discussing the Excellence theory, which forms the basis for the theoretical framework of this research, it is useful to define what theory means. According to Swedberg (2014), a theory is defined as “logically interconnected sets of propositions from which empirical uniformities can be derived.” These uniformities emanate from empirically testable hypotheses, and serve as general principles or body of principles for explaining certain phenomena. Theories offer structured generalizations about the world that researchers can employ for discussing general characteristics of a given social phenomena. (MacRaild and Taylor, 2004, p.3)

Swedberg (2014) notes that theory formulation (or theorizing) can occur in different ways which include induction, deduction, generalizing, model-building, and using analogies, among others. It is also closely tied to observation, experiments and drawing meanings.

2.9.1 Excellence Theory of Public Relations

The development of Excellence theory was headed by James E. Grunig (1942-present). This theory is taken as the most advanced one due to a number of reasons. First, the theory has been developed by gathering the relevant data from the horse’s mouth – public relations people, upper managers of organizations, and from people, who are directly or indirectly influenced by organizations. Therefore, as primary sources were used to gather first-hand information during the development of the theory.

The Excellence theory strictly highlights the importance of the participation of public relation in strategic management roles in the decision-making process in an organization. Excellence theory, more than other public relation theories, stresses the importance of environmental assessment to know the strategic publics of organizations. In addition, the balanced and mutual relations of organizations and their publics based on dialogue is the central theme of the theory. (Grunig & Grunig, 2008)

This makes the theory the most effective one for implementing two-way symmetrical model of public relations, and at the end of the day, both the interest of the organization and its publics are maintained and attained in a symbiotic, quality, long-term, and balanced communication relationships.

The Excellence theory also highlights the importance of building good system of internal relations as it is a mirror for the external relations. (Grunig & Grunig, 2008, p.2) Actually, employees are one of the strategic publics of any organizations; the brand building of an organization should begin internally as employees are the first implementers of organizational vision and mission.

When we evaluate Excellence theory against its scope, it is a grand theory because it strives to establish long-term, sustainable, win-win, and quality relationship between organizations, stakeholders, and their strategic publics. According to Browning (2010), the usefulness of the Excellence theory is also high in producing fruitful and balanced communication, which in turn brings about organizational and societal success. The theory is also hard-wearing as the relationship it sets up is long-standing, and not side to one party. Excellence theory is both applied and pure theory. This is because it solves many communication problems as it makes use of dialogue and two-way symmetrical public relations model. In addition, it is pure theory as it can kindle other researches and quality ideas, which are beneficial in a number of fields of study. (Browning, 2008)

2.10 Review of some empirical studies on the usage of new and old media PR instruments

The student researcher has reviewed previous studies, both international and local, to find out what topics have investigated by researchers in relation to the use of public relations tools for organizational communication. Accordingly, the researcher has found out that various studies have been conducted locally and internationally on public relation tools and the practice of organizational communication. There are studies which specifically focus on Ethiopian Airlines and its public relations practices for communication and marketing purposes.

In this researcher will summarize some of the international and local researches conducted on the mentioned topics.

Review of international studies

A. Social Media and the Evolution of Corporate Communications

This study, conducted by Laura Matthews, is published in ‘The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications’. The study assesses the relationship between social media and corporate communications. It focuses on the radical change the public relations industry has seen with the introduction of social media tools. This research critically analyzed and interpreted previous research studies and publications in addition to online resources, current trends as well as public relations and communication theories among others. The study concluded that the PR industry is undergoing massive changes as a result of digital media and that the speed of the change is benefiting those who adopt technology early on while leaving behind those who are lagging behind in adopting technological innovations.

B. Strategic Social Media Use in Public Relations: Professionals’ Perceived Social Media Impact, Leadership Behaviors, and Work-Life Conflict

The authors of this research are Hua Jiang, Yi Luo and Owen Kulemeka. It was published in 2016 in the ‘International Journal of Strategic Communication’.

The research assessed the perceptions of public relations practitioners and communicators regarding the impact of social media use on their work, leadership behaviors, and work-life conflict. The study employed quantitative research approach and analyzed data gathered from a sample of communication professionals. The findings showed that as far as the perceptions of the communication professionals are concerned, the use social media in media relations, employee communications, and social marketing have significant association with improving the effects of social media use. The conclusion also included that governmental relations practitioners use social media regularly and that they experienced high level of work-life imbalance.

C. Social Media, Traditional Media and Marketing Communication of Public Relations: A Study of Banking Industry

This study is conducted by Datis Khajeheian and Fereshteh Mirahmadi, and published in the American Journal of Marketing Research in 2015. The research tried to understand how the public relations departments of three Iranian banks use diverse media platforms for marketing

communications and related activities. The study categorized public relations functions into 14 under three categories and employed questionnaires to gather data from respondents. The results of the study showed that old media tools still played a significant role in media consumption of public relations, during the time the study was conducted.

Review of local studies

A. An Assessment of Public Relation Practice: The Case of Ethiopian Airlines Enterprise

This research was conducted in 2013 by Rahel Demoze as partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in marketing management at Saint Mary's University. The study aimed at studying Ethiopian Airlines public relations practice in the view of external publics. It also sought to assess the general public relation work of the airline, investigate the factors that affect the carrier's public relations practice, the challenges observed in the public relations practices of the airline, and how the organization tries to maintain healthy relationship with its customers through proper handling of their grievances. The study employed mixed research method, which analyzed questionnaire data gathered from respondents quantitatively in addition to descriptive (qualitative) analysis of interviews with respondents.

The study concluded that Ethiopian Airlines Public Relations and Corporate Communications Office needs to do more to maintain the favorable image it has in the minds of its customers. The study also identified gaps in the planning and implementation of PR programs which facilitate common understanding with customers and stakeholders of the carrier. It added that the Public Relations and Corporate Communications Office is doing its best to protect the carrier's image. The researcher also suggested recommendations abased on the conclusion.

B. The Practice of Marketing Public Relations in Ethiopian Airlines

This study is conducted in 2021 by Ayele Legesse in partial Fulfillment of the Requirement of Degree of Master of Art in Public Relations and Strategic Communications. The objective of the study is to assess the practices of Marketing Public Relations (MPR) at Ethiopian Airlines. Anchored in the interpretivist research paradigm, the study employed qualitative

research method to analyze data gathered through document analysis, key informant interview and focus group discussions.

From the analyzed data, the researcher concluded that the marketing public relation work at Ethiopian Airlines is conducted under Integrated Marketing Communications department. It also found out that the respondents are convinced about the critical role of the public relations and corporate communication office and that the Integrated Marketing Communications arrangement has helped in unifying and consolidating the marketing communication activities of the airline with better customer reach.

C. The Practice and Challenges of Integrated Marketing Communications; the case of Ethiopian Air Lines

The study was carried out in 2021 by Minwuyelet Denekew in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communication. The research aimed at assessing the Integrated Marketing Communication practice of Ethiopian Airlines. The researcher employed the mixed research approach and gathered data through document analysis, questionnaires, in-depth interview and observation. The study revealed that Ethiopian Airlines staff have favorable attitude towards the implementation of integrated marketing communications at the organization, and that the new arrangement is beneficial when it comes to saving costs, optimizing resources, and better customer relations.

The study also uncovered that online marketing is the dominant marketing communication tool the airline employed. It also showed the successful utilization of social media platforms by the airline towards meeting the demands of customers online. Among the weaknesses identified by the study are lack of a marketing communication plan and delivery cycle as well as lack of technical training among others.

D. Determinants of Effectiveness of Social Media Usage: A case of Ethiopian Airlines

Conducted by Eskedar Baheru 2017 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Masters of Art in marketing management, this study focused on evaluating the determinants of effectiveness of social media usage by Ethiopian Airlines. The researcher employed

quantitative research approach and gathered data from responders using questionnaires. The study identified perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, perceived enjoyment and trust to measure the effectiveness of social media usage. The finding indicated that trust is the dominant determinant of effectiveness in the digital media usage of the carrier. According to the analyzed data, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use also had significant correlation with effectiveness of social media usage by Ethiopian Airlines.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Research Design and Methodology

This chapter describes the research methods and procedures the researcher followed to answer the research questions. The researcher will show the appropriateness of the research method and design chosen for this study, by explaining the philosophical foundation on which the study is based. This chapter discusses the research method and design, the data sources, the sampling technique, the data collection tools used, as well as ethical considerations and limitations.

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this research is to assess the practice of using Public Relations tools in the Public Relations and Corporate Communications department of Ethiopian Airlines. The specific objectives of the study include identifying the strong sides in using PR tools by the department and investigating the effectiveness of the tools in the communication activities of the department. The study also aims to evaluate the appropriateness of the PR tools used by the department, and see if there are gaps in using the tools in light of the communication theory on which this study is based.

The objective of the study calls for the description, analysis, interpretation, and writing of the collected data on only one company, i.e., Ethiopian Airlines. And this in turn requires the use of qualitative approach which mostly uses open-ended questions and the like Creswell. (2014). This doesn't mean that the research doesn't use quantitative method; the dominant research methodology is qualitative research design as the objective of the paper is achieved through fact-finding.

3.2 Research paradigm

The philosophy we have on nature and knowledge dictates our research designs and methodologies. It is, therefore, important to discuss the philosophies or worldviews depending on the objective and purpose of our research. Philosophies on nature and knowledge are broadly divided into two lenses - ontology and epistemology under which positivism/post-positivism view, anti-positivism, the transformative and the pragmatic worldviews of research paradigms are categorized. (Creswell, 2014).

Positivism/Post-positivism begins with a theory and highlights that knowledge is outside the mind of humans. According to Creswell (2014), this worldview mostly holds true to quantitative research design. In fact, quantitative research approach follows deterministic way in which it believes causes determine effects. (p. 7)

In contrast, anti-positivist philosophy states that meanings are varied and multiple, and that humans construct meaning as they interact. This philosophy also holds that knowledge is within the minds of humans. This worldview leads to qualitative research method which entertains multiple meanings. Researchers who subscribe to the anti-positivist philosophy follows inductive approach in their studies.

The pragmatist world view combines both positivist and anti-positivist paradigms. As a theoretical foundation for research, this world view focuses on understanding a research problem and applying all available approaches to address the problem. (Creswell, 2014) Hence, researchers subscribing to the pragmatist philosophy use mixed methods (both qualitative and quantitative) to conduct their studies. This research is based on the pragmatist philosophy, and hence, follows the mixed research methods.

3.3 Research method

Research methods include the techniques used to collect, analyze and interpret data for a given research. They encompass all the forms of data collection instruments and their characteristics including the use of closed/open ended questions, their focus on quantitative versus qualitative data. Data collection may also include observation of individuals at a given site and conversing with them.

Research method are also chosen by considering whether deductive or inductive approaches are employed to arrive at the conclusion. It also considers whether the data is numeric or non-numeric such as voice, text, images and video which are gathered through the use of tools like observation, content analysis, interviews and the like. (Creswell, 2007). A mix of both quantitative and qualitative data may also be used in studies, in which case, mixed research methods are employed.

Creswell stated that “mixed methods research may be a methodology for conducting research that involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative research during a single study” (2007, p.9). The essential assumption is that the uses of both quantitative and qualitative methods, together, provide a far better understanding of the research problem and question than either method by itself.

The study focuses on the case of the PR and Corporate Communications department of Ethiopian Airlines and assesses the practice of using public relations tools by the office. The researcher gathered different data from published documents and employees working under the Integrated Marketing Communication Directorate of Ethiopian Airlines, which incorporates the PR and Corporate Communication department.

As we have discussed so far, among the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods, the researcher has chosen the mixed research method for this study.

3.4 Research design

A research design is a conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data (Kothari, 2004). A

research design covers all aspects of the research plan from the broad philosophical perspective of the researcher to the specific methods used for gathering and analyzing data. According to Creswell (2007), research design “involves the intersection of philosophy, strategies of inquiry and specific methods.” (p. 5) Factors such as the nature of the topic of the research, the researcher’s personal experience and audience or the target of the study also determine the type of the research design used.

Broadly speaking, there are three types of research designs: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. As noted previously, the selection of one or the other of these designs is dictated by the research problem and the philosophical worldview the researcher subscribes to. (Creswell, 2007). Before determining the type of research design to be used in a study, the researcher is supposed to see the bigger picture of the study including his/her philosophical world view assumptions, the method of investigation related to the world view, and the detailed procedures and techniques applicable to the philosophical world view the study is anchored in. (Creswell, 2007).

This study uses mixed research approach, which integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. However, the qualitative method (specifically, descriptive analysis) is used predominantly in the research.

In descriptive analysis, the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of the research questions are expressed in written form, rather than numerical form. The researcher has limited role on the variables and does not generalize the findings of the research to other entities. In other words, he reports the facts on the ground analyzing and interpreting the collected data against the available literature.

3.5 The study subject/site

This research focuses on the Integrated Marketing Communication Directorate of Ethiopian Airlines which incorporates the PR & Corporate Communications as well as the Sales & Promotion departments. Particularly, the study aims to assess how public relations tools are used by the airline.

Ethiopian Airlines is the leading aviation group in Africa with more than 75 years of air transport service. The airline has become one of Africa’s leading carriers, unrivaled in the

African continent for its efficiency and operational success, and turning profits for almost all the years of its existence. Operating at the forefront of technology, the airline has also become one of Ethiopia's major industries and a veritable institution in Africa. (Ethiopian Airlines, 2021).

Ethiopian currently serves 127 international and more than 62 continentals destinations in Africa. The Airline operates more than 135 ultra-modern and youngest aircraft to serve its destinations in the five continents. Ethiopian Airlines has become one of the few global airlines that managed the COVID-19 crisis successfully (Ethiopian Airlines, 2021).

Hence, the study site is the headquarters of Ethiopian Airlines which is located adjacent to Addis Ababa International Airport around Bole.

3.6 Population of the study

All the employees working under Public Relations & Corporate Communications as well as Sales & Promotion departments constitute the population of this study. There is a manager in charge of each department, and in total, there are around 30 employees in the two departments combined. Additionally, two managers from the broader Integrated Marketing Communication /IMC/ department have been interviewed through purposive sampling to address the research problem.

3.7 Sampling frame

The list of all employees, team leaders, managers, and directors in the Integrated Marketing Communication /IMC/ department is the sample frame of this research.

3.8 Sampling technique

Purposive or 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, 1996). The researcher employed purposive sampling to select managers, team leaders and directors for interviews.

Accordingly, the researcher interviewed two team leaders from Sales & Promotion department, two managers from the broader Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

directorate as well as the Director of IMC himself. These interviewees were selected through purposive sampling as they are well informed about the subject of the research, and the researcher believes that they help in addressing the research problem.

As mentioned above, the population size of the research is 30 employees working under Public Relations & Corporate Communications as well as Sales & Promotion departments. Considering the manageability of the size of the population, the researcher gathered questionnaire data from every member of the population, i.e. all the 30 employees working in the two departments. According to Neuman (2007), surveying every member of a population, which is known as census, helps the researcher get high-quality data which leads to sound conclusions. (p. 241)

3.9 Data collection instruments

The research used data gathered by means of questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Interviews are used to gather information from team leaders, managers, and a director. Focus group discussions are conducted with a group of five employees from the sample. In addition, questionnaires are distributed to some 15 percent of the sample.

Considering the objective of this study, the mixed research method is the most suitable approach to gather and analyze data about the use of public relations tools by the PR and Corporate Communications department of Ethiopian Airlines. The researcher believes that investigating the effectiveness of the public relations tools by the organization requires the use of detailed qualitative as well as quantitative data from managers and technicians in the public relations department and cross-functionally related sections such as Advertising and Sales Promotion.

The researcher, therefore, used in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and content review (each of which is further discussed in the next section) to describe, analyze and interpret data which are critical to address the research questions. Although qualitative research tools are applied predominantly in this study, the researcher also used questionnaires to gather data from practitioners, which were later analyzed quantitatively.

The researcher believes that methodological and data triangulation through multiple data collection tools is essential to better address the research questions and enhance the validity and credibility of the findings. Triangulation is also critical to gain better understanding of the research problem and avoid the bias that may arise from the limitations of any single data collection method.

3.9.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are one of the most widely used data gathering instruments as they are easy to design and facilitate systematic analysis of the data gathered. According to Gray (2004), some of the factors that contribute to the extensive usage of questionnaires as data gathering tool include the low cost and time they require to prepare and distribute, the time and place flexibility to fill them out, the simplicity of data analysis for close-ended questions and their suitability to avoid interviewer bias.

The questionnaire utilizes a Likert-type scale and also includes some open-ended questions that allow respondents to express their particular views more clearly. The questionnaire is prepared in the English language.

3.9.2. Data gathered through questionnaires

The researcher distributed questionnaires to all the 30 employees of PR and Corporate Communication as well as Advertising and Sales Promotions departments. The questionnaire included 16 questions clustered under three themes: Public/stakeholder related questions, PR empowerment related questions, and questions related to PR tools. (Appendix xix) Likert scale was used to measure the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the questions, which are phrased as statements.

3.9.3. Demographic characteristics analysis of respondents

The background information of the respondents comprised of age, gender, and educational level. Regarding the gender of respondents, 60% of them are males and the rest 40% are females. This shows that the majority of the participants of the study are males. Likewise, some 60% of the respondents belong to age group of 20-30 years, followed by the remaining 40% of the respondents who belong to the age group 31-40 years. This shows that most of the participants of the study are between the age of 20 and 30 years. concerning the educational

background of the participants, 86.7% of the respondents are first-degree holders while holders of master's degree and above accounted 13.3% of the respondents' qualifications. This shows that the respondents have high literacy levels.

No of Item	Item	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	18	60.0
		Female	12	40.0
2	Age	20-30	18	60.0
		31-40	12	40.0
3	Level of Education	Degree	26	86.7
		Masters and above	4	13.3

Table 1: Demographic characteristics analysis of respondents

3.9.4. Interview

In-depth interview is used as one of the data collection tools in this study. Interview allows the researcher to gather data about the interviewee's knowledge, principles and attitudes. It can be used in combination with other data gathering tools of qualitative research and allow the researcher to test hypotheses and ascertain the presence or absence of correlation among the variables studied. According to Gray (2004), interviews serve their purpose best in studies where the questions are open-ended or complex. The interviewer's skill and experience is key to draw rich and in-depth information form the interviewee.

The interviews can in essence provide an in-depth background about the underlying reasons why participants gives specific answers, also provide extensive information associated with the interviewee's opinions, perceptions, values, motivation, and feelings, etcetera. It also allows the researcher to realize a broader perspective about how communication is viewed within a specific organization. (Gray, 2004, 217).

3.9.5. Data gathered through interviews

The researcher interviewed five management members under the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) department including the Director of IMC, Manager of Corporate Communications Department, and three Team Leaders under Advertising and Sales Promotion office. They were selected purposively as they are better informed about the public relations and corporate communication work of the airline, the old media and new media tools it uses, the capacity of the staff under IMC and related matters. The names of these key informants are kept anonymous, but their basic profiles are presented as follows. (Please note that KI stands for Key Informant.)

No	Respondent's Code	Sex	Qualification	Field of Study	Work Experience in ETG	Current Position in ETG
1	KI1	M	1st degree	Finance & accounting	14 years	Director IMC of Ethiopian Airlines
2	KI2	M	Diploma	Accounting	22 years	Mgr. PR&CC
3	KI3	F	1st degree	Marketing	12 years	Team Leader advertising
4	KI4	M	Diploma	Accounting	35 years	Team leader promotion
5	KI5	M	1st degree	Finance & Accounting	14 years	Team leader content

Table 1: information about the respondents of key informant interviewees

3.9.6. Focus Group Discussion

Focus group discussion is one of the data gathering techniques in qualitative research. It is a gathering of respondents who are interviewed and re-interviewed, allowing the researcher to assess their attitudes and behaviors. (Gray, 2004) In focus group discussions, the researcher gathers respondents and interviews them serving as a moderator. According to Neuman (2007), the researcher facilitates free discussion among the participants on issues related to the researcher's enquiry and ensures that the discussion is not dominated by any of the participants.

3.9.7. Data gathered through focus group discussions

The student researcher conducted focus group discussion to gather data from the participants about their responses regarding the major public relations tools and techniques used by the PR and Corporate Communications office; the skills and knowledge of the PR practitioners working in the office, how well the airline is engaging its publics, and the level of empowerment of the office.

The focus group discussion was conducted with five participants who are working in the Public Relations and Corporate Communication office of Ethiopian Airlines. Employees from all sub teams of the office, including Media Relations and Event Management, Content Development and Social Media Management teams, participated in the focus group discussion. Before delving into the questions raised in the focus group discussion and the responses provided by the participants, it will be important to feature some of the basic profiles of the respondents. The below table summarizes the some of the demographic characteristics and the roles of the participants in the workplace.

S.N.	Participant's Code	Sex	Qualification	Field of Study	Work Experience in Ethiopian airlines	Current Position in Ethiopian airlines
1	P1	F	BA	English & Literature	>5 years	Senior Corporate Communications officer
2	P2	F	BA	Journalism & communications	>5Years	Senior Corporate Communications officer
3	P3	F	BA	Journalism & communications	>5years	Senior Corporate Communications officer
4	P4	F	BA	English &	7 years	Senior

				Literature		Corporate Communications officer
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Table 2: Information about the participants of FGDS

3.9.8 Document analysis

Document analysis is a systematic approach for assessing the contents of written documents online and offline. It is a technique widely employed in qualitative research for examining and interpreting data to draw meaning and understanding from the material analyzed. Document analysis is usually blended with other qualitative research tools such as interviews, observation and focus group discussions to identify convergence of findings. (Bowen, 2009)

The researcher has used questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussion and document analysis as data collection tools. The use of multiple data collection tools is useful for checking whether there is convergence of data collected through different instruments.

3.10 Method of data analysis

The data which is gathered from the sample will be analyzed qualitatively through a descriptive approach. Some data may be analyzed quantitatively by using percentages. The analysis is limited to the data gathered based on the research questions.

3.11 Research ethics

Ethical procedure has been applied strictly throughout this research. This research is conducted after securing the consent of Ethiopian Airlines Group through a formal letter issued by Addis Ababa University. As per the requirement of the airline, the researcher’s proposal on the data needed for the research, data sources, and data collection methods, has been reviewed and approved by the Human Resources Management of the airline. The data gathered from employees have also been kept confidential, and are used only for the research purpose in line with the ethical requirements of research procedures.

Staff members who participated in the interviews and focus group discussion were given the opportunity to review on the transcription of the responses they provided, and correct if there are wrongly presented data.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Introduction

As explained in the first chapter, the objective of this study is to assess the practice of using Public Relations tools of Ethiopian Airlines in its PR and Corporate Communications department. Specific objectives were drawn, and research questions were formulated to address through the data gathered using different research instruments. The researcher applied mixed research approach and used data gathered through interviews, document analysis, questionnaires and focus group discussions.

Although quantitative data is presented regarding the demographic features of respondents and analysis of the data gathered through the questionnaire, the major research approach used in this study is the qualitative research method predominantly.

4.2 Data gathered from document analysis

As discussed earlier in this study, one of the data collection tools used in this study is document analysis. The researcher has analyzed different documents which are published on Ethiopian Airlines' website and social media pages as well as the digital channels of different media outlets. The documents include press releases, news reports, factsheets, internal bulletins and social media posts.

Since this study aims at assessing how effectively public relations tools are used by Ethiopian Airlines, the researcher has evaluated the different communication channels of the airline. Ethiopian Airlines uses multiple communication tools to disseminate its message through the use of mainstream (old) media as well as new media. For the sake of manageability, the researcher has limited his analysis to contents press releases, media reports/articles, social media posts and factsheets published in April and March 2022.

However, the researcher couldn't get the April and March editions of Ethiopian Airlines internal bulletin, called 'What's Up @ ET'. Hence, the researcher has analyzed the latest two editions of the internal bulletin, i.e., the editions of September 2020 and October 2020. To assess the place of PR and corporate communication office in the organization, which is a critical element in the Excellence Theory, the researcher also analyzed information posted on the internal portal of the airline.

4.2.1 The place of PR in Ethiopian Airlines Organogram

This study assesses the use of PR tools primarily in light of the Excellence Theory, which is an ideal theory developed through inputs gathered from public relations practitioners. It also aims to assess the use of PR tools vis-à-vis PR models such as press agency, public information, as well as two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical public relation. According to the Excellence Theory, PR performs best when it is empowered and represented in the dominant coalition (higher management) of the organization.

To show the place of PR and corporate communication office in Ethiopian Airlines' organizational structure, the researcher has analyzed a document focusing on the structure of the division where the PR office belongs to. The organizational chart below clearly shows that PR and corporate communication office is not a member of the dominant coalition.



Figure 6: Organogram of the Commercial Department of Ethiopian Airlines

The place of the PR office in the organization has a bearing on how empowered it is and how well it can discharge its responsibilities as a department. As per the organizational structure of Ethiopian Airlines, the heads of divisions such as Commercial, Human Resources Management, Strategic Alliances, Finance, Aviation Academy, Fight Operations, Catering, Ground Handling, and the like are part of the dominant coalition of the organization and take part in strategic management and decision-making processes.

As can be seen in the organogram of the Commercial division, there are two management positions between the Manager of the public relations and corporate communications office and the Chief Commercial Officer who is a member of the executive management. Clearly, in the case of Ethiopian Airlines, the public relations and corporate communications office is not a member of the dominant coalition and doesn't participate in strategic management and decision making. Hence, the airline is not living up to the recommendations of the excellence theory when it comes to the place of the PR office in the organization.

4.2.2. The practice of using new media tools at Ethiopian Airlines

According to Broom and Sha (2013), internet-based media have emerged as new media in the past decades, ushering in communication revolution and offering online presence to almost

all “old” media. Thanks to the technology of the day, companies are now making the most out of the expanding array digital media including social media. Press releases, which used to be sources of news for old (traditional) media, are now uploaded on company’s’ websites and social media pages. Hence the student researcher treats press release as one of the new media tools as it is published online on the website of Ethiopian Airlines.

i) Press release messages

The Public Relations and Corporate Communication department of Ethiopian Airlines has released a number of press releases in March and April 2022. The researcher reviewed five press releases, three published in March 2022 and the remaining two released in April 2022.

One of the press releases the researcher analyzed is published on Ethiopian Airlines website on March 4, 2022 under the title ‘Ethiopian Airlines and Boeing Sign Memorandum of Understanding for New 777-8 Freighter’ (Appendix ii). The press release elaborates that Ethiopian Airlines signed an agreement with Boeing to purchase five of the latest model aircrafts of Boeing. The press release sends the airline’s key messages and competitive edges as the leading pan-African airline. Technology leadership is one of the competitive edges the airlines prides itself on. The press release highlights that the airline has continued its leadership in Africa in terms of introducing ultramodern airplanes which are highly efficient and less polluting.

The press release does a good job of the highlighting the airline’s drive in leading the way in aviation technology acquisition and informs the airline’s publics about the signing of the memorandum of understanding with Boeing to introduce modern aircrafts.

In addition to the news about the signing of the MoU, the boilerplate of the press release also contains important facts and figures about the airline. The information contained in the boilerplate include the airline’s years of service, the number of its destinations, fleet types, vision as well as facts about the business units under the aviation group. The PR office’s phone numbers, email address and links to its social media accounts are also included at the bottom of the boilerplate, signaling the openness of the office to receive feedbacks and queries from its publics including media outlets. By doing so the PR office is sets the stage for two-way communication with its publics. We can conclude that the office is applying two-way asymmetrical communication model as the information flowing from the office to

its audiences is dominant compared to the feedback and queries it receives from the audiences.

The second press release the researcher review was published on March 8, 2022 with the headline ‘Ethiopian Inks Partnership Agreement with International Djibouti Industrial Park Operation and Air Djibouti for Sea - Air Transport’ (Appendix iii).

The press release informs Ethiopian Airlines’ audiences about the signing of a strategic partnership agreement with International Djibouti Industrial Park Operation and Air Djibouti which paves the way for launching multimodal transportation of cargo through air and sea. Ethiopian Cargo & Logistics Services is one of the strategic business units of Ethiopian Airlines Aviation Group.

Ethiopian Airlines positions itself as the largest cargo network operator in Africa. In this regard, the press release on the signing of the agreement with Djibouti Industrial Park Operation and Air Djibouti serves in informing Ethiopian Airlines publics that the airline’s cargo wing is sustaining its growth and expanding its services further in partnership with other cargo and logistics service providers, thereby reinforcing its key message as the largest cargo service provider in the continent.

Like the one discussed above, this press release also provides information to the airline’s publics including key facts and figures about the airline and its cargo wing. The same facts, figures and contact details are also contained in the boilerplate. Once again, we see the application of the two-way symmetrical model of communication through the use of the press release.

The third press release analyzed as published on April 12, 2022 under the heading ‘Ethiopian Airlines resumes flights to Bengaluru, India’ (Appendix v). The press release informs readers about the recommencement of the airline’s passenger services to Bengaluru, India after it was suspended due to COVID 19. It provides audiences with key details about the non-stop flight such as the fleet type used for the flight, the number of flights per week, as well as departure and arrival times. The quote of the Ethiopian Airlines Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Mesfin Tasew, embedded in the press release also offers important facts about Ethiopian Airlines. The quote says:

“We are glad to have resumed flights to the commercial capital of India and we will be committed in serving our customers with our high-quality services. Ethiopian Airlines is a significant player in connecting India and Africa and beyond. The recommencement of flights connects the important ICT hub of Bengaluru to the ever-expanding Ethiopian network in addition to our flights to the Capital New Delhi and Mumbai. The flights will also complement our existing freighter and passenger flight services to other key destinations in India. The addition of Bengaluru to our network is vital in meeting the demands of the fast-growing air travelers between India and Africa.”

The quote highlights that Ethiopian Airline plays critical role in connecting India and Africa through its flights not just to Bengaluru but also to other Indian cities such as New Delhi and Mumbai. Beyond providing information to readers, the press release can also be seen as a marketing tool promoting the relaunch of flights between Addis Ababa and Bengaluru.

On April 21, 2022 Ethiopian Airlines also published a press release on its website under the headline ‘Ethiopian Airlines, UTD Aviation Solutions and AFRAA Sign MoU to Re-establish African Aviation Renaissance in MRO Services’ (Appendix vii).

The press release is about the signing of an MoU among Ethiopian Airlines, UTD Aviation Solutions and the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) to provide market opportunities for African maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facilities in North America’s aviation industry. The quote of AFRAA Secretary General Mr. Abdérahmane Berthé, says:

“This signing ceremony with Ethiopian Airlines is a significant milestone in the Brown Condor project. We express our appreciation to Ethiopian Airlines as the first African airline to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will operationalize the objectives of this robust Project.”

The quote highlights the spearheading role of Ethiopian Airlines in the project; it is a strong endorsement for Ethiopian Airlines from the African Airlines Association, which will help build its reputation among its publics. Ethiopian Airlines CEO’s quote, also included in the press release, reads:

“Ethiopian MRO Services, as the largest MRO service provider in Africa, is continuously increasing its capacity and expanding its reach to customers in the Middle East, Europe and the Americas. We are pleased to sign this MoU with UTD and AFRAA as it is in line with our plan to increase our market reach and build our presence in North America and tap into the big potential market in the region.”

The quote underscores that Ethiopian MRO is the largest in Africa and that it serves customers based in Middle East, Europe and the Americas. It also highlights the airline’s proactive initiative to tap into market opportunities in the US and elsewhere through partnerships with players in the aviation industry.

The press release informs the publics of the airline about the key facts on the maintenance wing of Ethiopian Airlines. It does a good job of providing facts to audiences, and includes contact details of the airline at the end of the press release, which opens the door for two-way communication between the PR office and its key publics.

The last press release to be reviewed in this thesis is one published on March 24, 2022 (Appendix iv). The press release has a headline which reads ‘Mesfin Tasew Appointed as New CEO of Ethiopian Airlines’. The appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer is a significant development for all the publics of Ethiopian Airlines. This is definitely a press release which attracted a great deal of attention as it marks a turning point in the airline’s journey. The press release offers readers information about the new CEO’s profile and his service at Ethiopian Airlines for nearly four decades.

Besides offering key facts about Mr Mesfin Tassew, the press release also entails a quote from the current Board Chairman of Ethiopian Airlines, Mr. Girma Wake, endorsing the newly appointed CEO and congratulating him on his appointment. The two-page press release is full of background details about the new CEO, and definitely served as a critical input for the media, one of the key publics of the airline, for their news coverages on the early retirement of former CEO Tewolde GebreMariam and the appointment of the new CEO Mr Mesfin Tassew.

All in all, all the reviews of the press releases discusses above show that this PR tool is instrumental in conveying the messages of the airline to its audiences and also in initiating dialogue between the airline’s PR office and its key publics through the contact details

included in each of the press releases. Hence, press releases allow the airline to apply two-way communication model by setting the stage for feedback from audiences. However, as the airline's communication dominates this two-way conversation, we can say that the two-way asymmetrical communication model is applied in the case of press releases.

ii) Internal bulleting messages

Employees are one of the strategic publics of any organization. The Excellence Theory, the major lens through which the researcher assesses the use of PR tools at Ethiopian Airlines, states that building good system of internal relations is a mirror for the external relations. The theory says that organizations should first engage their employees to build their brands, as internal publics are the first implementers of organizational vision and mission.

Ethiopian Airlines has been using monthly digital bulletins as a tool for internal communication, providing news and updates to employees. One of the bulletins circulated within Ethiopian Airlines is a publication titled 'What's Up @ ET'. At the end of every month, the bulletin is emailed company-wide and is published on the airline's website to provide monthly updates to employees. Unfortunately, the last time this bulletin was published is October 2020.

Currently, the responsibility of internal communication is entrusted to the Corporate Human Resource Management (HRM) division of the airline. A section called Employee Engagement has been set under the division and has been publishing somewhat similar digital publication called 'ET Star' to disseminate information to employees. However, as the focus of this study is the communication tools used by the Public Relations and Corporate Communications department of Ethiopian Airlines, the researcher has deal with the 'What's Up @ ET' bulletin published by the office.

The first bulletin of 'What's Up @ ET' reviewed under this section is the one published in September 2020 (Appendix Vii). One of the topics the bulletin featured is a recap of an interview the then Ethiopian Airlines CEO Mr Tewolde GebreMariam had with CNN regarding the COVID 19 pandemic and its effects on airlines around the world. The interview covered issues such as the spread of the pandemic worldwide and the sweeping to travel restrict countries took to avoid the spread of the virus.

The bulletin highlighted the severe effects the pandemic had on the aviation business due to travel restrictions and the losses they incurred due to lost passenger traffic. The story closes with an explanation of the coping strategy Ethiopian pursued to navigate through the challenge by capitalizing on its cargo and aircraft maintenance services. The bulletin also offers a recap of an interview Mr Tewolde had with AFP regarding the approach the airline pursued to stay afloat in the face of the COVID crisis. A similar story by Bloomberg was also included in the news recap section of the bulletin highlighting Ethiopian Airlines' resilience amid the crisis. The news recap is significant in terms of informing the airlines internal public about key developments concerning the company they work for.

A bulletin section titled 'Do you know' also featured Ethiopian Airlines mobile application and its booking, paying and online check-in features with multiple language options. This part can be seen as an advertisement directed at the internal publics, who, in turn, are supposed to disseminate the message among their circles in line with the airline's mantra of 'Every employee is a salesperson.'

Testimonies about the airline's success and qualities posted on social media are also included in the bulleting along with screenshots of the posts and tweets. Towards the final pages, the bulletin features photo stories about the airline, its modern fleet, airport facilities and cabin crew.

The other 'What's Up @ ET' edition the researcher analyzed was published in October 2020 (Appendix Viii). One of the contents featured in the internal bulletin is new recap about a partnership USAID and Ethiopian Airlines to source food from local farmers for in-flight meals, the delivery of two new aircrafts from De Havilland Canada, the launch of Global COVID -19 Insurance for passengers and international awards the airline won in October 2020. The bulletin also informed staff about developments at Ethiopian Airlines stations overseas. As the edition discussed above, the bulletin closes with photo stores.

All in all, the internal bulletin served its purpose in terms of informing Ethiopian Airlines' internal publics about key organizational developments and updates related to the airline's officials, services, infrastructure, capabilities and similar matters. Some of the contents of the bulletin also promote the services the airline rolled out with a view to spread the message through the networks of employees.

iii) Messages disseminated through Facebook posts

Facebook is one of the new media platforms Ethiopian Airlines uses extensively. The airline posts contents on both its English and Amharic Facebook accounts on a daily basis. The English Facebook account of the airline (<https://www.facebook.com/EthiopianAirlines>) has 2,111,835 people followers as of May 19, 2022 while the Amharic Facebook account has 579,004 followers on the same date (<https://www.facebook.com/ethiopianairlines.et>). Considering the vast number of contents the airline posts every month and considering the need to analyze posts on other social media platforms of the airline, the researcher assessed two recent English Facebook posts from March and April.

The first Facebook post analyzed, which was posted on March 29, 2022, featured the launch of double daily passenger flights from Addis Ababa to Tanzania's capital Dar Es Salaam (Appendix x). The post included key facts about the flight including the frequency of the flight and the date the service is launched. The post informed the airlines audiences who have Facebook accounts and follow Ethiopian Airlines' Facebook account about an important development in the passenger service the airline provides to customers.

The update posted is consistent with the airline's positioning as a pan-African carrier committed to bringing Africa together closer to the world by providing better intra-African and transcontinental air connectivity options. In addition to informing the airlines' audiences, the Facebook post also serves as a promotion of the service among its audiences, hence serving as a marketing tool as well.

The message Ethiopian Airlines disseminates through Facebook seem to be consistent with the two-way asymmetrical communication model manifested in its messages released through press releases. The Facebook post gives information to audiences, while at the same time giving audiences an opportunity to have their say by putting their comments in the comment bar under the post, or by sending the PR and Corporate Communication team direct message by clicking the direct message icon under the post.

The other Facebook post the student researcher analyzed was posted on April 20, 2022 (Appendix ix). The content focused on the service Ethiopian Skylight Hotel, which is owned by the airline, offers members of ShebaMiles, the airline's frequent flyer program. It contained a promotional messages for ShebaMiles members to get bonus miles for their stay

and dining at Ethiopian Skylight Hotel with discounted rates. The post informed the airline's frequent flyers following its Facebook page about the privileges they enjoy for using the services of Ethiopian Skylight Hotel, while enticing potential customers to join the ShebaMiles program. Again, the post served its purpose when it comes to informing the airline's key publics about important developments which are likely of interest to them. It also facilitates two-way communication between the airline and customers through Facebook as well as the website link included in the message.

iv) Messages disseminated through Twitter

The Public Relations and corporate communication office of Ethiopian Airlines also uses Twitter as one of the new media PR tools to reach its publics. The airline's Twitter page has 611.1K Followers as of May 18, 2022. As the Public Relations and corporate communication office tweets messages almost on a daily basis, the researcher randomly picked a couple of tweets from March and April 2022.

The first tweet analyze was posted on March 23, 2022 and contained a congratulatory message for Ethiopian Athletes who came back home after winning in the 18th World Athletics Indoor Championships held in Serbia in March 2022 (Appendix xi). The tweet included a photo of the athletes deplaning from an Ethiopian Airlines aircraft at Addis Ababa International Airport.

The airline being the flag carrier of Ethiopia, the congratulatory message resonates very well with its national symbolism and its corporate messaging as well as its brand colors which match the colors of the tracksuits the athletes were wearing when they deplaned at the airport. The tweet reminds audiences about the national significance of Ethiopian Airlines, the air connectivity options it created and while reinforcing its stature as the leading African carrier tying the message with the winning team of athletes.

The other tweet analyzed was released on April 15, 2022 and focused on promoting the capabilities of Ethiopian Cargo and Logistics Services. (Appendix xii) The tweet highlighted the state-of-the-art cargo infrastructure, equipment, IT systems and trained manpower of Ethiopian Cargo and Logistics Services. It also mentioned the international certification it got for storing and transporting pharma products.

The tweet informed key publics of the airline including businesses and humanitarian organizations about the airline's capabilities in safely storing and shipping medical supplies. In addition to informing audiences, the tweet also serves as a promotional content with the potential to attract customers seeking cargo service. The tweet can also trigger two-way communication via Twitter allowing customers to send in their queries and comments.

v) **Messages disseminated through LinkedIn**

The other new media platform Ethiopian Airlines uses for disseminating information and engaging its publics is LinkedIn. The airline's LinkedIn page has 164,631 followers as of May 18, 2022. Given the huge volume of LinkedIn posts the PR and Corporate communication office releases, the student researcher has picked two posts randomly from March and April 2022.

One of the posts picked for analysis was posted on March 28, 2022 (Appendix xiii). The content focused on a window view photo one of Ethiopian Airlines' passengers took while flying. This post is a showcase of the two-way communication new media platforms facilitate between the airline and its publics. Ethiopian Airlines PR and Corporate Communication actively gathers photos passengers took while flying and shares the photos back to its social media followers with the tagline #ETMoments.

This LinkedIn post shares a creative content that highlights the two-way communication with customers and entices other passengers to follow suit. Such contents highlight the experiences of delighted customers and puts Ethiopian Airlines in a positive light for engaging its passengers actively when it comes to sharing their flight experience.

The other LinkedIn post analyzed was posted on April 18, 2022, with a photo of an Ethiopian Airlines aircraft taking off. (Appendix xiv). The post aimed at enticing potential customers to travel while at the same time informing audiences that they can book their flights online using the airline's website and mobile application. Again, the post serves its purpose well in terms of informing the airline's publics about the booking options passengers have. Given the comment and direct message features of LinkedIn, the platform lends itself for two-way communication between the airline and its publics.

vi) **Messages disseminated through Instagram**

In addition to the new media platforms discussed above, Ethiopian Airlines also engages its social media followers through Instagram which is popular for sharing compelling visuals. Ethiopian Airlines has 89, 200 followers on Instagram as of May 18, 2022 (https://t.me/ethiopian_airlines) For the sake of manageability the student researcher has analyzed two randomly selected Instagram posts from March and April, considering the high volume of Instagram posts the airline's public relations and corporate communication office shares on the platform.

The first Instagram content the researcher analyzed was posted on March 30, 2022. (Appendix xvi). The message was about the privileges ShebaMiles members enjoy when they stay at Minor Hotels around the world. It highlighted a partnership between Ethiopian Airlines and Minor Hotels which benefits the carrier's frequent flyers program members.

Besides informing the airline's Instagram followers about the benefits ShebaMiles, members get for staying at Minor Hotels, the post also serves to entice audiences to enroll in the frequent flyer program of the airline and enjoy similar entitlements. As is the case with the other social media platforms, customers can also reach the airline's public relation and corporate communication office through Instagram, enabling two-way communication.

The second Instagram post reviewed was posted on April 8, 2022 which marked the 76th anniversary of the airline's establishment. (Appendix xv) The post shared on this day featured an artwork highlighting the airline's 76 years of service, with text reminding the day when the airline made its first flight to Cairo via Asmara with one of its Douglas C-47 Skytrain airplanes which it used at the time. This post reminds the airlines audiences about the history of Ethiopian Airlines and positions the carrier as the longest serving African carrier. The post adds to the airline's reputation as an experienced carrier unparalleled by its African peers and one that is spearheading the growth of the continent's aviation sector.

To sum up, all the messages disseminated through new media platforms indicated that the dominant communication approach Ethiopian Airlines employed is the two-way asymmetrical communication model where a dialogue exists between the airline and its audiences, and where the content flowing from the organization to the audiences dominates the interaction. In light of the Excellence Theory, the primary theoretical anchor of this thesis, the airline's public relations and communication office falls short when it comes to

balancing the content flowing between the two parties, ultimately aiming for a symmetrical dialogue.

4.2.3. The practice of using old (traditional) media and new media tools at Ethiopian Airlines

As the leading carrier in Africa, Ethiopian Airlines usually makes headlines on both local and international media outlets including print and broadcast media. Especially in crisis situations such as the outbreak of a pandemic, extreme weather conditions that disrupt flights or accidents that claim the lives of passengers, the airline finds itself in the spotlight of the press.

The public relation and corporate communication office of Ethiopian Airlines has set up a sub team within the office to handle media requests, media relations and also to monitor and compile media reports focusing on the airline, its flights, passengers, executives and related matters. Weekly media monitoring reports are compiled by the Media Relations and Event Management sub team and sent to the manager of the public relation and corporate communication office as well as senior management members.

As part of the documents analysis for this study, the researcher has reviewed some of the recently compiled media monitoring reports to assess the use of old media tools by Ethiopian Airlines public relation and corporate communication office to communicate the airline's messages including new developments. For the sake of manageability, the researcher will focus only two weekly media monitoring reports.

The first media monitoring report the researcher analyzed is a compilation covering the period from March 28 to April 7, 2022. (Appendix xvii). Around 47 international and 13 local media outlets carried stories on new developments about Ethiopian Airlines. The airline enjoyed huge positive coverage during this period particularly with regards to the appointment of the current CEO of Ethiopian Airlines, Mr Mesfin Tasew.

Ethiopian Airlines had sent out a press release on the appointment of Mr Mesfin Tasew as CEO, which media outlets used as a source to do news on the appointment. The media coverages during this period also focused on other topics such as the legacies of former CEO Tewolde GebraMariam and the signing of an agreement among Ethiopian Airlines, Air Djibouti, and International Djibouti Industrial Park Operation to boost freight links between

China and Africa. The media outlets which covered the stories include The Africa Report, Jeune Afrique, CNBC Africa, Flight Global, New Telegraph, Independent, Nigerian Tribune, Somaliland Current, Air Journal, African Markets, East African Herald, AirlineGeeks, Simple Flying and Fana Broadcasting Corporation.

The other media monitoring compilation analyzed covers the period from April 25 to May 1, 2022 (Appendix xviii). The compilation includes news coverages in 33 international and 15 local media outlets. Canada Global, Business of Travel Trade, IH Aviation and Travel, Daily News Prime, TravelBiz Monitor, Air Journal, Business Ghana, Aviation Week, The Kenyan Wall Street, Air Charters Africa, Travel Daily News, Fana Broadcasting Corporation, and Ethiopian Monitor are among the media outlets that covered the stories.

The topics range from the 50th year anniversary of the airline's service to/from Mumbai to the conversion of passenger airplanes into freighters by Ethiopian Airlines technicians, the signing of an MoU among Ethiopian Airlines, AFRAA and UTD Aviation Solutions as well as other matters. The 50th year anniversary of Ethiopian Airlines flight to Mumbai dominated the news coverage during the week mainly because India-based media outlets picked the airline's press release on the subject. The press release Ethiopian Airlines distributed regarding the anniversary was critical to get its messages to global audiences through traditional media outlets.

In both cases discussed above, the traditional media outlets served as tools for Ethiopian Airlines to get its messages to the audiences of the news channels. Unlike in the case of the new media platforms of the airline, the communication model achieved through these traditional media is Public Information Model of Public Relations, which is a one-way communication conveying factual information to the target audiences. The news coverages carried in the traditional media outlets did not offer audiences the option of interacting with the source of the news, i.e., Ethiopian Airlines. Hence, two-way information flow was not affected through the use of traditional media.

4.3. The use of public relation tools for public relations and strategic communications

According to the findings, the mean average of the Likert Scale 1-5 (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree) showed that the respondents agree with the statement that Ethiopian Airlines Public Relations and Corporate communications office uses

appropriate new (digital) public relation tools effectively to reach the airline’s publics. The findings also showed that the PR practitioners can use digital media tools and that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are the dominantly used new media platforms by the airline.

The responses were similar for the statement that Ethiopian Airlines Public Relations and Corporate communications office uses appropriate traditional public relation tools effectively to reach the airline’s publics. Concerning the practice of annual audit of the PR and Corporate communications activities, out of the total 30 respondents, 20 respondents (66.7%) agreed while 6 respondents (13.3%) disagreed and the remaining 4 respondents (20.0%) chose the ‘neutral’ option. Regarding the statement that the airline invests on equipping its staff with the skills and knowledge of PR tools, 3 respondents (42.8%) agreed (2 of them strongly), while 3 respondents (42.8%) remained neutral and 1 respondent (14.2%) disagreed.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ethiopian Airline’s PR uses old media tools	30	3.87	1.655
Ethiopian Airline’s PR uses new media tools	30	4.87	.730
Ethiopian Airlines uses proper PR tools for the targeted audience	30	3.97	.183
The PR tools Ethiopian Airlines uses are appropriate	30	4.87	.346
Ethiopian Airlines is reaching its public with PR works	30	3.93	.365
The PR practitioners at Ethiopian Airlines can use the platforms of the digital media	30	5.00	.000
Digital media are dominantly used PR tools at Ethiopian Airlines	30	4.93	.365
The PR tools Ethiopian Airlines utilizes are effective	30	4.80	.610
There is an annual audit of the PR and Corporate communications of Ethiopian Airlines	30	2.33	.1.269
Ethiopian Airlines invests in skills and knowledge of PR tools	30	2.20	.610
The relevance of the PR tools to achieve Ethiopian Airline’s objectives is high	30	3.90	.403

Valid N (listwise)	30		
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Table 3: Questions related to PR tools & techniques

4.3.1. The Empowerment on Public Relations and Corporate Communications office in selecting PR tools

Regarding the statement that the Public Relations and Corporate Communications office is empowered to select PR tools, 25 respondents (83.3%) agreed while the remaining 5 respondents (16.7%) chose the neutral option. Concerning the statement ‘The Public Relations and Corporate Communications office is a member of the top management body’, 10 respondents (33.3%) agreed while 15 respondents (50.0%) disagreed and the remaining 5 respondent (16.7%) chose the ‘Neutral’ option.

Responding to the ‘The PR office trains its practitioners on how to use of PR tools’), 23 respondents (76.7%) agreed, while 5 respondents (16.6%) disagreed, and 2 respondents (6.7%) remained neutral.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The PR & CC office of Ethiopian Airlines is empowered in selecting and using PR tools	30	3.83	.379
The PR & CC office is a member of the top management body	30	2.50	.1137
The PR office trains its practitioners on how to use of PR tools’	30	3.53	.860
Valid N (list wise)	30		

Table 4: PR empowerment related questions

4.3.2. Relationship with Ethiopian Airlines Stakeholders

Responding to the statement ‘Choice of PR tools considers Ethiopian Airlines’ audience’, 22 respondents (73.3%) agreed while the remaining 8 respondents (26.7%) remained neutral.

Responding to the statement ‘The PR tools Ethiopian uses allow two-way symbiotic

communication between the Company and its customers’, 19 respondents (63.3%) agreed while the remaining 11 respondents (36.7%) remained neutral. Finally, concerning the appropriateness of the tools of Ethiopian Airlines in light of the current global aviation world, 29 respondents (96.7%) agreed while 1 respondent (3.3%) remained neutral.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Choice of PR tools considers Ethiopian airline’s audience	30	3.73	.450
The PR tools Ethiopian Airlines uses allow two-way symbiotic communication between the Company & its customers	30	3.63	.490
The PR tools Ethiopian Airlines uses take into account the current global aviation world	30	3.97	.183
Valid N	30		

Table 5: Relationship with Ethiopian Airlines Stakeholders

The profile of the participants presented in the table above shows that the respondents have the right expertise and qualifications to provide data regarding the issues the study focuses on. Their educational and professional background makes them the right personnel to provide the data which is used for drawing conclusions in line with the objectives of the study.

The participants were randomly selected from among the staff working under the public relations and corporate communications office and all sub teams under the office. The department was chosen purposively as it is the department, which manages all the public relations and communication activities of the airline.

4.4. Validity and reliability

According to Creswell (2007), validity enables the researcher to ensure that the findings of the study are accurate. (p. 190) In this thesis, the researcher employed different strategies to ascertain the validity of the findings obtained from the data.

Regarding the documents analyzed in this study, the researcher made sure that the sources referred are trustworthy. The sources include the website and social media pages of Ethiopian Airlines as well as the reports of well-known and trusted media outlets, which publish news coverage about the airline. This makes the contents the researcher analyzed the right and relevant materials for the study.

Concerning the data collected through questionnaires and focus group discussions, the researcher has tested the questions with employees who are not respondents of the actual research, but have intimate knowledge of the Public Relations and Corporate Communication department of the airline. The first draft of the questionnaire was distributed among five employees of the airline who worked in the Public Relations and Corporate Communication office in the recent past. These include three office staff who transferred to other departments and two flight attendants who worked in the PR office for months when they were assigned to office work due to pregnancy. The feedback of these staff has enabled the researcher to revise some of the questions so that the questionnaire and the focus group discussion questions are articulated properly to gather the right data the researcher needs.

The other strategy the researcher used for ensuring the validity of the study is triangulation. The researcher used different tools to gather data whose analysis showed converging findings, which proved the soundness of the study. In general, the measures the researcher took in terms of validity and reliability show that the findings of the study are accurate and consistent.

4.5. Analysis of data gathered through focus group discussions

The discussion points were crafted to illicit and assess the beliefs of the public relations practitioners regarding the usage of the wide-ranging PR and communication tools at its disposal, the skills and knowledge of the PR practitioners and related matters. The analyzed data gathered from the focus group discussion was analyzed vis-à-vis the core themes articulated in the research questions.

Participants' belief of participants towards the use of major PR tools, techniques, and new media

P1 explained that the public relations and corporate communication office effectively uses wide ranging public relations tools and techniques including traditional instruments such as

press release and media coverages, both print and broadcast. P1 further elaborated that PR is the face of the company and has been using all the tools at its disposal to put the airline in a positive light. P2 said Ethiopian Airline's public relations and corporate communication has largely been successful in using PR tool and instruments, adding that it can set a good example to local enterprises when it comes to building and maintaining the organizational reputation through a mix of old and new media tools.

P3 interjected saying that the practice of using PR instruments of the airline is very impressive, both in traditional media and new media tools such as its social media pages. P3 mentioned the wide media coverage the airline enjoys on TV, newspapers and magazines is testimony to the effective utilization of mainstream media as PR instruments. P4 highlights the success the airline's public relations and corporate communications office has been seeing in new media platforms is especially commendable.

P4 stresses the relatively huge number of followers the airline's Facebook page and other social media platforms enjoy as a showcase of the robust online presence of the airline. P5 concurs with the views of the other participants and reiterates that the positive brand reputation Ethiopian Airlines is enjoying is driven by the coordinated use of both traditional and new media platforms.

Addressing the second question which reads, 'What is the new media for you? Could you describe it?', P1 mentioned Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Telegram, YouTube as the new media tools the public relation and corporate communication office of the airline uses. P3 said new media tools are internet-based platforms organizations use to inform and influence their audiences online.

On the proper skills and knowledge of participants for using the PR tools

P5 said that the PR practitioners in the office have the skills and knowledge to use these PR tools, but said the skills may not be sufficient considering the emerging trends in new media usage and the evolving social media landscape. P1 mentioned that the PR practitioners in the office have basic knowledge when it comes using the new media tools the office uses. P1 added that advanced knowledge and skills in the area of digital communication is necessary to make the most out of new media platforms.

P2 said it is difficult to say that all PR practitioners in the public relations and corporate communication office have the knowledge and skills of using new media platforms as communication tool of organizations. P2 added that the office's practitioners who are not working in the social media team may not be adequately equipped with the skills and knowledge to manipulate new media tools in advanced manner. In P2's opinion, all the staff of the public relations and corporate communication office should be at a level where they can comfortably use social media tools.

P3 pointed out that in line with the merging trend of using social media tools as marketing tools in addition to PR tools, the staff in the office should be well trained to use digital platforms and complement the efforts of the marketing and sales teams as an office which participates in Integrated Marketing Communication.

Participants' perception on achieving mutually beneficial relationship with its target customers

The participants were asked the question: "Do you think that Ethiopian is achieving mutually beneficial relationship with its target customers?" P1 believes that Ethiopian Airlines and its publics are indeed achieving mutually beneficial relationship. P1 said the airline keeps its target customers up-to-date regarding its services, facilities, fleet, destinations and the like through its communication platforms. P2 said although the airline is providing information to its customers through its communication platforms, there are gaps when it comes to addressing the feedbacks and requests of customers on time.

P2 pointed out that some of the comments customers send through the airline's social media platforms show their grievance with and dissatisfaction with the service they are getting. P3 agrees with P2 saying the social media team receives complaints through social media channels and forwards the complaints to the concerned departments in the airline. P3 adds that from what customers say social media, it can be understood that some customers may not get their queries addressed on time. P5 pointed out that just as they receive grievances from customers, they also get positive feedbacks and testimonies of customers who are happy with the airline's service.

Participants' belief regarding the PR offices empowerment in choosing the right PR tools

P3 said the public relations and corporate communication office is empowered enough to use PR tools deemed appropriate for any PR activity or campaign. P3 mentioned the diverse old media and new media instruments which the office is using in its day to day communication activities. P5 noted that the public relations and corporate communication office uses both new media and old media tools in combination, adding that the office enjoys favorable relationships with media outlets and gets huge coverage for its events or press releases in both print and broadcast media. P1 stressed that the office primarily uses its social media platforms for reaching its customers as it gets a large chunk of customers online.

Participants' perception on whether the PR office updates itself in using digital media

P2 said practitioners in the office try to update themselves when it comes to manipulating new media platforms. However, P2 adds that the efforts for updating oneself to use digital media in a better way is done on a personal initiative rather than as part of a planned program of the office. P4 says the office is making efforts to update itself in the digital arena although it is not enough.

P4 mentions that the PR office opened a Telegram account in recent months and is considering creating Tik Tok account recently. P1 says the office sets aside budget for learning and development though it is not implemented as planned. P1 adds that the cost cutting initiative of the airline could affect the amount of budget allocated for training, ultimately depriving the practitioners of critical skills they need to better use digital media for the organization's benefit.

To sum up, from the focus group discussion, one can understand that the PR practitioners have a grasp of what new media is and that the PR office uses new media platforms including the popular social media pages of the airline. The discussion also revealed that the PR office uses diverse mix of old media and new media platforms for reaching the airline's publics.

It was also clear from the feedbacks of the participants that the offices has to work on providing adequate training for the practitioners and also update itself in the digital arena. The practitioners also noted that the airline has mutually beneficial relationships with customers though the relationship may not be symmetrical due to the fact that the queries of customers are not addressed timely in some cases.

Data gathered from Key Informant 1

As mentioned earlier, this informant is the head of the IMC department and oversees the activities of the public relations and corporate communications office, the Advertising and Sales Promotion office and other digital sales teams under the department. The respondent is key when it comes to providing critical data to answer the research questions mentioned in chapter one. The key informant's responses are summarized as follows.

Key informant's belief about the place of PR in the airline and its relationship with target customers

KI1 says the PR and corporate communications office is structured the Integrated Marketing Communications department. Divisionally, it is included in the Chief Commercial Officer division. There are two management positions that come between PR and corporate communications office and the Chief Commercial Officer who is a member of the executive management.

KI1 says, as a travel company, Ethiopian Airlines has different stakeholders such as the regulatory bodies such as which means the Ethiopian Civil Aviation and international regulators such as IATA and ICAO. He also mentioned others, stakeholders such as travel agencies, travel management companies, other companies in the travel and tourism industry. KI1 believes that Ethiopian Airlines' PR is strategically placed under the integrated marketing communications director to reach out to major stakeholders and customers with different PR tools including media relations, social media influencers, press releases, and others. KI1 adds any news that is worth communicating to our customers is actually and actively managed by the Public Relations & Corporate Communication section.

Key informant's belief about the use of new and old media tools and capacity of PR practitioners

KI1 says Ethiopian Airlines uses different new media and traditional tools that we use to reach stakeholders. KI1 mentions magazines, newspapers, TV, newsletters, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as some of the tools the PR office uses. KI1 adds that the PR office uses all digital platforms effectively for communications and branding. KI1

also pointed out that the airline uses customer relation management tools to disseminate information.

Regarding practitioner's capacity, KI1 says that the airline has human resources management system and progression procedures. Promotion from one position to another requires more skills that need to be acquired. This system facilitates the transfer of skills to junior members of the staff. The coaching and mentoring scheme in the organization also allows the transfer of knowledge and skills from experienced practitioners to those who are less experienced. The office is using new media tools which allow us to reach audiences easily and in a cost efficient way.

Data gathered from Key Informant 2

Key Informant 2 is the manager of the Public Relations and corporate Communications office, and hence he is a key person to provide information regarding the office, its use of PR tools, the staff and stakeholders. The key informant's responses are summarized as follows.

Key informant's response about PR tools and its relationship with target customers

KI 2 says Ethiopian Airlines PR office uses major tools such as email, social media, media day, press conferences, facility visits, and magazines to promote Ethiopian Airlines through new and traditional media. KI2 adds that the PR office invites social media influencers who have many followers on Facebook and YouTube. Regarding the effectiveness of the PR tools and techniques the office uses, KI2 says the office monitors the coverages the airline gets on publications after disseminating press releases and updates. In terms of social media, KI2 says the office gets feedback from social media users about the effectiveness of these tools, and monitors the reach and number of views its posts get.

KI2 believes the strength of Ethiopian Airlines' PR will survive all crises of the airline by feeding updated information to the external and internal publics. KI2 adds that the weakness of Ethiopian Airlines' PR is that it has no mainstream media monitoring tools. KI2 also mentioned that journalists do not always get timely response to their requests. KI2 believes that the PR office is creating mutual understanding between Ethiopian and its publics. He mentions experience sharing sessions the airline organizes for companies requesting such

sessions on different matters (including events, e-blast cards, electronic printing cards, and others) show the good relationship the airline has with its publics.

Key informant's response about practitioners' capacity and budget of PR office

KI2 says the office doesn't have continued training for practitioners to boost their capacity, adding that such trainings will be considered in the future. K2 mentioned that the practitioners are currently taking training about the Social Bakers tool only, to manage social media better. KI2 believes that the experts in the office are capable of using many PR tools, but basic training is very important for the staff to be familiar with many PR tools because training enables them to be efficient in terms of their skills to use the tools. KI2 say there is budget allocated for the PR & Corporate Communications office, which it dispenses for advertising, publicity, handling company guests, travel expenses and others.

Data gathered from Key Informant 3

Key Informant 3 is Team Leader of Content Production under Advertising and Sales Promotions office. The PR office and the Advertising and Sales Promotions office work together under the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) office and hence KI 3 is one of the key people to provide information for the study. The responses of KI3 are summarized as follows.

Key Informant's responses on the role of PR under IMC and reaching customers through PR tools

KI3 says the major roles of public relations office are preparing press releases, press conferences, and organizing events and media days. KI3 adds that the PR office disseminates information through its PR tools, and that the PR office is helping in promoting the airline's our products and services, and reduce the high cost of advertising that would have been incurred. KI3 believes the fact that the PR office works with media houses, influencers, and digital ambassadors is helping gain attention for the messages of the airline and reducing costs.

Regarding the communication tools are used in the IMC, KI3 said IMC uses both traditional media such as magazines, radio, TV, newspapers, and brochures, as well as modern media like Facebook, Twitter and emails. KI3 believes Ethiopian Airlines is reaching its customers

through its PR tools, adding that emails should be used as the primary tools to promote new products/services as it allows customers to send in their requests and get responses from the sales team who manage email campaigns.

Key Informant's responses on PR practitioners' capacity and recommendations for PR

KI 3 says PR practitioners are able to manipulate new media tools the office uses. The PR office invites professional journalists, YouTubers, digital ambassadors, and social media influencers to produce free videos and articles. KI 3 points out that the company is not providing enough training for PR practitioners due to cost issues, suggesting that the PR office reaches out to partners such as Airbus, and Boeing to provide training and experience sharing to the PR office of Ethiopian Airlines.

KI3 also suggest that the PR office continues partnering with media and PR agencies as well as international influencers or influencers in the aviation industry for better success of PR communications. KI3 adds that the office should also provide training to the practitioners in the PR office because the PR office is the face of the company.

Data gathered from Key Informant 4

Key Informant 4 is the Team Leader of Sales Promotions under the Advertising and Sales Promotions office. The respondent is also key for providing information which help address the research questions. The responses of KI4 are summarized as follows.

Key Informant's responses on the role of PR under IMC and reaching customers through PR tools

KI4 mentions press releases, press conferences, flyers, billboards, banners, TV, radio social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram as some of the tools the PR office uses to share information. He also mentioned various collaterals such as flyers, posters, banners, billboards, and give-away items as additional tools for PR. KI4 says PR is also supposed to evaluate and analyze the effect of campaigns/engagements and recommend actions for improved results. KI4 adds, as part of IMC, the PR team implements its roles through the PR tools previously mentioned. KI4 believes that the airline is effectively reaching its target customers through PR, adding that the PR office is particularly effective in

terms of using digital platforms and measuring the success of its social media accounts and posts.

Key Informant's responses on PR practitioners' capacity and recommendations for PR

KI4 says that most of the PR practitioners are professionals although there is always room for improvement. According to KI4, achieving the mission and vision of the company partly depends on the professionalism, experience, and the background of the PR staff. KI4 recommends that PR practitioners should increase their English, French, Chinese and Amharic language proficiency. This enables PR practitioners to handle translation assignments better.

Data gathered from Key Informant 5

The final key informant from the Advertising and Sales Promotions office is the Team Leader Sales Promotions who is also a key management staff members under IMC department. The responses of KI4 are summarized as follows.

Key Informant's responses on the role of PR under IMC and reaching customers through PR tools

KI5 says the major role of PR is promoting the company to the public through its channels such as press releases, press conferences, digital campaigns, websites, press kits, filers, and the like. KI5 adds that Ethiopian Airlines uses different marketing communication tools such as advertising, sales promotions, PR and publicity, direct marketing, and personal selling. According to KI5, under IMC, the role of PR is to build the company's reputation by releasing press releases, organizing press conferences, and arranging facility visits, among others.

KI5 is convinced that the airline is effective in reaching its target customers through PR, highlighting the presence of media people and business people whom the PR department can reach out to through digital communications and press releases. KI5 says the country's rules and regulations as well as the rules and regulation of other airlines may not allow the PR to use all the PR tools as much as it wants to.

As KI5 was not willing to address questions about the practitioners' capacity and her recommendations to the PR, the researcher could not include that data.

Discussion

As discussed extensively in the previous sections of this chapter, the student researcher employed a mix of qualitative data gathering tools including document analysis, interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires. By analyzing the data gathered through these tools, the researcher has tried to answer the research questions the researcher set out to address. The first research questions the researcher tried to address is related to the practice of selecting and implementing public relations tools in the PR and Corporate Communications office of Ethiopian Airlines.

The document analysis carried out at the start of this chapter showed that the PR office uses different traditional media and new media instruments to reach the publics of the airline. The student researcher analyzed random samples of the press releases, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn posts as well as tweets to substantiate the effective use of new media tools by the PR and Corporate communication office.

The researcher also assessed media monitoring reports to show the traditional media outlets the PR office uses to disseminate information through the press releases it send out to media as well as the press conferences and other events it organizes. The use of diverse old and new media outlets by the office is also revealed through data gathered from the focus group discussion participants as well as the responses of questionnaire respondents from the PR office and Advertising and Sales Promotions Office.

The data gathered through the different data collection tools also helped answer the second research question: "Which public relations tools are used dominantly in frequency by the Ethiopian communications office?" The document analysis has showed that Ethiopian Airlines uses both digital media and traditional media outlets extensively. The airline disseminates messages through its diverse social media tools (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Telegram) almost on a daily basis.

Hence, there is a huge volume of content the airline send out though digital media. With regards to traditional media outlets, the use of these media as channels of communication

depends on the occurrence of newsy developments related to the airline, which limits the volume of coverage the airline gets in traditional media. Moreover, given that these media outlets are not owned by the airline, the PR office doesn't enjoy the luxury of disseminating messages through them as it wishes. Hence, this situation makes new media platforms the dominant communication tools at Ethiopian Airlines.

According to Grunig et al. (2002), the Excellence Theory recommends two-way symmetrical model of public relations to maintain the interests of both the organization and its publics in a symbiotic way. The document analysis showed that the new media tools the airline's PR office uses allows two-way communication although the messages flowing between the organization and its publics falls short of being symmetrical. This shows that that the airline is practically applying the two-way asymmetrical communication model.

The Excellence theory also advises that the PR office becomes part of the higher management team (the dominant coalition) and participate in strategic management and decagons making. One of the points the document analysis revealed is that unlike what is recommended by the Excellence Theory, the PR office of Ethiopian Airlines is not part of the higher management of the airline.

Some of the respondents of the questionnaire agreed to the statement that Ethiopian Airlines PR office is a member of the dominant coalition. However, through the analysis of the organizational structure of the PR office and the place of PR in the organogram, the researcher ascertained that there are three management positions between the Chief Commercial Officer (who is a member of higher management) and the Manager of the PR office. This clearly shows that in the case of Ethiopian Airlines, the PR office is not a member of the higher management.

The third question the researcher tried to answer through the analysis of the data gathered focuses on the strengths and gaps of Ethiopian Airlines in its practice of using the PR tools. According to data gathered from questionnaire respondents and focus group discussion participants, Ethiopian Airlines is uses both old and new media tools effectively.

The airline's PR office is particularly effective in using digital media platforms as manifested by the huge followers it has on social media. However, as mentioned in the interview with management staff members, there are gaps when it comes to addressing the issues of

customers and queries of journalists who send in their questions to the PR office through emails and social media. The lack of tools for monitoring mainstream media was also mentioned as one of the gaps by interviewees in addition to language proficiency limitations and the lack of evaluation and analysis of PR and marketing campaigns.

Although the PR practitioners of Ethiopian Airlines are capable of using digital media effectively, as revealed in the data gathered, they need recurrent trainings which builds their capacity. The data showed that the practitioners should update their skills continuously so as to effectively use the ever-evolving new media platforms for the benefit of the airline. The fact that the PR office is not a member of the higher management, the asymmetrical nature of the communication between the PR office and the airline's publics, as well as the absence of annual PR audit are also some of the gaps identified through the data gathered.

The final research question the study sought to address is related to the appropriateness of the PR tools implemented in the PR and Corporate Communications office. The data gathered from respondents also revealed that the tools are appropriate for reaching the airline's customers both online and offline. The airline's use of all communication tools and techniques at its disposal gives it an opportunity to reach wide ranging target customers.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Summary of the Findings

The objective of this study, as stated in the first chapter, is to assess the practice of using public relations tools in Ethiopian Airlines' PR and Corporate Communications department. The researcher used qualitative research approach and applied four data collection tools, namely, interviews, document analysis, questionnaires and focus group discussions to gather and analyze data. A summary of the research findings is presented as follows.

- The PR and corporate communication office is not a member of the dominant coalition (higher management) of Ethiopian Airlines.
- The PR and corporate communication office uses both new and traditional media to communicate with its publics.
- The office uses new media channels including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn more frequently compared to traditional media.
- The new and traditional communication channels the airline uses are appropriate to reach its publics.
- Ethiopian Airlines Public Relations and Corporate communications office uses appropriate traditional effectively to reach the airline's publics.
- New media channels are better suited to have two-way communication between Ethiopian Airlines and its publics. However, the communication is dominated by the airline, leading to asymmetrical communication, which is contrary to what is prescribed by the Excellence Theory.
- The public relations practitioners of Ethiopian Airlines are capable of using new media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram. However, there is no continuous training offered for staff to build their skills and keep pace with the ever-evolving new media landscape.
- The PR and corporate communication office of Ethiopian Airlines does not conduct annual PR audits.

5.2. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher has arrived at the following conclusions.

1. Ethiopian Airlines PR and Corporate Communications office uses both old and new media effectively.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the data gathered through different tools revealed that Ethiopian Airlines uses wide range of old and new media tools to reach its publics effectively and appropriately. The airline is very active in using diverse social media tools and has a huge number of followers online. It also attracts huge media attention through its press releases and conferences, enabling it to get its message across to customers through traditional media.

2. New media tools are the dominant instruments for Ethiopian Airlines PR and Corporate Communications office.

As manifested through the data analyzed, Ethiopian Airlines uses new (digital) media extensively. The airline frequently disseminates messages through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and Telegram to inform and engage customers.

3. However, gaps are observed in staff capacity, communication symmetry, annual PR audit, and the empowerment of the PR and Corporate Communications office.

The public relations practitioners of the airline are capable of managing its digital media tools. In spite of that, they need continuous training and capacity building to keep pace with the ever-evolving digital media landscape. The PR and Corporate Communications office is effective in using both old and new media tools, but falls short of making communication with its publics symmetrical as prescribed by the Excellence Theory. The PR office is also not empowered enough to participate in decision making as part of the higher management. The office also needs to conduct annual PR audits to evaluate its performance and learn lessons from previous experiences.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn, the researcher would like to suggest the following recommendations to improve the performance of the PR and Corporate Communications office.

- The researcher believes that continuous training is crucial for the PR practitioners of Ethiopian Airlines to exploit new and traditional media channels in a better way and build the airline's reputation further. Therefore, the Public Relations and Corporate Communications office should continuously train practitioners working in the department by allocating the required budget. As suggested by the research participants, the office should also facilitate experience sharing sessions with the public relations staff of partner companies so as to gain better experience and keep pace with emerging public relations trends.
- The research conclusions show that the PR and Corporate Communications office of Ethiopian Airlines is not adequately empowered. Unlike the recommendation of the Excellence Theory, the office is not part of the higher management team which makes major corporate decisions. Hence, the PR and Corporate Communications office should initiate a radical structural reform so as to claim executive management position for itself so that it can participate in decision making and strategic management. This will allow the office to better plan and execute PR initiatives and challenge management decisions that may not nurture effective PR practice in the airline.
- The research conclusions also revealed that the communication between Ethiopian Airlines and its publics is not symmetrical. The conversation is dominated by the airline, which is contrary to what the Excellence Theory advises. Hence, the PR office should take initiatives to create a more balanced communication environment by engaging its publics better.
- The findings have shown that Ethiopian Airlines does not conduct annual PR audits currently. Annual PR audit is vitally important for companies to evaluate their performance in an organized manner and learn from their experiences. It helps in measuring the effectiveness of PR campaigns, and learning from gaps observed in previous campaigns. Therefore, the researcher would like to recommend that the PR

and Corporate Communications office Ethiopian Airlines start evaluating its PR activities annually to further enhance its public relations activities.

5.4 Future Research Directions

This study has tried to assess the use of public relations tools by Ethiopian Airlines Public Relations and Corporate Communications office. The study was based on data gathered from employees and documents the airlines published online and as well as the contents it sent to media outlets. Hence, it will be useful to conduct research by gathering from the airline's publics and audiences as well.

This study also focused only on some of the traditional media and new media tools. Hence, assessing tools which are not covered by this study (such as Telegram, YouTube, factsheets, annual reports and others) can be an area of investigation for other researchers. This study could also be enriched by incorporating data to quantifiably measure what results the airlines communication through old and new media platforms has achieved in terms of meeting the airline's objectives.

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Ethiopian Airlines (2021) Overview

<https://corporate.ethiopianairlines.com/AboutEthiopian/Overview>

Ethiopian Airlines (2021)

<https://corporate.ethiopianairlines.com/AboutEthiopian/Overview>

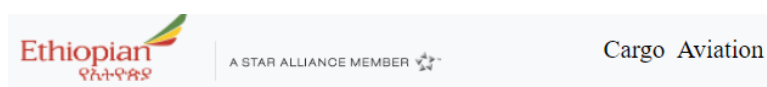
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<https://corporate.ethiopianairlines.com/media/Ethiopian-Factsheet>

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communication>

Appendixes

1. Appendix i: The place of PR in Ethiopian Airlines Organogram
2. press releases ii: Ethiopian Airlines and Boeing Sign Memorandum of Understanding for New 777-8 Freighter



Ethiopian Airlines and Boeing Sign Memorandum of Understanding for New 777-8 Freighter

Addis Ababa, 4 March 2022

Ethiopian Airlines, the largest and leading aviation group in Africa, and its longstanding partner Boeing [NYSE:BA] today announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the intent to purchase five 777-8 Freighters, the industry's newest, most capable, and most fuel-efficient twin-engine freighter.

The Memorandum of Understanding to order the 777-8 Freighter will enable Ethiopian Airlines to meet expanding global cargo demand from its hub in Addis Ababa and position the carrier for long-term sustainable growth.

“Consistent with our history of aviation technology leadership in Africa, we are pleased to sign this MoU with our longstanding partner Boeing, which will make us join select group of launch customer airlines for the fleet. In our vision 2035, we are planning to expand our Cargo and Logistics business to be one of the largest global multimodal logistics providers in all continents. To this effect, we are increasing our dedicated Freighter fleet with the latest technology, fuel-efficient and environment-friendly airplanes of the 21st century. We have also started the construction of the largest E-commerce Hub Terminal in Africa.” said Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Tewelde Gebremariam. “The new 777-8 Freighters will be instrumental in this long journey of growth agenda. Today, our air cargo services cover more than 120 international destinations around the world with both belly hold capacity and dedicated Freighter services.”

Boeing launched the new 777-8 Freighter in January and has already booked 34 firm orders for the model, which features the advanced technology from the new 777X family and proven performance of the market-leading 777 Freighter. With payload capacity nearly identical to the 747-400 Freighter and a 30% improvement in fuel efficiency, emissions and operating costs, the 777-8 Freighter will enable a more sustainable and profitable business for operators.

<https://corporate.ethiopianairlines.com/Press-release-open-page/ethiopian-airlines-and-boeing-sign-memorandum-of-understanding-for-new-777-8-freighter>

3. Appendix iii: Ethiopian Inks Partnership Agreement with International Djibouti Industrial Park Operation and Air Djibouti for Sea - Air Transport

Ethiopian Inks Partnership Agreement with International Djibouti Industrial Park Operation and Air Djibouti for Sea - Air Transport

Addis Ababa, 08 March 2022

Ethiopian Airlines, Africa's best airline and winner of multiple global awards, has signed a strategic partnership agreement to jointly commence sea-air multimodal transportation with International Djibouti Industrial Park Operation (IDIPO) and Air Djibouti for an expeditious transportation of goods to Africa.

Based on the agreement, the cargo will be transported from China to Djibouti Free Zone by sea and will be uplifted by air from Djibouti International Airport. The synergy between air and sea transportation is highly instrumental in facilitating trade between Africa and China through fast and easy movement of cargo. The collaboration will save both time and energy in addition to stimulating the growth of cargo market in Africa. The transportation deal enables traders to order their products from China to Africa via Djibouti port and Ethiopian facilitates the air movement of goods to different parts of Africa through its vast network.

<https://corporate.ethiopianairlines.com/Press-release-open-page/ethiopian-inks-partnership-agreement-with-international-djibouti-industrial-park-operation-and-air-djibouti-for-sea---air-transport>

4. Appendix iv: Mesfin Tasew Appointed as New CEO of Ethiopian Airlines Group

Mesfin Tasew Appointed as New CEO of Ethiopian Airlines Group

Mesfin Tasew Appointed as New CEO of Ethiopian Airlines Group

Addis Ababa, 24 March 2022

The Board of Management of Ethiopian Airlines Group has announced the appointment of Mr. Mesfin Tasew Bekele, as Chief Executive Officer of Ethiopian Airlines Group, effective March 23, 2022. Mr Mesfin has been a successor to the former CEO of the Airline group, Tewolde GebreMariam whose early retirement request due to health issues has been approved by the board.

Mr. Mesfin has 38 years of experience in airline management and operations in the areas of aircraft maintenance and engineering, procurement, information technology, flight operations, capability development, capacity building, development of corporate strategies, airline operation management, and corporate leadership. He earned Master's in Business Administration (MBA) from Open University in the UK, MSc degree in Electrical Engineering specializing in Communications Engineering from Addis Ababa University, and BSc degree in Electrical Engineering from Addis Ababa University.

The Board Chairman of the airline, Mr. Girma Wake said, "I would like to congratulate Mr Mesfin on his new appointment and I am fully confident about his capabilities. We believe that Mr Mesfin will lead the airline to an even greater success, keeping it on the right track that will see it grow through many generations to come. I urge the 17,000 employees of Ethiopian and the board members to stand with the new Group CEO to keep the airline fly high. We are also thankful for the remarkable contributions of the former Group CEO."

<https://corporate.ethiopianairlines.com/Press-release-open-page/mesfin-tasew-appointed-as-new-ceo-of-ethiopian-airlines-group>

5. **Appendix v:** Ethiopian Airlines Resumes Flights to Bengaluru, India

Ethiopian Airlines Resumes Flights to Bengaluru, India

Addis Ababa, 12 April 2022

Ethiopian Airlines, Africa’s best airline and the largest aviation group in Africa, has announced the resumption of thrice weekly passenger flights to Bengaluru, India as of 27 March 2022. The airline announced the recommencement of after it halted operations for two years due to the pandemic. Ethiopian operated its first flight services to Bengaluru in October 2019.

The nonstop service between Bengaluru and Addis Ababa is being carried out using B738 aircraft as per the below schedule.

Flight	Frequency	Departure Airport	Departure Time	Arrival Airport	Arrival Time
ET 690	TUE/THU/SUN	ADD	23:00	BLR	7:10
ET 691	TUE/THU/SAT	BLR	2:30	ADD	5:50

The capital of the Indian state of Karnataka, Bengaluru is dubbed ‘Silicon Valley of India’ and serves as the center of technology and innovation.

Commenting on the resumption of services, CEO of Ethiopian Airlines Group, Mr. Mesfin Tasew remarked, “we are glad to have resumed flights to the commercial capital of India and we will be committed in serving our customers with our high quality services. Ethiopian Airlines is a significant player in connecting India and Africa and beyond. The recommencement of flights connects the important ICT hub of Bengaluru to the ever-expanding Ethiopian network in addition to our flights to the Capital New Delhi and Mumbai. The flights will also complement our existing freighter and passenger flight services to other key destinations in India. “The addition of Bengaluru to our network is vital in meeting the demands of the fast-growing air

<https://corporate.ethiopianairlines.com/Press-release-open-page/ethiopian-airlines-resumes-flights-to-bengaluru-india#:~:text=Ethiopian%20Airlines%2C%20Africa's%20best%20airline,years%20due%20to%20the%20pandemic.>

6. Appendix VII: Ethiopian Airlines, UTD Aviation Solutions and AFRAA Sign MoU to Re-establish African Aviation Renaissance in MRO Services

Ethiopian Airlines, UTD Aviation Solutions and AFRAA Sign MoU to Re-establish African Aviation Renaissance in MRO Services

21 April 2022, Addis Ababa – Ethiopia: Ethiopian Airlines MRO, UTD Aviation Solutions and the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) have signed a tripartite MoU to work together on Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) services in pursuance to the The Brown Condor Initiative (BCI). The signing ceremony took place at Ethiopian Airlines headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

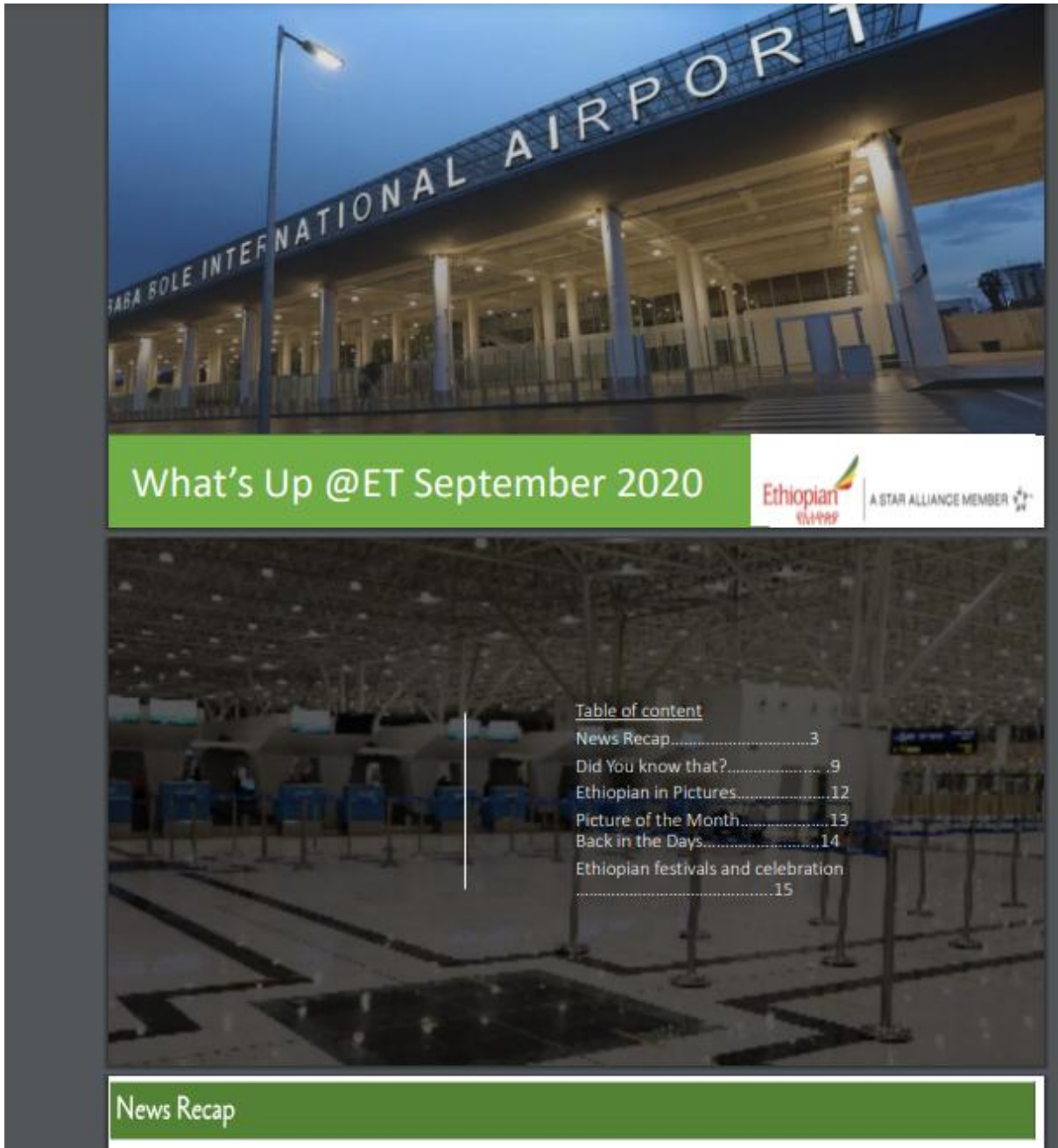
The Brown Condor Initiative (BCI) is a joint initiative which was conceptualized in 2020 and officially launched by UTD Aviation Solutions and AFRAA in May 2021. The BCI project is aimed at providing a platform for AFRAA members with Maintenance Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facilities to relieve USA MRO workforce crunch in terms of both facilities and manpower constraints, as well as support other airlines from USA in MRO services and aircraft spares.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Mr. Abdérahmane Berthé, AFRAA Secretary General stated: “This signing ceremony with Ethiopian Airlines is a significant milestone in the Brown Condor project. We express our appreciation to Ethiopian Airlines as the first African airline to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will operationalize the objectives of this robust Project.”

“For 2 years, as part of the industry recovery measures at AFRAA, we have been

<https://corporate.ethiopianairlines.com/Press-release-open-page/ethiopian-airlines-utd-aviation-solutions-and-afraa-sign-mou-to-re-establish-african-aviation-renaissance-in-mro-services>

7. Appendix Vii: WHAT UP @ ET in September



https://corporate.ethiopianairlines.com/docs/default-source/what-s-up@-et-monthly-newsletter/what's-up@-et-september-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=eed2a5_2#39;s-up@-et-september-2020.pdf

8. Appendix Viii: WHAT UP @ ET in October



What's Up @ ET October 2020



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- Back in the Days.....12
- Picture of the Month.....13
- Ethiopian in Pictures.....14
- Area News16
- Ethiopia.....18



News Recap

New USAID-Ethiopian Airlines Partnership to Source Food from Local Farmers for In-Flight Meals
https://corporate.ethiopianairlines.com/docs/default-source/what-s-up-@-et-monthly-newsletter/what's-up-@et-october-2020.pdf?sfvrsn=a2000512_2#39;s-up-@et-october-2020.pdf

9. Appendix Ix: Messages disseminated through Facebook posts on April



<https://www.facebook.com/EthiopianAirlines>

10. Appendix x: Messages disseminated through Facebook posts on March



<https://www.facebook.com/EthiopianAirlines>

11. Appendix xi: Messages disseminated through ET'S Twitter page on March 23, 2022



<https://twitter.com/flyethiopian/status/1506714327738470420>

12. Appendix xii: Messages disseminated through ET's Twitter page on April 15, 2022



Ethiopian Airlines  @flyethiopian · Apr 15

Ethiopian in recent years has invested heavily in infrastructure, equipment, people, system & processes to enhance its cargo handling capabilities throughout its network. IATA's CEIV PHARMA certification exhibits the worldclass service that our cargo wing delivers.

[#EthiopianCargo](#)



<https://twitter.com/flyethiopian/status/1514864933372059649>

13. Appendix xiii: **Messages disseminated through ET'S LinkedIn Page post about window view on March 28, 2022**



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/ethiopianairlines/>

14. Appendix xiv: **Messages disseminated through ET'S LinkedIn Page post on April 18, 2022**



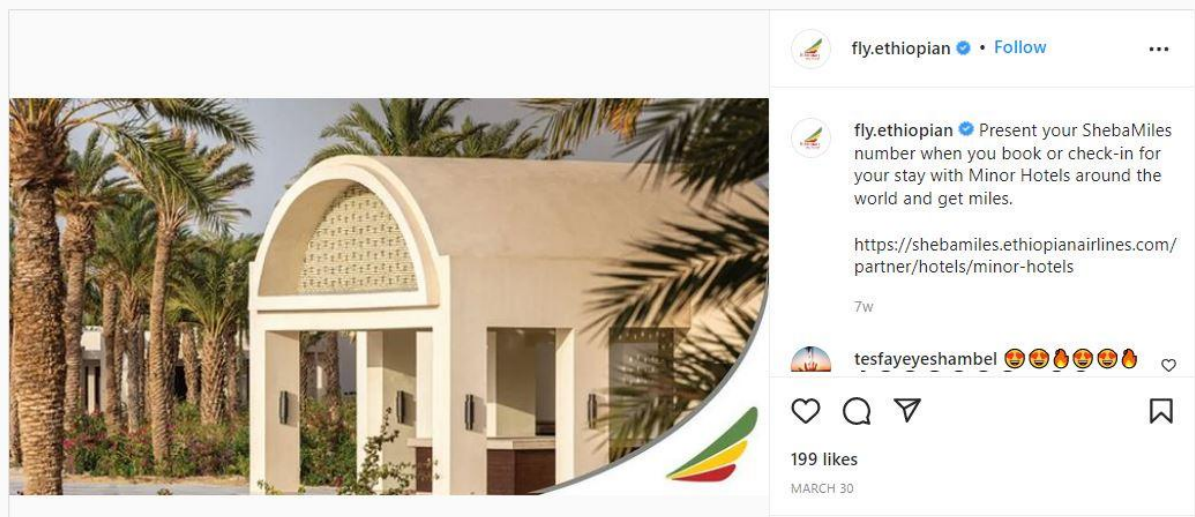
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/ethiopianairlines/>

15. Appendix xv: Messages disseminated through ET’S Instagram page about Ethiopian airlines its first flight schedule on April 8, 2022



<https://www.instagram.com/fly.ethiopian/>

16. Appendix xvi: Messages disseminated through ET’S Instagram page about booking and check in on March 30, 2022



<https://www.instagram.com/fly.ethiopian/>

17. Appendix xvii: The usage of old (traditional) media new media tools at Ethiopian Airlines about media monitoring on March 28-April 07, 2022

Ethiopian in the Week on World Wide Web
(Media Monitoring Report)

March 28-April 07, 2022



A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 



Media Monitoring Executive Summary

- ❖ In last ten days 47 international and 13 Local medias released news coverage about Ethiopian Airlines new developments on their media platforms (prime time, websites, print and social media pages).
- ❖ All the media coverage were positive and most of the news about the assignment of new Group CEO for the Airline.

Ethiopia: 10 things to know about new Ethiopian Airlines CEO Mesfin Tasew



Appointed on 24 March as head of the Ethiopian Airlines group where he spent his entire career, Mesfin Tasew will be taking over from Tewolde GebreMariam, whose resignation was announced the day before. It is back to Addis Ababa, therefore, for the Ethiopian who arrived in Lomé, Togo, in May 2021 as chief executive officer of ASKY Airlines.

Although he has reached the highest level of civil aviation on the continent, the new boss of Ethiopian Airlines has an air of discretion. He does not express himself on social networks, such as Twitter and LinkedIn, or in the conferences that periodically bring together the profession, nor does he take part in interviews and photo sessions. As for his personal life, it remains a mystery, even for those who regularly meet him.

Ethiopian Airlines: Mesfin Tasew Bekele is the new CEO of the company

Mesfin Tasew Bekele is the new CEO of Ethiopian Airlines. Mesfin, officially in office since March 23, takes over from Tewolde GebreMariam whose request for early retirement due to health problems has been approved by the board of directors of the company.

Mesfin has 38 years of airline management and operations experience in the areas of aircraft



18. Appendix xviii: **The usage of old (traditional) media new media tools at Ethiopian Airlines about media monitoring on April 25 –May 01,2022**



A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

Ethiopian
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THE NEW SPIRIT OF AFRICA

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

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THE NEW SPIRIT OF AFRICA

Executive Summary

- ❖ In the last Seven days, international 33 and 15 Local medias gave news coverage about Ethiopian Airlines Mumbai 50 Years' Service anniversary, Ethiopian B767 aircraft cargo conversion and The new MoU between UTD Aviation Solutions & AFRAA and Ethiopian.

Business Standard

https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/ethiopian-airlines-to-boost-india-flights-eyes-higher-traffic-from-brics-122042900245_1.html

Ethiopian Airlines to boost India flights, eyes higher traffic from BRICS

Ethiopian Airlines, the largest carrier in Africa, is allowed to operate 35 flights per week to Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai.

Ethiopian Airlines is keen to add 3-5 destinations in India as it eyes higher traffic from BRICS countries. BRICS refers to Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.



19. Appendix xix: Questionnaires

Dear Respondents,

The questionnaire is designed to collect data about “**The practice of using PR tools: the case of Ethiopian Airlines**”. your response will be used as primary data in the case study I am conducting for MA studies in Public Relations and strategic communications. Your response will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone.

Direction: Please answer the following questions by writing the tick symbol (√) as per your choice.

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Age below 20

20-30years old

31-40 years old

41-50years old

51-60years old

Above 60 years old

3. Educational background (chose more than one if necessary)

Below Diploma

Diploma

Degree

Master's degree

PHD

No	Description	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Questions related to PR tools & techniques					
1.1	Ethiopian Airline's PR uses new media tools					
1.2	Ethiopian Airline's PR uses old media tools					
1.3	Ethiopian Airlines uses proper PR tools for the targeted audience					
1.4	The PR tools Ethiopian Airlines uses are appropriate					
1.5	Ethiopian Airlines is reaching its public with PR works					
1.6	The PR practitioners at Ethiopian Airlines can use the platforms of the digital media					
1.7	Digital media are dominantly used PR tools at Ethiopian Airlines					
1.8	The PR tools Ethiopian Airlines utilizes are effective					
1.9	There is an annual audit of the PR and Corporate communications of Ethiopian Airlines					
1.10	Ethiopian Airlines invests in skills and knowledge of PR tools					
1.1	The relevance of the PR tools to					

1	achieve Ethiopian Airline's objectives is high					
2.	PR empowerment-related questions					
2.1	The PR & CC office of Ethiopian Airlines is empowered in selecting and using PR tools					
2.2	The PR & CC office is a member of the top management body					
2.3	The PR office trains its practitioners on how to use of PR tools'					
3.	Public/stakeholder/ related questions					
3.1	Choice of PR tools considers Ethiopian airlines audience					
3.2	The PR tools Ethiopian Airlines uses allow two-way symbiotic communication between the Company & its customers					
3.3	The PR tools Ethiopian Airlines uses take into account the current global aviation world					

20. Appendix xx: Questions for Focus Group Discussion

1. What major PR tools and techniques do the PR & Corporate Communications use?
2. What is the new media for you? Describe it?
3. Do you think that you have the proper skills and knowledge to use most of the PR tools?
4. Do you think that Ethiopian airlines is achieving mutually beneficial relationship with its target customers?
5. Is the PR office empowered in choosing and implementing the right PR tools?
6. Is the office is updating itself in using the digital media?
7. Anything you would like to add?

21. Appendix xxi: interview Questions for IMC Director

1. Where is the place of PR in the organizational structure of Ethiopian airlines?
2. Who are the major publics and stakeholders of the Company?
3. Do you believe that Ethiopian is reaching its target customers /stakeholders & publics/ through the PR & CC?
4. What is new media for you?
5. Does Ethiopian airlines upgrade and update its PR tools to the new media?
6. Are there strategies to build the capacity of the PR experts in using new technologies?
7. How much does Ethiopian airlines use the digital media?

22. Appendix xxii: interview Questions for PR & CC manager

1. What are the dominantly used PR tools and techniques at Ethiopian Airlines?
2. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of these tools and techniques?
3. Is the PR office is creating mutual understanding between Ethiopian airlines and its publics?
4. What capacity building works are being done on the PR practitioners of the office?
5. Is there allocated budget for the PR & Corporate Communications?
6. Are the experts of the PR office capable of using many of the PR tools?
7. What are the strength and weakness of the PR office in terms of PR tools?

23. Appendix xxiii: Interview questions for team leaders of advertising & sales promotions

1. What is the role of PR in working under the IMC?
2. What communications tools are used in the IMC?
3. Do you believe you are effective in reaching your segregated /specific/ customers through PR?
4. Do you believe the PR practitioners can use each PR techniques?
5. What improvement do you recommend for the better success of the PR & Corporate Communications?