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Graduate school of Journalism and
Communication

*The strategic role of media relations in corporate
communication: the case of Ministry of Revenues*

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Ziyen Gedlu, titled: *The strategic role of media relations in corporate communication- the case of Ministry of Revenues* and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Art in Public relations and Strategic Communication complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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ABSTRACT

The fundamental role of media relations is to publicize the activities of the organization. The Medias on the other hand are expected to use diverse sources in order to present different sides of the story. This leads to a good relationship between practitioners and journalists. The organization needs media as a channel to broadcast its message or print its message while the media need information from organization transmit to public.

The main purpose of this study is to explore the strategic role of media relations in corporate communication of Ministry of Revenues. Research questions were raised in the study in order to meet the objective of the research. The researcher has customized the qualitative method to explore the role of media relations and data to be collected in the Ministry.

There are models relating to corporate communication specially media relations were widely discussed in the literature review part. The researcher used the Grunig and Todd Hunt models.

Data were collected through qualitative type of research methods, individual in- depth interviews and document analysis which helps for crosschecking media relations outlets and tools to reach the target audiences are used.

The study has also forwarded recommendations that have a common understanding between the public and organizations symmetrical communication is very important. This helps to minimize misunderstanding between public and the organization.

Keywords: Corporate communication, Media relations, Qualitative research,

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

The term corporate communication refers to “a management function that is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the work done by communication practitioners in different specialist disciplines such as media relations, public affairs and internal communication (Cornelissen, 2014:49). Accordingly, this research aims at assessing the strategic role of media relations in corporate communication- taking the case of Ministry of Revenues and activities of communication Affairs directorate in the ministry.

Ministry of Revenues is the body responsible for collecting revenue from customs duties and domestic taxes. In addition to raising revenue, The Ministry is responsible to protect the society from adverse effects of smuggling; it seizes and takes legal action on the people and vehicles involved in the act of smuggling while it facilitates the legitimate movement of goods and people across the border.

In many developing countries including Ethiopia taxpayers are reluctant and fail to pay taxes properly and regularly (Shimelis , 2016). One of the major reasons is assumed to be lack of effective communication between the organization and the customers and also lack of sufficient or adequate information and proper education about the purpose of collecting taxes. Here, The Ministry of Revenue should take the responsibility for collecting taxes. Hence educating and informing as well as communicating tax payers and the community as a whole is the responsibility of the organization. In order to reach the large audiences of the organization, the Ministry therefore has to exercise different mix of media relations with diversifications of media.

According to Tench and Yeomans (2006, p.312), media relations involves managing relationships with the media—all the writers, editors and producers who contribute to and control what appears in the print, broadcast and online media.

Media relations are the most visible components of public relations. Effective media relations presuppose a strategic planning as organizational Communication processes. Coherent and well-planned communication activities assure long-term cooperation relationships with media. Moreover, it helps build and keep a positive reputation of a given organization. Good relation with media coverage to reflecting organizational objectives and messages, which in turn, influence public opinion towards the organization (Dustin, 2014). Media relations essentially involves liaising with the media in order to inform the public or their client's about practices, achievements, mission, policies and sometimes even their very existence. Media relations differs from the more direct forms of advertising and marketing because it is more focused up on gaining third party endorsements of the product, service, organization or individual in question and the having that third party disseminate this endorsement to the public. Because having third party endorsements of is a more effective in establishing a reputation for company.

Public relations must be a two-way activity; listening to what the public thinks, as well as projecting the organizations messages. It follows that public relations efforts can only be effective where the aims of the organization are compatible with the aims of the public's (Haywood, 2002:15-16)

The good will of the public is the greatest asset any organization can have. A public that is well informed and holds a positive attitude toward the organization is critical to its survival (Wells *et al.* 1998: 560)

In this research the Ministry of Revenues is selected as case as it has a dedicated program in radio, TV and newspaper. In addition, the ministry has different stakeholders – tax payers categorized in three levels. To this end the research focuses on assessing the strategic role of media relations in Directorate of communication Affairs of the ministry to supporting the achievement of the mission and vision of the ministry.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Mass media play a great role in our day to day life in areas related to entertain, educate, and inform people.

Media relations department represents a major and authentic information sources to journalists. Organizations, government offices and NGOs as well as business firms have their own media relations departments that give information to journalists

Nevertheless, there is a criticism that they do not give information with the primary aim to inform the public. Critics claim that communication practitioners give information to the media only when they think it would boost the reputation of the organization. Some even contend that communication practitioner tends to hide information that could harm the reputation of the organization (Biniyam, 2006: 8.)

According to Cornelissen (2004, p.210) the relationship between communication practitioners and journalists has often been described as adversarial. Journalists often have a negative opinion about communication practitioners, in part because they feel that there is a clear divide between their interests; according to journalists' communicators follows company first strategy and what journalists need is secondary. Past research (As Cornelissen reported sighting set of report) showed that journalists felt that communicators either withheld information, information were not objective and certainly not focused on issues of public interest. Cornelissen notes that according to some reports (As Cornelissen reported sighting set of report), as much as 80 percent of news reports about companies is promoted and delivered by communication practitioners. Thus, there is a need to create a smooth and symbiosis kind of relationship between journalists and communication practitioners. This shows the need to assess the extent to which such relationship is created and maintained in specific domain.

To understand the alignment of target audiences to the organization media relations activities such as different media kits, conducting research and analyze it is vital as described in the work of Tench and yeomans(2006 ,p.240). Research is an integral part of the public relations planning process. Without research it is difficult to set communication objectives, identify publics or develop messages. Research is also under taken to evaluate public relations efforts. Evaluation helps practitioners understand and improve program effectiveness through systematic effort to

clients, management or other disciplines. Thus, there is a need to assess the local content produced by the media relation department and the extent to which the audiences are accepting or internalizing the content.

The researchers strongly believe that after getting feedback from the target audience, it is important to develop media relations strategy which is part of communication strategy of corporate communication. As stated in the work of Cornelissen (2014, p.145), communication strategies typically involve a process of bringing stakeholder reputations in line with the vision of the organization in order obtain the necessary support for the organization's strategy. Hence, there is a need to assess the extent to which communication strategy of an organization is supporting the mission and vision of the organization.

As to the researcher's knowledge, there is no research that has been done on the strategic role of media relations in corporate communication. Therefore, there seems to be a need to conduct this research which aims at finding out how the media relations contribute for an organization in supporting its vision and mission.

1.3 Research questions

Based on the problem statement stated in the previous section, the researchers assess the strategic role of media relations in corporate communication – the case of the Ministry of Revenues. The study shall answer the following research questions.

1. What is the nature of relationship among public relations practitioners and journalists in the Ministry?
2. What is the media mix involved in media relations?
3. What are the roles of media relations in supporting the mission and vision of the organization?
4. What Media relations strategy they have?
5. How are media relations evaluated?

1.4 Objectives of the study

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this research is to assess the strategic role of media relations in corporate communication- the case of Ministry of Revenues.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

In order to achieve the main objective, the following specific objectives are identified:

- To assess Strategic communications of Ministry of Revenues to meet its' goals, objectives and Plans.
- To evaluate the achievement of Ministry in communicating organizational mission.
- To identify the relationship the Ministry had with the Media.
- To assess Media Strategy of Ministry to meet its goals, objectives and plans.
- To identify the media mixes that the Ministry use.

1.5 Significance of the study

The major important of this paper is to identify the strategic role of media relations in the Communication Affairs Directorate in Ministry of Revenues who work on collecting revenue from customs duties and domestic taxes. It helps to deliver a clear picture of the media relations activities of the institution. This will have an input for the government's commitment to change the practice. The practitioners and others who have interest in the field will find interesting insight on concepts, theories and practices from the global perspective. This will help them to identify and perform their activities with a better knowledge and full understanding. The findings of this study may help the top management and staff members of the institution.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the study

This study mainly focused on media relations activities utilized in Directorate of Communication Affairs. Thus the research was conducted in Ministry of Revenues as a case.

This study also focused on the strategic role of media relations in Ministry of Revenues and how the communication Affairs Directorate handles the activity of media relations in order to communicate with target audience. The study was conducted in media relations plan and

strategy, media tools employed and their relationship with the media and in addition evaluated the organization media relations practices whether media relations plan effectively meet its goal and objective or not.

The research is limited only to investigate media relations practice in corporate communication of the Ministry of Revenues. Though related, the research does not address issues related to public Relations practice of the organization.

1.7 Ethical Consideration

Research that involves human subjects or participants raises unique and complex ethical, legal, social and political issues. Research ethics is specifically interested in the analysis of ethical issues that are raised when people are involved as participants in research (Nancy Walton, n.d). When planning to undertake a research, Ethical guidelines and principles for conducting research with human participants (and nonhuman ones as well) are clearly needed. There was an informed consent with participants before they take part during the data collection. This means that they were provided with information so that they know exactly what they are being asked to do, and what the risks are, before they agree to take part.

In this research the ten ethical issues proposed Bryman and Bell (2007) has been adopted. The main aim of these issues is to protect the subject involved in the research from any harm, respecting their dignity, getting consent, protecting subjects' privacy, keeping data privacy and confidentiality, anonymity of subjects, keeping balance in research objective, neutrality, honesty and transparency in communication.

Participants were informed that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason and that they can request that the data they have given be removed from the study. There was no pressure on individuals to participate. The duty of the researcher is not to cause harm. During the process of this research, Anonymity and Confidentiality was also maintained. In addition, Works of others was acknowledged and was not presented as of own. Appropriate credit was given for the work of others through citations.

Among the ten criterions, the following ethical guidelines were put into place for the research period:

1. The research data remained confidential throughout the study and the researcher obtained the subjects permission for interview,
2. We prefer to keep the anonymity of the subject and hence the name of the subject shall not be specified in the any communication. However, the position of the subject in the organization is stated,
3. However, triangulating the personnel who was the interviewed in the research could be identified considering period and name of the organization. We believe that this shall not affect the privacy, dignity and wellbeing of the subject as the data stated in the research is meant to reflect what exists in the organization and what should be done in the future

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

The study has five Chapters. The first chapter deals with introductory concepts such as back ground of the study, statement of problem, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, Ethical consideration and scope of the study .The theoretical part of the thesis is dealt in chapter two in which discussions on concepts about corporate communication specially media relations and particularly the four step public relations models of public relations, historical backgrounds of the field have been made. Chapter three is entirely dedicated to the discussion of research methodology i.e. methods of data collection and analysis. Data presentation, analysis and discussion follow in Chapter four. The last Chapter five is conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literatures and Related works

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this Chapter is to provide literature review that function as a relevant framework for this research. The thesis focuses on studying the strategic role of media relations in corporate communication in Ministry of Revenues.

The Chapter provides in-depth insight on corporate communication, communication strategy, the role of media relations in an organization, tools and techniques of media relations, communication practitioner – Journalist relationships, Media relations and Media strategy, the difference between Advertising and media relations and theoretical framework.

2.2 Corporate Communication

Corporate communication has been defined in different ways. Van Riel define it as an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonized as effectively and efficiently as possible with the overall objective of creating a favorable basis for relationships with groups upon which the company is dependent. (1995: P.26)

Cornelissen defined corporate communication as a management function that is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the work done by communication practitioners in different specialist disciplines such as media relations, public affairs and internal communication.(2004: p.49)

According to Cornelissen a Corporate communication involves a range of ‘managerial’ activities such as planning, coordinating and counseling the CEO and senior managers in the organization as well as ‘tactical’ skills involved in producing and disseminating messages to relevant stakeholder groups. (2004:p.50)

Cornelissen (2004:p.203) the most important specialist are as in corporate communication: media relations, employee communication, issue mgt and crisis communication. These four areas involve specialist knowledge, tools and techniques around communicating to each of these stakeholder groups including journalists and media organizations, investors and shareholders, activist groups and NGOs and on organization's employees.

2.3 Communication Strategy

According to Cornelissen, a communication strategy involves the formulation of a desired position for an organization in terms of how it wants to be seen by its different stakeholder groups. Based up on assessment of gap between how the company is currently seen (corporate reputation) and how it wants to be seen in the future (vision), a communication strategy specifies a strategic intent, on which possible courses of action are formulated, evaluated and eventually chosen. Communication strategies often involve a process of bringing stakeholder reputations in line with the vision of the organization in order to obtain the necessary support for the organization's strategy. (2004:P.167)

Cornelissen stated that the content of communication strategy should be translated into specific communication programs and campaigns towards both internal and external stakeholder audiences. (2004: p. 167)

L.Grunig etal (2002) states that effective organizations usually rely on long –term Strategic planning to enable them to develop a mission and set of goals that are appropriate for their environment. Excellent public relations departments are involved in this process by recognizing and cultivating relationships with the strategic publics that affect their mission or goals. When public relations develop these relationships, it saves the organization money by reducing the costs of litigation, regulation, legislation, pressure campaigns, or boycotts that result from bad relationships with publics (the public become activist groups when relationships are bad).

Research and evaluation process are needed to determine and ensure that organizational messages were accurately received by the target publics (Gruing, 2002).

When organizations want to communicate with the public and other Stakeholders, they send out messages. A message has to be Visible, audible and cognizable. Furthermore, it must be

unambiguous and relevant to the targeted receiver. Thus, messages should be created by keeping the target audience in mind. (Gruing, 2002)

To create an effective communication the organization has to ‘speak the language of the stakeholder group’. The message needs to tailor for each audience group who are impressed by organizational decisions and conduct. This implies that the same message was delivered in different formats, paraphrasing, simplifying, or adding details. It is vital that communication professionals are a part of the strategic message design process in the organization and not acting as mere technical clerks. (Gruing, 2002)

2.4 Role of Media Relations in an Organization

The definition of media relations is presented in different ways by different author taking into account different factors.

Cornelisson defines it considering the relation it has with media and main players as “Media relations involves managing communication and relationships with the media – all the writers, editors and producers who contribute to and control what appears in the print, broadcast and online news media” (2004, p.205). The above definition indicates the existence of interdependency and mutual relationship between communication practitioners and journalists

According Ridgway the term Media Relations refers to the communication pattern between an organization and those sections of the Media which are interested in its activities (1996, p.5).

Lamb F. Mckee Brittain state that media relations is a busy high way traffic traveling in both directions between journalists and public relations practitioners and the rules of road are observed as courtesies rather than enforceable regulations.(2005, p.105)

Recently, it is defined as a science “media relations is a science because it involves systematic planning and measurement. An effective media relation often depends on designing and implementing a well thought out plan. It involves audience targeting, media segmentation and media measurement in the attainment of its goals. The plan often includes description of what you want to convey to whom and how you plan to convey it ([https://pdf crowd.com/doc/api/ref](https://pdfcrowd.com/doc/api/ref))

Develop media relations plans that support organizational objectives and talk about publicity opportunities. Ideally a good balance between public relations and media relations is a good strategy to achieve a company's goals. (<https://evoma.com/term-conditions>).

“Media relations stresses on third party endorsements of the product, service, firm or a particular individual and then using the third part to disseminate the information to the target audience.” (<http://popkorn> communications. In importance – of –media - relations)

Media relations consist of all the different ways an organization interacts with media outlets or individual media representatives. Managing media relations include the ability to build long – term relationships with journalists who cover the topics of the organization on a daily basis, as well as interacting with journalists who are calling the organization for the first and may be the only time in their career. (Doorley , 2007)

A government corporate communication is a critical link between the government bodies and the citizens. The office is responsible to liaising with the media in order to inform the public of their client's practices, achievements, mission, policies and sometimes even their very existence. (<http://www.curzonpr.com>) This is further supported by the media relations department. The media relations responsible to arrange interviews with important individuals in the company, field questions from reporters and write press releases to make the media aware of company announcements and achievements.” (<https://evoma.com/terms-conditions>)

Grunig , (1990, p.19) States that the situational theory of public relations implies that only the unsophisticated public relations practitioner would try to communicate with active publics through the mass media.

According to Geary, there are two benefits of Media Relations to public relations practitioner. The first one is a respectable means to achieve a large, or a Cosmopolitan consultation. Public relations practitioners might want to reach a large audience for a variety of reasons, including increasing awareness, creating a positive reputation, disseminate point of view messages from the organization. The second purpose is that the news media serve as a “credible third party” for public relations practitioners (Geary, 2005).

In the business and service giving communities, gaining third party endorsements of the product, service, organization or individuals in question and is a more effective in establishing a

reputation. This can be done in the form of press coverage so as to it. Inform consumers about products, services, mission and identity through trusted media channels

The media relations aspect of public relations practitioners has two forms. The first one is initiating the media coverage. He Public relations professionals are usually employs the proactive way of dealing with journalists. In this style of media relations, Public relations office will prepare press release and employ other information providing mechanisms by their own so that they would be able to inform journalists. The second type of media relations is concerned with responding to media enquiries from journalists and providing sufficient information proactively. (Zemdekun, 2014:33)

2.5 Media Relations Frame work

Media Relations has been a predominant function of public relations practitioners (Wilcox and Cameron, 2009: Spicer, 1997) and also the most visible (Supa and Zoch, 2009: white and Raman, 2000). There is a need for a systematic frame work that enables practitioners to examine the environment in which the journalists, media organizations and practitioners operate in (Anderson and Lowrey, 2007; CHO, 2006).

Journalist- centric Mediating the media model seeks to equip practitioners with a holistic and comprehensive framework to cultivate media relations. This model identifies two set of influences, internal and external.

2.6 Internal Influences

Journalist Mind set. Journalists are guided by traditional news values like immediacy, excitement and novelty that determine their choice of stories and angling (Chibnall, 1977).Journalists' back ground and characteristics such as gender, ethnicity and education (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996) also influence what they perceive to be news and relevant content for their audiences. This determined how journalists select news (Sinaga and WU, 2007) practitioners therefore need to understand what makes news and how journalists write as the knowledge can help practitioners get better media coverage (Sallot and Johnson, 2006a).This includes providing easy accessibility, exclusive stories and useful, timely and well-written information(Bagin and Fulginiti,2005).Additionally, interpersonal relationships such as prior interactions, practitioners' professional work ethics and news sense would stand with the journalists during subsequent interactions. Practitioners should undergo extensive media training,

engage in systematic monitoring of the various media platforms and improve their writing skills (Sallot and Jonson, 2006, a,b).

Journalist routines- Journalists adhere to work routines including deadlines, publishing balanced stories and fair and neutral reporting (Richards, 1998, Ruff and Aziz, 2003). To do this effectively, journalists need fast and immediate information (Richards, 1998; Yoon, 2005). Therefore, they appreciate qualities like timeliness, accessibility and transparency (Bagin and Fulginiti, 2005). When practitioners fail to help journalists meet their deadlines, not only will they lose the opportunity to get fair media coverage for their organizations, they also stand to lose the journalists' trust (Ruff and Aziz, 2003). Practitioners should familiarize themselves with each news organization's deadlines and production routines and plan media events that maximize chances of coverage (Richards, 1998).

News room or organizational routines- Each news room has different groups of news workers who work through each story, such as editors, copy writers, sub-editors and even photographers (Pang, 2010). Practitioners may also be able to influence editorial decisions by liaising directly with the editors.

Practitioners thus need to understand where the power that ultimately decides news output lies. They should cultivate relations with other news room staff, like the administrators, camera crew and photographers who can influence story selection and salience (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). Budget constraints and manpower limitations may also impact what news gets covered.

2.7 External influences

Extra media forces- These include the existing relationships between organizations and media establishments, the presence of market forces, restrictions posed by government regulations and legalities, the size and nature of the media industry and the intensity of the media competition (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996)

Media ideology- Media ideology refers to media organizations' role in society and their reasons for existence (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). State-press ideology affects the relationship between organizations and the media and influences the way news gets disseminated (Pang, 2006; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). Carroll (2011) argued this as part of media systems, or what he described as "national media environments" (P.432)

2.8 The four-step public relations process model

The public relations process is a method of solving problems. It has four phases: Research, planning, communication and evaluation (Hendrix 2004:4). Part of the public relations process is the monitoring of the environment in which the organization operates. This continual attention to how the organization is affected by social, legal, professional and economic trends and the public opinion surrounding them is known as issues management. The public relations practitioner is expected to identify issues that may affect the organization, suggest ways that might address these issues (Smith 2003:229). These phases are detailed in the remaining sub-sections

2.8.1 Research

As a leading text points out (Baskin, Aronoff, and Latimore 1997.p.107), research is a vital function in the process of public relations. It provides the initial information necessary to plan a public relations action and used to evaluate its effectiveness. Management demands hard facts, not intuition or guess work. Pavlik (1987) defined three major types of public relations research: *applied, basic and introspective*. Applied research examines specific practical issues; in many instances, it is conducted to solve a specific problem. A branch of applied research, strategic research, is used to develop public relations campaigns and programs.

According to Broom and Dozier (1990) strategic research refers to “deciding where you want to be in the future and how to get there.” A second branch, evaluation research, is conducted to assess the effectiveness of a public relations program. Basic research in public relations creates knowledge that cuts across public relations situations. It is most interested in examining the underlying processes and in constructing theories that explain the public relations process. The third major type of public relations research is introspective research, which examines the field of public relations using research for problem identification and analysis and for program development, implementation and assessment (Newsom, Turk and Cruckeberg, 2004:64).

The backbone of successful public relations efforts understands publics. The difficulty that organizations have in dealing with publics is the fact that they have conflicting interests. Surveys to examine attitudes and beliefs often surprise closed systems managers because they have isolated themselves from their publics. Increasingly, organizations long term relationships with its various publics are seen as being responsible for its image and its reputation. No public is static. That is why public must be monitored in an ongoing way. Messages have to be designed

for them and appropriate media must be chosen to convey the necessary messages (Ibid: 67). Since Public Relations is problem prevention and problem solving, most of the researches are exploration in nature to find out problems (Ibid.81).

Otto Lerbinger suggests four different areas of conducting research for public relations: environmental monitoring, the public relations audit, the communications audit and the social audit (Hiebert 1988:109). The most interesting research in public relations today may well be the research performed at the beginning and end of the programs (Ibid.112). Public relations practitioners who ignore research will soon discover that they are ignored (Ibid.118).

Research is becoming a vital tool for public relations because the days of intuition and gut feelings are over (Ibid.132). We do not contend that research solves all problems or replaces experience, judgment or even less likely, power in decision making. The assumption underlying, however, is that research makes the practice of public relations more responsive, useful and professional. Our thesis is that scientific research is fundamental to effective public relations practice and management (Broom and Dozier 1990:3-4). In short, research is essential to the rational management of the organizational adjustments, adaptations and responses to changing environments (Ibid.11-12).

Based on the role of research in public relations practice, *we see five major approaches to program management: No research approach, informal approach, media-event approach, evaluation-only approach, and scientific approach* (Ibid.16-18). Strategic planning uses research to define and redefine the perceived problem. The meaning of “problem” here is a condition in which someone thinks there is a gap between what is perceived and what I desired. Without research, you are left with your own and others unsystematic observations, views and assertions and a collection of intuitions and “gut feelings” about what is happening. Without ongoing research, one cannot update understanding of the problem as it changes depending on the context and the time (Ibid.24). Informal evaluations are better than nothing but using a professional researcher to guide such studies (Haywood 2002:91).

The research involves identifying and learning about three key elements(1) identify a client or institution that has (2)a problem or potential problem to be solved, which involves (3) one or more of its audiences, or publics (Hendrix 2004:4). This is the information gathering phase. Through formal and informal research methods, practitioners gather data of the client, the

environment in which it operates, and its stakeholders, the people who can affect or are affected by the organization's ability to achieve desired results.

Practitioners identify the problems and opportunities facing the client and determine what, if any, action is appropriate (Guth and Mash 2005:3). *In the absence of research and evaluation, public relations effectiveness is compromised and the practitioners' credibility and accountability suffer.*

In basic terms research is a form of listening. Before any PR program is undertaken data should be collected, analyzed and interpreted. Then, the organization can begin to map out policy decisions and strategies for effective communication (Oliver, 2004:154).

2.8.2 Planning

The second phase of public relations process involves the *setting of objectives for a program to solve the problem*. The objectives may include the kind of influence the client hopes to exert with audiences, such as informing them or modifying their attitudes or behaviors. The objectives may also include statements about the program itself, such as its composition or how it will operate (Hendrix 2004:4). In the planning process practitioners decide on a future course of action. They may create ad-hoc, or limited purpose, plans to address a short-term situation, or standing and contingency plans that have a longer shelf-life. Whatever path they follow, these should all be value driven, when they are, consensus is reached not only on desired goal, but also on objectives that will be followed to achieve those goals and the specific tactics needed to execute those objectives (Guth and Marsh 2005:3).

2.8.3 COMMUNICATION

The third phase of the process consists of planning and executing a program to accomplish the objectives. The program comprises a central theme, messages and various forms of communication aimed at reaching the audience (Hendrix 2004:4). In the communication phase, the plan is transformed into action. The availability of key resources, such as budget, staffing and time will influence the process. Under ideal circumstances, practitioners' send their messages to individual publics using media (channels of communication) that those publics prefer.

2.8.4 EVALUATION

The valuation is needed to check whether the Public Relations work is truly effective or not. Answering such question has been one of the professions biggest problems. Edward L. Bernays believed strongly that Public Relations should be practiced as an applied social science and that like all sciences, it could be defined and its results evaluated with precision. *If public attitudes are properly understood, if the problem is carefully researched, if the objectives are carefully planned, if the communication is properly devised and implemented, then the results can be precisely evaluated.* The best way to determine the effectiveness of public relations campaign is to test attitudes and opinions before the campaign and retest them afterward to see if any change has taken place, if so, the direction of that change (Hiebert 1988:265-266).

Formal research of substantial sample audience into perceptions of reputation, awareness, opinion and attitude, remains the best measure of true effect of the public relations program(Haywood 2002:100). Management by objectives may be defined formally as the total management system that focuses on results rather than activities for performance evaluation (Ibid.203). All sound public relations begin with research and ends with evaluation. *Building public relationships has no room for winners and losers* (Kitchen, 1997:375-376).

Finally, evaluation as defined in this process consists of two parts. First it includes an ongoing procedure of program monitoring and adjustment. Second, evaluation refers back specifically to the objectives that were set in the second phase of the process and examines the practitioner's degree of success in achieving them (Hendrix, 2004:4). Public relation's measurement may be divided into two categories: *Process evaluation (what goes out) and Outcome evaluation (effect on audience)*. Process evaluation examines the success of public relations program in getting the message out to target audiences. There are several difficulties in evaluating the outcome of public relations efforts (Wells et al., 1998: 582-583).

2.9 Media relations tools

There are different media relation tools, which help any organization to reach its target audience and give messages at any time and place. These tools are broadly categorized into two. Those are traditional media and social media or new media, those tools has their own significance for the organization and for the rest of the public to get information.

According to Cornelisson, Communication practitioners use a wide range of tools and techniques to obtain news coverage and to monitor reporting on their organization over time. (2004:P.213).Cornelisson recommends the following tools and techniques of Media Relations.

2.9.1 Traditional Media Relations Tools

There are many common media relations tools, which are used by organizations, make contact with appropriate targeted audience within a specific period. These tools are also a basis for a good media relations plan and communication strategy. Dominantly applied tools are listed below.

1. Press release: The aim of press releases is to transfer news to journalists so that it can be made public. Press releases are more likely to be used and placed in a news medium when they refer to news worthy events or items that are current and have a human interest or appeal, when the release is written in a factual (as opposed to judgmental) manner and with a clear heading and lead (first paragraph) in to the topic. When writing a press release, communication practitioners should keep the expectations, preferred frames and deadlines of the different media in mind. Different media organizations and media forms (TV, print, internet) involve different reporting styles, time tables and deadlines.

The content and the focus of press release depend on the type of journalist. The print journalist, for example, employ a pyramid scheme where the most important information is shared the initial part of the article, and as the information appearing further down in the news article will be deemed less important. In contrast, the radio journalist will try to share all of the information early on. Moreover, a reporter who is assigned to a business or financial desk will be concerned about angles from the perspective of business audiences and the implications for financial performance and financial markets. The public affairs reporter will be more concerned about the public angle. A feature writer will be more concerned about the human interest angle.

It is important that practitioners are sensitive to the dominant frames and interests of journalists and their news organizations so that there is a greater likelihood of frame alignment. Another point is the time – frame of different news media. Television and the internet are ‘fast’ media in the sense that a topic or article, once it is finished, is published directly, whereas newspapers are slower and waits till the next publication. The shorter

timeframe associated to internet and television media are importance to corporate communication practitioners.

2. Press conference. Press conference is normally organized around fixed periods in the calendar when an organization release financial results or share corporate information at the annual general meeting in the presence of shareholders. An important element of the press conference is availability of company executives in the event to respond to the questions of journalists. This ‘interactive feature distinguishes a press conference from a press release. A press conference is therefore more applicable when information cannot be conveyed in a standardized, written form or when the information involves a controversial or sensitive issue. In preparation for a press conference, communication practitioners need to invite journalists and editors and brief them about the nature and purpose of the conference in time.
3. Interviews. Journalists often request an interview with official spokesperson or with the CEO or other senior executives of an organization. For this purpose, Communication practitioners need to offer executives advice and training on news angles in relation to corporate themes and on specific guidelines regarding the interview format.
In addition, CEOs and other executives who are likely to be interviewed by journalists over the telephone, face - to -face or in front of a camera need to be trained to be skilled communicators.
4. Media monitoring and research. The most common type of media research consists of monitoring media relations efforts. Two of the most commonly used monitoring techniques are gate – keep research, an output analysis and Syndicated media monitoring
 - Gate – Keeping research. A gate – keeping study analyzes the characteristics of a press release or video news release that allow them to ‘pass through the gate’ and appear in a new medium Both content and style variables are typically examined.
 - Output analysis. The objective of output analysis is to measure the amount of exposure or attention that the organization receives as a result of media relations. Several techniques can be used in output analysis such as the total news coverage (i.e. total number of stories or articles) that appears in selected mass media. In addition, it is also possible to examine the tone (positive or negative) of stories or articles.
 - Syndicated media monitoring services. Countering the short coming of output analysis, a number of media research agencies have developed media monitoring

packages. These packages focus on measuring the total circulation or audience reached, the tone of the news stories or articles on the organization; the extent to which key messages were picked up and communicated; and the share – of – voice compared to competitors or other comparable organizations.

2.9.2 Social Media Tools

Social media (which will be referred in singular form throughout this research) has revolutionized corporate media communications. Social media marketing allows companies and/or organizations to communicate directly and instantly with their stakeholders, marking a shift from the traditional one-way output of corporate media communications, to an expanded dialogue between organization and community, this type of media is more effective and the organization can easily communicate with the public at large (Matthews, 2010). Social media consists of online technologies, practices or communities that people use to generate content and share opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives with each other (Ethiopian Television Bureau of Advertising, Inc., 2009). Examples of social media include blogs (e.g. Blogger, Word press), intranets, podcasts, video sharing (e.g. YouTube), photo sharing (e.g. Flickr), social networks (e.g. Facebook, MySpace), wikis (e.g. Wikipedia), gaming sites, virtual worlds (e.g. Second Life), micro-blogging (e.g. Twitter), videoconferencing, instant message chats, social event/calendar systems (e.g. Eventful), social bookmarking sites (e.g. Delicious, Digg, Stumble Upon), and news aggregation sites, are among others. (Counties, 2016) In the last decade, these technologies have risen in popularity and ambiguity, and are being utilized by public relations.

2.10 Communication practitioner – Journalist relationship

The relationship between communication practitioners and journalists has often described as adversarial. Journalists often have a negative opinion about communication practitioners, in part because they feel that there is a clear divide between their interests: according to journalists' communicators think about the needs of their companies first and less about what Journalists need.

Past research has also found that journalists felt that practitioners withheld information were not always objective and certainly not focused on issues of public interest. Communication practitioners are less negative about journalists and are often eager to work with them. However, communication practitioners also realize that journalists have their own agenda and may frame

news about the company in line their news routines and the ideology of the news organization that they work for (Cornelisson, 2004:210).

Cornelisson stated that both communication practitioners and journalists have different agendas and perception and focus on news related to a company, they do realize that they are interdependent. Journalists need and often use information provided by communication practitioners. Communication practitioners, and the companies that they work for often need the media as a conduit to generate coverage on the company and to reach important stakeholders such as the financial community, customers, prospective employees, government and the general public (2004;p.210),

According to some reports, as much as 80 percent of news reports about companies is prompted and delivered by communication practitioners. (Cornellisen, 2004:p.211)

A noticeable understanding and the realization of this interdependence has led to a further specialization of media or press relations within a corporate communication of large companies. Such companies have a dedicated press office or media team that deals with the general media (Cornelisson, 2004:211)

Grunig (1990:p.19) describes the relationship between journalists and communication practitioners as follows: The relationship between public relations and journalists continually produces conflict because many practitioners will do whatever it takes to gain exposure for their client organizations in the media. Therefore, journalists and communication practitioners have to smooth their relationships to disseminate balanced information for the society.

According to Biniyam (2006:p.8), media and public relations have strong ties. The challenge for the media is that they have a responsibility to include more than the public relations' side of the story in order to maintain fairness and balance. For instance, if the public relations office of an organization gives information to a journalist about a development project; the journalist may also want to seek the views of the beneficiaries of the project, find out how workers react to the project, how surrounding residents of the village react, and also, the journalist may physically go to the site and make a report. By doing so, the journalist will get more comprehensive picture of the project

In other words, the media relations practitioner acts as a sort of “pre – reporter” for the journalist, providing them with information they need to do their jobs. Sallot, Steinfatt and Salwen (1998:p.374) explain the process as an effort by practitioners “to gain ink and air time” by continually offering journalists unsolicited assistance in the performance of their jobs. With good reason, journalists perceive that practitioners have self – serving motives for offering this service.

Public relations practitioners should be media neutral and they should have the skills and experience to choose the most suitable channels objectively to reach the target audiences with the most appropriate messages (Tench Yeomans, 2006: p.317).

In this case, it can be said that skillful communication practitioners play on journalists’ knowledge and views to propose stories that follow dominant news frames, fit certain categories of content and resonate with a journalist’s notion of expectations of their audience (Cornelisson, 2004: p.212).

The most important point and the underlying principle of avoiding conflict in news frame. With this conflict, it is not possible to make fair and balance information. Therefore, according to Cornelisson, How can communication practitioners avoid such frame conflict? Alignment of frames is more likely when the substance of the corporate frame relates to common norms and expectations about business and society. Frame alignment is also more likely when practitioners and journalists openly discuss an issue, decision or event so that a journalist is more likely to understand the other side (Cornelison, 2004:213).

According to Tench andYeomans to be credible, the public relations practitioner should seek to use media relations to gain editorial coverage in respected programs and publications with a reputation for editorial independence. To be credible, a Journalist should only write or broadcast stories that are of interest to their audiences. These conflicting priorities explain the tension that exist between the public relations agenda and the journalist’s.(2006:p.314)

In addition to this, journalists are quick to present public relations practitioners as gate keepers who seek to withhold information, rather than as good sources of news and comment. Few journalists are willing publicly to admit to their close working relationships with public relations contacts, although they will often acknowledge this in private (Tench and Yeomans, 2006:317)

In several institutions it is only through the public relations office that journalist can get timely access to information. It is therefore obligatory for journalists to have good contact with media relations department while searching for information.

John Wiley and sons state that it is important to develop a relationship with key reporters as long as they have nothing to lose. The relationship is based on aligning the company interest against based as short – term and long – term interests of the reporter so that. This approach allows building media relationships that allow educate reporters about organization, clarifying issues on which media personnel to serve as a resource (2006:p. 315).

Many organizations use media (print or electronic) to publicize their products and services. Many organizations measure the media coverage in terms of the cost of advertising. Coverage is the goal of any media relation plan. Good relations with the press result with the reporter checks with the corporation to validate statements and facts. Their contact offers. An opportunity to set the record straight, or put the facts in to a clearer more objective, context Rumors and in accuracies can be corrected.(Sandra;2004, p.210)

2.11 Media strategy

A Media Strategy is a plan of action that helps an organization to reach their stakeholders locally and globally and improve their overall service delivery. The process follows a four – step problem – solving model.

- Define the problems, write a problem statement and analyze the situation: The analysis requires gathering processing and interpreting information. Listening observing are fundamental methods. The interpretation of information helps to confirm the problem statement. Or to restate it in a new light. The analysis should lead to planning.
- Plan: Articulate goals and objectives, and develop a program of actions to achieve them. Identify the audiences or ‘publics’; identify the goals for each and the message and media strategies determined to meet the goals; identify budget, time and other resources that must be committed to the program. Planning also involves the evaluation of the performance of the program.
- Implement plans and communicate messages: The fundamentals of the communication process offer the key to successful implementation. These demands understanding the

corporate goals and objectives, fitting them to the audience needs and expectations, and being mindful of the context in which the communication applies

- Evaluate. Evaluation is needed to measure the extent to which the program is effective in achieving the planned goals. The actual accomplishment of the program which may vary from the number of columns in inches to the airtime in minutes and frequency and evaluation checks the cost benefit such as the increased awareness on the issues; relative changes in attitudes, opinions, or behaviors compared against evidence of economic, social or political change. The criteria and evaluation methods must be determined as the program is planned and as it evolves (Sandra; 2004, p. 211).

2.12 The Difference between Advertising and Media relations

According to Cornelisson, advertising is the process of gaining the public attention through paid media announcements (2004; p.182). Hence, advertising is creating a paid announcement to promote products and services through the use of different types of media including online, print, TV, out of home and radio. A Media relation on the other hand is a strategic communication process that builds organizations and the public.

Tench and Yeomans state that advertising and public relations may both seek the same goal: publicity, the process of making something known. Yet they use very different techniques to achieve this end. (2006:p.312)

The difference is advertising uses paid media coverage to inform and persuade whereas public relations use third party endorsement to inform and persuade its stakeholders. In other words, the advertiser controls the message by paying for it while the public relation practitioner seeks to persuade other people (third parties) to convey the message for them in a supportive way (endorsement)(Tench. Yeomans; 2006:312)

2.13 Theoretical Framework

2.13.1 Model

2.13.2 .3s of Public Relations

James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt proposed four models of Public Relations that explain four different approaches to the practice of public relations (Seitel,2011:p.81)).These models of

Public Relations describe the different forms of communication between an organization and its stakeholders.

- **Press a gentry (Publicity Model)**

A press agent or publicist aims to secure coverage for a client, and truth is not an absolute requirement. This type of PR is most common in show business – celebrity PR – where individuals are promoted through media coverage (Alison, 2004: p.12).

Grunig and Hunt (1984:p.25) point out that practitioners in these organizations concern themselves most with getting attention in the media for their clients.

Was marked by manipulation exaggeration and deception (Solomon, 1998: p.9) . “This model is essentially one-way communication where message will be sent from a source to a receiver with the express intention of winning favorable media attention. This model of communication

- **Public information model**

This kind of communication provides information to people – where accuracy is now important indeed essential. This model does not seek to persuade the audience or change attitudes. Its role is similar to that of an in – house journalist (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

The early 1900’s was a time when huge business organizations were under serious of corruption and other forms of injustice. This situation has forced private organizations to establish public relations offices and hire practitioners. This period was marked with a communication model known as public information (Grunig, 1992; p.286).

During this time the principle of Lee which promotes telling the truth is the best way to effective public relations was a widely accepted way of doing public relations business. It was also a time when the first “Public Bureau” was opened in Boston and Washington in 1902 then followed by Lee’s office of publicity. (Solomon, 1998; 10-11)

Many governmental and nongovernmental organizations opened public relations units from 1900 - 1931.

Government public relations are restricted to providing “Information” rather than “Publicity” and to avoid practicing “Public relations”. Thus, even today, government agencies are essentially limited to practicing the public information model (Grunig and Hunt, 1992; p.37)

- **Two – way asymmetry**

According to Alison, two-way model introduces the idea of feed-back or two – way communication. It is asymmetric or imbalanced because the intended change is in the audience’s attitudes or behavior rather than in the organization’s practices. (Alison: 2004 p.14)

According to Gruing (2009:p.14) the two-way asymmetrical model conducted on public relations research seeks to determine what the public knows and understands or believes about the client’s organization, issues of importance, and so on. The model is asymmetrical it focuses heavily on persuasion than hitting feedback. Research is the basic component for this model, as it seeks to persuade the public to take the attitude and beliefs that are favorable to the organization based on baseline and actual data collected about the situation.

- **Two –way Symmetrical Model**

This model is sometimes described as the ‘ideal’ of public relations. It describes a level of equality of communication which is not often found in real life. In this model, each party is willing to alter their behavior to accommodate the needs of the other party (Alison, p. 15).

The major advocate and founder of this model James E. Grunig, mentioned that it would be difficult to exactly identify when who are considered to be the founders of modern public relations Lee and Bernarys used to council their clients in a way both the organization and the public mutually benefit from each other’s interaction (Grunig, 1992;p. 286)

2.13.3 Excellent Theory the International

The excellence theory is a general theory of public relations that resulted from a 15-years study of best practices in communication management funded by Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation. This general theory incorporates a number of middle-range theories of public relations, including theories of publics, public relations and strategic management, models of public relations, evaluation of public relations, employee communication, public relations roles, gender, diversity, power, activism, ethics and social

responsibility, and global public relations (Public Relations Evaluation).The Excellence theory represents an endeavor to demonstrate a universal theory of public relations that explains how ,why and to what extent public relations leads to organizational effectiveness. It also provides best practice on how public relations should be managed organizations that engage in excellence should achieve positive results for organization in terms of stronger, long-lasting relationships with strategic publics such as the media (Gruing, 2009).An excellent communications department should try to build public relations plans to communicate with strategic partners, such as the media, on the same basis (Gruing, 2009).

The Excellence Theory explained the value of public relations to organization-public relationships. The theory advocates that for an organization to be effective, it must behave in socially acceptable ways that solve the problems/ needs and satisfy the goals of the stakeholders. If this relationship is not mutual interest, stakeholders will either pressure the organization to change or oppose it in ways that add cost and risk to organizational politics and decisions. The theory recommends public relations to scan the environment to identify the public who are affected by organizational decisions or who are in the support of the decisions; communicate symmetrically with the public to cultivate healthy and long-lasting relationship.

Describe a two-way symmetrical communication model as the most idealistic kind of communication with the public. The goal of two-way symmetrical communication is mutual understanding between the organization and its stake holders. It attempts to balance the interest of the organization and its publics. Feedback from the public is sought in order to analyze the results of communication. Research is conducted in order to evaluate not just attitudes but also the level of understanding of organizational messages.(Wilcox , 1997).

The theory has four major components with two additions. The components are derived principles of how the public relations should be organized to maximize its value.

1. Empowerment of public relations function in strategic management- the Public relations executives played a strategic role as well as administrate manager role. Public relations should be empowered by giving access to key organizational decision-making.
2. Organization of communication function: the public relations to be organized independently rather than being sublimated to marketing or other management functions so that its stakeholder category of interest shall not be to specific unit. The public

relations function is advised to be integrated in one unit and works with other management functions.

3. Public relations model: effect organization should base its internal and external communication and relationship building on two-way symmetrical model.
4. Gender mainstreaming in public relations: value women as much as men for strategic role and develop programs to empower women throughout the organization.
5. Diversity of race and ethnicity: this is important for international projects/ programs in which the stakeholders both internal and external have different culture, race, and ethnicity. With generic nature and conducted in different contexts.
6. Public relations Ethics

2.13.4 Strategic Communication Framework

Betteke Van Ruler (2016) a leading scholar constructed seven requirements for a good strategy development model for public relations and communication management. These requirements are the result of extensive researches.

1. Clear vision on communications and its added value to the mission of the organization.
2. Focus on internal and external context as building blocks for constructing ambitions.
3. No smart objectives but inspiring ambitions based on clear choices.
4. Explicit accountability that suits the ambition.
5. Clear choices in every building block as hypotheses for the future.
6. Compact to fit on one page.
7. Adjustable at any time to respond to situational dynamics.

In addition, the authors formulated a model called Strategic Communication Frame which has eight interdependent building blocks which demonstrate how developing a strategy is like. The building blocks are:

1. **Ambition** – described in the form of strong desire to do or achieve some things and is formulated by answering two questions 1) what are the basic communication values needed for this specific strategy? 2) What do you want to achieve? -,
2. **Vision**– describes the strategic vision, there is a need to answer the following questions 1) In what way can communication add value to organizational strategic choices and what is

- the role of the communication professional in this respect? And 2) what signifies communication profession and which trends in communication profession are relevant? -,
3. **Internal Situation** – describes what is happening inside the organization. This shall consider the following questions: 1) what is going on in the organization, what are the strategic decisions in the board and in other management fields, and 2) (what is the “style of the house” (i.e. the communication style both inside and outside the organization)? –
 4. **External Situation** -describes what is going on outside the organization and unknown so far. 1) What are relevant trends and developments in society? And 2) what are relevant issues and what is the social mood around these?–,
 5. **Accountability**-describes clearly what are the responsibilities associated to ambitions and how progress is measured/ tracked? -, Stakeholders – describes the target groups who have stake in the ambition. This focus on answering: 1) who are enablers? And 2) who are organizational partners?–,
 6. **Resources**–describes anything needed to realize the ambition and the vision which can be about budget, budget allocation, and competences. It answers 1) what are the competencies needed to realize the ambition, and 2) how much budget is required how this budget will be allocated? -,
 7. **Approach**– describes how strategic decisions in the other 7 building blocks shall be translated into operational activities. Two questions 1) What do you want to achieve with which key constituency and how, and 2) Which activities should have top priority and what does that mean for the communications calendar?
 8. **Making the right choices**–enables communication professional to select the best choices for the best strategy that shall appear in one page.

2.14 Related Works

In this section, the main works related to this research are reviewed. To the best of our knowledge the amount of work related to ours is very limited. The first work is by Kumeshe Humnesa entitled evaluating the practices of Media Relations in Federal HIV/AIDS prevention and control office. The main objective of the study is to evaluate the media relations practices

FHAPCO in Communicating with target population. The research aim sat answering the following questions:

1. What are the Communication strategies to approach media to reach goals, objectives and plans of FHAPCO.
2. Which media relations strategies are used in the organization?
3. What are the relationship between FHAPCO and media?
4. How does the organization evaluate its practices of media relations?

Though the work of Kumeshe (2019) is similar to me in terms of focus area the role of media relations in organization, the targeted organizations are different and hence the behavior, approach, best practice shall be different. Hence, the result of Kumeshe's work shall not be applied as is to the Ministry of Revenues.

Chapter Three

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This Chapter presents the detailed discussion of the research methodology that will be employed to collect, analyze and interpret data of this study. As stated in the Chapter One, the main purpose of this research is to point out what is the role of media relations in corporate communication practice of the Ministry of Revenues.

In order to answer the research questions and accomplish the objectives of the research qualitative research methodology has been employed. Specifically, in – depth interviews and content analysis have been used to answer the research questions.

Qualitative research method is becoming more common in public relations research works (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006; 405-408). Qualitative research methods are particularly important if one intends to study people, groups, organization and societies (Vanaken, Bered s nand and Bij ,2007:129). In qualitative study, research is carried out in “real life settings” building on understanding of people’s behavior thoughts and action to illuminate their social meanings (Henn, Weinstein and Foard, 2006; 150).

Case study research is an investigation and analysis of a single or collective case, intended to capture the complexity of the object of study (Stake, 1995). Qualitative case study research, as described by stake (1995) draws together “naturalistic holistic, ethnographic phenomenological, and biographic research methods” in a bricoleur design, or in his words, “a palette in of methods” (Stake, 1995, pp.xi-xii).

In case studies, the case is the situation, individual, group, organization or whatever it is that we are interested in (Robson, 1993; 177). Case study is not easily summarized as a single, coherent form of research. Case studies seek to engage with and report the complexity of social activity in

order to represent the meanings that individual social actors bring to those settings and manufacture in them. Case study assumes that “social reality” is created through social interaction, albeit situated in particular contexts and histories, and seeks to identify and describe before trying to analyze and theorize. The strength of case study is that it can take an example maximum understanding (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006; 137). Case studies are undertaken to make understandable (Stake, 1995; 85). Thus, case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., setting a context). Although Stake (2005) states that case study research is not a methodology but a choice of what is to be studied (i.e., a case within a bounded system), others present it as a strategy of inquiry, a methodology, or a comprehensive research strategy (YIN,2003).

In this work, we choose to view it as a methodology a type of design in qualitative research, or an object of study, as well as a product of inquiry. Thus, in this work, Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g. observations, interviews, audio visual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes following the work of Creswell (2007; 73)

3.2 Research approaches

Research approach encompasses basic principles, and procedures to solve a specific problem. It incorporates different stages such as identification and formulation of the research problem, reviewing literatures, data collection, data analysis, solution design and implementation, validation and drawing future research direction.

There are two standard approaches to conduct a research namely quantitative research and qualitative research. Quantitative research uses statistical, logical and mathematical techniques to generate numerical data and hard facts. The objective of quantitative research is to study cause and effect for relationship identification between variables. Structured techniques such as surveys, questionnaires, and observations are the common methods for quantitative approaches. Whereas qualitative research is a research that develops understanding of human and social sciences to find the way people think and feel. Methods that are used by qualitative research are non-structured techniques such as interviews, group discussions etc. the final goal of this

approaches is to explore, discover ideas and develop initial understanding used in the ongoing processes. Attitude or opinion research i.e., research designed to find out how people feel or what they think about a particular subject or institution is also qualitative research. (Kothari, 2004:p.3)

Qualitative research approach has been applied and proved to be successful in many media and communication audience studies for considerable reasons.

Mytton States that qualitative research tries to discover or understand human attributes, attitudes or behaviors in a more exploratory or interpretative way. According to him numbers cannot describe or explain everything. Human behavior and everything else that can be said about people cannot be fully encapsulated in or understood from numbers and percentages (Mytton, 1999: P.126)

Furthermore, Flick (2005:P.7) Indicates that qualitative study provides detailed information of people's point of view and the meaning they attribute to their experiences. Similarly, Bryman (2004:P.280) states "qualitative studies provide a detailed account of what is going on in the setting being investigated. The details provide an account of the context with in which peoples' behavior takes place."

Generally qualitative research is concerned with the understanding of peoples' attitude in terms of context in which they express their reaction. It takes into account different viewpoints and practices in the field because of the different subjective perspectives and social back grounds related to them (Flick, 2005: P.6). According to Hsieh and Shannon, (2005; 1278) qualitative content analysis can be defined as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. In other words though it is a subjective based interpretation, systematic coding process allows the researcher to interpret subjective data in a scientific manner.

Thus, it was with these points in mind that the researcher decided to use the qualitative approach to investigate topic of this study.

3.3 Research Instruments

The main data collection methods in qualitative research are interview, focus group discussions observation and content analysis. For the purpose of this study, the researcher employed qualitative data that were obtained through in – depth interview and content analysis.

3.3.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis is widely used in communication research and provides a brief description of important aspects of text or data collected (Wilkinson, Joffe and Yardley, 2004).

Content analysis consists of analyzing the contents of documentary materials such as books, magazines, newspapers and the contents of all other verbal materials which can be either spoken or printed. Content analysis prior to 1940's was mostly quantitative analysis of documentary materials concerning certain characteristics that can be identified and counted. However, since 1950's content analysis is mostly qualitative analysis concerning the general importance or message of the existing documents.(Kothari,2004:p.110)

Content analysis is also a technique used for gathering and analyzing the content of a material. According to Deacon *et al.*, (1999), it refers to any message that can be communicated in forms of words, pictures, symbolic ideas, themes or meanings. The qualitative content analysis would also help to identify the encoded message elements of the media tools content.

As one of the objectives of this study is to identify the role of media relations in Corporate Communication of M inistry of Revenues. The researcher has tried to closely study the tools that communication directorate use in creating awareness related to tax collection from tax payers. In this attempt, documents of communication strategy, media relations strategy, different manuals, handouts, brochures, posters, banners, press release, press conference, media kits, magazines, bulletins are collected.

3.3.2 In – depth interview

In-depth interview is designed to discover underlying motives and desires of the participants of the study. In-depth interview is held to explore needs, desires and feelings of respondents. It is an important tool that assists in the elaboration of data concerning respondent's opinions, values, motivations, recollections, experiences and feelings (Wimmer and Dominic, 2006: 135).

Using in–depth interviews as data gathering method has its own advantages and limitations. The method is ideal to collect data in natural settings while keeping detail information about a topic or issue from few and yet key respondents. It Facilitates access for immediate follow–up data collection for clarification and omissions; it provides Flexibility for interviewer during interview process and facilitates analysis, validity checks, and triangulation (Kumar, 1999, Hughes, 2002, Wimmer and Dominick, 2006).

There is a need to give due attention in the process as it has several limitations. The method takes intensive evaluation activity and time to conduct interviews, transcribe them, code them and analyze the results, the quality of the result depends especially on the honesty of those providing the data as respondents don't always tell the truth, it may prone to interviewer bias unless researchers be able to be honest and systematic to control it, it may be difficult to make generalizations partly due to the small sample size of informants and it is difficult to replicate. (Kumar, 1999, Berger, 2000: Hughes, 2002: Wimmer and Dominick, 2006)

In this work, to gather data, the researcher employs personal in-depth interviews with communication practitioners' who working in the Ministry of Revenues, and from different media house of journalists. There are a number of reasons why this tool has been employed for the study. Firstly, it helps the researcher to get the first hand information and perspectives of key communication practitioners about the role of media relations in corporate communication practice of Ministry of Revenues. In a non-structured interview, the interviewer is allowed much greater freedom to ask, in case of need, supplementary questions or at times he may omit certain questions if the situation so required. UN structured interviews also demand deep knowledge and greater skill on the part of the interviewer (Kothari, p.98). So this type of interviews helps the informants to speak freely about the practice of media relations in their Ministry. Finally, the in-depth interview with key communication practitioners is an important instrument to answer some of the research questions mentioned in the study.

3.4 Sampling method

In qualitative research, sampling occurs at several stages, both while collecting data and interpreting and reporting it. Non-probability sampling is a sampling procedure which does not demand any basis for estimating the probability an item in the population has to be in the sample Non-probability sampling is categorized as deliberate sampling, purposive sampling and

judgment sampling. In this type of sampling items for the sample are selected deliberately by the researcher, his/her choice concerning the items remains supreme. In other words, under non-probability sampling the organizers of the inquiry purposively choose the particular units of the universe for constituting the small mass representative of the whole (Kothari, 2004:p.59). The key sampling method in collecting such data is purposive or strategic sampling (Han Cock, Wind Ridge and Ockle Ford, 2007: 21).

This research employs purposive sampling a form of non – probability Sampling to select interviewees. Because in this type of sampling, items for the sample are selected deliberately by the researcher; choice concerning the items remains supreme and has the relative advantage of time and money (Kothari, p.55).Miles and Haber Man (1994) stated that sampling technique permits the selection of interviewees whose qualities or experience creates an understanding of the phenomena in question and are, therefore, valuable. This is considered as the strength of purposive sampling's (1994: 224).

The selection of samples in purposive sampling depends on the capability of a subject depends on capability in responding to set of questions that are relevant for the study. According to Morse (1994:228) the subjects is anyone who;-

- have knowledge and experience that the researchers or investigators need,
- is capable of reflection,
- can articulate,
- have time to be interviewed,
- is willing to take part in the research investigation

In this research work, to ensure representativeness, the participants for the interview were selected using purposive sampling method. It requires selecting individual or group of individuals that have deep understanding and knowledge on the profession and subject matter. Hence, from Ministry of Revenues, five respondents were selected based on their position related to media relations, management position, the detail of information they can provide related to the realm of the research topic.

As a result, we choose three out of five from Communication Directorate and the remaining two with Management position in the Ministry of Revenues. In addition, five journalists were selected from different Media houses that have frequent contact with the Ministry.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

Once data is collected, there is a need to analyze them. In qualitative research, researchers use an inductive method for analysis. Data are collected relevant to some topic and grouped in to appropriate and meaningful, categories: Explanations emerge from the data themselves (Wimmer and Dominick, 2003: 111).

Transcribing all the qualitative data collected was the first step of the process as most of them were audio tape recorded. Then, based on the research questions raised at the beginning of this study the transcribed data were categorized in a way they give meaning and be convenient to the data analysis.

The data were analyzed on thematic way of data analysis. There are five themes related to the thesis work as described in the next chapter Data presentation and Analysis and after presenting the data the researcher analyzed give explanation in every theme depending on the related literature (Chapter four, Section 4.2-4.6).

Chapter Four

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess the strategic role of media relations in the Ministry of Revenues, using Gruing's theory of media relations as a conceptual analytical base. To achieve this, data was collected by interviewing senior directors and experts within the organization and also journalists from different media house, as well as visiting their social media, audio visual documents. In order to understand how the organization works and what has contributed to their success, the study aimed to answer the following research questions. What are the roles of media relations in supporting the mission and vision of the organization? What is the media mix involved in media relations? What is the nature of relationship among public relation practitioners and journalists in the Ministry? What media relations strategy does the Ministry have? How does the organization evaluate its practices of media relations?

In order to answer these questions, this Chapter was organized on five themes emerged from the data analysis in order to build on the result and discuss the meaning of our findings in light of Gruing's excellent theory of media relations as a theoretical and conceptual lens .

In this work, ten Interviewee composed of five from the Ministry of Revenues and another five journalists affiliated with the Ministry were conducted. Interviewee from the office was selected depending on their position and affiliation with media relations profession. In remaining sections, the gathered data from both parties are presented, analyzed and discussed. The data is recorded in tape radio, transcribed, coded into the five thematic areas following the approach of Wimmer and Dominick (2003: 111) as explained in Section 3.5.

4.2 The Relationship between Communicators and Journalists

The communication director of the Ministry stated that the work relationship between communicators and journalists as follows. "We have a friendly relationship. However, there are

causes for misunderstanding. For instance, journalists come to interview higher officials of the organization to seek information, they had inappropriate outfit and haircut that lacks proper ethics, and we don't allow the interview to happen. The aim of the public relations practitioners is to protect the interest of the organization, whereas the journalists are focused on making sure their program is full. This results in a misunderstanding. The other causes of disagreement, they take sides with the business people. This can be evident from the March 2019 custody of 100 business people who allegedly failed to issue receipt following the discovery of our intelligence staff. Shortly after our public announcement, five media houses requested the case of one businessman specifically. This is running after personal interest rather than not for national interest. We don't agree with the journalists in such cases. In spite of this, our relationship is good.”

According to the Customs team coordinator, the organization has organized a consultation forum with journalists and arranged ways to help them get information easily. The coordinator also stated that the relationship is smooth as the journalists are able to access clear and quality information within short time. The communications expert of the organization also said that “a year ago the journalists were not able to get information easily and the communication offices were not accessible to all. Currently, this is changing due to the organizational reform, and change in the leadership. As result, the relationship with the journalists is improved and they are able to quickly get the information they seek, with the exception of court cases.”

In this work, we have consulted the media houses working closely with the Ministry; we asked them to explaining the relationship they have with the communicators. A journalist from Walta Media and Communication Corporate stated, “We have a good relationship in relative terms and they provide updates about the organization as journalist wants to get fresh and timely information for news consumption. When we raise issue or concern of the public, they provide us with the needed information. There was time they demanded more time to provide answer. We have no problem to report balanced and fair information directly from the pertinent official. One of the factors that creates disagreement with the communicators is that they want all the information they provided to be included in the news. However, we have news parameters such as the hot issue of the news, its human element, priority. What is highly important for communicators may not be for us as we give measure property on the bases of context, time and

recentness? The communicators do not understand this. In some cases, they tend to forget we run a media house and request airing news promising pay enough money. We boldly explain to them why we don't include Every information in the news when they request us to do so. Despite this, honestly speaking, we are working coherently to the level needed.”

As to the relationship the Ethiopian Press Agency has with the Ministry, the journalist highlighted that the promptness of Ministry in providing information depends on the type of requested information. He added that they don't provide information that relates to the gaps in the system and internal issues as quickly as they would give other information.

The Ministry also works closely with Fana Broadcasting Corporate. A journalist from Fana Broadcasting Corporate explained their relationship as follows: “The relationship we have with the Ministry is related to our radio and television channels. It is twofold: 1) we go to the Ministry to seek information; 2) they provide us information on their own initiative. The Ministry also collaborates with Fana buying airtime and broadcasting its own programs. Generally speaking, we have a good relationship. We try to understand their aim as much as possible, but we don't tolerate if they use our media as their public relations entity. We also don't allow them to challenge our editorial right. We don't negotiate in presenting the information demand of the public. The Ministry has a close relationship with the public. It is a corruption prone organization and is a source of lack of good governance. Keeping media balance is at the center of our activities. Our primary goal is not to save the good face of organization. We are committed to uncover bad practices. When we disclose bad practices, it is to support the Ministry to provide quality services rather than to exposing and defame the organization. There are some communicators in the Ministry who do not understand this. When disagreements arise, our relationship doesn't disrupt completely. The main focus of the programs the ministry broadcasts on its airtime is on building the good image of the organization. We also edit in accordance with the media policy and national laws. But we don't interfere in the programs they produce.”

Ethiopia Broadcast Corporation also works closely with the Ministry. Speaking of the relationship they have, the business reporter noted that the Ministry performed many media works in this fiscal year in relation to the tax movement. It has been restructured as a Ministry, has undergone various reforms, and invited the media to publicize different issues for the public consumption. He remarked that there is a good relationship and exchange of information is

smooth. He stated the gaps as follows “The Ministry wants us to report mainly its positive aspects. When we want to get information from the relevant higher officials, the public relations experts insist to provide the information. They don’t give us the right information at the right time because their aim is building the image of the organization. They sometimes deny the information, when we raise issue related to malpractice or problems of the organization.”

A journalist from Sheger FM Radio reflected on the roles of the communicator and a journalist stating that the main focus of the public relations expert is building the image of the organization, while the aim of the journalist is reporting the truth to the public. The journalist demonstrated this stating recently there were gaps our news and the information provided by the Ministry in its official Face book page. The source of data for both is the audit report of the General Auditor that was presented to the parliament. The reporter added that the Ministry mainly focuses on blurring the truth and sometimes writes in its Face book posts that denounce the report of the media as defamation.

Based on the majority of the subjects involved in the fact-finding activity, as a trend the Ministry of Revenues used two-way communication strategies i.e., the major source of information was both from PR and Journalist. They further elaborated that, Journalists request the Ministry taking mutual responsibilities concerning the issue of tax, custom and to produce programs that would be transmitted through different media channels. The programs were aimed at creating tax and custom related awareness and bring behavioral change in the community.

Childers Hon (1999) said, the relationship between organizational communication and media is often with antagonism, conflict and misperceptions, and is based on different needs and orientations there a fundamentally built – in conflict of interest between the two professions. Therefore, from finding sometimes journalists and officers get in terrible.

The excellence theory was originated by James Gruing and his squad of researchers (1985) offers a theoretical framework for further investigating practices that contribute to media relations, public relations and overall organizational strength. It also should be handled. Organizations that engage on excellence should achieve positive results for the organization in terms of stronger, longer- lasting relationships with strategic publics such as the media.

An excellent communications theory, also confirmed that seek to build public relations plans to communicate with strategic partners, such as the media, on the some basis (Gruing, 2009) for a media relations program, this would signify not just listening to journalists and being responsive to their demands but also granting them access to the organization and offering useful data in a kind that journalists need and desire. At journalists need and want. Therefore, Ministry of revenues public relation practitioners are aware of creating good relationship with the media to serve with the organizations speeds up process and generate fair and precise reports. It can also manage rebuttals wit journalists more easily, without putting relationships at risks. Officers are communicative with journalist every time they are working understandably and with negotiating for common beneficial activities.

Available communication process has cyclical nature. (Grunig, 2002) describe a two-way symmetrical communication model as the most idealistic kind of communication with the public. In this research, the researcher understands in interview media and public relations in the system have maintained two-way cyclical communication. The goal of two-way symmetrical communication is mutual agreement between the establishment and its media. It attempts to balance the interest of the organization and its media.

Kumeshe (2019) in her recent related work, the need and availability of smooth relationship between journalist and communicator to achieve goals and objectives of Federal HIV/AIDS prevention office stated. She added that to strengthening relationship the establishment of media forum having different media houses journalists and from the appropriate organization has member is stated. In this work, we have understood that the Ministry of Revenues is working smoothly with journalists as a result of the organizational reform.

4.3 Channels and Tools

The Communications Director of the Ethiopian Ministry of Revenues stated that one of the channels used is broadcast media. The Ministry broadcasts a weekly 25-minutes radio program and weekly one-hour TV program on Fana radio and a 20-minutes TV program on Walta Media and Communication Corporate. The print is also another channels and it publishes two monthly

newspapers titled “GebeyachinHilwenachin”, which is disseminated to the taxpayer in 35 thousand copies and “EngaLeegna”, which is disseminated to the staff in 7 thousand copies.

The Ministry uses Face book, website, Twitter, Telegram and YouTube for its news media and collects information from its four customs checkpoints and post them on these media. It was also noted that it posts video footages of confiscated contraband goods on Face book for the public use. About the organization website, according to the Communication team coordinator, “the organization works to ensure access to information and transparency for the taxpayer by posting daily news, excerpts of laws, legal frameworks, proclamations, directives, regulations, bids, vacancy announcements.” The coordinator added that the official Face book account of the organization has 84 thousand likes.

The communication experts explained that they use the above channels and tools to disseminate different information. The communication team coordinator, for example, noted that they have to convince the taxpayer to have paid their taxes voluntarily. The communication specialist outlined that the subject matters of the messages broadcasted are about revenue, raising the taxpayers’ awareness on the proclamations, directives and regulations, compliance, illegal business practice and its consequences, and campaigning during tax collection periods. He also argued that the non-compliance is due to lack of awareness and the aim of the media relations is to create taxpayers’ voluntary compliance and inculcate the idea that tax is for the benefit of the taxpayer and his/her family and country.

The communications director and experts mentioned that

their target audience is the taxpayer, which is divided into three categories of Category A, Category B, and Category C taxpayers, and subsidiary organizations and other stakeholders like the Ethiopian Shipping Lines and Logistics Service, Ministry of Trade, Ethiopian Standards Authority, Ethiopian Drug Administration and Control Authority, and Ethiopian Postal Services, which play a role in the customs system directly or indirectly. In order to work collaboratively each has to know what the other is doing. These all are our stakeholders and at the same time they have a stake in the system, which makes them our target audience. We consider the people of Ethiopia our target audience as tax matters to everyone.

The Ministry implemented structural reform in this fiscal year. It has run a tax campaign this year to enable citizens to pay tax voluntarily. Tax is a voluntary compliance. We need to build a society that discharges its tax duties and demands its rights. In the reform activities, we are carrying out and broadcasting various awareness creation activities to the taxpayer using different media tools. The common tool is, however, press conference. Next to that they organize continues panel discussions.

The communication team coordinator highlighted “Most of the times we use press conference. In case of extraordinary issues, over performance, and noticeable achievements related to contraband, we held press conference. For example, we disclose to the media when a large amount of hard currency or commodity is held. We also organize press conferences on current issues. The second common tool we use is panel discussions.”

The communication experts highlighted that they have an editorial board, comprising skilled and experienced members, to make sure the information conveyed through the different tools is correct and effective. The Communication Director explained that

Our structure has three teams. The first is tax communication team, which works mainly on tax issues. The second is customs communication team, which focuses on customs issues. The third is media and documentation team, which handles documentation and editing to ensure quality production.

Recent related research (Kumeshe, 2019) also identified the use of selected media relations tools such as documentary programs, TV and radio spot, panel discussion, press conference, news releases, live talk show, event organization and outdoor advertising in Federal HIV/AIDS prevention office. These Medias are needed due to the nature of the subject under consideration – creating awareness. However, the author did not specify the use press release or social media as media relations tool which may address larger younger generation which is affected by HIV/ADIDS. In our study, we found that the Ministry uses social media actively. By using social media, the Ministry reach millions of viewers that can be addressed (i.e. the Face book account of the Ministry has 84000 likes which is an indicator of the impact).In addition, most of the time the Ministry uses News releases which is very effective to measure the media relations impact by simply counting viewers and page visitors. We believe that the Ministry should do a research to know the impact and outcome of the media relation in changing taxpayer’s attitude

4.4 The Role of Media Relations in the Organization

Explaining the role of media relations in achieving the mission and vision of the organization, the Communications Director underlined that its role to make sure accurate information is provided to the community. He stated that the Ministry bought airtime from media houses and broadcast awareness creation programs to improve our service quality and makes it easier to reach and convince the community. He also stated that the taxpayer community trusts the information they get from the organization's media outlets better than the information from external media sources.

In addition, he highlighted the role of media relations explaining that “sometime the information we want to send to the community through external media is not accepted by the media houses because of their editorial policy; thus, we use our own media outlets to deliver the information we want to the right target audience.”

The customs communication team coordinator shared that the aim of the organization is to enable the country to cover its expenses from its internal revenue and its principle is to enable the taxpayer to pay based on what they report. In order to do this, there is a need to educate the society. He also claimed “you have to convince a taxpayer to take money from their pocket. It is hard to make them pay. Our objective is to make the taxpayers pay their taxes voluntarily. Opening tax collection stations in different locations wouldn't help unless it is supported by communication activities. We work to develop the attitude that the taxpayers pay their taxes to build schools, hospitals, roads and benefit their families and the nation.”

The coordinator also stated that the organization had a negative perception in the eye of the taxpayer in relation to its service provision. Noticing this, the Ministry is working to build the image by informing the community about the recent reforms, service provision, and legal frameworks.

A communication expert from the organization reflected on the role of media relation as follows: “We need to look at the organization from the perspective of before and after the reform. Before the reform, media relations has no role. Our role was sending the information to the media as directed by the leadership. After the reform, there are changes. Currently, the communications

directorate is the right hand of the organization. All the activities of the Ministry are supported by communications. The Minister has a good opinion understanding of the communication works. Previously, on daily bases two or three news were posted on the website, but now ten News are posted every day. Still this is not enough. There are gaps in fulfilling the input the communication expert needs. However, relatively it is better than before, knowing that a lot remains to be done in terms of input and professional freedom.”

He additionally commented that

A lot remains to be done in the awareness raising front. We and the media are working on it, but it is evident that we have to work more to enable the community to pay tax voluntarily in order to achieve the country's aim to avoid foreign loan and cover its budget from internal revenue sources. The taxpayer complains about the existence of unethical employees. The organization has 13,000 employees nationwide and some employees working in the border allow contraband to get through to the country. The taxpayer complains that the organization is enforcing the tax laws on the legal business people, while its employees are allowing contraband to get through the checkpoints accepting bribes. Our activity is mainly focused on Addis Ababa, but we really need to reach out to the regions. The leadership insists on carryout communication activities in the regions; and when we present a proposal, it doesn't get approved stating that there is no budget. Due to such reasons our strategy emphasizes on Addis Ababa. It is known that the number of taxpayers in Addis Ababa is small and hence the role of the media relations is below the expected.

The positive role of media has been identified in recent related research (2019) in creating awareness and injecting behavioral change towards health issue are largely shaped and influence of the media. The use of media is costly and demands the commitment of the high-level management body. Ministry of Revenues is using Media after the reform to reach out target audience. Activities of the Ministry are supported with communications with aim of reducing its negative public and tax payer perception in relation with its service provision. Noticing this, the Ministry is working to build the image by informing the community about the recent reforms, service provision and legal frameworks.

4.5 Communication Strategy

A communication strategy is a document that explains the vision, goal and mission of an organization to its employees, clients and stakeholders and helps them to work in line with them. It also outlines how the media relations look like. The communications director stated that the Ministry has developed a communication strategy. It includes internal communication, marketing communication and public relations. The different tools like interview, Press Releases, Press Conferences and Panel Discussions that should be Planned and are made part of the Strategy.

The director mentioned that the media relations plan was not based on research, and he admitted that it should have been used and promised to use it the future course of action. The image of the organization was negative and the society portrayed it as a corrupt organization. This was taken into consideration. He also indicated that they have considered the feedbacks received formally or informally on the newspaper articles and radio and TV programs in the development of the strategy. Following the strategy, they are able to post Several news on daily basis, give press conferences and organize panel discussions for the taxpayers.

The communication expert remarked “The idea of developing a communication strategy was raised during the 1-to-5 team discussion and the development was initiated before the recent reform. After the change of leadership was enforced, I have no formal knowledge whether it is finalized or not. Informally, I heard about the existence of a communication strategy”. He added that the media relations plan was not prepared based on research. The plan is not designed to enable the communication directorate to give information. The directorate serves as a coordinator and information is provided by other directorates.

The view of the communication team coordinator is as follows: “The organization has a communication strategy. We presented the draft to the leadership for discussion and we are preparing to implement it. It contains all the basic contents of a communication strategy. It provides answer to the questions, what should be the content? Who should prepare the content? How it should be communicated? Who should be the target audience? The strategy also determines how the relationship with the media should look like? How to use social media and mainstream media? How the media can contribute to the improvement of the tax collection as the benefit is mutual? The organization maintains the principles of information freedom and transparency. We have to provide the media with accurate and transparent information.”

The coordinator also stated that in addition to the regular media relations plan a 100-days plan. Which takes in to consideration past realities, past performances, and the interest of Directorates, is designed. For example, if the customer care directorate has information it wants to communicate to its customers, our directorate collaborates with the customers care directorate in gathering inputs. In order to know and fulfill the needs of the customers they gather feedbacks from comments given on social media, website, radio and TV.

According to him, an action plan has been developed for the information that are planned to reach to the taxpayers and it outlines when and who should be communicated. For instance, on policy matters the high-level leadership should give quarterly press conference as put in the action plan. He stated that they are currently running a tax campaign where awareness raising activities are carried out by employing appealing and entertaining mechanisms to convey organizational messages developed taking to consideration the experience of other organizations. Now dramatic messages and spots are broadcasted once a week in a scheduled manner.

The communications experts mentioned that the Ministry employs radio, TV, newspaper and social media to communicate information to the taxpayers and stakeholders. The researcher also observed that the Ministry airs a 25-minutes weekly radio program and a one-hour weekly television program both with Fana Broadcasting Corporate, a 20-minutes weekly television program with Walta Media and Communications Corporate, and a half-page weekly coverage on Addis Zemen Newspaper. In addition, the Ministry publishes “GebiLehilwenachin”, a newspaper that is freely disseminated to taxpayers nationwide, and “EgnaLegna”, a monthly newsletter disseminated to staff. Different programs and articles are produced by the communications experts and disseminated through the above-mentioned outlets. There are programs that target the taxpayer focusing on contraband, customs and transistors.

The Ministry also has a Face book account, website (www.erca.gov.et), Telegram group, Twitter account, YouTube channel. Information, which is supported by images and footages, is gathered from all the customs checkpoints in the four corners of the nation and posted on Face book.

However, according to a study conducted by the African Development Bank, in may, 2019 announce in media that A the number of taxpayers who pay taxes voluntarily in Ethiopia stand at 33%. The study also indicated that due to the lower level of performance in tax collection the country loses a large amount of revenue and from Addis Ababa alone 725 million Birr is

uncollected annually. Hence, the Ministry has to strengthen its communications activities by using different media relations tools to educate and convince the taxpayer. The Ministry is currently undergoing reform activities and using different media relations tools to feed the taxpayer with information.

This research studied the media relations works done over a period of three months. During this period the Ministry used different tools and it mostly uses press conference and panel discussion to send out information to the taxpayer. Once a month, a press conference is given by the Minister or other higher officials of the Ministry. The press conference is mainly organized around the issues related to stakeholders, taxpayers and government policy. Organizational reform activities, closing of the tax campaign, nine months performance report, smuggles hard currencies held by the customs.

A panel discussion was organized and broadcasted on “YegnaGuday”, an EBC television program, on the topic “Tax: Whose Concern is it?” in collaboration with the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation and it was attended by higher officials from federal organizations and top-level taxpayers. The next panel discussion was on the topic of “Contraband: Who should Struggle it?” The other panel discussion organized in March 2019 was titled “From March to March” to reflect on the year-long reform activity implemented in the organization and was attended by the top management of the Ministry. It was organized in partnership with the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation.

The contents posted on social media include, but not limited to, trainings offered to employees, a consultation forum organized for taxpayers, trainings provided to the taxpayers, tender notices, holding of contraband and revenue related issues.

Kumeshe (2019) recent work shows that the absence of clear guiding communication strategy document nor media relations plan in the organization. She stated that the PR department uses the organizational plan as media relation plan though different it has positive impact in doing job in the normal manner. In our study, the Ministry of Revenues developed a communication strategy and media relations as its part. This shows the commitment of the Ministry and its management to be governed in strategic manner.

4.6 Media relations Evaluation

The data from the interviewee stated that there was no media relations measurement (evaluation system) tool in the mentioned organization. In the office, there were no crafted documents that would be used, as guiding principle to measure the performance of media activities in the organization. However, as the practitioners elaborated they did not have media relations evaluation system in the organization instead they used their own techniques like collect the comment of the customer from social media and they get formal or informal comment from different customer. Due to lack of measurement, though the organization did not have an experience to measure the feedback of what they had already planned, they had set organizational goals and objectives of media relations based on the theoretical framework that the organization had to achieve.

The absence of standardized media relations measurement tool is reported in the work of Kumeshe (2019). Our investigation, also we know that the Ministry was no crafted documents that would be used as guiding principle to measure the performance of media activities in the Ministry. Thus, public relation offices of such organizations have no easy way to know the impact of the media relation activities conducted so far and have no easy way to plan for improvement

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Introduction

In the preceding Chapters, an effort has been made to go through basic matters in relation to Strategic role of media relations in corporate communication practice of Ministry of Revenues. The research questions are answered collecting data from the in-depth interview and document analysis. This Chapter deals with a brief conclusions and recommendations of the research topic. Accordingly, the first issue to be treated here would be the conclusion followed by the one possible recommendation that could help in minimize the problems identified and sustain strengths.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the media relations of the ministry is to raise the awareness of the taxpayers and achieve the goal of the country to cover its expenses from internal revenue and to renew its image and increase its acceptance to build trust on the taxpayers. It implemented organizational and structural reform. It also engaged in empowering its staff, modernizing its service provision and motivated the taxpayer through its media relations activities to encourage volunteer tax disclosure.

In a bid to make its reform activities successful and close the information gap evident in the organization, the ministry has developed a communication strategy. The strategy includes a strategy for media relations.

The purpose of the strategy is:

- To achieve the mission and goals of the ministry and establish successful partnership with its stakeholders,
- To publicize the activities and achievements of the ministry,

- To inform the staff and stakeholders on the activities of the ministry,
- To ensure the growth of positive attitude on the ministry.

The objectives of the strategy are:

- To communicate the vision, mission, goals and plans of the ministry and gain the support of the stakeholders,
- To make sure the communication directorate play a central role in the ministry,
- To ensure the messages are strong and consistent,
- To make sure key messages are communicated in a clear and fair manner,
- To work closely with stakeholders to achieve the objectives of the ministry.

The ministry produces and broadcasts programs through the mass media by buying airtime, publishes articles using print media by buying a newspaper page, publishes and disseminates a newspaper titled “GebiLehilwenachin” nationwide and uses social media to communicate information to its audience on a regular basis. The strategy also clearly determines who communicates a specific message, when and what tool to be used. For example, policy issues are communicated by higher officials quarterly, performance report is presented monthly, and the contraband related issues are communicated monthly using press conference. This year since the launching of the tax campaign on December 30, 2018 awareness raising activities are being carried out better than before. According to feedbacks collected formally and informally, the programs and publications were not appealing to and had low reception rate by the audience. After the implementation of the reform, the programs and messages are made to be appealing for the audience by working closely with organizations which have good experience and this would contribute to the achievement of its plan.

Despite the development of the communications strategy, there was no attempt made to discuss and ensure common understanding around the document. This was evident from the interview made with the communications experts who stated that they have no idea about the strategy. There is a gap in creating a common understanding to enter into implementation. There was lack of making the staff and taxpayers part of the planned activities, their implementation, building on strengths and addressing weaknesses. There is a considerable information gap between the top

management and the employees of the organization. This was clear from the interview held with the communication experts.

The ministry employs electronic media, TV and radio channels, print media, and new media to reach the taxpayers and its stakeholders. The ministry should extend extra efforts in providing information through its news media. The researcher did not encounter a problem in accessing information regarding the activities performed by the communications directorate for the document analysis. There is a proper documentation of events, press conferences and panel discussions organized by the ministry in pictures and video formats.

Research is a vital function in the process of public relations. (Wimmer and Dominick 2006 :396). So a media relation is one part of public relations activities. But this strategic task is not part of the media relations function of the Ministry. The in-depth interviewees also confirmed that they do not conduct research to identify their performance gaps and problems that surround their environment. Formal research is not part of the media relations process. In the organization, there is no organized system to collect feedback and listen to their stakeholders. Sometimes, they receive few and irregular complaints but these are not representative of the public's. The researcher noticed that the concerns of their key and strategic public are not incorporated well in the planning, objectives, and communication and evaluation phases of the media relations process. The practice is guided by the wrong assumptions that what is transmitted using different media outlet will be received by the intended public. The Ministry tries to persuade without understanding its surrounding environment public's interests and practitioners concerns regarding the relationship that communicators and journalists had, the study showed that their relationship was based on exchanging truth and reliable information for the public. The communication framework they commonly used is two-way communication framework. The researcher noticed that sometimes, Journalists complain that communicators focused on image building of the Ministry. As a result, they give priority for success history of their organizations. Relatively the relationship of them is healthy.

Finally, the study founded that there was no clear procedure in the evaluating the effectiveness of media relations in the Ministry. They neither measure nor analyze the gaps of their media relations activities. The media relations activity is not measured from the perspective of their

strategic public. Concerning the Publics, media relations are not two ways and public's interest is not their primary concern.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are key recommendation of the researcher in order to strengthen the media relations practice in the Ministry.

1. The Ministry media relations activity should be based on research. Research should be conducted on the image (reputation) of the organization, the readability of their press products, the trust and credibility of their media relations activity etc. and try to fill gaps and solve problems based on research findings with possible solution. Publics 'interests should be the primary concern in the research planning, communication and evaluation phases of the corporate communication specially media relations process. Their corporate communication function should also be two-way and participatory. In the two-way symmetric model both the flow of communication and influence between the organization and its public shall be balanced. The communicators should advice the management concerning the sensitivity and responsiveness to public interest in the strategic decision-making process.
2. The Ministry has to develop media diversification approach not only with the different type's media but also the use of different local languages transmitting broadcast and publish print media like magazine, pamphlets, leaflets, newsletters and etc.
3. The Ministry communicator should not be only focused on image building of their organization. The corporate communication activity should come out of its mere publicity and spokesperson role and transform itself in to the institutional strategist function. The communication department should deeply understand the need of the publics' and practitioners and try to adjust and adapt itself to the changing environment. The structure role and function of the department should be designed to meet these critical issues and concerns .Developing mutual relationship with journalist should be taken as one of the target strategies of the organization to gain media cover.

Communicators had understood journalists' news room deadline and News sections and segments in the various media organizations. Communicators and Practitioners have to be accessible to journalists through their office phones, mobiles and emails any time of the day. Responding to media queries should be immediate as they had to work within organization.

4. The Ministry should develop media relations evaluation mechanisms to recognize effort made and their impact on the target audience.

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Annex 1: Interview questions

An in-depth interview for Ministry of Revenue Communication directorate.

1. Do you have Communication Strategy? If your answer is “yes” what is the strategy of media in this strategy document?
2. Before you plan media relations what research outputs do you use before start planning?
3. Who are the target audiences of your messages?
4. Who were responsible for designing the messages that was disseminated?
5. What kind of issues raised in media for target audiences?
6. What were the major challenging factors in communicating to the target audiences?
7. Based on your experience in the Ministry, to what extent the media relations is effective? Is it done regular? Is it continuously updated based the target audience?
8. What kind of major media relation tools the organization using to interact with the media? Why?
9. What is the role of media relations in the Ministry?
10. Does the organization have its own media channel? Please explain its roles, objectives, and missions
11. How do you evaluate your media relations activities in improving awareness of tax payers?
12. What are the channels used in the Organization to disseminate information to target audiences?
13. How do you get feed backs from the audience on your performance?
14. What are the main means the organization is using to get the feedback of audiences?
15. How do you explain the relationship between journalists and public relations officers?
16. Please explain the openness of the public relations department of the Ministry to media in give information proactively and addressing critics

Interview for Journalists

1. Explain the relationship between your media house and the Ministry.
2. Please explain the openness and responsiveness of the public relation officers of the Ministry to your media requests?
3. How do you rate responsiveness of the public relations officer in the Ministry in communicating the media?
4. Please explain the information provided by the public relations officer of the Ministry considering the quality of the information in terms of technical detail, professional aspect, subject matter, etc.
5. Explain the quality of information and response time of public relations office for your request
6. Explain the main subjects or content classes the Ministry wants to have coverage in your media house
7. Based on your experience and observation with the Ministry, what are the main factors/ issues that made the smooth communication between the public relations officers of the Ministry with your media house at risk?
8. What are the tools the office of the Ministry frequently uses to contact with your media house?
9. Was there a time in your media house was invited by the Ministry for News release, press conference? How many times in the last 5 years?
10. What are your opinions towards the office and important experiences you have with the office?