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**SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION
PUBLIC RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PROGRAM**

**PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES OF OROMIA CULTURE AND
TOURISM BUREAU**

**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Journalism and Communication of
Addis Ababa University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of
Master of Arts Degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communication**

**By
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Addis Ababa

Ethiopia

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TOURISM BUREAU**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and that it has not been presented for a degree in any other university, and that all sources of materials used for this thesis have been a very acknowledged.

Name _____

Signature _____

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APPROVAL

As the member of the Board of Examiners of the MA Thesis Open Defense, we certify that we have read, evaluated the thesis prepared by Birhanu Kebede and examined the candidate. We recommend that the thesis is accepted as fulfilling the thesis requirement for the Degree of Masters in Public Relations and Strategic Communication.

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Abstract

Public relations is considered as an important factor in the process of development and growth of culture and tourism. The general objective of the study is to analyze the public relations practices at Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau. This study employed case study design and followed qualitative research approach in the data gathering using in-depth interview and content analysis methods. In selecting interviewees purposive sampling technique was used using the profession, experience, position, and relevant to the study in gathering quality data. The key informants were deputy head of the Bureau, public relations director, and practitioners. Besides, for content analysis availability sampling was employed; and then three available publications of the Bureau (Dhangaa Irrecha magazine 2016, Oromia Travel Tips Booklet 2018, and annual plan document 2018) contents were exhaustively reviewed. The study analyzed the data by triangulating and interpreted the findings in the discussion. Thematic data analysis was employed in descriptive manner. The study mainly indicates that less attention was paid to professional public relations practices, poor understanding and misconception of the profession; informational model and technician role of public relations were employed by the Bureau. Generally, public relations of the Bureau has to get strategic attention. Professional capacity building and further educational opportunities need to be given for the practitioners to overcome their professional knowledge gap and challenges concerning public relations practices. At the same time, public relations department ought to be empowered so as to play its managerial role such as counseling the management, researching, communication facilitator and boundary-spanner, and become influential in the dominant coalition for the sake of success and progress of the profession.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

- CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility
- CIPR - Chartered Institute of Public Relations
- E.C. - Ethiopian Calendar
- IABC - International Association of Business Communicators
- OTTB - Oromia Travel Tips Booklet
- OCTB - Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau
- US - United States
- IPR – Institute of Public Relations
- Ibid - In the same book or piece of writing as the one that has just been mention (from Latin '*ibidem*')
- i.e. - used to explain exactly what the previous thing that you have mentioned means (from Latin '*id est*')
- PR - Public Relations
- PRSA - Public Relations Society of America
- PRSC - Public Relations and Strategic Communication
- SWOT - Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat
- UK - United Kingdom
- UNESCO - United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Public relations plays a significant role in creating harmonious relationships between an organization and the public. It helps the organization to communicate with the public about its objectives, strategies, plan, and implementation process for mutual understanding between the Bureau and the publics. Contemporary everyday life is influenced by increased complexity, rapid change, globalization, and the deconstruction of social structures. As a result, corporations and other organizations today have a greater need to build relationships with their stakeholders and to communicate with them about their aims and behavior (Ihlen, 2009)

According to Hodges (2006), public relations industry should be regenerated and the role of public relations in the development of culture should not be neglected. Public relations has increasingly been a means of structuring the public and encouraging public discussion. It has been playing an active role in shaping societies and cultures. Additionally, Hodges stated that some studies on international public relations have emphasized that public relations should encourage organization to take more active role in social transformation.

Public relations contribute to organizational effectiveness when it helps reconcile the organization's goals with the expectations of its strategic constituencies. This contribution has monetary value to the organization. Public relations contribute to effectiveness by building quality, long-term relationships with strategic constituencies. Public relations most likely contribute to effectiveness when the senior public relations manager is a member of the dominant coalition where he or she is able to shape the organization's goals and to help determine which external publics are most strategic (Grunig, 1992, p. 6)

From this statement the study recognizes that excellent public relations practices are an integral parts of one organization's success when contributes for public benefits, and helps to build and develop the community especially in achieving organizational goals and serving the publics interests.

To Kruckeberg (2006), public relations can be understood as having the responsibility for creating, restoring, and maintaining the societal linkages between governments, civil society organizations, and corporations. Likewise, by emphasizing on the strategic value of PR Vasquez and Taylor (2000) stated that many different definitions of public relations have been offered, but it generally accepted that public relations is strategic communication between an organization and its publics (Ihlen, Ruler, & Fredriksson, 2009). From this statement practitioners understand that the functions of public relations are maintaining good relationship, and achieving the intended objectives, goals, vision, and mission of the organization strategically.

Penning (2007) stated that modern public relations has evolved to embrace corporate sustainability; corporate sustainability is built around the organizational structure that embraces public relations theories and practices. Ecological, sociological, environmental and corporate/business elements must be properly promoted internally/externally by utilizing public relations efforts in order to provide the most updated information to stakeholders/employees and the public.

This statement implies that contemporary public relations practices would have to base on theoretical framework and informational model of public relations in communicating and providing latest information for both internal and external publics and stakeholders, and also understand the social environment. However, two-way symmetrical model more advisable to the bureau to communicate, interact and react with different publics of the organization and to promote various cultures and tourisms. Likewise, excellent public relations practices are an integral part of one organization's success when contributes for public benefits, and helps to build and develop the community especially in non-profit oriented organization in spite of the fact that public relations is emergent discipline in Ethiopia and Oromia regional state.

Therefore, at Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, public relations and its practices seem misunderstood and less attention has been given to it. However, public relations activities could help to achieve the organizational objectives especially in communicating and promoting different culture and tourism resources of the regional state as mentioned in the mission of the bureau. Thus, the study analyzed the public relations practices of the bureau. Then the student

forwards constructive, professional, and scientific recommendations for further improvement and progress of public relations practices in the future.

1.2. Profile of Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau

Oromia is one of the nine regional states of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia with the largest land size and population in the Country. Likewise, the Oromo nation is one of the largest indigenous peoples of East Africa. Throughout their long history they have developed their own culture, identity, religious cult and ritual performances. They governed themselves in accordance with Gada system which is a democratic political, socio-economic system long before the 16th century. Oromia is the land of gifted with various culture and tourism in nature. This naturally gifted property needs so many treatment and conservation from the peoples and the bureau.

Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau is one of the regional state government Bureaus. The Bureau was established as per proclamation No. 110/1998. Obviously, before own the current name the Bureau used to be called by different manes and was reestablished (i.e. as per proclamation No. 7/1988 the Bureau was called culture and information; as per proclamation No. 50/1994 the bureau was called culture and tourism commission). This Bureau found in Finfinne/Addis Ababa/ the capital city of Oromia and the seat of the government of Oromia, and Ethiopia. The organization built for the purpose of registering, researching, promoting, conserving, protecting cultural assets, historical event, areas, and for the development of tourism attraction sites, culture, values and norms of the regional communities in general. Currently, Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau has one hundred two employees (from document of the Bureau).

Oromia, extending from west to south East across the heart of Ethiopia, endowed with an abundant cultural and natural of resources. It is the land of rich natural and historical heritages that leaves good memory once it is visited. These natural and cultural beauty embrace the different incredible tourism resources such as the Africa's largest and amazing caves, various species of fauna and flora, wonderful alpine, and endemic animals, unique color and high population of birds, the rapture of rift valley Lakes, the wide range of huge forests, and diverse cultural colors and the unique culture of the Oromo people such as the democratic power transfer of Gada system, many important historical sites, the magnificent early civilization of palaces, as well as several monasteries, shrines, Mosques, monuments, and many other natural and cultural

tourist attractions, that make Oromia one of the most favored tourist destination. On the other hand, Christianity (Orthodox and protestant), Islam, and Wakeffata are the major religions in Oromia. There are also followers of other traditional beliefs in a few numbers (OTTB, 2018).

1.3. Statement of the Problem

It is obvious to say that public relations practices play significant roles in creating harmonious relationships and mutual understanding between an organization and the publics towards achieving organizational objectives. Furthermore, public relations activities have great contributions in communicating and promoting culture and tourism resources of Oromia to build image and to contribute for sustainable development. In order to manage the publics image and stakeholders relationships of companies and organizations, public relations practitioners employ a variety of communication tactics, including media releases, media events, social media accounts, backgrounders, fact sheets, pamphlets, annual reports, newsletters, and other materials. Senior practitioners are responsible for planning the details of ‘what, how, and why their organizations communicate with strategic publics’ (Mahoney, 2013).

Public relations is the key to success for any organization in the world. As the name indicates, it is the relationships of publics. These days, it is a worldwide phenomenon that the people of the world, especially governmental and business organization, see as the key of their success (Cutlip, 2000). As a scientific discipline, public relations is relatively new and developing rapidly (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). From this statement the student understands that public relations is emergent, but continually growing up due to its importance for the achievement of any organization. Thus, both government and business organization opening public relations department or communication unit in their organizations intending to build image and to serve the organizational and the public interests’ in public relations practices.

Concerning public relations, the study conducted within two Ethiopian towns portrayed that, the practices of public relations within two Ethiopian towns Harar and Dire Dawa have been subjected to a wrong perception of what public relations person actually does. Generally, the status of the practice of public relations in Ethiopia looks like it is in the early stage of its maturity and formation’ (Geremew, 2017). According to Mihret (2018) public relations and media works the most misguided profession in Ethiopia. He also mentions that PR is still in its low level when measured objectively from scientific point of view.

Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau has been practicing public relations functions. Public relations is a new discipline in Ethiopia particularly in Oromia regional state. However, still less attention has been given to professional public relations practices, education, and training. Therefore, due to these reasons there was misunderstanding of public relations and its practices in Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau. Likewise, lack of having clear public relations strategies or tools and experienced professionals in public relations was the other rational of the study which impose impact on proper practices of public relations. Additionally, in this Bureau there was misconception and wrong attitude concerning public relations practices. Due to this and the above statement of the problem, Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau public relations practices faced challenges to well communicate and promote the various cultures and tourism resources of Oromia. On the other hand, public relations practices, tools, and model employed by the organization were still not studied. Because concerning this, the student assessed different secondary sources, but he didn't come across any research conducted on the public relations practices of the Bureau. Thus, this study was mainly focused on analyzing public relations practices of Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1. General Objective

The general objective of the study is to analyze the public relations practices of Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study can be stated as:

- To identify the tools of public relations practices and analyze its effectiveness.
- To analyze public relations concept understanding of the practitioners.
- To sort out the challenges and opportunities of public relations practices of the Bureau.

1.5. Research Questions

In relation to these objectives, the research was responded to the following questions. They were:

1. What are the public relations tools of Oromia Culture and tourism Bureau?
2. How do practitioners understand the concept of public relations (their profession)?

3. In what ways the Bureau sort out the challenges and opportunities of public relations practices?

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study has significance for the Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau and its employees as it contributes for the improvement of public relations practices of the Bureau in a professional way. Additionally, this study enables the practitioners to know about public relations models, roles, strategies and tools to carry out their roles professionally. It helps the bureau to mark on the existing challenges and weaknesses of public relations practices through successfully communicating the culture and tourism activities towards building the image of the Bureau. It introduces and encourages the implementation of two-way symmetrical model of public relations to get reflection or feedback from different publics for mutual understanding. Likewise, paves the way for future professional public relations practices of the Bureau by overcoming the misunderstanding of public relations, lack of professionalism, and principles (ethics) if the findings of the study would be implemented. Additionally, it helps other researchers who want to conduct further investigation on public relations as a secondary source.

1.7. Scope of the Study

Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau is one of the regional state government Bureaus. This Bureau is found in Finfinne/Addis Ababa, the capital city of Oromia regional state and Ethiopia. The organization built for the purpose of registering, researching, promoting, protecting cultural assets, historical event, areas, and for the development of tourism attraction sites, culture, values and norms of the regional communities in general. To do so, the Bureau has been working different functions under various departments, directorates, groups, and core process (OCTB, 2018)

Therefore, the study analyzed the Public Relations practices at Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau regardless of policy. And also it tried to sort out the challenges and opportunities of the Bureau in practicing public relations functions. It analyzed practitioners view towards public relations and its tools. Additionally, the study analyzed the content of available public relations tools excluding about design and layout of the publications. Thus, the study excludes other different functions of the organization undertaken by other groups or departments. This was done

to make the study manageable because of conducting a research is not a simple task; and it requires many resources (i.e. human resource, budget, and time).

1.8. Limitations of the Study

The study has its own limitations. One of its limitations was that the study was done only at Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau mainly because of time and financial constraints. The other limitation was that there is lack of related literature or books in the field, due to the recentness of the concept of public relations especially in Ethiopia and Oromia regional state particularly in culture and tourism sector. Because, locally written literatures on the concept and significance of public relations is almost rare. This also limited the researcher not to supplement the study with adequate related literature review.

1.9. Organization of the Study

This study would have five chapters. The first chapter would be an introductory part. In the next chapter, the review of related literature is included. In chapter three the researcher treated methodologies of the study. Data analysis and discussion will be in the chapter four. Finally, chapter five included conclusion and forwarded recommendations based on findings.

1.10. Definitions of Terms

- Press release -- an announcement of an event, performance, new product/service/hire or other newsworthy statements presented by its promoters to the media for editorial comment and broad coverage.
- Fact sheet -- a one page document that describes a company's history, product and services, includes business contact information and Public Relations contact information often used for media's reference.
- Globalization -- the growing interdependence and interconnectedness of the modern world through increased flows of goods, services, capital, and information.
- Newsletter -- written information sent regularly to members of an organization, containing news about activities, events, and etc.
- Pamphlet - a very thin book with a paper cover containing information about particular subject.
- Practice -- Day to day activities of public relations officers

- Social media account -- they are web-based applications where people create profiles and connect with others (with profiles) in a closed system.
- Boundary-spanners - public relations professionals can play a key role in the dominant coalition by gathering and interpreting information from the external and internal environments and presenting this as strategic intelligence. On the basis of this, organizations can adapt and change or initiate a dialogue so that the continued support of their key stake holding publics can be assured (Corinna, 2013).
- Media Relations - any correspondence with the media for your organization or your clients; may include: building relationships with reporters, pitching stories, distributing news releases, responding to reporters, etc (Corinna,2013).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Historical Review of Public Relations

A Public relations is now a global occupation and implemented in many corners of the world in different ways. However, written histories of PR reflect the dominance of the United States on the academic field of public relations and tend to focus on its origins in the United States rather than in other countries (Yeomans, 2009). The historical development of public relations is related to media and media science such as advertisement with the aim of marketing or business to promote the product of organizations' to the public.

Many histories of public relations see the modern profession emerging in the United States in the 1800s and early 1900s. In the 1930s, a new type of communications professional emerged in the form of a 'press agent' as companies and promoters sought new ways of communicating with the public rather than paying for costly advertisement in newspapers (Harrison, 2011).

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

It was in the early twenty century that a demand for more ethical and communication between companies and the mass media set the stage of the emergence of a new type of communication professional: the public relations specialist. In particular, two individuals, Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays, are often identified as 'founding fathers' of modern public relations due to their influence on shaping the principles and practices of the emerging profession (Martinelli, 2011).

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

On the other hands, as different scholars wrote, there is sufficient evidence in the records of the early Greek and Roman empires to show that great attention was devoted to the influencing of public opinion. Public relations in the earlier time appear to have been a central part of government. While the far-away roots of public relations lie in the art of rhetoric practiced by the ancient Greeks, other notable development accompanied important political events throughout history. In medieval European society, both church and state sought to dominate public opinion and used preaching, painting, scripture, songs, rituals, events, and public announcements as forms of communicative influence' (Harrison, 2011).

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

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

2.2. Operational Definitions of Public Relations

A Public relations is used in a huge range of industries and in each one slightly different skills and competencies have emerged among practitioners. Many scholars define public relations in a different way at different times and social environments. This is due to various reasons such as the difference in historical development from country to country; inter disciplinary, nature of PR as profession, the difference in theoretical base of public relations. Thus, there is no one universally agreed definitions of public relations (Grunig, 1992). This is so the profession is still young as scholars stated. Likewise, this implies even if PR has been practiced in the earlier time

it is still unable to reach on its maturity stage. Here, some of the commonly known operational definitions of public relations are:

Public relations is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics' (CIPR, 2004). Similarly, other scholar defined PR that scale up the above definition as, public relations, is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics', on whom its success or failure depends (Cutlip, 2000).

From these definitions, the researcher recognize that, public relations practices could maintain both mutual understanding and beneficial between organizations and the public as well as manage their relationships with different stakeholders or publics for the reason that their success or failure depends on each others. Harlow (1976) elaborately defined PR as:

Public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change; serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.

This definition involves largely goals, processes, and tasks of PR and practices, and positions the profession tightly within the organization, as the managerial and the technician roles. It tries to cover most aspects of PR in a wide manner. But, this definition seems too long to other scholars. So, they gave their own definitions of PR as such. Grunig and Hunt (1984) define PR in a short sentence as 'the management of communication between an organization and its publics'.

In order to manage the public image and stakeholder relationships of companies and organizations, public relations practitioners employ a variety of communication tactics, including media releases, media events, social media accounts, backgrounders, fact sheets, pamphlets, annual reports, newsletters, and other materials. Senior practitioners are responsible for planning the details of 'what, how, and why their organizations communicate with strategic publics'

(Mahoney, 2013). The above statements suggest that the practices of public relations require different tools to communicate with stakeholders and the strategic publics for organization's image building and to maintain relationships for the sake of goals achievement. Additionally, it implies that planning and designing PR strategy is the functions of senior practitioners in the organization.

According to the 1978, the First World Assembly of Public Relations Associations in Mexico public relation is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organizational leaders, and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both the Organization and the public interest (Newsom, 2000). This seems highly developed definition of public relations. Since it incorporates many things from the nature and functions of public relations; analyzing from the corner of its nature they capitalized the artistic and social scientific essence of it. Additionally, they emphasized the practice of public relations practitioners as analyzing, predicting, counseling, and implementing planned program of action. This definition scaled up public relations profession from traditional concept that was retroactive to proactive, and from one-way communication to two-way symmetrical model. It has also illustrated public relations work from the angle of mutual benefit sense of organizational and public interest. In developing this definition practitioners understand that open system theory is their theoretical base due to its involvement of both the organization and publics benefits at large.

Furthermore, by recognizing the contemporary views and emphasizing on the strategic value of PR, Vasquez and Taylor (2000) stated that many different definitions of public relations have been offered, but it generally accepted that public relations is strategic communication between an organization and its publics (cited in Ihlen, Ruler, and Fredriksson, 2009). According to Gordon (1997), all definitions of public relations highlight the fact that PR is about managing communication in order to build good relationships and mutual understanding between an organization and its most important audiences. Grunig and Hunt (1984) put forward the view that PR is a young profession, and only really started to approach that status in the 1980s:

The profession has its roots in press agency and propaganda, activities that society generally holds in low esteem. Most of its practitioners have little training in the social sciences. Few have been trained in public relations. We must admit

that many people today who call themselves public relations practitioners still do not measure up to professional standards. True professionals possess a body of knowledge and have mastered communication techniques that are not known by the average citizen. They also have a set of values and a code of ethics that discourage the use of their knowledge and technical skills for antisocial purposes (Theaker, 2004).

Similarly, the study conducted within two Ethiopian towns portrayed that, the practices of public relations within two Ethiopian towns Harar and Dire Dawa have been subjected to a wrong perception of what public relations person actually does. Generally, the status of the practice of public relations in Ethiopia looks like it is in the early stage of its maturity and formation' (Geremew, 2017).

However, Cutlip, (2000) stated that, public relations, is a key to success for any Organization in the world. As the name indicates, it is the relationships of publics. These days, it is a worldwide phenomenon that the people of the world, especially governmental and business organization, see as the key of their success.

This statements shows that, even if public relations has great contribution for one organization to carry out its activities and succeed goals through mutual understanding with both internal and external publics still requires more attention to improve PR practices in professional way by understanding its contemporary worldwide phenomenon, and practitioners' also require to upgrade their profession to practice in line with the current context of PR in the region.

Public relations and media works: the most misguided profession in Ethiopia. He also mentions that PR is still in its low level when measured objectively from scientific point of view (Masresha, 2018). Qualified public relations experts in Ethiopia are rare. Unlike other profession public relations training in Ethiopia did not get attention for many years, but now the profession is gradually in progress. However, African Research Review an International Multi-Disciplinary Journal states that, none of the Ethiopian Universities and Colleges has been offering public relations as its own field of studies with the exception few courses within language, and journalism and communication studies (<http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrrrev.v11i1.10>).

By understanding the importance of the profession, Addis Ababa University has been started providing Masters of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communication (PRSC).

Kruckeberg (1998) asserted that PR is a professional occupation which requires specialized professional education. Scholar such as Grunig (1989) has argued that public relations education is the key to developing the profession of public relations. From this statement one can understand that, PR is a recent phenomenon or emergent profession, and requires professionalism still poor attention is given to develop the profession through education and trainings.

2.3. Roles of Public Relations

There may be different concepts or ideas about roles of public relations. Even though, Broom and Smith (1979) and Broom and Dozier (1995) identified two dominant public relations roles (cited in Theaker, 2004; Tench and Yeomans, 2009). They are:

The communication manager: refers to who plans and manages public relations programs, advises management, makes communications policy decision, and oversees their implementation. The communication manager responsible for the full PR program or if they work for a large corporate organization, they may be responsible for one specialist area such as government or investor relations.

Communication technician: refers to who is not involved in organizational decision making but who implements public relations programs such as writing press releases, organizing events, speech writing, writing house journals, and producing web content. Technicians usually do not get too involved in research, or evaluation. Because they are the ‘doers’. Similarly, the practitioners are often responsible for the communication tactics of news releases, organizing press conferences, employee newsletters, position papers, design brochures, and media placements Castelli (2007). On the other hand, the communication manager role by itself divided into three identifiable types. They are:

The expert prescriber: refers to who researches and defines PR problems, develops programs to tackle these problems and then implements them, sometimes with the assistance of others.

The communication facilitator: who act as a communication broker, maintaining two-way communication between an organization and its publics, liaising, interpreting and mediating.

The problem-solving process facilitator: who helps others solve their communication problems, acts as counselor/advisor on the planning and implementation of programs.

The researcher understands that however, the roles of PR categorized into the manager and the technician roles, it does not mean that lines are strictly fixed. Most PR professional practitioners carry out a mix of manager and technician work, but the point is that one role will tend to dominate. Practitioners at entry-level are normally entrusted with technical tasks at the initial stages of their career. As they become more experienced they may move on to the manager role because public relations practices require professional practitioners to carry out their activities in appropriate manner for the achievement of the goals, mission, and vision of the organization as well as to meet publics' interest.

On the other hand, Cutlip (2000) categorize PR work along task lines. According to them the tasks of public relations practitioners are: writing and editing, media relations and placement, research, management and administration, special events, speaking, production, training, contact, and counseling.

This task of public relations practitioners includes some of both the managerial and technician roles. It shows as there is no clear cut line between the managerial and technician roles of PR. Sriramesh & Verčič (2003) stated that the role of public relations has become more important nowadays. Organizations hired public relations practitioners to manage organization's reputation, relationships with both external and internal clients and most of the time to increase sales in order to maximize profit of the organization. However, Public Relations practitioner role varies in different countries depend on the country's political ideology, level of economic developments, degrees of activism, culture and media system (Tench, 2009).

In a nutshell, the two dominant roles of public relations are the managerial and the technician roles. However, there is no clear separation between the two roles. Therefore, the study suggest that public relations practitioners would have to understand their roles in practicing PR to serve both the organization's and the publics' interest. The researcher understands as successful practices contribute for mutual understanding between the two actors, while achieving the organizational goals, and serving the public interest.

2.4. Public Relations Role in Culture and Tourism

According to Hodges (2006), public relations industry should be regenerated and the role of public relations in the development of culture should not be neglected. Public relations have increasingly been a means of structuring the public and encouraging public discussion. It has been playing an active role in shaping societies and cultures. Some studies on international public relations have emphasized that public relations should encourage organization to take more active role in social transformation. In addition, Hodges has pointed out that the understanding of professional culture, the culture of public relations practitioners can make a great contribution to the development of national culture. The PR practices aiming to build and develop a nation indicate that public relations and strategic communication is not in the domain of profit-oriented organization (ibid).

According to the International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts, and Literature (2018), in an exceptionally fertile literature regarding PR, the number of guidebooks of articles elaborating the topic on public relations in tourism is relatively low while there's is none scientific edition and literature focused particularly on this subject. On the other hand, concerning public relations in tourism, marketing and public relations theoreticians confront in their works. Some of them, treat PR as part of marketing while the others treat PR as a special functions of management due to its large coverage. Two-way symmetrical model of public relations applicable for tourism through concrete forms and instruments with the purpose of drawing attention, building social profile and credibility, increasing the placements and lowering promotion costs. Identification of strategic elements of managing public relations model determined by strategic development lines of tourism with the special strategy of public relations as an integral part of national strategy touristic development of tourism of a country (Ilievska, 2018). Public relations are crucial in the promotional activities and the communications of companies and tourism institutions. In spite of this, there is a lack of association between theory and practice in public relations in the tourism industry. On the one hand, the theory, models and concepts of public relations have neither been developed nor applied in this industry (Etang, 2006), which continues to be conceptually dominated by marketing. However, public relations activities are prevalent in the practices of the industry. Public relations is the predominant activity in promotion and communication in the tourism industry as stated in A Global Journal of Research and Comment, (2008).

Public relations (PR) is significant and primary pillars for building, developing, and sustaining the country's image of attractive touristic destination and plays the crucial role in the promotion and affirmation of tourism and touristic destination of the country. In modern social-economic context, public relations are considered to be an important factor in the process of development and growth of tourism. They transfer consumer's messages about attractiveness, traffic infrastructure, and accommodation capacities of a touristic destination, at the same time following the pulse and needs of the target group and surrounding so that the touristic economy can adapt to the changes and needs of the public (Ilievska, 2018).

Likewise, this Journal stated that tourism and touristic industry have an important influence on the economic life of a country. For that reason, tourism development of a country and its growing into the attractive touristic destination is directly connected to quality standards of touristic product, accommodation capacities of tourism, on one hand, and prestige, public legitimacy, image, informing, promotion, and lobbying on the other. Henceforth, derives the important place and role of PR in tourism development of one country. The most significant factor for the successful realization of this process is communication with the public and usage of appropriate means of communication. The main goal of the use of PR in tourism as in any other industry is continuous transfer of messages and information for certain touristic offer, touristic attraction, and opportunities; building, and image of attractive touristic destination (image based on identity); as well as providing feedback- when public information reach the doors of touristic economy and in that way providing further evaluation.

Additionally, tourism promotion means trying to encourage the actual and potential customers to travel destination through the spreading of information. The objectives of promotion plan is to identify the target group to which the promotion is conducted, to find out the effective public relations programs to be planned, and to select the best methods to be used to control and assess the promotion operation (Baldemoro, 2013). Similarly, public relations represent a unique way of promoting the organization, its products or services, by building a higher visibility in the public space. Public relations represent a strategic form of communication, which focuses on gaining the audience's understanding and acceptance, as well as on the process of building a good relation between an organization and the public. In the tourist sector, public relations are more than a necessity. The major challenge consists in identifying the most efficient ways of

promoting tourist products, building a positive image, increasing the visibility of tourist destinations, in order to attract a significant number of tourists. Public relations may represent a bridge towards change, a means for adjusting to the new attitudes triggered by change (Amalia, 2014).

Furthermore, public relations may support the tourism public sector, building a positive image and a favorable attitude towards the tourism product, respectively the tourism destination envisaged (Stăncioiu, 2000). The explanation lies in the fact that in the tourism sector, a favorable image creates motivation in making the decision to buy the tourism product (ibid). Materials for promoting tourism destinations include: magazines, brochures and tourist guides, which may contain information about certain events, characteristic of a certain area or scheduled activities (audio-visual presentations, expositions), rules of conduct for tourist safety; maps and information on tourist attractions; information centers in public spaces, parks, shops, stations and restaurants; graphic boards placed on tourist tracks and in belvedere points (Henche, 2004). In their turn, interpreter guides also play an essential part by the accuracy and coherence of the information provided during tourist circuits. The promotion actions performed by public relations cannot be efficient without properly specialized and trained staff, which may provide quality services and meet the clients' expectations (ibid).

2.5. Communication Perspective of Public Relations

For the success of high level officers, communication perspective of public relations is the essential to make good decision that can contribute to the goals of an organization. Public relations practitioners help to give managers good information which may be vital for managers in order to impart the right decisions. The communication perspectives of public relations are used to provide genuine information about their organizations.

The communication role of public relations Saylor looks at all the stakeholders in the organization and uses a variety of tools and tactics to enhance relationships with these publics. At its best, the communication function uses research and monitoring methods to keep a finger on the pulse of internal and external perceptions of the organization. It uses a variety of communication channels to enhance the organization's reputation. And most importantly, it provides strategic counsel to the organization's leaders to help the team make better decisions (DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrev.v11i1.10>).

2.6. Management Perspectives of Public Relations

According to Theaker (2004), the management perspective of public relations is twofold: first helping to collect and interpret information from the social environment so that strategic decision can be made and second, the communication of the strategic vision. Grunig and Gruning (1998) contextualize that when public relations is part of the organization, it is likely to manage communication programs strategically. By focusing on the concept of management's role of public relations, Grunig and Grunig have been able to show that public relations must report to those who run the organization. However, in many organizations, this reporting relationship has not always been practice.

From this statement the researcher conceptualizes that the management perspectives clearly show the essential managerial role of public relations practices. Additionally, the study recognizes PR practices have responsibility in communicating organization's strategic plan, goals, and vision on one hand, and researching, conduct environmental scanning, and interpreting the environment to the organization or serving as boundary-spanners on the other hand.

On the other hand, public relations and marketing have a lot in common. Even though, many scholars believe that they are not the same thing. They deal with Organizational relationships and employ similar processes, techniques, and strategies. However, the functions have to be separated by mission and goal. Public relations is most excellent when it is strategic, and when marketing does not dominate public relations (Grunig G. , 1998). Additionally, Grunig argued that public relations is excellent only if it is housed in a single department or specialized communication departments. The purpose of marketing is mainly to maintain and build customers for the organizational products or services, whereas the purpose of PR is the management function through communication of perception and strategic relations between an organization and its internal and external publics (Koekemoer, 2004).

2.7. Public Relations Practices and Social Media Usage

Social media is becoming a significant tool in public relations practice because of the advancement in communication technology. With advent of social media or new media, public relations practitioners have changed thoughts about themselves and the practice even in

government. Grunig and Hunt (1984) ideal two-way symmetrical model of public relations revelation entails the very active characteristic of social media. So, in the current digital age, public relations in the government have to be altered in this way. The use of information technology to increase the level of efficiency and transparency of transactions within the government, between the public and the government and enterprises locally and internationally and at the same time empower the public via access and usage of data. It is possible to say that this media has been changing the way in which information is produced, distributed and displayed.

Public relations practitioners are shifting to social media as the line between online and offline promotion becomes blurry. Social media affords public relations practitioners the opportunity of reaching out to and engaging with their publics in conversation (Breakenridge, 2015). Public relations and communications professionals are in an excellent position to strategically guide all types of communications for their companies, including social media (ibid). Social media may play an important role in public relations. They can serve as a vehicle for strategic communication and as a platform to conduct public communication campaigns. In contrast to the one-way communication of traditional media, social media communication is not only interactive, but also participatory, collaborative, personal, and simultaneously communal, thus, allowing organizations to engage in publics in constant conversations, supportive behaviors, and meaningful relationships (Wang, 2015).

From the above statements, the study recognizes that the technological advancement such as social media and Internet has become the most used channel for public relations practices. Likewise, it is possible to say that social media may enable an organization to make two-way symmetrical communication, and since it is a media where people communicate and hold conversations with each other online. Thus, social media allow the organization to get closer as well as to receive both positive and negative feedback.

2.8. Importance of Ethics and Professionalism in Public Relations

Ethics means the formal study and codification of moral principles into systematic frameworks so that decisions can be made about what is right and wrong in a reasoned and structured way. Also it is about what is good and what is bad (Tench, 2009). There are many reasons why ethics and professionalism should characterize PR practice, but just five are presented below.

Trust: PR is about building and maintaining relationships. Trust is the key to successful relationships. Trust usually includes words like reliability, confidence, faith, and integrity. Trust is a precious thing, given by one individual to another and once broken, it can rarely be fully restored. If a PR practitioner acts ethically and professionally they are likely to be trusted. They will be described as having integrity there is something wholesome, honest and trustworthy about them. Being ethical and professional is core to having a good reputation. It is important for an organization to be represented by someone who is ethical and professional (Tench, 2009)

The ethical guardian: There is much debate about the role of the practitioner as the guardian of the organization's ethics. However, Heath and Ryan (1989) argue that a part of the role of PR practitioners is to monitor the environment to detect various publics' attitudes to certain values. They should then make company managers aware of external ethical standards and help companies implement CSR programs or develop codes of ethics (cited in Tench and Yeomans, 2009). What cannot be denied is that PR people have to justify the decisions and actions of their organization to a range of publics. They should have an acute awareness of what their publics' likely reactions will be and whether there will be a sense of moral outrage or approval. They then need the courage to challenge potential decisions and actions as they are being made and before they become reality (ibid).

Social Responsibilities: Organizations are regarded as having wider responsibilities to society, and the Corporate Social Responsibility movement has come about largely because organizations have recognized they have responsibilities towards all stake holding groups, to the environment and to society as a whole. Current research demonstrates quite clearly that organizations increasingly have to respond to stakeholder demands that they carry out their social responsibilities. According to research for the UK Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR, 2002) shows that Public Relations practitioners are usually responsible for communicating Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies and activities; indeed, CSR is often placed within the PR remit.

Community building and conflict resolution: To function properly, democracy must reflect an open society that is constantly challenging and reappraising its assumptions and values. PR brings to the public debate all kinds of ideas and represents all shades of opinion. As a result of informed debate, collective decisions can be made, citizens accept the democratic will, and

society and community is built. According to Kruckeburg and Starck (1998) say, 'A community is achieved when people are aware of and interested in common ends and regulate their activity in view of those ends. Communication plays a vital role as people try to regulate their own activities and to participate in efforts to reach common ends' (as cited in Tench and Yeomans, 2009).

Power and obligation: Power and influence comes responsibility (Bivins in Tench and Yeomans, 2009). There is an obligation on practitioners to be as professional as possible. That means taking education and training as seriously as other professions. Intellectual training, mastery of the technical aspects of the job, management knowledge and ethical training are all important. Practitioners should be members of the appropriate professional body ascribe to its code of conduct and strive to go beyond the minimum requirements. It is right and proper that organizations expect the highest standards from their communicators (ibid).

Additionally, the IPR Code of Conduct, which was updated after a major consultation in 2000, covers members' practice of PR, how the practitioner deals with the media, the public, employers, clients and colleagues. The code emphasizes 'honest and proper regard for the public interest, reliable and accurate information'. The member is required to 'maintain the highest standards of professional endeavor, integrity, confidentiality, financial propriety and personal conduct' and to bring neither the Institute nor the profession into disrepute. Professional activities must be conducted with 'honest and responsible regard for the public interest', and any conflict of interest must be declared to clients as soon as they arise. The clause in the old code which stated that members 'have a positive duty at all times to respect the truth and shall not disseminate false or misleading information knowingly or recklessly, and take proper care to check all information prior to its dissemination' is now reflected in a principle to 'deal honestly and fairly in business' and 'never knowingly misleading clients, employers, colleagues and fellow professionals about the nature of representation' (Theaker, 2004) Similarly, according to the code of professional standards for the practice of public relations, adopted by the Public Relations Society of America Assembly in 1988, pledged that PRSA members will conduct themselves professionally, with truth, accuracy, fairness, and responsibility to the public (Hendrix, 2001).

In a nutshell, the professional ethics of public relations suggests that PR practices require ethics and professionalism in day to day activities to meet organizational goals and to serve the public interest properly with great responsibility. Since public relations functions carry out in changing social environment ethically dealing with it and practicing to build trust between both internal and external publics are priceless which result in the organization's image or reputation building, and harmonious relationship building. So, it is important noting that PR practitioners have concern in conflict resolution activities through dialogue.

2.9. Theoretical Framework

According to scholars there is no a single theory that explains all about public relations; however, public relations advanced into an area of communication base in international enquires, in particular in the western economy it has become a research based maturing subject which include multidisciplinary characteristics. It is difficult to get indigenous theories and models of public relations in Ethiopia, and in Oromia regional state. So, it is advisable to explore how PR has been described in theories in the world, and adapt useful ones contextually. Therefore, one researcher needs to think about a number of different theoretical frameworks when he wants to study the practices of public relations of an Organization for the success of the study. Thus while scholars stated, there is no one theory that fully satisfies every explanation for public relations practices. Public relations practitioners have to consider various theories when they make decision about how they can build successful relationships with their publics (Lattimore, 2012).

Specifically for this study, the researcher was used among theories of public relations which focus not only on the organization but also on its publics as mutually dependent actors for mutual benefit in the public relations practices and process. Thus, the study was employed two main theories namely open system theory and excellence theory of PR.

2.9.1. Systems Theory

This theoretical framework acknowledges the importance of publics and their actions, Cutlip (2000) have proposed an open system theory of Public Relations (PR). Open systems are systems that take their environment into account and change their business activities accordingly; whereas closed systems do not adapt to their external conditions. Cutlip and his colleagues suggest that PR should view itself as part of an open system. It should help the organization to

examine relevant environmental influences and adapt its activities accordingly, as well as encouraging changes in the external environment that will help the organization.

From this theory, public relations researcher understands about the importance of environmental scanning (SWOT analysis) because of social environments are changing from time to time. These changes require the Organization to adjust its practices or strategies to cope up with the internal and external situations. Furthermore, it implies that to get legitimate support for its activities an organization would have to emphasize on how to build harmonious relationship which create conducive environment to succeed its goals. Thus, the practices of PR, strategies and tactics should always be assessed in terms of organization's either positive or negative impact on the relationship between an organization and its publics, rather than the benefit they provide for the organization only. Either understand or overcome such impacts two-way symmetrical model of public relations advisable for the Organization. Therefore, the study employs this theoretical framework to analyze the PR practices of OCTB.

2.9.2. Excellence Theory

The excellence theory of public relations is a fundamental and defining statement about what effective public relations is. Furthermore, excellence theory is a general theory of public relations that resulted from a study of best practices in communication management funded by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation Grunig (2002). Grunig (1984) led an international research team consisting of six public relations academics and as a result that team proposes the excellence theory, which provides insight as to how public relations excellence is achieved in an organization. This theory seems to give emphasizes on two-way symmetrical communication practices as a keystone for excellent PR. Likewise, excellence theory of public relations mainly focus on managerial, strategic, diverse, and ethical functions of PR, and it put in consideration the importance of both internal and external situations understanding for excellent public relations functions.

Properties addressing excellence theory provide a model for the maturation of public relations theory in international contexts. As originally conceived, and based on an examination of public relation practices only in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, there were fourteen fundamental principles in three general areas: (1) empowerment of the public relations

function, (2) communicator roles, and (3) organization of the communication function and its relationship to other management functions Freitag (2009). The IABC team concluded that organizations are effective when they choose and achieve goals that are important to their self-interest as well as to the interest of strategic publics in their environment (Grunig, 1992). Furthermore, Grunig argues that by helping organization build relationships and by resolving conflicts between an organization and its strategic publics, public relations departments contribute to organizational effectiveness. Through the study, they identified 14 generic principles of excellent public relations, which they later consolidated into ten. The following are the ten generic principles Grunig and his Colleagues suggested.

Involvement of public relations in strategic management. It refers to an organization that practice public relations strategically develops programs to communicate with strategic publics both external and internal that provide the greatest to and opportunities for the organization.

Empowerment of public relations in dominant coalition or direct reporting to senior management. In effective organization, the senior public relations person part of or has access to the group of senior managers with greatest power in the organization. Integrated public relations function. All public relations functions are integrated into a single department or have a mechanism to coordinate the departments. Only in an integrated system of public relations to develop new communication programs for changing strategic publics.

PR is a management function separate from other functions. Many organizations splinter the public relations function by making it supporting tool for other departments such as marketing, human resources, law, or finance. When public relations function is sublimated to other functions, it cannot move communication resources from one strategic public to another as an integrated public relations functions can. Public relations unit headed by a manager rather than a technician. Communication technician essential to carry out day-to-day communication activities. However, excellent public relations must have at least one senior communication manager who conceptualizes and directs public relations programs (ibid).

Two-way symmetrical model of public relations: Two-way symmetrical public relations are based on research and uses communication to manage conflict and improve understanding with strategic publics. Excellent public relations department model more of their communication

programs on this model than on the press a gentry, public information, or two-way asymmetrical model. However, they often combine elements of the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models in a “mixed-motive” model (ibid).

A symmetrical system of internal communication: Excellent organizations have decentralized management structure that give autonomy to employees and allow them to participate in decision making. They also have participative, symmetrical systems of internal communication with employees that increase job satisfaction because of employee goals are incorporated in into the organizational mission (ibid).

Knowledge potential for managerial role and symmetrical public relations: this refers to excellent programs are staffed by professionals’ people who are educated in the body of knowledge and who are active in professional associations and read professional literature. Diversity embodied in all roles: this refers to excellent public relations include both men and women in all roles, as well as practitioners of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds (ibid).

Organizational context for excellence: Excellent public relations department are nourished by participative rather than authoritarian cultures, activist pressure from the environment, and organic rather than mechanical management structures (ibid). Additionally, the excellence theory both describes and prescribes the role of public relations in strategic management. It is a general theory that explains how public relations function should be structured, and manage to provide the greatest value to the organizations, publics, and society (Carroll, 2013).

By and large, the student recognizes that excellence theory of PR provides the necessary insights and generic principles of how an organization becomes successful in practicing public relations by compromising both the organization and the public interests and benefiting the two actors. Additionally, it implies how the practitioners or communicators would have to employ appropriate models of PR to carry out their responsibilities and make the organization successful in interactive practices. Therefore, the study employed the excellence theory as a framework to analyze the public relations practices of the Organization.

2.10. Models of Public Relations

The most helpful for public relations’ practitioners have to know the existing different models and its concepts for the practices of public relations. It is useful understanding how those models

are related to each other or differentiated from one another is important. Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified four models of public relations which are based on research. The four models of public relations are press agency/publicist, public information, two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric communication.

Public information: is related to press agency in that one-way information dissemination is the purpose of the activity, but it is different from the press agency in that truth is fundamental to its purpose. The information has to be accurate, true, and specific. The central purpose of this model is informative. Practitioners operating under this model do slight research about their audiences beyond testing the clarity of their message (Grunig, 1984).

Two-way asymmetric communication: is mainly focused in persuasive communications to generate agreement between the organization and its publics by bringing them around to the organization's way of thinking. This model employs social science research method to increase the persuasiveness of their messages. Feedback from publics is used to adapt communications strategies to be more persuasive, not to alter the organization's position, or the organization is much more interested in having the publics' adjust to the organization's interest than the reverse. Through this model it is impossible to build good relationship for mutual benefit (Grunig, 1984).

Two-way symmetric communication: intended to generate mutual understanding. The two-way communications process should lead to changes in both the public's and the organization's position on an issue. Through this two-way model of communication the organization and their publics adjust to each other to achieve mutual understanding and to sustain harmonious relationship (Grunig, 1984).

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

both on how to collaborate interpersonally with publics and on how to use media symmetrically to communicate with them. The two-way symmetrical model, as refined is a major component of excellence in public relations and communication management (Grunig G. D., 2002)

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

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

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The major purpose of this study is to analyze the public relations practices of Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau (OCTB). Research methodology is the general term that stands for how and by what means certain study should be conducted. This part of the study describes the research design, sampling techniques, instruments of data collection, data sources, data analysis, and ethical consideration. Fundamentally, there are three types of research approaches: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Among these three approaches, the study employed qualitative research approach. It uses words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data.

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

3.1. Research Design

The study used case study design. It helps the student to conduct in-depth study on a case of the organization. Also this enabled the study to qualitatively collect, analyze, and make interpretation of the data. Likewise, the study employed qualitative data collection techniques namely in depth interview with key informants and publications document review for content analysis.

Case study is more interested in getting large information but from very limited individuals; and it focuses on getting as large body of information as possible but only from a single case (Belay & Abdinasir, 2015). As a research design, the case study claims to offer a richness and depth of information not usually offered by other methods (Hancock, 2002).

Research methods: The study followed qualitative research approach. Besides, it employed research methods namely in depth interview and content analysis.

3.2. Source of Data

This study used both primary and secondary data sources.

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

Secondary Source: Secondary data refers to data that are already available that they refer to the data which have already been collected and analyzed by someone else. So this includes previous research work, public relations tools of the Bureau, and other documents which archived and collected by Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau.

3.3. Sampling Technique

The study used purposive sampling technique for in-depth interview. This, purposive sampling technique was enabled the student to choose key informants by their profession, position, experience (more than one year), and relevance to the study were inclusion criteria. The researcher conducted in depth interview with deputy head of the Bureau, public relations director, public relations practitioners, and employees of the Bureau. Likewise, for content analysis availability sampling was employed. The selection criteria for the publications of the Bureau were availability of them.

3.4. Sampling Size

Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau has one hundred two employees. From those, purposively the study was intended to interview fourteen key informants since they were practitioners and concerned interviewees. Out of fourteen sample size designed twelve key informants were interviewed this is so due to the data was saturated. Among twelve key informants, one deputy head, nine were practitioners including the public relations director, and other two directors were (i.e. public service and human resource development directorate director and plan and budget directorate director) were interviewed. Professional human resources and budget are vital for effective public relations practices. Thus, these two directorates were included in the key informants of the study.

Besides, the study reviewed and analyzed the content of *Oromia Travel Tips Booklet 2018*, *Dhangaa Irreechaa/The Oromo Thanks Giving Day magazine 2016*, and *annual plan document of public relations/communication department* among its tools based on availability sampling.

The study used qualitative data collection techniques in depth interview and content analysis. For data gathering the researcher prepared semi-structured interview questions with follow up or probing questions and document review checklist to obtain quality and sufficient data. The instruments were prepared in English, and translated to Afan Oromo working language of the region, and back to the English version. Interviews were recorded using the voice recorder, and were transcribed verbatim each day.

3.5. Techniques of Data Analysis

In the study qualitative data analysis techniques were employed. Qualitative data analysis methods namely transcription, coding, categorizing, thematizing, and narration were employed. The data were collected through in-depth interview using voice recorder and note taking, and through exhaustive available publication documents review. Therefore, the findings were presented in narration based on thematic areas. Likewise, data triangulation was used by comparing and contrasting the patterns and themes within the data during analysis. Analyzing qualitative data typically involves immersing oneself in the data to become familiar with it, then looking for patterns and themes, searching for various relationships between data that help the researcher to understand what they have, then visually displaying the information and writing it up (Kawulich, 2015).

Data validity was assured by employing multiple data collection techniques. Besides, concerned key informants such as deputy head of the Bureau, public relations director, and practitioners were interviewed in depth. Publications documents of the organization were exhaustively reviewed to collect data for content analysis, and also the study triangulated the data by comparing and contrasting the reflections of interviews and the data obtained through available publications document reviewed during analysis. Likewise, for data translation, the researcher contacted two skilled Afan Oromo and English language translators who were MA and BA holders respectively. Those professionals checked for the right word usage in translating process

of data and instruments from working language of the regional state to English, and from English to Afan Oromo version.

3.6. Ethical Consideration

During data collection and interpretation processes, the study convinced the participants that any confidential information they disclose will be kept confidential and convinced them the importance of the study was to help the Bureau and the employees. The participants were told that the study was only for academic purpose and no one would fall as a victim because of any adverse findings in connection with their professional duties. The consents of the participants were obtained orally and confidentiality of the interviewees was secured by coding i.e. Interviewee 1, 2... 12 named as I1, I2... I12 (see Appendix V, p. 65), and also the organization secured. This was done in order to motivate them to give their responses without reservation. The interview guideline clearly explained the purpose of the study. The guideline did not require the names of the interviewees; this was to protect their identity remain anonymous. The employees were aware from the beginning what the study was doing, why and where the information was going and why it was being gathered.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Profiles of the Interviewees

Twelve key-informants were interviewed at this level the data attain saturation; and three available publications or documents were reviewed. Out of the twelve interviewed key-informants, one was second and eleven were first degree holders. Eleven of them were men and one was female. Here, there was only one female among the practitioners. By the position they held, one was deputy head, one public relations director, eight practitioners, and two directors from human resources development directorate director and budget and plan directorate director were included. The reason why human resource and plan and budget directorates included in interviewees were that professional human resources and budget are vital for effective public relations practices. Thus, analyzing their view towards public relations was important. Concerning experience, seven interviewees have 2 to 5 years, four interviewees have six to ten years, and one interviewee has more than ten years of experience (for more see Appendices IV, p. 64). The age of the participants ranged from 28 to 45 years.

The researcher presented the initial question for each key informants and then probing. For all probing questions respondents provided different answers. Then, as there were more in numbers, the researcher tried to summarize their answers by themes.

The documents reviewed were *Oromia Travel Tips Booklet 2018*, '*Dhangaa Irreechaa*'/*Oromo Thanks giving Magazine 2016*, and *public relations department annual plan document among public relations tools*. Both *Oromia Travel Tips Booklet* and *Dhangaa Irreechaa* magazines were published once or not periodical publications.

Therefore, the study results obtained through in-depth interview and available publications reviewed data for content analysis were presented together by quoting the words of the interviewees. And also the study triangulated the data obtained through multiple techniques. The data obtained from key informants through in depth interview and publications reviewed for content analysis were presented hereunder.

Data Collected from Available Publication Documents Reviewed:

Oromia Travel Tips Booklet: The study reviewed *Oromia Travel Tips Booklet 2018*. The major contents of the Booklet were introduction, which concisely informs the readers about history and general facts of Oromia (location, area, government, topography, and media in Afan Oromo, religion, hydropower, economy, tourism, transportation, telephone services, and bank services). In general, the rest parts of the booklet briefly and concisely provide important information about major tourist attractions or cultural and natural and human made tourism resources of Oromia with their respective photos which make the information in the booklet more authentic and credible. Additionally, the magazine concisely informs about tourism destination with their concise profile such as distance from Finfinnee/Addis Ababa, and local area/Woreda town, location, visiting sites in the area, weather condition (i.e. temperature, rainfall), and available accommodations and facilities.

Oromia, extending from West to south East across the heart of Ethiopia, endowed with abundant cultural and natural resources of tourism. It is the land of rich natural and historical heritages that leaves unforgettable memory once it is visited. These natural and cultural beauties embrace the different incredible tourism resources such as the Africa's largest and amazing Caves, various species of fauna, and flora, wonderful alpine and endemic mammals, the unique color and high population of birds, the rapture of rift valley Lakes, the wide range of huge forests, and those of diverse cultural colors and the unique culture of the Oromo people such as democratic power transfer of Gada system, many important historical sites, the magnificent early civilization of palaces, as well as Monasteries, Shrines, Mosques, monuments, and many other natural and cultural tourist attraction that make Oromia one of the most favored tourist destination (Oromia Travel Tips Booklet, p. 6).

Of the major natural and cultural tourism resources included are Bale mountain national park, Babelle Elephant Sanctuary, Suba national forest, Sor water fall, Bishoftu Lakes, Dandi Lake, hot springs, and Sof-Omar Cave, etc.

The Oromo Thanksgiving Magazine: Similarly, the study reviewed *The Oromo Thanksgiving Magazine 2016*. This magazine published once on *Irreechaa* celebration. Briefly, the first part of the magazine informs the readers about mission, vision, and core values of the Bureau. The second part of it was about the editors, top Oromia regional state authority, and the head of Bureau's messages respectively. The rest contents of the magazine was about the Oromo thanksgiving which gave more vital information about '*Irreechaa*' festival, blessing ceremony, when and where it took place, code of conduct; and photo exhibitions which provided further information about Oromo people's cultural costumes, materials, cultural foods, natural and human made heritages. The last part of the magazine was about intangible heritages and criteria of UNESCO which fulfilled by cultural and natural tourism resources to be registered as one of world intangible heritages. The purpose of the magazine was to provide information to create awareness and to promote cultural tourism resources.

In the same way, the study reviewed *annual plan document (2018)* of public relations department. The plan consists of different parts. Mainly the first part of the plan was an introduction, which concisely informs about Oromia cultural and natural and manmade tourism resources and the importance of communication and promotion to create awareness and understanding to develop, conserve, protect, register, and research by stakeholders and public participation to generate revenue and make beneficiary both the government and the people, and transfers those resources to the next generation. Additionally, it discusses public relations practices function for communicating and promoting tourism resources to internal and foreign tourists or internationally. The second part of the plan was the environmental scanning mainly about political situation, economic situation (import and export), unemployment situation, rural and urban people situation, different stakeholders of the organization namely abba Gada council, Oromo artists association, cultural costumes trading organization, tourism institution (i.e. Hotels), private tourist guiders, research and researchers, media (both print and broadcast) were analyzed.

The third part of the plan concisely informs about mission and vision of the Bureau, and public relations department's main objectives which aim at providing timely and relevant information for internal and external tourists on cultural and tourism resources which might result in generating revenue, consensus, and image building. The final, parts of the plan informs about

four implementation evaluation perspectives such as customers' satisfaction, finance, work done/process, capacity building, and action plan. Additionally, the plan was involved a previous year implementation evaluation and identified strengths and weaknesses. Likewise, the department briefly conducted SWOT analysis (strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats) for current year public relations practices.

Therefore, the main strengths of the organization stated in the plan were able to practice public relations using different tools and media to communicate and to promote culture and tourism resources and create awareness, increased tourists flow and income, having mission and vision, work plan, whereas the major weakness identified of the department were poor information documentation/archive, weak publications distribution, poor awareness created to mobilize the people to conserve and develop tourism resources and significantly realize their benefit, lack understanding on mission and vision of the organization among employees, poor relationship with different stakeholders, unable to persuade the management for sufficient budget allocation/lack of budget/, public relations practices and promotion activities were unable to effectively generate income from abundant tourism resources in appropriate manner, quality and standard promotion problem, event oriented practices, weak internal communication, lack of knowledge and training, lack of professionals, unable to employ all communication tools, and unable to communicate and to promote culture and tourism resources properly at airport, hotels, transportation, and destination areas.

Similarly, the major opportunities of public relations practices were having abundant cultural and natural tourism resources, technological advancement and media expansion, currently attention given to culture and tourism sector and tourism resources promotion, and reliable peace and security, and good working environment. Whereas, the main challenges/threats of public relations practices were lack of infrastructures, increasing destruction of culture and tourism resources and illegal settlement around the sites, throat cut competition to promote at international level, problem of professional training and further educational opportunity, and lack of logistics and budget.

4.2. Analysis and Discussion

The data obtained through in depth of interview and contents of available publications documents reviewed were presented together in the analysis by quoting the words of the interviewees. The data analysis and interpretation were presented by coding interviewees, categorizing the data by their thematic areas as follow.

4.2.1. Relevance of Available Publications Document Reviewed

Oromia Travel Tips Booklet 2018: The study indicated that the *Oromia Travel Tips Booklet* consists of relevant contents which provide necessary information about major Oromia cultural and natural as well as human made tourism resources. The Booklet is being event oriented which was published on the celebration of 2018 world tourism day. The purpose of the Booklet is providing information for communicating and promoting Oromia tourism resources to foster understanding and create awareness. The contents of the booklet presented in good manner; and briefly it gives information about major tourist attractions or cultural and natural and human made tourism resources of Oromia with their respective profile such as distance from Finfinne/Addis Ababa, local area/woreda town, location, visiting sites in the area, weather condition (temperature, rainfall), and available accommodations and facilities.

The Oromo Thanksgiving/'Dhangaa Irreechaa' Magazine 2016: This magazine contents are presented poorly, and not well organized. It contains mainly relevant contents about *Irreechaa* celebration. Likewise, it contains irrelevant political messages or contents. The relevant contents are about giving information to foster understanding and promoting Oromo culture particularly '*Irreechaa*' celebration in detail, whereas the irrelevant one included in the magazine was that propaganda messages delivered from the ruling party's top regional state authority. For instance,

...antigovernment forces and the existed opposition political parts were collaborated with the terrorist groups, who were running their agenda to destroy the constitution and needs to uproot the ruling government to seize power by force; and it was called for nation, nationalities and people of the country stand with the government and fight against those antigovernment forces for the sake of your developmental and democratic state (The Oromo Thanksgiving Magazine, 2016, p. 4).

The above irrelevant content in the Oromo thanksgiving magazine implied that there was ruling party's manipulation and imposed influences on public relations practices. These findings of the study endorsed key informants' reflections about public relations misusing and manipulation. On the other hand, high lightly that magazine was poorly written and not well organized. Therefore, public relations department would have to practices public relations regardless of any political party's concern in professional way.

Annual plan: From the reviewed annual plan document the study shown that the department conducted environment scanning during planning. But, the situational analysis was not viewed in terms of environments positive or negative impact on public relations practices of culture and tourism Bureau. Likewise, the strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat (SWOT) was mainly analyzed targeting on internal and external situations impact on the government, and the ruling party rather than the Bureau.

The department identified target audiences, but there were no appropriate public relations tools intended to communicate with those stakeholders and target audiences strategically. Likewise, the department planned to prepare various public relations tools, but there were no budget allocated for each particular public relations tool in the action plan, and also poor documentation of public relations tools was indicated. Because of for content analysis the study has got only three available publications. On the other hand, the plan was bulky and it has irrelevant contents.

For example, *For the last several years the government and ruling party faced strong public complains and opposition due to violation of rule of law, violations of citizens' right, and lack of good governance (annual plan document, p. 3).* Likewise, the plan contains a statement which said, *Internal communication of the Bureau mainly focuses on the three pillars of development forces such as ruling party, government, and public (Annual plan document, 2018, p. 5).* The contents of *the annual plan* implied that public relations practices were used as government mouthpiece which indicated that there was influence on public relations practices of the department. Therefore, the reviewed documents content analyzed of *the annual plan, Dhangaa Irreechaa magazine* data, and the key informants' interview data suggested that public relations has been practiced as government mouthpiece in addition to communicating and promoting culture and tourism resources of Oromia or the PR tools were not free from political influence

(messages). On the other hand, the study revealed that irrelevance educational preparation of the practitioners within the department (see Appendices IV, p.64).

4.2.2. Tools Public Relations

Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau public relations department has been practicing public relations since 2002 E.C. According to key informants' responses, the Bureau has public relations department which has two groups namely government communication group and promotion group; also the department has practitioners and the director. From interviewees' responses, the study indicated that the Bureau has been practicing public relations functions especially on event and process oriented rather than result oriented. According to interviewees reflections, event and process oriented public relations practices refers to practicing mainly by focusing on events within the year such as *Irreechaa* celebration and taking over 'Ballii' or power in *Oromo Gada* system, and the process refers to the process of one publication pass through collecting information to printing or to its dissemination and distribution. The practitioners have been using different public relations tools for the purpose of providing information and creating awareness on plan, implementation, government strategy, and promoting culture and tourism resources to achieve the mission and vision of the Bureau. For example, I3 said,

My tasks in the organization has been preparing different publications such as brochures, magazines, booklet, pamphlets, fliers, posters, events, banners, exhibitions, short documentary, posting on social media (Face book and Twitter official account), developing website content, and also organizing press conference, press release for print and broadcast media to provide information for the public to create awareness (personal interview with I3, March, 27/2019).

In relation to public relations practices, other interviewees agreed with the above interviewee's response by saying that, *in the organization, I have been working for communicating and promoting culture and tourism resources by disseminating information for the public through different public relations practices tools (personal interview with I4, April, 3/2019).* Additionally, I5 said, *I have been practicing public relations through various publications to communicate and promote culture and tourism resources to make Oromia preferable tourism*

destination, and for conserving, keeping, developing natural resources, and sacred areas through public participation (personal interview with I5, April, 3/2019).

Likewise, concerning public relations practices tools from the reviewed *annual plan document* content analyzed, the study has indicated that similar practices tools such as brochure, magazine, etc with that of the above key informants' responses.

Concerning **media relations**, public relations department of the bureau identified both government and private media (i.e. broadcast and print media) to deal with for the sake of effective public relations practices through press conferences and press releases mainly to communicate and promote cultural and natural resources of Oromia. For example, Oromia Broadcasting Network, Oromia Media Network, Oromia Broadcasting Service, Ethiopia Broadcasting Corporation, Fana Broadcasting Corporation, Walta Television, Kallacha Oromia Newspaper, Barisa Newspaper, Addis Zemen Newspaper, etc were identified in the annual plan of the PR department; and the study obtain similar about it from key informants interview data. From key informants data and annual plan content analysis the study indicated that there were positive relationships between the Bureau and the media. However, some times the PR department press releases were not aired, and published as they want as some key informants said. This implied that there was lack of professional public relations practices because of media give emphasizes to the newsworthy of the press releases.

Social Media: Concerning social media usage as channel of public relations practices, the responses of the interviewees were implied that usage of social media has been similar to that of traditional media. This focuses on informing the public, even if it is an opportunity to employ two-way symmetrical model of public relations. For instance, *the department employed social media as one of public relations tool, but it has weaknesses; because there is no social media expert who actively follows up comment, share and like then forward feedback for followers and friends (personal interview with I3, March, 27/2019).* Other key informants of the study agreed with the above responses. Thus, it would be better, if the department emphasizes to social media for its practices. Concerning social media the scholar Breakenridge stated that, public relations practitioners are shifting to social media as the line between online and offline promotion becomes blurry. Social media affords public relations practitioners the opportunity of reaching out to and engaging with their publics in conversation. Public relations and communications

professionals are in an excellent position to strategically guide all types of communications for their companies, including social media (Breakenridge, 2015). Similarly, in contrast to the one-way communication of traditional media, social media communication is not only interactive, but also participatory, collaborative, personal, and simultaneously communal, thus, allowing organizations to engage in publics in constant conversations, supportive behaviors, and meaningful relationships (Wang, 2015). Therefore, it is better if the department emphasis to social media such as face book and Twitter for its practices in strategic and responsible manner.

Role of public relations: public relations has different roles such as managerial and technician roles. Concerning this **I1** said that the role of public relation in the organization is providing information to the public through different tools such as brochure, magazine, and organizing event, and press release, press conferences to disseminate information for the public by means of print media and broadcast media. According to him public relations department was member of the management. The department took part in management discussion but it was not influential, because the department has been not serving the management as source of information by analyzing and interpreting about internal and external situation and trends proactively as you are asking me. Even, I did not understand public relations role like that he said (personal interview with I1, March, 27/2019). According to **I1**, the aim of public relations practices at the Bureau is creating transparency and awareness, to promote culture and tourism resources for image building, to mobilize the people to development and conservation of culture and tourism resources.

Similarly, **I2** said that the role of public relations is communicating and promoting different cultures, arts, and natural and manmade tourism resources of the region for researching, conserving, keeping, and developing through public, government, and any concerned body participation. Additionally, the interviewee said,

Creating public awareness and increasing internal tourism visit culture in line with foreign tourism attraction. To do so, the organization employs various tools: magazines, brochure, booklet, pamphlet, short documentary, website, social media, and print and broadcast media for press release and press conference. Especially for foreign tourists the organization has been using booklet,

pamphlets, and short documentary by putting and displaying at well known hotels and at tourism destination. Public relations department was member of the management, but it has no voice and is not influential in the dominant collision (personal interview with I2, March, 27/2019).

Furthermore, **I3** said, *my role in the organization has been preparing different publications such as brochures, magazines, fliers, posters, event, banner, exhibition, and organizing press conference, press release for print and broadcast media, and providing information through website, social media. So, I practice public relations using different tools mentioned above. The department has no regular publications such as magazine; most of our publications are event oriented. Public relations department is member of the management but not influential (personal interview with I3, March, 27/2019).*

Other interviewees agreed with the above responses concerning their role in practicing public relations at the Bureau; and from these the study understood that the themes of their reflections were similar to the above.

Therefore, from public relations practice tools, key informants' responses, and publications document reviewed content analyzed indicated that different public relations tools identified were not effectively employed. Additionally, the study indicated that technician role of public relations carried out at the Bureau. This implied that the managerial role of public relations such taking part in strategic planning, decision making, counseling and advising, researching, analyzing, and interpreting the trends and the environment to the management (serving as boundary spanner and communications facilitator) have not been properly practiced. Therefore, the study confirmed that the statement of Mahoney (2013), in order to manage the public image and stakeholder relationships of companies and organizations, public relations practitioners employ a variety of communication tactics, including media releases, media events, social media accounts, backgrounders, fact sheets, pamphlets, annual reports, newsletters, and other materials which implied the technician role and informational model of public relations.

However, the study recognized that, public relations is significant and primary pillars for building, developing, and sustaining the country's image of attractive touristic destination and plays the crucial role in the promotion and affirmation of tourism and touristic destination of the

country. In modern social-economic context, public relations are considered to be an important factor in the process of development and growth of tourism. They transfer consumer's messages about attractiveness, traffic infrastructure, and accommodation capacities of a touristic destination, at the same time following the pulse and needs of the target group and surrounding so that the touristic economy can adapt to the changes and needs of the public (Ilievska, 2018). Therefore, the Bureau ought to practice public relations by understanding its importance and roles in culture and tourism sector.

Model of Public Relations

Pertinent to this, from key informants' responses, publications document reviewed content analyzed, and identified public relations practices tools of the organization, the study suggested that informational model or one way communication model has been used at the Bureau. Because department has been practicing public relations to provide information to the public to create awareness through public relations tools. This realizes that the implementation of Grunig and Hunt (1984) informational model of public relations which mainly focus on providing truth and accurate information to the public. This model seems old ones and not advisable for the organization which intends to practice public relations functions for mutual understanding and long lasting harmonious relationship between the organization and the public that result in image building. According to the theoretical frameworks, open system theory and excellence theory, the study has employed clearly explain the importance of two-way symmetrical model of public relations for successful practices and for mutual understanding by entertaining or balancing both the organization and the public interests. Additionally, those theories encourage the managerial role of public relations function for further achievement of organizations goals if it practices both professionally and strategically (see chapter 2, pp. 14-19).

Professionalism

Public relations is professional practices which helps an organization to achieve its goals. In light of professionalism, the study indicates that the attention given to the profession and the practices are poor and weak. Additionally, the department has planned to practice public relations by paying attention to events and special occasion. This infers that lack of professional knowledge and poor understanding of the profession. For example, **I1** said, **In the Bureau, public**

relations practices understood as ordinary functions; without professional knowledge of public relations employees have been assigned as the public relations director and as the practitioner (personal interview with I1, March, 27/2019).

Additionally, the interviewee said, **I believe professionalism has great contributions for the success of public relations practices, but we have lack of professional knowledge, experience, and experienced practitioners. No other option, the only option will be professionally practicing.**

Likewise, I12 said,

Our Bureau's public relations department has been practicing different tasks such as stage facilitating, recording video and taking photos during meeting, and prepares publications. But, most of the publications contents were not attractive; and also the department unable to practice properly by producing quality documentary to communicate and promote culture and tourism resources which brand Oromia zones with their respective tourism destinations; and to do so we have been out sourcing because of lack of professional knowledge gaps and competencies. I think practicing in professional manner is necessary for the Bureau in the future by overcoming those existing gaps" (personal interview with I12, April, 4/2019).

Similarly, other interviewees explained their glimmer of hope for future public relations professionalism, even if less attention is being given to public relations progress in the Bureau. In case of professional practices, Kruckeberg (1998) asserted that public relation is a professional occupation which requires specialized professional education. Similarly, scholar such as Grunig (1989) has argued that public relations education is the key to developing the profession of public relations. Furthermore, concerning the profession and practitioners code of conduct the IPR Code of Conduct (2000) stated, how the practitioner deals with the media, the public, employers, clients and colleagues. The code emphasizes 'honest and proper regard for the public interest, reliable and accurate information'. The member is required to 'maintain the highest standards of professional endeavor, integrity, confidentiality, financial propriety and personal conduct' and to bring neither the Institute nor the profession into disrepute. Professional

activities must be conducted with ‘honest and responsible regard for the public interest’, and any conflict of interest must be declared to clients as soon as they arise. The clause in the old code which stated that members ‘have a positive duty at all times to respect the truth and shall not disseminate false or misleading information knowingly or recklessly, and take proper care to check all information prior to its dissemination’ is now reflected in a principle to ‘deal honestly and fairly in business’ and ‘never knowingly misleading clients, employers, colleagues and fellow professionals about the nature of representation’ (Theaker, 2004). Therefore, the Bureau have to give due emphasize to the profession and practices to meet both the organization the public interests.

Public Relations Strategy

Concerning this **I1** said, *the Bureau has no its own public relations strategy, but it has been practicing by adopting regional government communication affairs office communication strategy which stated as two-way communication between the government and public (personal interview with I1, March, 27/2019).*

Likewise, **I2** said,

The organization has no its own public relations strategy. But, we have been practicing by employing regional government communication affairs Office communication strategy. This strategy focuses on creating awareness on government’s policies, plan, program, achievements, and strategy by giving information, and to build good relationship between the government and the public. However, from the existing trends and poor understanding, public relations practices at the Bureau focuses on process and event oriented rather than strategically result oriented (personal interview with I2, March, 27/2019).

Pertinent to public relations strategy, other key informants of the study agreed with the above responses provided. Concerning public relations strategy, even if the interviewees said that the department has been conducting two-way communication, the tools of public relations employed by the organization suggested that Grunig and Hunt’s informational model of public relations. Furthermore, in relation to public relations strategy, the study implied that poor attention has been given to public relations which might hindered practices success, and confused

practitioners. In spite of the fact that, it is preferable if the Bureau either embrace the adapted strategy from regional communication affairs office or clearly set its public relations strategy in line with two-way symmetrical model of public relations in culture and tourism sector. Because, the goal of two-way symmetrical model of public relations is creating mutual understanding through interactive communication and serving both the Bureau and the public interests. Concerning this Grunig (1992) in excellence theory stated that, excellent public relations department model more of their communication programs on this model than on the press agency, public information, or two-way asymmetrical model. Furthermore, according to the International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts, and Literature (2018), two-way symmetrical model of public relations applicable for tourism through concrete forms and instruments with the purpose of drawing attention, building social profile and credibility, increasing the placements and lowering promotion costs. Identification of strategic elements of managing public relations model determined by strategic development lines of tourism with the special strategy of public relations as an integral part of national strategy touristic development of tourism of a country.

4.2.3. Public Relations Understanding

The Bureau has been practicing public relations functions. From key informants' responses, and document reviewed content analysis the study indicated that public relations understanding among interviewees were poor and not encouraging. Not only this but also public relations is misunderstood, misperceived, and wrong attitudes towards it.

For example, concerning public relations understanding **I5** said,

Public relations practices are understood as easy and ordinary functions. Without professional background any person has been assigned as public relations director and as practitioner. Including me, many of our employees see public relations functions as propaganda and work of cadre; since government communication and political communication were mixed in the Bureau (personal interview with I5, April, 3/2019).

Likewise, **I2** said, **public relations understanding progressing from time to time in the organization. In spite of the fact that personally, I have poor understanding of public relations as a communicator (personal interview with I2, March, 27/2019.** Similarly, **I3** said,

In scientific point of view, as a practitioner, I have lack of understanding about public relations. I understood public relations practices are only for positive implementation and building good image of the government, and not to say any weakness or negative sides of the government, and I understood it as one way communication for providing information to public (personal interview with I3, March, 27/2019).

Furthermore, pertinent to public relations understanding **I4** said, **public relations works for government communication affairs emphasizing on policies, plan, and implementation including political issues, whereas promotion group works on promoting culture and tourism resources. Promotion works are necessary for the Bureau than public relations because it is free from political influence, and even more it got great attention than public relation (personal interview with I4, April, 3/2019).** Similarly, other interviewees agreed with the above responses. However, several interviewees were not refraining from saying that there has been unnecessary competition between government communication group and promotion group within the department. Because, their works overlap and confuse them, since they are practicing on culture and tourism resources by employing the same public relations tools. From interviewee's responses the study suggested that there is misunderstanding about public relations and promotion in the Bureau. Public relations is the umbrella when the study compared and contrasted it with promotion. However, both the public relations and the profession are wrongly understood in the Organization as a supporting tool of promotion which is one means of marketing mix and as ordinary activities which require no professionalism.

Likewise, **I10** said that public relations practices did not create interactive communication among internal stakeholders and directorates of the Bureau. Public relations practices with internal stakeholders did not get attention and it was weak because of poor understanding, and most of the practitioners are not professionals (interview data of I10, March, 30/2019).” Similarly, **I3** said, **there is no strategically prepared tool for internal stakeholders' communication. For that the bureau has been employed face to face communication, and**

regular reporting monthly and quarterly (personal interview with I3, March 27/2019). In the same way, other key informants of the study agreed with the above responses regarding public relations practices with internal stakeholders. Similarly, the study indicated that there were no public relations tools intended in the annual plan for internal publics except face-to-face communication. Therefore, from interviews responses and documents reviewed content analysis, the study indicated that poor understanding of public relations among participants of the study which implied that as professional discipline public relations require attention at the Bureau.

Definitions of public relations: Key informants of the study define public relations in their own views. Some of the definitions provided by them relatively have similar concepts with scholars' operational definition of public relations but mainly confined to communication between the government and the public that intend to provide information to create awareness; and to promote culture and tourism resources. For instance, **I1**, defined public relations as, *public relations is communication conducted between the government and the public to build good relationship. It is communicating with the public to give information for them about policies, plan, implementation, and strategies of the government for creating public awareness, and mutual understanding (personal interview with I1, March 27/2019).*

Similarly, **I8** defined public relations as such, *public relation is communication between the government and the public to create good relationship and to build positive image of the region” (personal interview with I8, April, 30/2019).* Furthermore, **I4** defined public relations as, *public relations is a bridge between the organization and the public through different means of communication and public relation practices tools for providing information (personal interview with I4, April, 3/2019).* The other key of informants' definitions provided had similar themes with the above. In their definitions, the interviewees have missed the management and strategic communication perspectives of public relations.

According to the 1978, the First World Assembly of Public Relations Associations in Mexico public relation is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organizational leaders, and implementing planned programs of action which will serve both the Organization and the public interest (Newsom et al. 2000). Likewise, Harlow (1976), defined public relations as, public relations is a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and

cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinions; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change; serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools.

Therefore, the study indicated that poor public relations understanding among the interviewees. Their understanding of public relations endorsed Grunig and Hunt (1984) view which stated as public relations is a young profession. The profession has its roots in press agency and propaganda, activities that society generally holds in low esteem. Most of its practitioners have little training in the social sciences. Few have been trained in public relations. We must admit that many people today who call themselves public relations practitioners still do not measure up to professional standards. True professionals possess a body of knowledge and have mastered communication techniques that are not known by the average citizen. They also have a set of values and a code of ethics that discourage the use of their knowledge and technical skills for antisocial purposes (Theaker, 2004).

4.2.4. The Challenges and Opportunities of Public Relations Practices of the Bureau

As the study understood from the interviewees' responses, and publication documents reviewed content analysis the organization has different challenges and opportunities in practicing public relations.

Challenges of public relations practices: According to **I1**, *public relations practices are vital for the organization. But, the Bureau faced challenges such as lack of professional human resources, language constraint, public relations misunderstanding at all levels practitioners, management, and organizational (personal interview with I1, March, 27/2019).*

Similarly, **I2**, said, *when I strategically evaluate public relations practices, there are many challenges such as lack of professional knowledge and understanding, poor attention given to public relations, high turnover, assigning the director and the practitioners without profession, and lack of budget.* Furthermore, **I3** said, *the major challenges I have been faced while*

practicing public relations are lack of understanding as a practitioner, wrong perception and attitude pertinent to public relations practices, and manipulation, lack of professional capacity building training and educational opportunity, and undermining the practices as ordinary activities which require no profession and poor attention given to public relations (personal interview with I3, March, 27/2019).

Likewise, **I6** said that the department has planned to practice different public relations tools to provide information to the public and to promote culture and tourism resources but some of the tools planned were not implemented properly due to lack of budget. The other challenges are poor management support for public relations and lack of clear job descriptions for each practitioner within the department. These were the main challenges he has been encountered (personal Interview with **I6**, April, 3/2019). In addition to the above stated, while practicing public relations **I7** has faced that challenges such as lack of management support for public relations, interference of authority, and poor flow of information with internal and external publics, and poor technology usage and handling (personal interview with **I7**, April, 5/2019). Most of the interviewees said that there was no significant measurement taken to overcome challenges of practitioners concerning public relations practices by giving further educational opportunity and training. For example, concerning that, **I11** said, *Frankly speaking, practitioners did not get on job necessary professional capacity building training, and further educational opportunities, because these opportunities are rare still now (personal interview with **I11**, April, 5/2019).*

In addition to this **I12** said, **public relations department did not get attention because it considered as supporting staffs; and when compared with others directorates. On the other hand, their functions were not seen this much. We will improve their budget in the future based on its activities (personal interview with **I12**, April, 4/2019).** Similarly, from the annual plan document reviewed content analysis, the study implied that the department was planned for capacity building training but not implemented yet because of limited opportunities of training and further education. Likewise, the department has planned to practice public relations through various tools but some of them were unpracticed due to budget constraint. In addition to this, language constraint related to understanding of the profession for communicating and promoting culture and tourism resources on international level (i.e. in English) is another challenge of the

practitioners. Furthermore, management support for public relations at the Bureau is poor which suggested that public relations understood as ordinary practices.

Other key informants' responses, and *the annual plan* document reviewed content analyzed encourage the above statements concerning challenges of the public relations practices. Therefore, the department would have to work hard to take strategic measurement to overcome such challenges by paying attention to public relations practices and to the profession.

Opportunities of public relations practices: Concerning this, **I2** said, *the opportunities of public relations practices are having abundant culture and tourism resources, public and government interest for communicating and promotion of the resources*" (personal interview with I2, March, 27/2019). Likewise, **I3** said, *the opportunities of public relations practices are having untouched various tourism resources, media expansion, good working environment, and currently attention given for culture and tourism development and promotion*" (interview data, 27/3/2019). Furthermore, interviewee I5 said that the Bureau has prepared promotion strategy to use available opportunities of public relations practices concerning culture and tourism resources.

Other key informants' responses, and *the annual plan* document reviewed content analyzed encourage the above statements concerning opportunities of the public relations practices for communicating and promoting culture and tourism resources. Therefore, the study indicated that the Bureau has been paying more attention to promotion rather than public relations which imply poor understanding and less management support for public relations.

Weaknesses and strengths of public relations practices: As the study suggested from the participant's responses and publication documents reviewed content analysis there were different weaknesses and strengths in practicing public relations.

For instance, **I3** said, *the weaknesses of public relations practices are unable to properly communicate and promote abundant and untouched culture and natural and human made tourism resources to brand Oromia with different tourism resources; and generate significant income which benefit both the government and local community nearby tourism destination at large, and lack of public relations strategy, whereas the strengths of the practices were preparing different public relations tools on events to provide information and promote various*

culture and tourism resources about indigenous democracy Gada system and 'Irreechaa' celebration, and also communicating and promoting about different cultural and human made heritages and natural resources of the Oromia as much as possible (personal interview with I3, March, 27/2019).

Additionally, **I9** said that the weakness of public relations practices were unable to create awareness about public relations itself among internal publics to overcome misconception and wrong attitudes towards public relations, lack of professional promotion of culture and tourism resources, and lack of necessary equipment (personal interview with I9, 30/3/2019). Similarly, other key informants of the study agreed with the strengths, and weakness of professionally practicing public relations functions stated above and their responses encourages it. Therefore, paying attention to professional public relations practices have great contribution for communicating and promoting Oromia cultural and human made and natural resources which result in achieving organizational goals and image building at large.

The study summarized the PR Department’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunity, and challenges as such

Internal situation analysis		External situation analysis	
Strengths	Weakness	Opportunity	Challenges/Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Availability of public relations plan ➤ Identified public relations practices tools and target audience ➤ Having promotion strategy ➤ Having Marketing strategy ➤ Commitment for professional practices ➤ Practitioners are committed for change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Poor understanding of public relations ➤ No specific public relations tools identified for each target audiences ➤ Irrelevant content in the publications ➤ Poor documentation/archive ➤ Lack of clear public relations strategy and sublimation of public relations to promotion ➤ Poor flow of information (within and out) ➤ The department thought in constraint ➤ Lack professional, experienced practitioners, and high turnover ➤ Lack of professional capacity building training ➤ Lack of clear job description for each practitioners ➤ Employed one-way communication/informational model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ untouched and abundant cultural, natural and manmade tourism resources ➤ Media expansion of both government and private media ➤ Technological advancement such as social media ➤ Availability of public relations and strategic communication field of study at MA level at AAU ➤ Good work environment, ➤ Attention given to culture and tourism resources communication and promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Lack of budget ➤ Political pressure/interference ➤ Lack of the management support for public relations ➤ Limited professional development opportunity ➤ Poor technology usage and handling ➤ Globalization and embracing modernity against indigenous culture ➤ Lack of infrastructures at tourism destinations, ➤ Increasing destruction of culture and tourism resources, and illegal settlement around it

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1. Conclusion

After a serious analysis of the findings of in-depth interview and publications documents reviewed contents analysis the study has drawn the conclusion as follow.

Public relations practices are considered to an important factor in the process of development and growth of culture and tourism. Thus while, the study analyzed public relations practices of Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau. The study has identified various public relations practices tools such as brochure, magazine, booklet, pamphlets, fliers, posters, exhibitions, website, organizing event, and also press conference, and press release which aim to provide information to the public. From the public relations practices of the Bureau, the study suggested that public information model and the technician role of public relations (i.e. writing and preparing different PR tools such as magazine, brochure) which indicated that the department was not empowered and not influential in dominant collision.

Therefore, the managerial role of public relations practices taking part in strategic planning, decision making, counseling, analyzing, researching, and interpreting the trends and the environment to the management, serving as boundary spanner were not properly practiced. Likewise, two-way symmetrical model of public relations were not employed what ought to be practiced for mutual understanding and interactive communication between the Bureau and the public. As stated in the statement of the problem, the study suggested that public relations concept is new discipline at the Bureau even if hither to less attention has been paid to its progress in the organization.

Furthermore, public relations has been misunderstood and wrongly perceived by practitioners and staffs which implied that public relations were not successfully practiced at the Bureau. Likewise, the study found that the Bureau has no clear public relations strategy, but it has promotion strategy which implies that high priority given to promotion rather than public relation. Furthermore, it indicated that poor attention and misunderstanding in light of public relations and strategic communication science and profession.

In public relations functions employees are considered as internal stakeholders. However, the Organization has not set appropriate public relations tools for internal public except face-to-face communication and regular reporting. It would be better if the Bureau set important tools for internal publics since communication is the life blood of all organizations (Fombrun & Riel, 2007). The Bureau would have to put in consideration internal publics as stakeholders for the sake of harmonious relationship and mutual understanding between the management and employees which contribute to the success of organizational objectives.

As stated in the specific objectives, the study sorted out challenges and opportunities, weakness and strengths of public relations practices at the Bureau. The major challenges found were lack of understanding due to limited professional development opportunity and using public relations practices as government mouthpiece/political influence and lack of budget. On the other hand, the main opportunities of public relations are availability of untouched and abundant culture and tourism resources, technological advancement, social media, media expansion, and attention given to promotion of culture and tourism resources.

Likewise, the study identified that the strengths and weaknesses of public relations practices. Therefore, the weaknesses of public relation practices sorted out were poor practices due to lack of professional and experienced practitioners, problem of capacity building training, lack of management support for public relations, necessary equipment, poor attention given to public relations, and misconception among practitioners; whereas the strength of public relations practices are having public relations plan, identified public relations tools and targeted audiences.

Finally, public relations practices would be evaluated by impact or result it brought strategically instead of evaluating the practices by different tools prepared and its copies. The organization set different public relations tools for practicing, but there were no budget allocated and responsible practitioners for each particular public relations tool. Therefore, public relations practices of the Bureau need prime attention for successful practices that contribute for the vision and mission of the Bureau's achievement.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings the study forwarded the following recommendations:

- The Bureau should pay special attention to public relations and its profession as well as the department should be dominated by professionals and assign right person at right position for successful public relations practices which meet both the Bureau's and the publics' interest mutually. Likewise, public relations practices in Culture and tourism sector has to be free from the influence of the ruling party and serving as government mouthpiece.
- The Bureau have to employ two-way symmetrical model of public relations as best strategy to create mutual understanding and to sustain positive relationship between the Bureau and the public by entertaining both sides interest instead of using informational model of public relations through various public relations practices tools. It is better for the department considering employees as key stakeholders and set tools for them which strengthen internal communication and make smooth flow of information among employees and the management of the organization.
- The public relations practices have to strategic and result oriented rather than event and processes oriented. The practices success evaluated in terms of the result or impact brought rather than numbers of publications copies or practices outlets. It would be better if the organization have regular publications such as magazine and newsletter either in print or electronic magazine and newsletter for the external and the internal publics respectively. Likewise, it is better if the department should improve its documentation and archive system.
- Professional capacity building training and further educational opportunity should be given for the practitioners to overcome their professional knowledge gabs and challenges concerning a public relations and its profession. Additionally, public relations department would be empowered to play managerial role such as counseling the management, strategic planning, researching, influential in the dominant collision for the sake of success and progress. The department ought to be analyzes internal and external situations; predict its trends and interpret the prospective consequences to the management about either positive or negative impact on the relationship between both the Bureau and the public. Furthermore, the department serves as a boundary-spanner and communication facilitator between the Bureau and the public for mutual understanding.

- Strategically, the Bureau have to commitment to professional public relations practices role in strengthening the culture and tourism sector and by recognizing that culture and tourism development could play a vital role in creating job opportunities and alleviating poverty which result in the overall economic growth of the region. Therefore, public relations in culture and tourism sector would have to get strategic attention in the Bureau.

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Appendices I

Addis Ababa University Graduate School of Journalism and Communication Program Unit of Public Relations and Strategic Communication (PRSC)

Interview Guidelines

Dear interviewee,

These questions are prepared to analyze the views of the deputy head and the public relations director of Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau regarding the practices of public relations and understanding in your Organization. The purpose of this interview is to gather data for the partial fulfillment of the MA thesis in PRSC. So, you are kindly requested to give your views because your reflections are very important for the success of the study. Personal profile (only used for this research purpose):

Gender: M _____, F _____

Position/Profession: _____

Educational status: _____

Field of study: _____

Experience in PR practices: _____ (years).

First of all I would like to thank you to be available for the interview.

1. Does the Bureau have public relations/communication department/unit?
2. Could you please tell the meaning of public relations?
3. How do you see the understanding of public relations within your Organization?
4. How do you discuss the role of public relations in your organization view?
5. Any suggestion you want to add concerning the public relations practices of the Organization?

Appendices II

Dear interviewee,

These questions are prepared to analyze practitioners' views and understanding pertinent to public relations practices at Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau. The purpose of this interview is to gather data for the partial fulfillment of the MA thesis in PRSC. So, you are kindly requested to give your views because your reflections are very important for the success of the study. Personal profile (only used for this research purpose):

Gender: M _____, F _____

Position/profession _____

Educational status: _____

Field of study: _____

Experience in PR practices: _____ (years).

1. For you what is public relations?
2. How do you explain your (practitioners) major roles in the Organization?
3. What are the challenges you may face while practicing public relations?
4. In what ways the Bureau promoting Culture and Tourism?
5. Any suggestion you want to add concerning the public relations practices of the Organization?

Appendices III

Dear interviewee,

These questions are prepared to analyze the views of employees of Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau regarding public relations. The purpose of this interview is to gather data for the partial fulfillment of the MA thesis in Public Relations and Strategic Communication. So, you are kindly requested to give your views because your reflections are very important for the success of the study. Personal profile (used only for this research purpose):

Gender: M _____, F _____

Position/Job title: _____

Educational status: _____

Field of study: _____

Experience: _____ (years).

1. Do you know the public relations practices tools of Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau? If yes what are they? If no, why?
2. How do you discuss the public relations practices importance in building harmonious relationships between the Bureau/Organization and the employees?
3. In what ways you are getting information from PR department?
4. Any idea you want to add concerning the public relations practices of the Bureau?

Appendices IV

S/N	Socio-demographic/profile of interviewees	Response	Frequency	%
1	Gender	Male	11	91.6
		Female	1	8.4
		Total	12	100
2	Age	21-30	1	8.4
		31-40	10	83.2
		41-50	1	8.4
		>50	0	0
		Total	12	100
3	Level of education	Degree	11	91.6
		Masters	1	8.4
		Total	12	100
4	Experience	1-5	7	58.3
		5-10	4	33.3
		>10	1	8.4
		Total	12	100
5	Field of study	Journalism and communication	2	16.7
		Language (Afan Oromo)	2	16.7
		Others	8	66.6
		Total	12	100

Appendices V

Table1: Code of Interviewees for In-depth Interview

No.	Structured In depth Interview		Data collection period	Place
	Interviewees	Code of Interviewees		
1	Interviewee 1	I1	27/3/2019 -5/4/2019	Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau
2	Interviewee 2	I2		>> >> >>>
3	Interviewee 3	I3		>> >> >>>
4	Interviewee 4	I4		>> >> >>>
5	Interviewee 5	I5		>> >> >>>
6	Interviewee 6	I6		>> >> >>>
7	Interviewee 7	I7		>> >> >>>
8	Interviewee 8	I8		>> >> >>>
9	Interviewee 9	I9		>> >> >>>
10	Interviewee 10	I10		>> >> >>>
11	Interviewee 11	I11		>> >> >>>
12	Interviewee 12	I12		>> >> >>>