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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS & HUMANITIES,

SCHOOL OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

**“EVALUATING THE PRACTICE OF PR IN CUSTOMERS COMPLIANT
HANDLING: THE CASE OF COMMERCIAL BANK OF ETHIOPIA”**

BY

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JUNE, 2025

**“Evaluating the practice of PR in customer compliant handling: The Case of
Commercial Bank of Ethiopia”**

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**Research Thesis Submitted to the College of Humanities Language Studies,
Journalism and Communication Studies in Partial Fulfilments of the
Requirement for the Degree of Masters of Art in Public Relations and
Strategic Communication**

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

June, 2025

Certification

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “Evaluating the practice of PR in customer compliant handling: The Case of Commercial Bank of Ethiopia”, submitted to Addis Ababa University for the award of the Degree of master in public relations and strategic communication and is a research work carried out by Behailu Eyosyas, under our guidance and supervision. Therefore, we hereby declare that no part of this thesis has been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

Advisor’s Name

Date & Signature

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, prepared under the guidance of my advisor. All sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged. I further confirm that the thesis has not submitted either in part or in full to any other higher learning institution for the purpose of earning any degree.

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Acknowledgement

I am always thankful for Almighty God for everything that's happened and happening in my life. I then would like to thank my whole families and most especially to my beloved mom who always is concerned my wellbeing until this breadth we've.

My respected advisor, Amanuel Abdisa (Asst. Prof.) who has been my advisor, my guidance and my teacher in giving me his most necessary comments and suggestions to finalize my study, I'm very grateful sir.

With all the humbleness I have my gratitude shall be extended to Dr. Abdulaziz Dino and the whole department's staffs for they were friendly, understanding and listeners to solve the issues we took, for the complaints we've had.

The last but not the least to be acknowledge are my classmates: Dawit Astatiqy for abridging me to the people I want to get for the info I wanted, Barnabas Bekele who was the greatest motivation to finish this study even I was in desperate health condition, Tesfaye Solomon the man who has had the big brother role in helping me out in many things I needed. and the rest I didn't mention, too.

I thank you all!!!

Abstract

*This study examines the effectiveness of **Public Relations** (PR) work in handling customers' complaints in the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE) case. With an awareness of the significance of customer satisfaction as a key driver of **banks sector** success, the study aims to investigate **complaint management** practices, identify areas where improvement can be made, and examine the role of PR in the development of a good customer relationship and organization's reputation. Using mixed-methods, 141 bank customers were surveyed with structured questionnaires and employees and stakeholders with key informant interviews. Quantitative testing using SPSS showed moderate perceptions of efficiency in **complaint management** and handling with substantial variation allowing for improvement. The study illustrates technological integration and responsiveness is significantly perceived to be favorable, yet the remaining areas within the clarity of communication, speed of response, and transparency of process. The study identifies the strategic importance of PR in managing customer perception, crises' reputation management, and building trust. The recommendations are for incorporating new technology tools, standardizing complaint procedure, augmenting staff training in empathetic communication, and incorporating mechanisms of continuous feedback. The research contributes in building the overall knowledge regarding service quality improvement in developing economies and offers practical implications for bank organizations that seek to strengthen customer loyalty through effective public relations and complaint handling practices.*

Keywords: Customer Satisfaction, Public Relations, Complaint Management and Banking Sector

Evaluating the practice of PR in customer compliant handling: The Case of Commercial Bank
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

In the contemporary banking sector, customer satisfaction is a critical determinant of organizational success and sustainability (Zairi, 2000). The practice of public relations (PR) plays a pivotal role in managing customer complaints, as it directly influences customers' perceptions and loyalty towards an institution (Fawzy & Dardir, 2021).

The Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, being one of the largest financial institutions in the country, faces the continuous challenge of effectively addressing customer grievances while maintaining a positive public image. Given the dynamic nature of customer expectations, it is essential for the bank to cultivate robust PR practices that not only resolve complaints efficiently but also reinforce customer trust and satisfaction (Fombrun & Gardberg, 2000).

The contemporary business landscape, particularly within the highly competitive and trust-dependent financial services sector, places immense strategic value on effective Public Relations (PR). Modern PR has evolved beyond mere publicity to encompass the proactive management of relationships and reputation through ethical communication and responsive action (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Central to maintaining positive stakeholder relationships, especially with customers, is the organization's ability to effectively handle complaints. Complaints represent a critical juncture: mishandled, they escalate dissatisfaction, damage reputation, and lead to customer churn; handled effectively, they become opportunities for service recovery, relationship strengthening, and organizational learning (Davidow, 2003; Johnston & Mehra, 2002).

The banking industry globally faces intense scrutiny regarding customer service quality. Customers entrust banks with their financial well-being, making perceived fairness, responsiveness, and resolution efficacy paramount. Research consistently shows that efficient

and empathetic complaint handling is a significant determinant of customer satisfaction, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth in financial services (Estiri et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2010). Conversely, poor complaint handling is a primary driver of customer defection and reputational damage (Tax & Brown, 1998). In this context, the PR function plays a crucial role, not just in communicating during crises, but in embedding a customer-centric ethos within complaint resolution processes, ensuring communication aligns with organizational values and rebuilds trust (Ledingham, 2003).

In developing economies, including those in Africa, the banking sector is often characterized by rapid growth, increasing competition, and evolving customer expectations, yet frequently hampered by legacy systems, resource constraints, and sometimes bureaucratic cultures (Abrham, 2016). Ethiopia exemplifies this dynamic. Its financial sector has undergone significant liberalization and expansion, yet the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE) remains the dominant player, holding the largest market share in assets, deposits, branches, and customer base (National Bank of Ethiopia [NBE], 2023). This dominance presents unique challenges. While scale offers advantages, it can also lead to perceptions of institutional rigidity, slower response times, and potential complacency regarding service quality and complaint responsiveness (Tafere, 2018). As competition gradually intensifies with the entry of new private banks and the growing influence of financial technology (fintech), CBE's ability to retain its vast customer base hinges increasingly on superior customer experience, where complaint handling is a vital component (Deribe & Regasa, 2020).

Studies focusing on the Ethiopian banking sector, including CBE, often highlight service quality gaps and customer satisfaction issues. Common concerns include long waiting times, perceived lack of staff empathy, procedural complexities, and delays in resolving issues, including

complaints (Mesay, 2015; Tafere, 2018). While some research touches on customer satisfaction or service quality dimensions (e.g., Zeleke, 2018), there is a conspicuous gap in dedicated research examining how the *Public Relations function specifically* is integrated into and practices within the customer complaint handling process at CBE. PR's potential role in shaping communication protocols, training staff on interpersonal communication during complaints, managing the reputational fallout from unresolved issues, and using complaint data for proactive reputation management remains underexplored in this specific context.

Understanding the current PR practices within CBE's complaint handling is therefore critical. Does the PR department have a defined strategic role in designing, monitoring, or evaluating complaint resolution procedures? How are PR principles of transparency, responsiveness, and relationship-building operationalized when customers voice grievances? What communication channels are utilized, and how effective are they perceived to be? Are PR professionals involved in analyzing complaint trends to inform service improvements and communication strategies? Answering these questions is essential for CBE to enhance its customer relationship management, mitigate reputational risks associated with poor complaint handling, and maintain its competitive edge in an evolving market. This research seeks to fill this gap by providing a detailed evaluation of how Public Relations is practiced within the specific domain of customer complaint handling at Ethiopia's largest and most systemically important financial institution.

Customer complaints are a fact of life in any service industry, and the manner in which a company deals with them can significantly influence its reputation (Tax et al., 1998). For the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, embracing quality PR when dealing with issues of customers is essential for lessening unfavorable attitudes and potentially damaging publicity (Kassa & Tesfaye, 2022).

This involves understanding the nuances of customer relationships, actively engaging with clients, and employing strategic communication channels that foster transparency and responsiveness (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Effective complaint handling through PR can transform negative experiences into opportunities for customer loyalty, thereby enhancing the bank's competitive advantage in a crowded marketplace (Homburg et al., 2006).

This study aims to evaluate the current practices of PR in customer complaint handling at the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, focusing on both the effectiveness of these practices and the challenges faced in their implementation. By investigating customer perceptions and satisfaction levels regarding the bank's complaint management strategies, the research intends to identify areas for improvement and recommend best practices tailored to the unique needs of the bank's clientele (Bennett et al., 2005). Such insights could be invaluable not only for the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia but also for other financial institutions seeking to enhance their customer service and PR strategies in an increasingly competitive environment.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing importance of effective public relations (PR) strategies in managing customer complaints, the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia face challenges in adequately addressing customer grievances. Research indicates that effective complaint handling is vital in fostering customer loyalty and improving overall customer satisfaction (Davidow, 2003).

With all extensive scholarship on public relations (PR) and customer complaint management in the banking sector globally, there are gaps like Geographical and Institutional Context Gap in state owned banks in Ethiopia characterized by monopolistic structures, bureaucratic processes; Grunig's Excellence Theory (Grunig, 2009) advocates symmetrical communication for complaint handling, its applicability in Ethiopia's high-power-distance cultural context and

methodological gap as few studies employ mixed-methods approaches to triangulate: Customer satisfaction data with PR staff experiences (Creswell, 2014) Policy documents (e.g., CBE's PR manuals) with frontline implementation challenges .

Similarly, Watson and Pitt (2009) observe that without full metrics, it is challenging to determine how complaint handling affects customer satisfaction and overall PR outcomes. Harrison (2018) also emphasizes that without proper evaluation mechanisms, banks cannot safely quantify whether their complaint resolution efforts positively affect their reputation.

Furthermore, Meyer and Schwager (2007) stress the importance of constant monitoring of customer interactions, e.g., complaints, to improve PR strategies an area that is often overlooked in banking operations. In general, these studies reveal that the absence of systematic analysis hinders banks from understanding and improving the efficiency of their complaint handling and PR strategies, thereby injecting significant uncertainties into their overall customer relationship management processes.

However, existing practices in customer complaint management at banks have not been sufficiently evaluated, leading to uncertainties regarding the efficacy of their public relations (PR) strategies in resolving customer issues. The lacuna in available literature is the lack of overall systematic examination of the complaint-handling of the banks today and its role as such in successful PR campaigns as well as public customer confidence overall. While previous studies have mentioned that complaints are proving to be difficult for the majority of banks to fulfill and that inappropriate responses also cause damage to customer relationships (Mohammed & Javed, 2020; Asif et al., 2023; Tran & Le, 2022; Khan & Ghafoor, 2021), few studies have considered specifically where complaint management procedures fall short and how the latter contributes to the strategic outcomes of PR efforts. This gap indicates the need for thorough

assessment and identification of targeted improvement to develop complaint resolution capacity and restore or bolster customer trust.

In Ethiopia, the effect of these deficiencies in complaint management practice is that Specifically customer satisfaction and loyalty are greatly compromised, leading to negative perceptions of the banks and even customer loss (Tadesse, & Mengesha, 2020). Recent studies highlight that approximately all banks and providers still do not have extensive evaluation processes for their complaint handling procedures, which prevents accurate measurement of their efficiency and effectiveness (Liao, 2020; Kivihotan & Kivihotan, 2021).

Literature indicates that particularly in Ethiopia, the lack of adequate assessment of complaint management practices (Hussen & Zewdie, 2022; Abebe & Woldemariam, 2023) leaves such adverse effects unaddressed, underlining the need for research to identify specific weaknesses and improve complaint-handling processes. The absence of a uniform approach to public relations in customer complaint handling at the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia can lead to inconsistent customer experience and perceptions that can weaken customer trust and satisfaction. There is evidence in comparable contexts that a lack of standardized complaint handling procedures results in inconsistency in service quality and customer perceptions.

For example, Hussen and Zewdie (2022) found that incoherent complaint handling practices in Ethiopian banks were the reason for customer dissatisfaction and lower loyalty. Additionally, Abebe and Woldemariam (2023) indicate that without a uniform approach, customers may perceive the bank's responses as arbitrary or unprofessional, which further erodes trust. Therefore, having a system of complaint handling standardized is important to ensure uniform, positive customer experiences and improved overall perceptions of the quality of the bank's service.

Previous studies have shown that organizations lacking systematic PR protocols in complaint management risk alienating their clientele (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002). Such inconsistencies can hinder the bank's reputation, as customers may share negative experiences more readily than positive ones. Therefore, a comprehensive evaluation of the bank's current PR practices in customer complaint handling is essential in developing a more structured strategy to enhance customer relations and mitigate the risks associated with poor complaint management.

Despite the burgeoning body of literature on customer complaint handling, particularly in global contexts, there is a conspicuous dearth of empirical studies focused specifically on Ethiopia's banking sector. While substantial research has been conducted in developed markets regarding effective complaint management strategies and their impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Davidow, 2003; McCole, 2004).

The research gap identified is that these complaint handling systems have not been adequately contextualized to the Ethiopian socio-economic and cultural situation. This is crucial since Ethiopia's banking industry has a peculiar blend of customer expectations shaped by rapidly evolving digital banking solutions and human face-to-face interactions. As noted by Hussen and Zewdie (2022), the majority of the frameworks that were established elsewhere do not take into account the distinctive cultural rules, communication styles, and technology adoption levels in Ethiopia. The utilization of one-size-fits-all frameworks can hence result in ineffective complaint handling that cannot respond to local customer needs and expectations.

The majority of Ethiopian customers remain to work in an emerging banking industry where trust, cultural concerns, and societal values are major determinants of their expectations of service and responses to complaints. While sparse specific quantitative data on complaint handling in Ethiopia are available, some studies provide interesting insights.

For instance, Yohannes (2020) indicates that approximately 65% of Ethiopian bank customers have low trust in bank services, partly due to unbalanced complaint resolution. Similarly, Desta (2021) set that 70% of customers need face-to-face contacts based on cultural expectations to handle service problems, so digital or impersonal complaint mechanisms are not ideal for the purpose.

While research emphasizes the importance of responsive service for customer satisfaction, there is a lack of studies specifically examining how complaints are managed within Ethiopian banks like the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. For example, common complaints include delays in resolving issues, perceived insensitivity from staff, and bureaucratic hurdles, which often lead to customer frustration (Tibebu & Kidane, 2021). Evidence suggests that inadequate complaint handling contributes to low trust and dissatisfaction among customers. Without a deeper understanding of how these complaints are addressed from both customer and employee perspectives, banks may find it challenging to develop effective complaint management systems that meet customer expectations and improve service quality.

This study aims to fill this critical research gap by providing a detailed examination of complaint management practices at CBE, thereby contributing to the broader knowledge base in the field of service management within developing economies.

1.3. General Objective

The general objective of this study is to evaluate the practice of PR in customer complaint handling in Commercial Bank of Ethiopia's customer service.

1.3.1. Specific Objectives

1. to evaluate the effectiveness of current complaint handling practice of CBE.
2. to examine the practices of complaint handling areas for improvement in CBE.

3. to analyze the roles of PR complaint handling strategy.
4. to assess the challenges of complaint handling strategy in CBE.

1.4. Research Questions

1. How effective are the current complaint handling in CBE?
2. What are the possible improvement areas of complaint handling practice of CBE?
3. What are the roles of PR in complaint handling process in CBE?
4. What are the main challenges of complaint handling strategies of CBE?

1.5. Scope of the Study

The scope of this study focused on evaluating the practice of PR in customer complaint handling: focusing on Kidist Silassie and Piassa branches of commercial bank. These branches are one of the most highly visited branches by many customers. They relatively have many windows to give services for many customers, who most of the times are seen lining up to get services. Since they are found in the heart of the city and the relative proximity one to another; and one is found under the historic Cathedral of Kidist Silassie, where tourists visit and use the bank on their way, too.

The other branch which is in Piassa, where once the too many city dwellers, business owners and other people's activities took place, now becomes a branch visited by investors and other foreign people. In addition to this the employee there and the frequent customers of the bank are familiar to the researcher and his assistance to gather information from. In general, both Kidist Silassie and Piassa Commercial Bank outlets include their location, accessibility, size of the branch, infrastructure, employees' experience, business processes, management routines, and clientele, all of which influence service quality and customer satisfaction.

It investigated the existing complaint resolution processes employed by CBE, analyze customer experiences and perceptions regarding these processes, and measure the direct effect of effective complaint handling on customer loyalty. The research also identified challenges encountered by both customers and employees in the complaint management system, as well as, assessed the role of technology in facilitating and improving these processes.

The study included the selected branches of CBE customers who have submitted complaints within the past year, as well as staff involved in complaint resolution, ensuring that the findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between complaint management, customer satisfaction, and loyalty in the context of CBE.

1.6. Significance of the study

The significance of this study on the practice of PR in customer compliant handling: A case study of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia's customer service can be outlined as follows:

- Understanding how effective handling of complaints influences customer satisfaction can help CBE improve its service delivery. By identifying best practices in complaint resolution, CBE can enhance the overall customer experience, leading to higher satisfaction levels.
- By outlining how timely and effective resolution of complaints can lead to stronger customer relationships, CBE can implement strategies that foster loyalty, reducing churn rates and increasing retention.
- The findings can inform training programs for staff members, ensuring that employees are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively handle customer complaints. Additionally, the study can help formulate policies that prioritize customer concerns in daily operations.

- Understanding the existing challenges in complaint management may lead to the identification of inefficiencies within CBE's complaint resolution processes. This can encourage the adoption of new technologies and practices that improve efficiency, saving both time and resources.
- The study added to the existing body of knowledge regarding customer service and complaint management in the banking sector, particularly in the context of developing economies like Ethiopia. It can serve as a reference for future research on customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- The insights gained from this research had provide valuable information for CBE's leadership and decision-makers, enabling them to create strategies that align with customer expectations and enhance the bank's competitive advantage in the financial sector.

By focusing on these areas, the study played a critical role in guiding CBE toward improved customer service practices, ultimately leading to better business outcomes.

1.7. Limitation and Delimitation of the Study

While this study offers critical insights into PR-driven complaint handling at CBE, the following limitations like limited Generalizability for findings reflect practices only in two urban branches (Kidist Silassie and Piassa) in Addis Ababa so results cannot be extrapolated to other branches necessarily; sample representation constraints; context specific biases due to branch characteristics must be acknowledged.

Delimitations: due to the intentional scope boundaries, the study excluded other CBE branches to enable deep contextual analysis. Non-CBE customers (e.g., competitors' clients) were not sampled to maintain focus.

1.8. Organization of the study

This research work be arranged in different parts and contains five basic chapters. Accordingly,

Chapter one

- ❖ Contains background of the study, statement of the problem, basic research questions and objectives of the study, definition of terms, and significance of the study and delimitation/scope of the study.

Chapter two

- ❖ The review of related literature deals with previous studies and literatures relevant to the study and it also includes theoretical and the conceptual framework adapted from previous studies.

Chapter three

- ❖ Is methods of the study contained, the type and design of the research paper, analysis of participants of the study, the sources of the data, the data collection tools or instruments employed, the procedures of data collection and the methods of data analysis be.

Chapter four

- ❖ The analysis and presentation section summarized the results or findings of the study and it also interpreted and discussed the findings by extensive use of the literature review and finally,

Chapter five

- ❖ Under this chapter, the summary of findings, conclusions, and possible recommendations are described precisely.

CHAPTER 2: Review of the Related Literature

2.1. Introduction

In the midst of increasing competition in the banking industry, customer care has become one of the main success drivers. In the midst of increasing competition in the banking industry, customer care has become one of the main success drivers. Banks are service companies where maintaining a high level of customer satisfaction is crucial, as it not only guarantees retention but also aids in building customer loyalty (Ahrholdt et al., 2019).

In fact, studies have proven that satisfied customers would be more likely to recommend the bank and continue their relationship (Kwortnik & Thompson, 2009). Therefore, complaint management is most important in growing customer satisfaction, lowering churn, and enhancing customer loyalty.

This literature review aimed to identify the significance of customer service and the crucial function complaint handling contributes to in banking. The review talked about past research that examines the link between resolving complaints and customers' attitudes, measuring the extent to which complaint-handling competence in banks can lead to improved customer experiences. Besides, looked for best practices in managing complaints to advise practical recommendations on steps that banks can take to achieve the greatest customer satisfaction and loyalty outcomes.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework serves as the foundation for scholarly inquiry, offering a structure that connects theories to research objectives and guides the analysis and interpretation of findings. For this study, which explores the practice of Public Relations (PR) in handling customer complaints at the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE), the framework is built upon key theories

from the fields of public relations, communication, and service management. These theories include Grunig and Hunt's Four Models of Public Relations, the Excellence Theory, Service Recovery Theory, and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). Each theory provides unique insights into how PR can function strategically to manage customer dissatisfaction, build relationships, and maintain institutional credibility.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) developed one of the most widely accepted models in public relations theory. They proposed four models that describe the evolution and practice of PR: Press Agency/Publicity Model: Focuses on one-way communication where the aim is to gain media attention with little regard for truth or feedback.

2.3 The Role of Public Relations in Complaint Handling

The role of Public Relations (PR) in complaint handling in the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE) is pivotal in building positive customer relationships and enhancing the quality of services. PR functions as an intermediary between the bank and customers, ensuring complaints are addressed promptly and effectively, which has a resulting impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Ledingham & Bruning, 2001).

Effective PR methods of handling complaints involve open communication, sympathetic engagement, and quick responses, which create credibility and trust for the bank (Heath, 2001).

In CBE, PR utilization in complaint handling can be utilized to balance negative experiences and turn dissatisfied customers into advocates by demonstrating responsibility and commitment to service quality (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

Response time is one of the most important aspects of complaint handling that dictates customer satisfaction. It has been established that the quicker the resolution, the higher the customer

satisfaction and loyalty (Hart et al., 2010). For CBE, reducing the response time to customer complaints can significantly improve perceptions of service quality and reliability.

PR plays a strategic role in this context since it aligns internal communication and also guarantees that the issues of customers are escalated and addressed accordingly. PR activities can facilitate faster response systems and thereby improve the complaint management system overall when they collaborate with operational staff (Taylor & Kent, 2014).

The effectiveness of current complaint handling processes in CBE can be evaluated on the basis of customer feedback and also service delivery metrics. Literature suggests that organisations with formal complaint management systems experience higher levels of customer satisfaction (Swarbrooke & Beard, 2003).

For CBE, an assessment of the adequacy of existing procedures, staff training, and communication channels can determine where improvements should be made. PR is not merely external communication management but also internal coordination to ensure that processes for managing complaints are efficient, transparent, and customer-focused (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). Continued improvement of these practices is the foundation for maintaining competitive advantage and customer trust.

Current complaint handling practices in CBE present both strengths as well as areas for development. For instance, integrating technological advancements like online complaint forums and automated feedback can increase efficiency (Bhattacharya & Korschun, 2008).

PR can assist in bringing about these developments through informing and educating employees and customers alike on new procedures and channels. In addition, problem-solving and empathetic communication training for employees guarantees that complaints are treated professionally and with sympathy (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The enhancements help to create a

good impression of the bank's commitment to customer satisfaction, which aligns with the strategic importance of effective complaint handling.

Finally, PR plays a strategic role in formulating complaint handling strategies and resolving issues facing CBE. Common problems include resource limitations, absence of standard procedures, and neglect of customer feedback (Liu & Chou, 2010). The PR function includes advocating policy changes, developing proactive communication systems, and managing crises resulting from unresolved complaints.

By fostering an organizational culture that favors customer feedback, PR can help CBE develop strong and adaptive complaint handling processes that enhance overall service quality and customer trust (Taylor & Kent, 2014). It is crucial to comprehend and surmount these challenges to align complaint management practices with the overall strategic objectives of the bank.

2.3.1. The roles of PR to measure the customer complaint handling of the bank(s)

2.3.1.1. In the context of managing banks reputation

Public Relations (PR) functions in measurement of customer complaint handling and bank service improvement are multifaceted and crucial for quality of service and image protection. Firstly, bank reputation management is a central PR function that involves managing public opinion deliberately by substantiating the bank's dedication to transparency and accountability in customer complaint handling (Ledingham & Bruning, 2001). Good PR prevents the bank's image from being tarnished by bad experiences and facilitates long-term trust in customers.

2.3.1.2. In the context of mitigating negative publicity

PR plays a crucial part in minimizing negative publicity generated due to unresolved complaints or breakdown of service. Through good communication and quick action, PR can handle potential crises and prevent the bank's credibility from being undermined (Heath, 2001).

2.3.1.3. In the context of improving customer relation

Improved relationships with customers are at the center of PR's complaint-handling functions. By empathetic communication and honest, regular information, PR helps to create positive relations that reinforce loyalty and satisfaction in customers (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). It involves creating channels of open communication and demonstrating visibly that customer grievances are heard and resolved amicably.

2.3.1.4. In the context of enhancing customer satisfaction

PR helps to enhance customer satisfaction by providing for feedback mechanisms and informing about improvement made after customer grievances. Periodic review of the effect of complaint handling allows PR to demonstrate how responsive and service-excellence oriented the bank is (Swarbrooke & Beard, 2003).

2.3.1.5. In the context of monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are PR roles that allow measuring the effect of complaint handling activities. Utilizing applicant tracking systems, complaint tracking systems, and social media tracking systems, PR can use the data from these tools to evaluate if complaint handling procedures meet customer expectation and identify areas where improvement is needed (Coombes & Holladay, 2012). Identifying information on a regular basis guarantees that the bank's complaint management is aligned with organizational goals and customer needs.

2.3.1.6. In the context of handling key relationship

Sixth, critical relationship management involves maintaining close contact with the stakeholders, including the regulators, customers, and internal constituencies, to ensure consistent and harmonized complaint handling (Taylor & Kent, 2014). Effective handling of relationships fosters trust and enables problem-solving through cooperation.

2.3.1.7. In the context of planning publicity strategies and campaigns

PR is tasked with conducting publicity planning, strategies, and campaigns to communicate the bank's commitment to excellent complaint handling. This includes fostering transparency, highlighting success stories in complaint resolution, and publishing improvement in service quality, and these can positively influence public opinion (Heath, 2001). Strategic campaigns foster accountability culture and demonstrate the bank's dedication to customer care, thereby improving its reputation and customers' confidence. In general, the various roles of PR in measuring and managing complaint handling are essential in upholding the image of the bank and ensuring customer satisfaction.

2.4. Significance of Customer Service for the Banking Industry

Bank customer service is excellent, and it directly contributes to how a customer thinks about, feels towards, and sticks with a bank. In a market characterized by intense competition and rapidly evolving technology, banks and other financial organizations are forced to differentiate themselves through the delivery of superlative service. Banks all offer a similar range of products and services, such as savings accounts, loans, and investment accounts; hence, the quality of customer service has become a critical differentiator in customer acquisition and retention (Lemke, Clark, & Wilson, 2011).

One of the banking industry's most defining characteristics is its trust dependence. Customers often look for bank relationships which ensure not just the safety of their money, but also service which is responsive and helpful. A study conducted by the American Bankers Association revealed that willingness among customers to recommend a bank to others depends on high levels of customer satisfaction. This word-of-mouth marketing is invaluable in a sector where reputation plays a significant role in client procurement (American Bankers Association, 2020). Banks that have good customer service not only enhance their reputation but also earn greater customer lifetime value because satisfied customers are more likely to use other products and services, thus becoming more profitable.

Moreover, the banking revolution has changed the expectations of customers. Due to growing utilization of fintech services and online banking, today's consumers want convenient, simple, and tailored experiences. The phrase "fintech services" is applied to refer to financial technology services. They are newly emerged online platforms and solutions that utilize technology to expand, automate, or improve financial operations and services. They range from online banking, mobile payment applications, digital wallets, peer-to-peer lending, robo-advisors, cryptocurrency exchange platforms, and other online financial platforms (Kagan, 2024).

In a study, Accenture (2019) found that 87% of customers identified superior service and engagement as primary motivations for choosing a banking organization. This transformation has challenged traditional banks to enhance the services they provide, emphasizing customer care that is not only reactive but proactive in addressing customer needs and expectations.

Lastly, banking customer service encompasses numerous facets: it fosters loyalty, enhances customer retention, and drives organizational achievement. Financial institutions will be required to emphasize customer service excellence as the industry expands further if they are to thrive in a

competitive environment and meet and exceed the needs of a diversified and increasingly demanding clientele.

2.5. Complaint Handling and Its Contribution to Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

Complaint handling is crucial for any company, but it is of the utmost importance in the banking sector, where customers' relations rely on trust and reliance on services. A customer complaint is not merely a nuisance; instead, it is an opportunity for banks to demonstrate their commitment to service quality and customer care (Mason, 2015). Effective complaint handling can convert a negative experience into a positive one and significantly affects customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Customers, when they complain, need to be validated and the problem to be solved. According to research conducted by Davidow (2003), a bank's handling of complaints can have severe consequences on customer retention. If the customers believe that their complaints are being resolved promptly and satisfactorily, they are likely to feel valued and respected, leading to their higher satisfaction with the institution. Unsatisfactory responses or ignoring complaints can lead to higher dissatisfaction, prompting customers to switch to competitors (Homburg et al., 2017).

The impact of effective complaint handling extends past short-term customer satisfaction; it helps in the creation of long-term loyalty. Kumar and Reinartz's (2016) study points out that satisfied customers are more likely to be loyal, consume more services, and even refer the institution to others. This "loyalty loop" implies that a positive resolution of complaints results in not only retention but also advocacy, which cannot be bought in the highly competitive banking sector.

Moreover, complaint handling serves as an important feedback mechanism for banks, offering information on service breakdowns and areas in need of development. Complaint analysis allows

banks to identify trends and recurring issues, thus making systemic changes that enhance service delivery and prevent future complaints (Groening & Bannister, 2008).

In this way, good complaint handling has the potential to drive continuous improvement in organizations, fostering a culture of customer-oriented practices. This kind of effective complaint handling has a direct impact on customer loyalty and satisfaction in the banking sector. Banks that view complaints as an opportunity to interact can not only resolve issues immediately but also strengthen their customer relationships, resulting in better loyalty and long-term success (Sammour, 2022).

2.6. Customer Satisfaction and Its Importance

Customer satisfaction is among the major drivers of business prosperity, reflecting the extent to which a company's products or services meet or exceed the customers' expectations. Customers who are satisfied are likely to demonstrate loyalty, repeat purchases, and positive word-of-mouth communication, which finally result in the growth of a company's revenue and market share (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016).

The importance of customer satisfaction is underscored by its role in long-term relationships and customer retention. Research indicates that even a 5% increase in customer retention can lead to a 25% to 95% boost in profits, highlighting that it is generally less costly to retain satisfied customers than to acquire new ones (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000; Kumar & Shah, 2018). Furthermore, in an increasingly competitive marketplace, knowledge of customer satisfaction is key to the continued innovation and development of products and services.

Feedback from customer satisfaction surveys can be used by companies to identify opportunities for improvement and innovation, thereby keeping themselves relevant and on point with consumer needs (Lin & Liang, 2011). Along with this, customer satisfaction has been connected

to increased employee satisfaction, as a more successful company creates a more fulfilled employee (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). Placing value, then, on customer satisfaction is not only a plan for short-term financial success but a long-term plan that sustains growth and builds a solid brand reputation over time.

2.7. Determinants of Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a multifaceted phenomenon that relies on various determinants including service quality, product performance, and customer expectations. Zeithaml, Bitner, and Gremler (2018) posit that service quality is the primary driver of customer satisfaction and encompasses dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles.

Outstanding service not only meets but exceeds customers' expectations and thus generates loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. Moreover, customer satisfaction is also influenced by perceived value of the product or service, which reflects the price-quality balance (Kotler & Keller, 2016). If customers realize that they are receiving value for money, then they will likely be satisfied and continue to return, emphasizing the importance of offerings to meet customer expectations and needs.

Another influencing factor is the role played by customer interaction and participation. Research by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) highlights that customer experience, which refers to all the interactions a customer has with a brand, is significant in determining satisfaction levels. Friendly interaction through personalized communication, responsiveness, and proper complaint resolution can generate good perception about a brand by customers and lead to higher satisfaction.

In addition, Arya and Gupta (2020) determined that emotional connections formed by customers in the course of interacting with their service providers further boost satisfaction levels as

customers tend to remain loyal to companies whose brands touch their hearts. The intersection of service quality, customer engagement, and perceived value creates a highly complex environment under which organizations must navigate to best maximize customer satisfaction.

2.8. The Role of Complaint Handling in Customer Satisfaction

Customer complaints are a reality of business practice, and they are an effective feedback mechanism that allows companies to identify service gaps and opportunities for development. The nature of customer complaints and frequency can serve as an indicator of customer satisfaction, brand allegiance, and organizational effectiveness.

According to research by Davidow (2003), complaints from customers can be constructive if handled appropriately, leading to improved service delivery and product quality. This perspective is supported by a more recent meta-analysis conducted by Chatterjee et al. (2020), which emphasizes that effective complaint management not only enhances customer satisfaction but also contributes positively to organizational performance.

Proper complaint handling is also required since unresolved complaints have a tendency to snowball and cause customer attrition, which is detrimental to a company's reputation and the health of its finances. Work done by Davidow (2003) suggests that active complaints taken by organizations not only help them retain customers but also transform negative experiences into positive ones, thus contributing to brand loyalty.

The value of complaining customers can never be undermined as customer complaints form a crucial part in the customer establishing a long-term relationship with the firm. When customers believe that their concerns are being heard and resolved, their loyalty and trust in the brand are also boosted. According to recent research by Ahearne et al. (2020), companies that regularly

consider customer feedback and streamline their service processes based on complaints tend to achieve higher customer satisfaction ratings and improved market competitiveness.

Moreover, effective complaint handling creates an opportunity for businesses to distinguish themselves from others because customers tend to share their experiences online (Ladhari et al., 2017). By using customer complaints as a source of continuous improvement, organizations can cultivate a customer-oriented culture that satisfies but exceeds consumers' expectations.

2.8.1. Effective complaint resolution strategies

Effective resolution of complaints is vital to customer satisfaction and loyalty, and there are a range of strategies used to enhance this process. Of these, responsiveness is the most critical. Timely acknowledgment of complaints can have a profound impact on a customer's perception of a business (Davidow, 2003). Timely responses not only de-escalate frustration by customers but also indicate that the business takes serious note of customer comments.

Recent studies indicate that organizations prioritizing prompt communication in complaint resolution can effectively transform dissatisfied customers into loyal ones (Deng, Lu, Wei, & Zhang, 2019; Van Vaerenbergh, De Keyser, & Tynan, 2021). By implementing formal complaint responses, these organizations can establish a foundation of trust and commitment, ultimately enhancing customer retention (Davidow, 2003; Homburg, Wieseke, & Hoyer, 2009).

Beyond responsiveness, the role of empathy in resolving complaints is crucial. Empathy involves understanding and validating the customer's feelings, which is an essential aspect of effectively addressing their concerns (Liu, 2020; Chatzopoulou et al., 2021). Acknowledgment of a customer's emotional state can transform a negative interaction into a positive one and foster a sense of connection between the firm and the customer (Davidow, 2003; van Baal et al., 2021).

Research has found that if employees express genuine empathy, customers tend to rate the service as good even though the solution may not be perfect for their initial complaint (Komunda & Vutukuri, 2021). Including empathy training in staff development can increase the effectiveness of complaint resolution, and the general customer experience will improve.

2.9. Impact of Complaint Management on Customer Loyalty

Customer satisfaction and loyalty are closely connected notions in consumer behavior and marketing literature. Research has consistently demonstrated that customer satisfaction leads to increased customer loyalty. Recent studies, such as those by Kumar and Shah (2020), emphasize that satisfaction is a crucial antecedent of loyalty, as satisfied customers are more likely to engage in repeat purchases and develop an emotional connection with the brand.

This emotional attachment generates brand advocacy, with loyal customers not only remaining with the brand but also promoting it via word-of-mouth, enhancing the brand's reputation (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Furthermore, Homburg and Giering (2001) note that businesses that emphasize customer satisfaction are capable of differentiating themselves in a competitive market because loyal customers are likely to provide stable revenue streams and lower churn rates.

Also, the influence of customer satisfaction on loyalty extends beyond transactional benefits to influence long-term relationships and brand loyalty. It has been proven that companies that spend time understanding and enhancing customer satisfaction can reap considerable rewards in terms of customer retention and advocacy (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000).

For instance, recent studies have shown that companies with high customer satisfaction levels experience lower price sensitivity, which ultimately leads to increased profits (Alaei et al., 2021).

The model of customer loyalty advanced by Dick and Basu (1994) emphasizes that both

cognitive and affective loyalty are integral to understanding customer relationships, where satisfied customers develop both rational and emotional ties to a brand (Kumar & Shah, 2022).

Additionally, the creation of customer satisfaction has evolved beyond being merely an operational issue; it is now recognized as a strategic necessity for companies seeking to foster long-term customer loyalty (Lemon et al., 2020).

2.9.1. Handling Customer Complaints and Customer Retention and Loyalty

Effective complaint management is crucial to building customer retention and loyalty within the competitive world of today's marketplace. Research has determined that organizations who address customers' complaints immediately and with sensitivity realize a very high degree of customer loyalty (Smith & Baines, 2022). By effective issue handling, companies demonstrate their commitment to addressing customer needs, which not only prevents potential loss but also aids an overall greater customer experience.

For instance, studies show that customers who believe their grievances have been handled well will tend to keep on patronizing a firm and increase their likelihood of referring the business to others (Davidow, 2003). This kind of relationship puts strong emphasis on investment in good complaint handling systems with a focus on more customer communication and proactive problem-solving processes.

Furthermore, the role of complaint handling in building long-term customer relationships is well-documented in the literature. Recent studies suggest that effective service recovery can transform dissatisfied customers into loyal advocates, effectively reversing negative experiences (Davidow, 2021; John et al., 2022). This finding is supported by recent research indicating that businesses that incorporate customer complaints into their complaint handling procedures not only enhance customer satisfaction but also foster lasting loyalty (Smith & Smith, 2023; Lee et al., 2023).

Thus, businesses which prioritize complaint resolution not only minimize churn rates but can also leverage positive interactions to enhance brand image and drive subsequent sales. Empirical research shows that complaint handling is not just a reactive approach but also a proactive approach that can be very effective in influencing customer loyalty and retention outcomes (McCole, 2004).

2.10. Cultural History and Customer Behavior in Ethiopia

It is essential to know the socio-economic context for banking in Ethiopia to attain economic growth and financial inclusion. The Ethiopian banking sector has witnessed significant reforms and growth in recent years as a result of the government's focus on the modernization and liberalization of the economy. The National Bank of Ethiopia (2021) has pointed out that the Ethiopian banking sector has emerged as the most important component of the nation's financial system, offering critical services ranging from saving to investment financing.

Even with these enhancements, the banking sector still struggles with issues such as restricted banking facility coverage in rural communities, low general levels of financial literacy among most of the population, and underdevelopment of information technology infrastructure. All of these contribute to a very real "banking gap," where a high percentage of the population remain unbanked or underbanked (Alemayehu & Wolday, 2020).

Besides, the unique socio-economic context in Ethiopia underscores the relevance of demographic and cultural factors on banking dynamics. The country has an agrarian economy, where over 70% of its population engages in agriculture (World Bank, 2022). This agrarian character influences financial services and demands because farmers are typically in want of tailor-made loan products and deposit services.

Furthermore, socioeconomic disparities between different regions place in perspective regional banking practices that address regional requirements (Fufa & Beshah, 2020). Microfinance institutions, for instance, have emerged to serve the key functions of providing financial inclusion for smallholder farmers and entrepreneurs, an indicator of flexibility of innovative financial products in eliminating poverty and catalyzing economic development. Hence, it is important to comprehend the interaction of socio-economic variables and banking services for the further growth of the financial sector of Ethiopia (Beyene, 2019).

2.10.1. Cultural dimensions influencing customer expectations and experience with complaint handling

Cultural dimensions significantly influence expectations and experiences of customers, particularly in complaint handling. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory suggests that factors such as individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance shape customer perceptions of service quality and their responses to complaints (Hofstede et al., 2010; Minkov & Hofstede, 2011).

Recent studies further highlight the relevance of these dimensions in understanding the varying customer expectations across different cultural contexts, ultimately impacting service recovery strategies (Hofstede Insights, 2022; Wang & Wang, 2020). For instance, in extremely individualistic cultures such as the United States, consumers would prefer prompt and tailored remedies to their complaints, and tend to value candor and acknowledgment of their concerns (Pizam, 2007).

Conversely, for collectivistic cultures like Japan, customers would focus on harmony and may not voice their complaints but vent them in a low-key manner and value the company's image of having good rapport instead of transactional feedback (Liu et al., 2006). Recognition of such

cultural facets enables businesses to modify complaint resolution processes to suit diverse customer expectations and ultimately boost customer satisfaction and loyalty.

On the other hand, in more high-context cultures where communication is much more nuanced and understanding is more implicit, firms will perhaps have to be more relational and personalized in resolving complaints effectively (Gabreski, 2014). Moreover, complaint handling success also depends on the cultural context in which a firm operates.

For example, cultures with high uncertainty avoidance tend to expect organizations to provide formalized and structured responses to complaints, reflecting a preference for standardized processes that reduce ambiguity (Hofstede, 2011). Conversely, in cultures characterized by high-context communication, where nuances and implicit understanding play a vital role, firms may need to adopt a more relational and personalized approach to effectively resolve complaints (Tay, 2021).

These style differences between cultures impact customer satisfaction and perceived quality of the solution achieved. Adapting complaints handling to suit these varied cultural expectations allows organizations to establish trust and loyalty, which in turn enhances their competitive advantage in the global market (Zhang, 2016).

2.10.2. The role of trust and relationship building in customer loyalty in Ethiopian banks

Trust and relationship building are the fundamental aspects of banking customer loyalty, particularly in developing economies like Ethiopia. Evidence shows that trust acts as a mediator between customer satisfaction and loyalty, creating a platform where clients are assured of their financial transactions (Biswas & Panda, 2018). Within the scenario of Ethiopian banks, where one relies more upon personal relationships and trust than upon transactional contacts, developing an effective rapport with customers can improve loyalty levels extensively.

This is in agreement with Ayalew's (2020) research, in which it was found that customers will tend to remain with banks that they perceive as being trustworthy and committed to their welfare, underlining the importance of transparency, reliability, and effective communication in banking relationships.

Besides this, the importance of relationship-building in customer loyalty is emphasized by increasing competition among banks in Ethiopia. With the evolution of the banking industry, those banks that have an emphasis on developing close, long-term relationships with customers are bound to achieve sustainable loyalty (Kebede & Seleshi, 2021). Relationship management strategies like tailored services and being proactive enable banks to differentiate themselves in a market of high competition.

A study by Kedir et al. (2021) highlighted that banks that successfully interact with customers through tailored financial products and attentive service are likely to build a loyal customer base, substantiating the notion that strategic relationship-building not only enhances customer retention but also creates advocacy and word-of-mouth referrals, which are critical in the context of Ethiopian banking.

2.11. Barriers to Effective Complaint Handling

2.11.1. Most common challenges of banks in complaint handling

Banks are faced with numerous challenges in complaint handling, an essential aspect of customer satisfaction and loyalty. A critical challenge comes through technology integration in complaint management systems. With the rise in customer expectations that digital banking has brought, banks are usually seen struggling to make their complaint handling both effective and consumer-friendly.

Institutions have invested significant resources in sophisticated digital platforms to manage complaints; however, the shift from traditional methods to automated systems has created gaps in service delivery. According to Ranjan and Read (2016), this transition can lead to inefficiencies

that result in longer resolution times, which in turn increases customer frustration and diminishes trust in the institution. As a consequence, organizations need to carefully consider how technology is integrated into their complaint management processes to ensure that it enhances, rather than detracts from, the customer experience.

The second issue is training and equipping frontline employees responsible for complaint handling. Insufficient training creates variable responses and lack of compassion when complaints are received, causing further frustration among customers. According to Davidow (2003), the emphasis is placed on employees who lack skills or capabilities or sufficient powers to address complaints successfully can downplay the likelihood of a satisfactory resolution, and the customers would feel insignificant (Davidow, 2003).

2.11.2. Internal and External Determinants of Complaint Resolution Effectiveness

Complaint resolution effectiveness depends on a universe of internal and external determinants that cumulatively influence the ability of an organization to solve customer complaints well. Organizational culture internally has a significant function in determining employees' conflict resolution approach. When organizational culture puts customer satisfaction as a top concern and feedback as a valuable entity, it empowers employees to interact with complaints in a constructive manner, enhancing the effectiveness of resolutions (Gronroos, 2001).

Furthermore, the quality of training and resources made available to employees has a great bearing on their ability to manage complaints effectively. Training schemes that empower employees with problem-solving skills, empathy, and product knowledge not only increase their confidence but also improve the overall customer experience (Patterson et al., 2006). On the other hand, external factors also have a great bearing on the effectiveness of complaint handling. The competitive environment and customer expectations are significant external determinants.

In the presence of a high level of competition in the market, organizations are compelled to adopt timely and acceptable redress mechanisms to maintain consumer confidence and enhance their reputation (Davidow, 2003). Furthermore, new electronic communication channels have transformed consumer interactions where speed and clarity of response are essential.

Consumers today want quick solutions facilitated by convenient access to support channels, and companies that do not provide this risk exacerbating the grievances through nasty online comments or social media assaults (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001).

Chapter Summary

The second chapter presented an extensive literature review on customer service, complaint handling, and their influences on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the banking sector, with specific emphasis on Ethiopia. It highlighted the utmost importance of top-notch customer care as a main distinguishing factor in a competitive banking setting, particularly in the face of technological advancements and regulatory issues. The review underscored the importance of complaint management in that resolving customer complaints quickly and with compassion would convert angry customers into trusting customers, retain long-term relationships, and grow brand loyalty.

Strategic application of Public Relations (PR) is highlighted as being key to complaint management, organizational reputation building, and creating good relationships with customers through open communication, rapid response, and continuous process improvements. In addition, the chapter discussed cultural influences on customer expectations, specifically in Ethiopia, where trust-building and relationship-building are cardinal foundations of customer loyalty and complaint handling strategies, and how cultural dimensions affect complaint handling strategies.

CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research design in this study adhered to a quantitative and descriptive approach in accordance with the prescriptions by Creswell (2014) to gather precise and measurable data on PR practice in complaint handling in banks. Embedded within the positivist paradigm, this method involves the collection of numeric data through formal questionnaires administered to employees in banks and customers in order to facilitate the exploration of patterns, relationships, and trends in customer satisfaction, complaint resolution effectiveness, and overall service quality.

Survey methodology is especially well-suited to PR practices, enabling effective, economical gathering of quantifiable feedback that can be statistically examined to gauge the success of complaint handling approaches, determine customer perceptions of service quality, and highlight areas where improvement is needed. This approach provides definitive answers to how PR actions contribute to customer loyalty, trust, and organizational reputation, which ultimately enables the formulation of evidence-based recommendations to enhance PR practice in the banking sector.

3.2. Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data were collected for this study. Primary data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires to the respondents and conducting five interview sessions, three from Kidisit Silassie because of the number of customers served at current times relatively greater than that of the Piassa branch from which two, were collected. Secondary data were collected from existing publications such as academic journals, books, conference

proceedings, and other relevant publications to provide background information and shape the analysis (Creswell, 2014, Saunders et al., 2019).

3.3. Target Population

The study's target demographics were customers and PR professionals of Commercial Bank of Ethiopia's customer service division. As a result, the study focused on evaluating the practice of PR in customer compliant handling: The Case of Commercial Bank of Ethiopia.

3.4 Sampling Design and Method

The study sampled respondents from the chosen branches of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, Kidist Silassie and Piassa, focusing on the customers service department and PR office. A stratified sampling design is employed to secure a representative sample and capture different customer segments as well as stakeholders that are relevant to the aims of the research (Lombard, 2010). Since the population in the two bank branches consists of a distinct groups: customers, employees and personels representation from each subgroup be ensured by stratification.

The primary population, therefore, were recent bank customers who have utilized other banking services such as account maintenance, loans, or customer support. According to Baker and England (2011), recent service-experienced customers can provide valuable feedback regarding customer service quality as well as public relations practices. These customers be sampled at different points of contact, including bank offices, customer care offices, and online channels like the bank's website or mobile platforms, in order to capture a variety of customer experiences.

3.5 Data Collection Method

Data related to the effectiveness of customer compliant handling in public relations in the case institution were collected from the above three divisions through questionnaires, interview and written journals and also from the websites, too. Besides, issues related to the topic under study, including the effectiveness of current complaint handling practices in CBE, potential areas for improvement, the roles of public relations (PR) in the complaint handling process, and the main challenges faced by CBE's complaint handling strategies, were obtained from secondary sources to develop the literature review, introduction, and problem statement.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences used the tool (SPSS) computer program version 25 was employed to calculate the data collected. The data be presented in tables to ensure convenient and easy interpretation. Descriptive statistics like frequency, percentage, means, and standard deviation will be employed to analyze respondents' opinions. Inferential statistics such as T-values and P-values will also be employed to test relationships and differences in the data. This procedure aligns with accepted social science research procedures as well as with what is advocated in the way of tips by Pallant (2016), which narrates best practices with the use of SPSS in strong data analysis.

3.7 Ethical considerations

The study ensured that all the ethical requirements were met to the letter during the research process. The population of interest is respondents of three customer handling departments of the Kidist Silassie and Piassa branches of Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE). The total of approximately 120 respondents were randomly selected by the simple random sampling, which

provides each respondent with an equal chance to participate, thereby providing fairness and reducing bias (Fowler, 2014).

The two strata of the respondents were labeled as customers and members of the PR department according to the quality of customer complaint management in public relations. Stratification was conducted to increase the accuracy of the data by giving each group representative proportionate in line with the sampling framework.

The researcher committed to conduct the research in accordance with professional ethics and general values of research. Participants were informed of why they were taking part in the research prior to data collection and requested to provide informed consent. Personal data and answers were handled with utmost confidentiality; participants' identities will remain anonymous, and their data will not be disclosed without explicit consent (Sarantakos, 2005).

The participants were assured of their willingness to participate and could withdraw at any time without any penalty. The researcher will avoid any false practices, adhere to local cultures, and handle sensitive information with utmost care. The researcher also undertakes to be honest, transparent, and objective in data gathering and analysis so that findings will be credible and free from bias (Creswell, 2011).

Chapter 4: Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

4.1. Introduction

This chapter intends to reveal the findings and statistical analysis used to evaluate the research question that has been established in earlier chapters. Subsequent to the data screening process and also the chapter reports the results of the screening for errors in the sample and the procedural check on the instruments utilized. With the help of the preliminary and analysis of the results, try to investigate on the topic entitled “evaluate the practice of PR in customer compliant handling in Commercial Bank of Ethiopia's customer service”.Therefore, this chapter has two parts: the first part deals with the characteristics of the respondents and the second part presents the analysis and interpretation of the main data.

To this end, both quantitative and qualitative data obtained through questionnaire and interview were used to answer the basic research questions. Respondents, for the questionnaire and interview, were selected randomly and included in the sample. These respondents were provided with 160 questionnaires. Accordingly, 141 (88.312%) of them were selected from the sample respondents and returned the questionnaire just in time while the remaining 19 (11.88%) of the respondents did not returned back the questionnaire for various reasons.

The collected data were analyzed by both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation, T value and P-value, respectively were also undertaken by using the “Statistical Package for the Social Sciences” (SPSS) version 25 software. Since the objective of this study was evaluating the practice of PR in customer compliant handling in Commercial Bank of Ethiopia's customer service in focus. Initially the responses to questionnaire with the sample respondents were quantitatively analyzed

whereas responses gained open ended items and interview were qualitatively analyzed and the central themes mentioned in the questionnaire as open items in concerning the research questions were identified.

Table 4.1. General statistics

Statistics		Sex	Age	Qualification	Experience
N	Valid	141	141	141	141
	Missing	0	0	0	0

Source: Survey Data 2025

The data in Table 4.1 is typical of a complete sample of 141 individuals across four demographic variables sex, age, qualification, and experience demonstrating high data integrity with no missing responses. The entire dataset provides a firm foundation upon which to investigate relationships between these variables, for example, how work experience is related to educational qualifications or how differences in age between the sexes vary. The absence of missing data enhances the integrity of any resulting statistical findings, allowing strong analysis of demographic trends and their projection to the population or research questions at large. Generally, the completeness of this data set suggests its capability to offer a valuable stage for informative analysis of the demographic characteristics of the sample, allowing concentrated analysis and informed decision-making.

Table 4.2. SEX OF RESPONDANT

Sex		
Variable	Frequency	Percent
Male	73	51.8
Female	68	48.2
Total	141	100.0

Source: Survey Data 2025

The data indicates a relatively balanced gender distribution within the sample, with males comprising approximately 51.8% and females 48.2%. This near-equal representation suggests that the findings derived from this sample are likely to be generalizable across both genders, reducing the potential for gender bias in the results. The slight predominance of males may reflect demographic or sampling factors, but overall, the comparable proportions imply that gender is unlikely to significantly influence the overall outcomes or interpretations of the study. Consequently, any gender-related differences observed in subsequent analyses are more likely to be genuine rather than artifacts of uneven sampling.

Table 4.3. AGE OF RESPONDANT

	Frequency	Percent
Below 20 years	5	3.5
21-30 years	47	33.3
31-40	49	34.8
41-50	23	16.3
51 & above	17	12.1
Total	141	100.0

Source: Survey Data 2025

The data in Table 4.3 reveals that the majority of respondents are between 21 and 40 years old, accounting for approximately 68.1% of the sample (33.3% aged 21-30 and 34.8% aged 31-40), indicating a predominantly young adult demographic. Those aged 41-50 constitute 16.3%, while respondents aged 51 and above make up 12.1%, and a small minority below 20 years old at 3.5%. This distribution suggests that the study's insights are primarily reflective of a youthful and middle-aged population, which could influence the generalizability of findings to older age groups. The prominence of respondents in the 21-40 age range may imply higher levels of engagement, awareness, or activity within this demographic, potentially impacting the interpretation of behaviors or attitudes examined in the study.

Table 4.4. QUALIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Certificate	23	16.3
Diploma	36	25.5
First Degree	61	43.3
Second degree & Above	21	14.9
Total	141	100.0

Source: Survey Data 2025

The data in Table 4.4 indicates that a majority of respondents possess at least a bachelor's degree, with 43.3% holding a first degree, highlighting a relatively well-educated sample. Additionally, a

significant portion (25.5%) have diplomas, suggesting a considerable level of post-secondary education among respondents. Those with certificates and second degrees or higher constitute smaller segments, representing 16.3% and 14.9% respectively. This distribution implies that the respondent group is generally educated, with a strong emphasis on university-level qualifications, which could influence their perspectives, decision-making, and responses within the study context. The diversity of educational qualifications also suggests varying levels of expertise and experience, which may have implications for the interpretation and generalizability of the study findings.

Table 4.5. EXPERIENCE OF RESPONDENTS

Variable	Frequency	Percent
below 5 years	26	18.4
6-10 years	55	39.0
11-15 years	53	37.6
16-20 years	5	3.5
20 and above	2	1.4
Total	141	100.0

Source: Survey Data 2025

From Table 4.5, it can be seen that the majority of the respondents have years and years of experience with 76.6% having experience in their respective industries in excess of five years—

i.e., 39.0% for 6-10 years and 37.6% for 11-15 years. Only 4.9% have less than five years of experience, and even fewer (1.4%) have over 20 years of experience. This distribution further suggests that the population of respondents is predominantly composed of relatively experienced individuals, which could mean increased expertise, stability, and exposure to the topic of study. The ratio of those in the 6-15 years range provides a similar balance of the experienced and perhaps better-informed professionals, which could give more informed opinions and reliable data, and perhaps fewer numbers of very new or very old individuals as a reflection that there may be cause for further intentional contact with those under-represented categories to have a more comprehensive picture.

Table 4.6: Issues related to the Complaint Handling Strategies at CBE

One-Sample Statistics			Test Value = 3				
N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
141	3.1135	.77545	47.676	.000	3.11348	2.9844	3.2426
141	3.5106	.79836	52.215	.000	3.51064	3.3777	3.6436
141	3.0709	.62844	58.025	.000	3.07092	2.9663	3.1756
141	3.0993	.51137	71.968	.000	3.09929	3.0141	3.1844
141	2.9929	.63804	55.700	.000	2.99291	2.8867	3.0991
141	3.3404	.82661	47.986	.000	3.34043	3.2028	3.4781

Source: Survey Data 2025

Information in Table 4.6 presents the opinions of respondents regarding problems of complaint handling strategies in CBE, analyzed using a one-sample t-test with test value of 3. The issues' average scores range from approximately 2.99 to 3.51, all of whose p-values are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). This shows that the respondents view the issues as slightly above or on a neutral level, and this shows there are significant concerns in the current complaint handling mechanisms that must be rectified. For example, the highest mean score (3.51) suggests there is a perceived concern or dissatisfaction with at least one complaint handling system area that has been above neutral perceptions.

The meaning of these results emphasizes that even though some areas of complaint handling at CBE are considered to be moderately acceptable, improvement is needed. The mean scores greater than 3 indicate frustration or inefficiencies experienced by customers or employees when complaints are processed. The relatively high standard deviations (0.51 to 0.83) convey diversity in perception, and this may imply that some groups or individuals vary in the perception of issues, possibly based on their own experience or expectations. To solve these differences may require special training, optimization of processes, or better communication strategies to facilitate more uniform and acceptable complaint handling.

Overall, the mean differences and statistical significance highlight the necessity to revisit and strengthen complaint handling programs at CBE. It seems from the findings that the current practices may not be fully adequate in terms of satisfying the stakeholder expectations, which would have a deleterious effect on customer satisfaction, trust, and bank reputation. Conducting more rigorous complaint management processes, founded on such results, could lead to better quality of service, increased customer loyalty, and enhanced organizational image. There should

be feedback loops and ongoing monitoring implemented to track the progress and make complaint handling a major component of the overall service excellence initiatives within the bank.

Table 4.7: Issues related to Customers' Perceptions of the Complaint Handling Process at CBE

One-Sample Statistics			Test Value = 3				
N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
141	3.241	.7358	52.304	.000	3.241	3.1186	3.3636
	1	3			13		
141	3.666	.8252	52.762	.000	3.666	3.5293	3.8041
	7	0			67		
141	3.049	.6899	52.483	.000	3.049	2.9348	3.1645
	6	9			65		
141	3.482	.8912	46.395	.000	3.482	3.3339	3.6307
	3	5			27		
141	3.078	.6444	56.715	.000	3.078	2.9707	3.1853
	0	4			01		
141	3.269	.6957	55.805	.000	3.269	3.1537	3.3853
	5	0			50		

Source: Survey Data 2025

Table 4.7 data indicate that the perception of customers regarding the complaint handling process at CBE remains on a neutral to slightly positive level, as indicated by mean scores of about 3.05 to 3.67 based on a Likert scale. All of the differences of means are significant at p-values of 0.000, indicating that customers' perceptions are always different from an indifferent standard value of 3. This means that customers rate either the complaint handling process as a bit better but not very much better or somewhat better but not very much better. The relatively high standard deviations (0.64-0.89) indicate a high heterogeneity of customer perceptions or experiences, which implies that, although some customers will be satisfied, others might have experienced problems or dissatisfaction.

The heterogeneity in perception implies that it is important to examine underlying causes influencing customer satisfaction with complaint handling. The positive mean scores, however small, show that CBE has made some efforts towards effective complaint handling, but scope exists to do better in order to drive customer perceptions to a higher more positive level. That these differences are statistically significant implies that these perceptions do not occur through mere chance but are grounded in genuine customer experiences. Thus, focusing on some of the specific areas of the complaint process e.g., responsiveness, communications clarity, or resolution effectiveness—can help steer customer perceptions more in a positive direction.

The significance of these findings is critical to CBE's customer service strategy. In order to maximize overall customer satisfaction, the bank should make efforts on priority changes for feedback from these perception scores. Focuses on clear communications, reducing handling times, and maintaining quality of resolution can help steer perceptions in the positive direction.

In addition, addressing the widespread nature of the experiences, evidenced by large standard deviations, may entail adaptive or more tailored complaint management approaches. Lastly, optimization of these processes can lead to heightened customer loyalty, increased brand reputation, and a competitive advantage for the banking sector by emphasizing an honest concern with customer-centric service excellence.

Table 4.8: Issues related to Effectiveness of Complaint Resolution and Customer Retention

One-Sample Statistics			Test Value = 3				
N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
141	3.929	.9902	47.113	.000	3.929	3.7642	4.0940
	1	8			08		
141	2.985	.8943	39.644	.000	2.985	2.8369	3.1347
	8	1			82		
141	3.886	.7568	60.980	.000	3.886	3.7605	4.0125
	5	0			52		
141	3.368	.8652	46.230	.000	3.368	3.2247	3.5129
	8	9			79		
141	3.397	.9774	41.269	.000	3.397	3.2344	3.5599
	2	6			16		
141	3.205	.7608	50.033	.000	3.205	3.0790	3.3323
	7	1			67		

Source: Survey Data 2025

Data on Table 4.8 provide data about respondents' perception of a number of the issues impacting the efficiency of complaint handling and its effect on retaining customers. The mean on all the issues is considerably higher than the test value of 3, indicating generally positive perception by the respondents. For instance, the peak mean score of 3.9291 shows that the interviewees confirm or believe a high level of effectiveness in some areas of complaint resolution, which is statistically significant with the very low p-value ($p = .000$). This suggests that, on the whole, customers have positive attitudes towards complaint resolution, which can be a critical parameter in determining customer loyalty.

Further, the data highlights where opinions are relatively mild but remain positive, such as the mean of 2.9858, which, while not as high as the other scores, is significantly above the neutral line at 3. The low standard deviations across all items reflect consistency in response, i.e., most customers share the same view regarding the effectiveness of complaint handling. The confidence intervals validate this consistency in that all intervals exclude the test value of 3, indicating that respondents overall consider the complaint handling process to be effective enough to make a significant contribution towards customer retention.

The implications of these findings are that those organizations that prioritize complaint resolution are better able to increase customer loyalty. The extremely statistically significant findings for the most part show strong positive perceptions, which can be interpreted as increased loyalty and word-of-mouth. However, the marginally lower scores in some areas also show up as opportunities for improvement, particularly where the perceptions are not so strong. Through highlighting enhancements of these weaker areas, organizations are able to further strengthen their complaint handling processes, thereby a stronger customer base as well as gaining competitive edge through better service quality and customer satisfaction.

Table 4.9: Technology Integration in Complaint Handling

One-Sample Statistics			Test Value = 3				
N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
141	3.560	.7403	57.102	.000	3.560	3.4370	3.6836
	3	6			28		
141	2.702	.7045	45.543	.000	2.702	2.5848	2.8194
	1	2			13		
141	3.766	.7034	63.571	.000	3.765	3.6488	3.8831
	0	4			96		
141	4.290	.7125	71.506	.000	4.290	4.1721	4.4094
	8	3			78		
141	4.141	.6277	78.351	.000	4.141	4.0373	4.2464
	8	1			84		
141	2.950	.8046	43.537	.000	2.950	2.8164	3.0843
	4	8			35		

Source: Survey Data 2025

The analysis of data on technology integration in complaint handling reveals that the respondents see the use of technology in a positive light, with mean values above the neutral point of 3 in all items covered. For example, the highest mean of 4.29 indicates extreme agreement or positive outlook on the effectiveness or significance of technology in this case. The statistically significant p-values (all < 0.001) show that such perceptions are not chance events and that technology integration is viewed as a critical component of complaint handling processes. This

demonstrates that organizations are increasingly employing technological solutions to improve efficiency, responsiveness, and customer satisfaction in handling complaints.

In addition, the results exhibit variation in perception since standard deviations of approximately 0.63 to 0.80 are observed. Despite such variability, confidence intervals for mean differences are relatively small, hence the legitimacy of these findings. The consistent positive mean differences, all of which are higher than the test value of 3, suggest the existence of perception of technology integration that exceeds a neutral point toward a positive bias among respondents. This has underscored heightened attention to technology's potential to automate the management of complaints, possibly through digital platforms, automated responses, or data analysis that can enhance transparency and accountability.

The implication of this data is powerful for organizations that want to better their complaint handling processes. The positive disposition towards technological integration suggests that further investment in technology capabilities can lead to improved service quality and customer satisfaction. However, organizations must be careful to notice the perception difference and eliminate the barriers or resistance towards technology adoption. Overall, the findings support a strategic move to more sophisticated technological complaint handling solutions, in accordance with modern customer service standards and business efficiencies.

Table 4.10: Issues related to Impression of Complaint Handling at CBE

One-Sample Statistics			Test Value = 3				
N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	p-value	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
141	2.950	.8645	40.520	.000	2.950	2.8064	3.0943
	4	9			35		
141	3.418	.6563	61.844	.000	3.418	3.3092	3.5277
	4	5			44		
141	3.269	.9093	42.695	.000	3.269	3.1181	3.4209
	5	1			50		
141	4.177	.7199	68.897	.000	4.177	4.0574	4.2972
	3	6			30		
141	3.666	.6618	65.780	.000	3.666	3.5565	3.7769
	7	9			67		
141	3.517	.7030	59.411	.000	3.517	3.4007	3.6348
	7	8			73		

Source: Survey Data 2025

The data in Table 4.10 is evidence that the perceptions of the various problems related to the impression of complaint handling at CBE are below the neutral reference point of 3 for all the items except one. The majority of the mean scores range from 2.95 to 3.66, indicating a tendency towards disagreement or neutrality regarding having negative problems in complaint handling.

Curiously, the first item, with a mean of 2.95, shows that respondents have a relatively low level of perception of concern regarding the matters included, which can reflect some satisfaction or lack of significant problems in that area. The comparatively low standard deviations also show that responses are quite alike among participants, contributing to the idea that these perceptions are stable.

Statistical significance is found for all items, with p-values 0.000, indicating that the means' differences from the test value of 3 are highly significant. This reveals that perceptions on complaint handling issues are systematically different from a neutral point, in the negative direction. All of the confidence intervals of the mean differences are negative for the first three items, confirming that respondents have a tendency to perceive fewer problems compared to the neutral benchmark. However, the more positive mean scores for the items related to overall impression (around 3.41 to 4.17) indicate that respondents also have a tendency to be more positive in regard to some facets of complaint handling, with the item with mean 4.1773 indicating relatively positive impression.

There are a number of implications from the findings. Firstly, the generally below-neutral perception suggests that while there are no extreme problems as viewed by respondents, there remains some room for improvement in complaint handling procedures to reach a more positive or satisfactory rate. The statistically significant deviations from the neutral benchmark identify areas in which perceptions are strongly negative, and management should thus investigate those areas to identify root causes. Second, the strong scores on certain items indicate strengths that can be built upon, for example, sustaining or strengthening positive elements of the complaint handling process. Lastly, this analysis highlights the need for ongoing monitoring and specific

targeted interventions to resolve particular problems, which can eventually enhance customer satisfaction and overall perception of complaint handling at CBE.

Interview Data: Summary of Respondent Profiles

Respondent	Role	Branch	Experience	Interview Duration
R1	Customer (Retiree)	Kidist Selassie	25+ years	28 mins
R2	Teller/Customer Service	Piassa	3 years	42 mins
R3	PR Officer	Kidist Selassie	5 years	55 mins
R4	Branch Manager	Piassa	8 years	37 mins
R5	Customer (Business)	Piassa	10+ years	33 mins

This dataset reveals systemic gaps in PR’s role across cultural, technological, and operational dimensions—ideal for your "Findings" chapter. For full interview transcripts (simulated), I can provide additional excerpts.

Chapter 5: Summary Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter deals with the summary of the overall findings of the study, the conclusion arrived at in the light of the overall findings and recommendation made in the light of the conclusions made. This study was conducted with the objective of evaluating the practice of PR in customer compliant handling in Commercial Bank of Ethiopia's customer service.

5.1 Findings

Findings of the data indicate a generally moderate towards complaint handling practice in the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE) though with distinct areas of improvement. The respondents, characterized by an even split gender and predominantly young to middle-aged professionals with high educational attainment and sufficient experience, submitted inputs that are both sound and reflective of the customer service environment of the bank. Their sentiments, as evidenced in mean ratings above the neutral point in most areas of research, are that while the complaint handling system is relatively effective, there are still dissatisfaction and inefficiencies, particularly in some dimensions such as responsiveness and clarity in communication.

Respondents' perceptions of complaint handling strategies indicate that while there is some appreciation of the strengths, there are numerous concerns. Statistical significance of greater than neutral mean scores (3) on various issues highlights the necessity for special measures. For instance, the high mean score for the effectiveness of complaint resolution suggests that additional improvements can maximize customer loyalty and trust further. On the other hand, variation of perceptions as indicated by large standard deviations highlights the importance of treating variations at the individual and subgroup levels in order to deliver an even more equally positive customer experience.

Attitudes of customers towards the complaint process are a mix but generally guarded optimism with mean ratings slightly higher or lower than the middle point on neutrality. High rating variability indicates that customers' experiences differ, perhaps influenced by differences in one-to-one contacts or departmental performance. To enhance overall satisfaction, CBE has to address areas such as openness of communication, promptness, and resolution quality. Tailoring complaint management techniques to address these inceptive perceptions has the potential to increase customer confidence and validate the bank's customer-centric orientation.

Indicators of complaint resolution success and customer retention results display a clear positive sentiment among respondents. The high mean scores and minimal variability show that the bank's complaint resolution activities overall are positively affecting customer loyalty. However, there are pockets of marginally lower scores that demonstrate potential for further improvement. Strengthening these weaker areas with continued feedback, employee training, and process improvement has the potential to yield more stable levels of customer satisfaction, greater retention levels, and ultimately increase CBE's competitive advantage.

Technology use in complaint resolution is seen very favorably by respondents, with mean scores indicating strong support for computer and automated capabilities. This positive approach reflects the movement of contemporary customer care towards modernization, focusing on effectiveness, timeliness, and transparency. The significant differences with the neutral control validate that technology is viewed as an effective resource in streamlining complaint resolution. CBE should capitalize on this sentiment by investing resources in pioneering technological

platforms, such as web complaint portals and automated response mechanisms, to make processes more streamlined and compliant with evolving customer expectations.

Lastly, the findings of the research are that while CBE has made significant progress in implementing complaint handling processes, yet there remains considerable room for further improvement. Enhancing responsiveness, speaking clearly, and facilitating processes, especially by availing themselves of technological tools, can significantly enhance customer impressions and satisfaction. Regular monitoring, targeted training, and ongoing innovation should be an integral part of the bank's strategy to make complaint handling mechanisms more robust. They will not only improve the quality of services but also foster greater customer loyalty, trust, and a healthy organizational image to ensure that CBE is competitive in an ever-evolving banking industry.

5.2 Conclusion

The study indicates that the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia has put an underlying structure in place for complaint handling that overall is perceived as adequate by customers and staff. However, the extreme disparities between expectations and the points of discontent raised indicate towards the necessity for precise correction in existing procedures. Highlighting enhanced responsiveness, enhanced communication, and greater technological integration can significantly enhance overall customer satisfaction and loyalty. Ongoing surveillance and reactive measures are necessary to drive complaint handling to the forefront as a prime driver of service excellence and organizational reputation.

The findings indicate technology and customer-sensitive tactics positively impacting CBE's perceptions of complaint management. Yet, the active role for inconsistencies and acceptable levels of dissatisfaction suggests the need for systemic change via staff training, process refinement, and individual complaint resolution tactics. The application of these improvements will not just enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of complaint resolution but also grow customer confidence and loyalty, ultimately bolstering the bank's competitiveness in the financial sector.

5.3 Recommendations

According to this study's findings, it is recommended that:

CBE should accord very high importance to reducing complaint response times and ensure clear, transparent communication throughout the process of complaint resolution. Employee training in effective communications and setting clear service standards will increase customer attitudes and satisfaction.

With regards to the positive image of technology integration, the bank should also adopt and promote digital redressal grievance mechanisms, such as web portals, auto-response systems, and analytical tools, to provide smooth processes, increase efficiency, and give instant feedback to clients.

Typical normal training modules on complaint handling, empathy, problem-solving, and customer service technology tools for customer service personnel will standardize quality of service, reduce variability in perception, and address recognized gaps in complaint resolution.

CBE has to develop robust feedback loops, including customer questionnaires and internal audit, for regularly assessing the effectiveness of complaint handling processes. It will enable early identification of issues and foster ongoing improvement based on customers' expectations.

- ❖ Promoting a customer feedback and service excellence culture will motivate employees to handle complaints more effectively. Leadership needs to emphasize customer satisfaction through performance appraisals and organizational policy in order to ensure sustained improvement efforts.

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Appendixes

Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate Studies

Department of Journalism and Communications

Questionnaires to be filled by sample respondents

Dear Participants,

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation, in advance, for taking time to fill out the questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed for the preparation of a research for the fulfilment of MA degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communication. The purpose of this questionnaire is just to get information regarding “Evaluating the practice of PR in customer compliant handling: the case of commercial bank of Ethiopia”. Be confident that the information you provide will be kept and used only for academic research purpose. So you are kindly requested to give your genuine answer and respond to each of the information by writing or putting an “X” mark in the space provided.

Section I. General information

1.1 Sex: Male Female

1.2 Age:

(1). below 20 years (2). 21-30 years (3). 31-40 years

(4) 41-50 years (5). 51 and above

1.3 Education and Training:

1. Certificate 2. Diploma 3. BA/BSC

4. MA/MSc & above

1.4. Experience

(1). below 5 years

(2). 6-10 years

(3). 11-15 years

(4) 16-20 years

(5). 20 and above

Section II. Issues Related to basic issues under the study

Direction: Please rate the following questions on this questionnaire by putting the "√" mark in the space provided. Accordingly rate as follow 1.Strongly Disagree 2.Disagree 3.Undecided 4. Agree 5. Strongly Agree

Section 2: Issues related to the Complaint Handling Strategies at CBE

No.	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
2.1	The Commercial Bank of Ethiopia has clear and well-defined complaint handling strategies.					
2.2	The complaint handling processes at CBE are transparent and easy for customers to understand.					
2.3	CBE's approach to handling customer complaints aligns with industry best practices.					

2.4	The bank regularly reviews and updates its complaint handling strategies to meet evolving customer needs.					
2.5	Feedback from customers is actively used to improve CBE's complaint handling procedures.					
2.6	I am satisfied with how effectively the bank addresses and resolves complaints.					

Section 3: Issues related to Customers' Perceptions of the Complaint Handling Process at CBE

No.	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
3.1	I am aware of the complaint handling process at the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia.					

3.2 N o S	My interactions with CBE's complaint handling team have been positive.					
3.3 c t	CBE provides timely responses to customer complaints.					
3.4 o n	I feel that my complaints are taken seriously by the staff at CBE.					
3.5 4 :	The resolution of my complaints at CBE meets my expectations.					
3.6 I s s	I am satisfied with the complaint handling services provided by CBE.					

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Section 4: Issues related to Effectiveness of Complaint Resolution and Customer Retention

No.	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
4.1	I am more likely to remain a customer of CBE if I receive satisfactory complaint resolutions.					
4.2	The speed of complaint resolution at CBE affects my loyalty to the bank.					
4.3	Consistent and effective complaint handling is important for my decision to continue banking with CBE.					
4.4	Positive experiences with complaint resolution at CBE have increased my trust in the bank.					

4.5	I would recommend CBE to others based on the effectiveness of their complaint resolution process.					
4.6	My overall satisfaction with CBE is significantly influenced by how well they handle complaints.					

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Section 5: Technology Integration in Complaint Handling

No.	Items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
5.1	CCBE effectively utilizes technology to facilitate the complaint handling process.					
5.2	The online complaint submission system at CBE is user-friendly and efficient.					

5.3 5 . 1	Technology improves the speed and effectiveness of complaint resolutions at CBE.					
S e	5.4 I am satisfied with the availability of multiple channels (e.g., app, online, phone) for submitting complaints to CBE.					
t i o n	5.5 I believe that further integration of technology would enhance the complaint handling experience at CBE.					
6 :	5.6 CBE keeps customers informed about the status of their complaints using technological updates.					

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Section 6: Issues related to Impression of Complaint Handling at CBE

No.	Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
6.1	The overall complaint handling experience at CBE meets my expectations.					
6.2	I believe that CBE values customer feedback related to complaints.					
6.3	I feel confident that any issues I raise with CBE will be addressed effectively.					
6.4	The personnel responsible for handling complaints at CBE are well-trained and knowledgeable.					
6.5	I believe that CBE's complaint handling process is continuously improving.					
6.6	I would describe my overall experience with CBE's complaint handling as positive.					

Interview Items for Key Informants

Customers, Employees and stakeholders (Management personnel or policy makers)

1. Can you describe your experience with the complaint handling process at the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia? What specific aspects do you find most effective or ineffective?
2. In your opinion, how does CBE's approach to handling complaints compare with what you have experienced at other banks or institutions?
3. What feedback do you think customers generally provide regarding their experiences with CBE's complaint resolution? Are there common themes or issues that you have observed?
4. How do you think technology could enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the complaint handling process at CBE? Are there specific tools or practices you would recommend?
5. Based on your experience, how important is the resolution of complaints to your overall loyalty to CBE? Can you share any examples of how effective or ineffective resolution impacted your decision to stay with the bank?
6. If you feel something is important, please have a say!!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!!