



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

**THE USE OF FACEBOOK IN CORPORATE PR: THE CASE OF ETHIOPIAN
AIRLINES**

Shumet Demeke Lemma

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, LANGUAGE STUDIES, JOURNALISM AND
COMMUNICATION
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION**

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AIRLINES**

Shumet Demeke Lemma

Advisor: Dr. Amanuel Gebru

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The use of Facebook in corporate PR: the case of Ethiopian Airlines

SIGNED BY THE EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Examiner _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Examiner _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Advisor _____ Signature _____ Date _____

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Abstract

Organizations, including corporate commercial organizations, seek public attention for a variety of reasons. The introduction of social media to the dynamics of marketing exchange between firms and users has shifted the attention to non-transactional customer behavior. Facebook, in particular, is regarded as one of the most important platforms for such organizations to reach out to their target audiences and engage with them. Public relations professionals largely view social media specially Facebook as a “cost effective way to receive greater reach for research and timely targeted dialogue. This study particularly focuses on the use of Facebook in corporate organization: the case of Ethiopian airlines. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were employed in the study. For the qualitative method, interviews, FGD-focus group discussion, webinar based interviews were used as a means of data collection tool. For the quantitative method, questionnaire was used as a data gathering tool. The questionnaire was distributed to 46 selected participants. Information collected from participants was organized as a data and were analyzed through statistical percentage for quantitative and thematic description for qualitative. Results obtained from the data indicated that the use of Facebook incorporate organizations is vital for communicating organizational community and external customers at large. Facebook eased the way PR works and proved to be one of the most important communication tools and/or platform through which effective interactive communications are made. It’s found to be cost effective, time friendly and of course traceable. Participants of this research, as were proved from the data, indicated that they categorically use the Ethiopian airlines Facebook page to gate updated information of their concern. Facebook enabled them to interact with the PR department personnel to have answers for their frequently asked questions. This research also tried to figure out key challenges and opportunities of using Facebook in Corporate PR. Finally, the research has put efforts to conclude and recommend the way forward and prospects of using Facebook in corporate organization based on the findings discussed.

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I thank you all once again!!

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this research paper is my original work and that all sources of the materials in the research paper have been duly acknowledged. The matter expressed in this research paper has not been submitted earlier for award of any master degree, degree or diploma to the best of my knowledge and belief.

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Lists of Acronyms

ETA	Ethiopian Airlines
ET's	Ethiopian airlines
FB	Facebook
PR	Public Relation
SM	Social Media

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Digital media, often known as new media, has evolved into a critical storytelling tool. Organizations are now using social media into their PR plan as a means of connecting with broader audiences, thanks to the growing digital world. Most firms and corporate groups use Facebook as part of their public relations strategy and communication (Pride, R.) (2018). How to use the new time limit features on Instagram and Facebook) Individuals' urge to engage and participate may be traced back more than five decades to technical advancements.

The origins of this social media revolution may be traced back to the creation of Internet structures, which began with the ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) initiative in the 1960s (Lipschultz, 2017). Since the researcher observes, social media is evolving and becoming increasingly significant in our daily lives, as individuals use it on a regular basis to carry out their daily activities. Corporate communication has extended to include marketing methods as a result of the rapid rise of digital communications, from one-way customer outreach in the form of advertising and publicity to the well-known two-way conversational approach favored by public relations professionals (Issa, 2011).

As a global trending phenomenon, social media provides a social environment for bringing the globe together in a global village. Many people, as well as businesses and enterprises, have benefited as a result of this (Castells, 2014). Burns (2017) adds to our understanding of social media by stating that social media are Internet-based platforms that allow users to create profiles and share user-generated or curated digital content in the form of text, photos, graphics, or videos with a networked community of users who can respond to the content.

In today's competitive business environment, the corporate brand, with its identity, image, and reputation, becomes the center of gravity for meaningful and long-term interactions between the firm and all interested parties, thanks to the digital revolution. Corporate branding, according to Vernuccio (2014), is a guiding principle in the corporate communication discipline. Social media has the capacity to reshape society by providing new ways to share events and information.

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and others are some of the most popular social media platforms that people utilize to gain more information in their daily lives. Customers today are searching for a better digital customer experience as well as more personal relationships through social media.

Rather than relying on random one-off posts to communicate their messaging, few brands are connecting intimately with their customers across media. Traditional corporate communication tactics and procedures, such as mission statements, news reports, and press releases, have helped the public shape an organization's image in the past.

Traditional media tactics will not suffice to contribute to the shaping of an organization's image and establish long-term relationships with a company's stakeholders, however, with a public that is always present online (Courtright & Smudde, 2009). The term "social media" was established to describe these and other new digital communication platforms that appear on a regular basis in this interactive electronic environment, emphasizing their participatory and collaborative social features (Vernuccio, 2014). Today's social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, and online blogs, provide new advertising and promotion opportunities. In theory, these sites allow airlines (and businesses in general) to advertise their product and brand, engage and motivate the online community to fly, target certain market segments, and generate brand loyalty to the carrier.

It's also a way for airlines to promote word-of-mouth advertising, which is the single most influential factor in travel decisions, and, as a result, increases revenue (CAPA, 2009). Airlines have been conditioned over the last ten years to believe that the promise and value of social media rests in the media channels themselves: Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. These are marketing channels that are used to create communities, target prospects, and offer bargains and promotions to notoriously difficult-to-reach populations.

To avoid a crisis or a public reputation loss, it is critical for an airline to retain its image and reputation in any situation that may emerge in the future. When instances like these occur, people are quick to pass judgment on an airline. According to Ash (2020), travel disruptions are inconvenient for both passengers and airlines; nevertheless, using social media to interact with consumers can assist to safeguard the airline's image and retain customers during this crisis is a minimal cost.

According to the researcher, social media can be used as a communication tool to address client complaints and suggestions while preventing a problem from escalating. Differentiating them in a market where pricing is critical, as well as ensuring that consumer expectations are met, is an ongoing struggle for airlines. This is especially difficult in a fast-paced industry that is prone to delays and last-minute modifications.

Social media, according to Meehan et al., (2016), allows consumers to express comments and share views about their travel experiences. In the airline sector, the customer experience is everything. Every touch point with consumers, from the routes they fly to the booking process and the on-board experience, is an opportunity for airlines to provide ground-breaking experiences that help them develop their reputation and stand out in a brutally competitive industry. Ethiopian Airlines is one of Africa's largest airlines. Addis Ababa International Airport serves as the organization's headquarters and principal hub. The airline's operations and subsidiaries offer scheduled passenger and cargo services to over 116 foreign and 23 domestic destinations from its hub in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In both normal life and during times of crisis, social media may be a particularly important communication medium between an airline and the general public or its passengers. Maintaining an airline's social media as their corporate image has a number of advantages, including making it easier to deal with a problem quickly. The purpose of this study is to see if Ethiopian Airlines' Corporate Communication Department employs a social media strategy across all of its social media platforms, primarily Facebook as a public relations tool.

PR practitioners have employed microblogging sites, social networking sites, and video sharing services to gather information on the local, regional, and international scene, according to (Wright and Hinson (2010). Furthermore, because social networking sites provide a platform for accessing and downloading information, public relations practitioners in many corporate organizations have used them to do campaign research and monitor public opinion (Fitch, 2009). While social media has shown to be successful in general social contacts and has been extensively integrated into marketing tactics, it is still a novel form of communication for PR practices when compared to e-mail and face-to-face engagement. Moreover, despite the popularity and rising use of social media in PR (Wright, & Hinson, 2012), not all PR consultants have included Facebook as one of their formal communication platforms. With this in mind, the purpose of this research is to look into the perceptions of PR professionals and consultants at

Ethiopian Airlines' (Ethiopian Airlines) regarding the use of Facebook, as well as their attitudes toward using Facebook as a communication tool.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The explosion in social media, especially social networking site such as Facebook with increased connectivity and interactivity has caused many public relations (PR) agencies begun to recognize the need to embrace these new media for effective communication with a variety of internal and external audiences. According to (Dholakiya, 2016), Over the last few years, it has become apparent that social media specifically Facebook has captured the fancy of most people. The extensive use of social media has drastically changed the way people communicate and share information. The use of social media platforms, particularly Facebook as a tool for public relations and how it is evaluated seem unclear, as most organizations underutilize the technology (Lovejoy, Waters & Saxton, 2012) especially in the African context.

Besides, researches examining the relationship between social networking sites and public relations are limited. Thus this study aimed to examine the use of Facebook and its implication by Ethiopian airlines PR Professionals as a Strategic communication platform.

To this end, the researcher is interested to investigate the impact of Facebook on the regular works of PR professionals, to identify the major uploaded contents on Ethiopian airline's Facebook pages, to investigate the challenges and opportunities of using Facebook as PR and communication tool and to realize how comments given by followers are monitored and used in decision making process.

1.3. Research Questions

The following guiding research questions were raised in order to attain at the specified general and specific objectives of the aforementioned.

1. What is the Impact of using Facebook in the regular work of PR professionals in ET??
2. What are the major contents uploaded on the Facebook pages of ET?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities of using Facebook as PR and communication tool?
4. How do ET's PR personnel Monitor and analysis comments reflected on their Facebook Page?

1.4. Objectives

This Research has had the following general and specific objectives.

1.4.1. General Objectives

- To analyze the practical use of Facebook in corporate PR and communications at the Ethiopian Airlines

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

- To investigate the impact of Facebook on the regular works of PR professionals
- To identify the major uploaded contents of Ethiopian airlines Facebook pages
- To investigate what challenges and opportunities are there for using Facebook as PR and communication tool?
- To examine how comments given by followers of Facebook page are monitored and used in decision making process.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The researcher believes that the findings of this research are significantly providing effective information on the use of Facebook in Ethiopian Airlines. Moreover, the airlines can be benefited in recognizing what challenges and opportunities its Facebook page has so far. Besides, this review has also been significant for media practitioners, individuals, groups and or policy makers in adopting and implementing the standard features and practices of Facebook so as to fill the gap in practically utilizing the platform.

The researcher further believes that the findings of this paper can be used as a reference material for continued research works in similar area.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to the implementation and usage of Facebook in Ethiopian airlines. More specifically, its implementation in the department of PR to ease the routine activities of the department was where the scope of the study was.

1.7. Limitation of the Study

There were various Constraints that hindered the work of this research. Most of them are directly related to the response against the questionnaire, focus group discussion (FGD). The Unmanaged outbreak of Covid 19 and the protocols imposed were significantly worked against ease of fact findings.

The research played role to mitigate the problems and found ways for online communication like corresponding via Zoom and webinar for focus group discussions and emailed questionnaires to gather some important information.

1.8. Research Chapter/ Organization

This research is organized and arranged in to five Chapters. The first chapter details about the background and introductory of research: It consists of the background study, statement of the problem, research objective, research questions, significance of the study, scope & limitation of the research work

The second chapter of the paper is all about literature review of the study. The third chapter accounts for the methodology section which consists of research strategy and design, sample size and sampling technique, data types and sources, data collection instruments, data processing and analysis.

Chapter four is the analysis and discussion part in which all the data is interpreted and analyzed by the researcher. The fifth which is the final chapter goes to the conclusion and recommendation part of the research.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of related Literatures

As a researcher, I made attempts to review variety of literatures and digitalized resources (literatures on websites, e-libraries, and so on) that I believe played a vital part in the overall comprehension of the research topic. The general study covered digital media, whereas the specialized review focused on the use of Facebook for public relations in corporate settings.

2.1. Framework of thought

In today's business world, a company's success or failure is determined by public perception. In all aspects of life, new media technologies, particularly Facebook, Twitter, and other Web 2.0 social networking applications, are becoming mainstream methods of communication, particularly in public relations and business communication. It has transformed corporate communications, drastically altering how stakeholders and businesses communicate.

The new developing and social communication technologies, according to (Wright and Hinson, 2012), have brought many drastic changes to many elements of the profession. The advent of various new technologies has considerably empowered a wide range of strategic publics by providing them with dynamic new media, which many are employing to successfully communicate with a variety of internal and external audiences.

Unlike the previous strategy of pure output, social media has compelled corporate communications to engage in a dialogue in which all stakeholders, not just companies, have control over the message. It has also become vital and difficult for many businesses to not only achieve economic goals, but also to ensure that the public, both internal and external, views them favorably.

Many people regard public relations in the conventional sense as "smoke and mirrors," with false messaging manufactured by "spin doctors." As a result, many people have started to distrust the traditional means of measuring the sector, preferring instead to trust the opinions of their peers, which they can find on social media sites like Woolf (2009).

Social media not only allows for direct and immediate business communication, but it also allows for a return to the ideal basics of public relations, such as creating and sustaining connections, as well as changing some of the industry's bad perceptions.

2.1.1. The Definition of New Media and Public Relations/PR

2.1.1.1. New Media

According to the New Media Institute, the phrase "new media" is used to describe everything that has to do with the internet and how technology, images, and sound interact. In actuality, the notion of new media is always evolving and always will be. New media is always changing and morphing. <https://ddunleavy.typepad.com/new-media/2016/03/what-is-new-media.html>

Additionally, the group claims, "The varied use of words, images, and sounds can be used to define new media. Because of the nested feature, these networks of images, sounds, and text data differ from traditional media formats like printed newspapers."

According to PC Magazine "'New media" is defined as "digital means of communication, including publishing... most crucially, over the Internet. It suggests that the user accesses the content through a desktop computer, a laptop, a Smartphone, or a tablet. In the developed world, new media is used by every company." According to these criteria, it appears that new media is concerned with creating material in a way that allows authors a full range of communication capabilities, including everything from website coding to authoring press releases and articles to producing photographs, videos, audio, and info graphics. In the modern world, when 75% of Internet users utilize social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, "new media" tools help people connect with a wider range of people.

According to (Eikermann, Hajj & Peterson 2009), new media, also referred to as consumer-generated media, new media, or citizen media, is interactive in character. The conventional media is produced by businesses, and information only flows in one direction—messages are sent from businesses to their intended audiences (one-to-many). When it comes to social media, the information flow takes the shape of many-to-many active contact between users of the online community.

2.1.1.2. The Concept of Public Relation (PR)

The British Institute of Public Relations (IPR) defines public relations as "the deliberate, planned, and sustained endeavor to build a mutual understanding between an organization and its publics," which is the definition that is generally accepted. The general public is not referred to as "Publics" in public relations, and certain dictionary definitions may be incorrect. This is true because, unlike advertising, PR messages are directed at particular demographics or subsets of the broader public (audience). Depending on the sort of company, these publics may be referred to as members of the local community, employees, investors, electors, donors, distributors, or different types of consumers and users.

2.1.1.3. Role of Public Relations

Managing public relations is a managerial task. In a government setting, it reports to the director general, while in the private sector, it reports to the chief executive. The public relations officer is always a member of the board of management and participates in decision-making. A public relations professional must be cognizant of the political, social, and economic milieu in which he or she operates. PR representatives are required to fill some of the duties described below inside some corporate organizations.

It aids management in assessing and interpreting diverse publics' attitudes, opinions, and aspirations as well as organizational internal and external operations. The general public is informed about governmental policies and daily operations. Additionally, it aids in the management of problems and crises. Additionally, PR is expected to plan a course of action so that the general public can voice their opinions on crucial new projects before a decision is made.

More than just controlling the information flow between a company and its audiences is involved in public relations. It is a communications discipline that involves engaging and educating critical audiences, developing significant relationships, and bringing crucial information back into a company for review and action. It affects the accomplishment of strategic organizational goals in a meaningful, quantifiable way. In addition to crisis management, reputation and brand building, consumer engagement, revenue generation, wealth creation, problems management, and positive modifications in constituent attitudes and behaviors, public relations is a significant driver of business outcomes crucial to organizational success.

Public relations specialists have a specific responsibility to practice their trade in an ethical manner, upholding the greatest standards of truth, accuracy, fairness, and public responsibility.

2.1.2. Public Relations in the Digital Era

The digital era has drastically changed from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when channels of information were classified as mass and micro communication, where the flow of information was through media such as TV, radio, magazines, and newspapers (for the Mass communication), and the information source was shared asymmetrically, and micro communication where the information was intended to be shared between individuals, and was symmetrical in its exchange (Phillips & Young, 2009), the digital era has also seen a dramatic increase in the number of people. Therefore, it also had an impact on PR practices.

2.1.3. PR and Social Media

The management of a digital PR can utilize a variety of social media platforms, including I blogging, a crucial aspect of social media marketing, where information is published on a website; (ii) microblogging, which is blogging in a smaller format; (iii) social networks, in which businesses and individuals are connected by dyadic networks through virtual social networks; and (iv) twitter. According to research findings (Wright & Hinson, 2015; Laksamana, 2015), the use of social media has altered how public relations are conducted. The two social media sites that public relations professionals use the most are Facebook and Twitter, with LinkedIn and YouTube coming in third and fourth, respectively. Public relations professionals need to be aware of a number of factors in order to effectively manage social media, including the need for adequate infrastructure, organizational policies, and the support of public relations professionals. They also need to be aware of the most recent technological advancements and be able to quickly adapt to them as well as a variety of gadgets and their applications (Laksamana, 2015).

Additionally, the digital PR must pay attention to the 7Cs of public message dissemination, which are credibility, context, clarity, continuity and consistency, channel, and audience capability. These 7Cs are credibility, context, clarity, continuity, and consistency. An organization can gain a lot from using social media to strengthen ties with the public and stakeholders (Grunig, 2009). However, a strategic approach is required between management/higher policy and public relations practitioners in terms of objectives, roles, duties, policies, and guidelines on management of social media (Bashir and Aldaihani, 2017).

According to Macnamara, public relations professionals struggle to effectively use social media because there isn't a strategic approach in place (Bashir and Aldaihani, 2017); social media is still used haphazardly, and higher management is to blame because it hasn't created any policies to take advantage of social media's potential. Additionally, there are still gaps in public relations professionals' understanding, familiarity, regulations, guidelines, and training regarding the usage of social media (Bashir and Aldaihani, 2017).

2.1.4. Digital Public Relation

Cyber or digital PR refers to the use of internet technologies for public relations efforts. Digital public relations have many meanings, but according to Onggo (2004), it is a PR strategy that makes use of the Internet as a publicity tool. The execution of PR functions in cyberspace is known as "digital PR" (Doherty, 1995; Galloway, 2005). Digital PR is thus the execution of PR programs through the use of digital media to engage the public (Laksamana, 2015).

More so than in the past, in the corporate world of today, a company's success or failure is determined by how the public views it. The use of new media technologies, particularly Facebook, Twitter, and other Web 2.0 social networking applications, is becoming commonplace in many spheres of society, particularly in relation to corporate and public relations efforts. Corporate communications have undergone a revolution, quickly altering stakeholder and company communication.

(Wright and Hinson, 2012) claim that several parts of the field have undergone significant change as a result of the new emerging and social communication platforms. Through the introduction of dynamic new media that many are using to successfully communicate, the development of diverse new technologies has considerably boosted the power of a wide range of strategic publics with a variety of internal and external audiences.

Social media, in contrast to the conventional strategy of pure production, has compelled corporate communications to open a dialogue in which the stakeholders, and not just the firms, have control over the message. For many businesses, it has also become crucial and difficult to achieve not only financial objectives but also to make sure that the public, both internal and external, sees them in a favorable way.

Many people view traditional public relations as "smoke and mirrors," with misleading statements produced by "spin doctors." As a result, many people now distrust the old methods of measuring the success of the industry, the media, and place greater faith in their peers' opinions,

which they can get on social media platforms Woolf (2009). In addition to providing a direct and immediate channel for business communication, social media also presents a chance to return to the fundamentals of effective relationship-building in PR and to challenge some of the unfavorable perceptions that are frequently held about the field.

2.2. Public Relations and Corporate Communications

The promptness of the media has significantly increased communication in public relations. The technique of public relations has shifted from pitching to participation in recent years. It is a significant development for public relations practitioners. According to Langett (2013), public relations are a strategic communication service that cultivates and enhances an organization's relationship with the general public. PR professionals can create solid relationships directly with a large number of people via social media — often in what they perceive to be a one-to-one relationship. As noted in the previous paragraph, PR professionals can use the platforms to discuss ideas and introduce products or campaigns. They can also look at the impact of the posts and vote on them.

They can also look at the audience's posts and reviews to see how influential they are. Today's public relations professionals not only serve as information distributors, but also as participants. PR communication has grown more influential and practical as a result of the growth of social media. The dissemination of real-time information on social media, in any form, amplifies the message and strengthens and expands PR's influence. The following discussion will be based on facts gathered by PR practitioners, interactions between the public and the organization, and points of engagement in the organization's work to demonstrate improvements in PR communication.

The art and science of developing relationships between an organization and its primary audiences is known as public relations. It is a company's ability to establish important connections between its organization and its target audience. A strategic communication approach that establishes mutually beneficial relationships between corporations and their publics is known as public relations. The Public Relations Society of America is a professional organization dedicated to public relations (2012).

According to Rensburg & Cant (2002), public relations evolved over many years but just lately became more prominent in the corporate sector during the last decades of the previous century.

Dolphin (2000) claims that public relations gave rise to corporate communication. The goal of public relations is to build, strengthen, and grow relationships between businesses and their communities. The relationships are defined as a set of expectations for mutual behavior that are shared by all parties. E. Kim and T. L. Johnson (2011).

Corporate communications is a strategic management process in which a company communicates with its numerous audiences for mutual benefit and to gain a competitive edge.

The functions of public relations are encapsulated in corporate communication. Management communication, organizational communication, public relations, and marketing communication are examples of sub-disciplines of communication inside organizations.

Corporate communication, according to Argenti and Forman, is a company's voice and image that it produces on a global stage in front of a variety of audiences. Corporate reputation, corporate advertising and advocacy, employee communication, investor relations, government relations, media relations, and crisis communication are all aspects of this discipline. Paul Argenti and Janis Forman (2002)

2.3. Public Relations and Social Media

The term "social media" refers to a group of online communication channels devoted to community-based input, engagement, content sharing, and collaboration. Among the various sorts of social media are websites and applications dedicated to forums, micro blogging, social networking, social bookmarking, social curating, and wiki. Margaret Rouse (whatis.techtarget.com, Personal computing)

Merriam Webster defines social media as "forms of electronic communication such as Web sites for social networking and micro blogging through which users construct online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content," according to Merriam Webster (as videos). "A category of Internet-based apps that build on the ideological and technological roots of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content," say Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:61).

As social websites and applications develop, social media is quickly becoming an inextricable element of online life. The majority of traditional internet media offer social features like comment areas for users. Some of the most popular social networking sites are Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, Reddit, and Pinterest.

Every year, the number of people using social media increases. According to the most recent statistics, there will be 3.96 billion social media users globally in 2022, up 4.8 percent over the previous year. It is also 1.1 billion greater than the number of social users in 2017, indicating a 38.5 percent increase in just six years. (<https://www.oberlo.com/statistics>)

Because of the high number of social media users, public relations professionals have access to a wealth of data and information. Social media not only helps to disseminate a lot of information, but it also promotes the organization's participation and visibility in the public eye.

People can use social media to form new ties with other people and organizations, as well as reconnect with other organizations, companies, and friends (BinShikh, Albaloushi, Almansori&Husani, 2016). Relationships are built as opportunities for public participation of PR personnel develop, particularly through the Internet, which helps improve an organization's services or profits.

According to a 2014 ING study, 81% of PR professionals feel that without social media, PR efforts would end. Social media is vital to them in their daily work, according to 78 percent of them. The value of social media in PR is self-evident.

In terms of presentation, with so many social media platforms to choose from, PR practitioners can utilize those channels to present their ideas and tell the public about their PR activities or campaigns. When there was no such thing as Facebook, YouTube, or other social media, PR professionals relied on press releases, reputation management, and attendance at trade events.

Traditional media, according to Broom (2009), cannot express all available new information. He also mentioned that audiences have a finite amount of time and attention to pay attention to millions of messages (cited in Oneya, 2010).

It was difficult for PR professionals to trace the audience and measure the results at the time. In contrast, today's PR professionals have access to a range of avenues through which they can reach out to customers. Each channel gives a unique venue for professionals to share their material with consumers, whether through catchy Facebook posts, quick tweets, or moving video posts on YouTube. These platforms can be used by a variety of individuals who can give various types of content, such as text or video, allowing PR to reach a larger audience. PR promotes a person's, brands, or company's reputation through earned media. Because Facebook has been around for a long time and has a vast user base, points of view will be developed through this platform.

2.4. Facebook

Facebook is a popular social media tool for public officials. Users establish profiles, post material, share images, communicate with friends and family, and comment to or link to messages posted by their friends on this free social networking site. Facebook, according to Stránská and Sttesk, (2015), improves the pace of making an issue public and can receive a response much faster than a hotline. On Facebook, public relations professionals engage the audience by acting as a conversational brand, and they create their own pages for the companies, which helps to build a strong audience base. Viewers can keep up with the latest news by visiting the pages made up by public relations professionals.

On the other hand, monitoring Facebook users' attitudes can reveal erroneous evaluations that need to be corrected as well as additional worries among the target groups (Wigley & Zhang, 2011). Because Facebook has such a large user base, posting on it allows PR professionals to reach out to a larger audience and evaluate if their actions are viable. They can also see if their stakeholder groups' thoughts and actions are in line with what PR professionals want them to be. The Facebook page, according to Komodromos (2014), is believed to be the key to monitoring crisis management strategies. The audience's increased attention is observed in advance, and the misunderstanding can be collected through the comments and reactions of the stakeholder groups. This helps to prevent a crisis from arising and the company's negative image from being exposed unexpectedly. Users of Facebook, on the other hand, mostly use the platform to keep in touch with or reconnect with people they know offline. As a result, public relations practitioners may face some challenges in reaching various audiences. Despite this, Facebook is a fantastic platform for PR practitioners in practice because of the variety of ways to publish, the speed with which they may share, and the necessity of getting responses.

2.4.1. Facebook brand and user engagement

Organizations, including corporate commercial organizations, seek public attention for a variety of reasons. The introduction of social media to the dynamics of marketing exchange between firms and users has shifted the attention to non-transactional customer behavior. Facebook, in particular, is regarded as one of the most important platforms for such organizations to reach out to their target audiences and engage with them.

Facebook is a popular social networking site that is widely utilized in Ethiopia and other nations across the world. A single post is at the heart of all Facebook interactions (a message). It is the smallest unit of communication on Facebook. Each article receives a certain level of attention.

It is the smallest unit of communication on Facebook. Each post receives a certain amount of attention from an organization's Facebook page (profile).

Consumers (as well as page visitors and followers) and businesses value interactions (organizations). Customer loyalty, desire to explore new goods, and resistance to unfavorable information about the company are all enhanced by successful company-consumer interactions (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

The term "engagement" becomes the primary construct for describing the nature of participants' interactions (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Online engagement, for example, is defined by Mollen and Wilson (2010, p. 923) as "a cognitive and affective commitment to an active relationship with the brand as symbolized by the website." Some definitions of this phrase emphasize the cognitive and emotional aspects of participation (Bowden, 2009).

Facebook is a popular social media platform that allows users to interact with an organization's profile and messaging using three different engagement tools: likes, shares, and comments.

Within the SM, these three tools – activities reflect various forms of social participation. A like is the simplest way to show that a person likes a post, whereas a share redistributes and publishes a post on a user's and their connections' pages, and a comment allows a user to make or add material to another user's posts, according to Facebook (Facebook, 2017; Srivastava et al, 2018). Each engagement behavior has a different value and resource commitment (Kim & Yang, 2017; Srivastava et al, 2018).

Giving likes is a very fundamental type of interaction. People can use comments to offer their thoughts, ideas, and opinions, as well as to express their interest in the topic of the post. According to Zell and Moeller (2018), making comments on Facebook requires more activity and effort than

"liking." They distinguish between "prepared communication (comments)" and "one-click" communication clearly (likes). (Alsufyan & Aloud, 2017) Distinct message features lead to different behaviors: sensory and visual features lead to like; rational and interactive features lead to commenting; and sensory, visual, and rational features lead to sharing. Giving a "like" is thus an affectively motivated action, whereas commenting is a cognitively motivated action.

Sharing might be affective, cognitive, or a combination of the two (Kim & Yang, 2017, p. 441). Social networks and Facebook have been investigated from several angles. Bowden (2009), for example, focused on the concept of satisfaction and the importance of commitment, involvement, and trust in the development of engaged and loyal customers. Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) focused on non-transactional customer behavior as well as the extent of online customer interaction as assessed by likes, comments, and shares.

Cho, Schweickart, and Haase (2014) used three different engagement tools to examine organizational communications on Facebook: likes, shares, and comments. Ji et al. (2017) defined two categories of online stakeholder involvement and investigated their effects on business reputation.

Revista comunicare 46 RETEHNO.qxd 7th of June, 2019 at 8:06 a.m. Page 11 as well as non-confrontational Facebook users' engagement in Facebook activities was also measured using real data from Facebook. However, there has been very little written about the use of Facebook in higher education in terms of public relations and brand building. Facebook, like a sophisticated social network, has an algorithm that gives varying weights to different types of activity and thus determines what should be displayed on the user's screen. A single share has roughly the same weight as two comments, each of which has around the same weight of seven likes. (Calero, 2013, p. 441) (Kim & Yang, 2017, p. 441) (Calero, 2013, p. 441) (Calero, 2013,

As a result, controlling an organization's communication with visitors and followers on Facebook is critical. To achieve this, it is necessary to comprehend how the aforementioned actions differ from one another and how they effect the general population. Researchers can gain robust metrics of messaging on corporate profiles and public behaviors, such as the amount of likes, comments, and shares, by using Facebook (e.g. using Netvizz or Power BI). Researchers can explore the relationship between public behavior and organizational public relations activities using tangible Facebook behavioral measures.

2.5. Social Media's Contribution to Corporate Communication

The number one advantage of social media marketing, according to 81 percent of respondents in an online survey of 880 participants conducted in March 2009 by social media marketer Michael Stelzner to find the "5WH" question of social media marketing, is receiving more exposure for the brand. Increased traffic and the establishment of new business partnerships followed.) A boost in search engine rankings was also mentioned by more than half of the respondents as an advantage of social media Stelzner (2009).

To achieve a positive corporate image and maintain meaningful stakeholder relationships in the current corporate environment, internet tools, particularly social media networks, discussion forums, and blogs, must become an integral part of organizations' communication strategies, in addition to traditional PR tools such as news releases, media statements, newsletters, organization, participation at public events conferences, conventions, awards, and so on.

According to a recent survey by global consulting firm McKinsey & Company, 65 percent of companies use "Web 2.0" technologies internally, with video sharing, blogs, wikis, and social networking sites among the most widely used applications, though no single technology was used by more than 38 percent of companies. 2010; Bughin & Chui. According to Forrester Research, yearly corporate spending on enterprise social media will exceed \$4.6 billion by 2013. Young et al (2008). Despite the fact that the use of social media as a corporate communication tool has increased significantly in recent years, research indicates that complete and efficient use of the technology has yet to be established.

2.6. The Use of Facebook as a Public Relations Tool in Corporate Organizations

The field of corporate communications, as well as how it is conducted and possibly professional impacts, has been altered by social media. Companies utilize social media to share company news, statements, accomplishments, and other information with all of its stakeholders in real time. To put it another way, social media is a critical instrument for effective corporate communication. "The combination of communications and technology provides PR professionals with the opportunity to shape their performance in a more strategic direction," according to the report. 2012 (Breakenridge) Furthermore, the advent of social media has ushered in a new kind of contact between a firm and its clients, allowing people to provide immediate feedback and ideas. Every day, the public uses social media as one of their favorite online pastimes. "Internet users spent 4.6 hours a week on social sites, compared to 4.4 hours on email, which was the most

prevalent internet activity,” according to a TNS survey from 2010. (2010, emarketer.com) With the rising use of internet on mobile phones, according to Jason Mander in GWI Social – Q1 2015, Global WebIndex’s quarterly report on the newest trends in social networking, “one in every four minutes spent on the internet is on a social network.”

Facebook has the most users, with more than half of them visiting the site multiple times every day. “The average person has 5+ social networking accounts,” according to the survey. (2015, Mander) “Social networking is the most time consuming activity for an internet user,” according to another research. A typical internet user spends 22% of their time on social networking sites, 21% on searches, 20% on reading material, 19% on emails and communication, 13% on multimedia sites, and 5% on online shopping.” (2012, Go-gulf.com) According to a study on social media marketing, 88 percent of marketers utilize social media to promote their businesses. The benefits of social media marketing, according to the report, include “creating awareness for the business, followed by growing traffic, building new business alliances, assisting in the climb in search ranks, generating qualified leads, and reducing marketing expenses.” (2009, Stelzner) As a result of the increasing acceptance of social media as a result of its benefits and worldwide influence, the majority of businesses now have a presence on social media for a variety of purposes.

According to McCorkindale, more than half of Fortune 2000 organizations (69%) presently utilize SNSs, with another 37% planning to do so in the next five years. 2010 (McCorkindale) Traditional media such as print and broadcast are already considered outmoded in the technology area. As a result, “many digital businesses believe that traditional media is dead and that blogs and social networks are in,” according to the report. (2009, Solis) To reach a wide number of people, companies use social media channels such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube for business communication.

“Public relations are spearheading the social media revolution inside enterprises of all sorts and sizes,” according to the 2009 Digital Readiness Report “PR leads marketing in the management of all social media communications channels,” according to the report, “PR leads digital communications in 51 percent of organizations,” “PR is responsible for blogging in 49 percent of all organizations, social networking in 48 percent of all organizations, and microblogging in 52 percent of all organizations,” and “PR is responsible for blogging in 49 percent of all organizations.” (2009) (Schwartzman, Smith, Spetner, and McDonald)

Corporate communication specialists can use social media to create and maintain relationships with the general public, including journalists. “Everyone is busy,” says Perkett, “and social media allows professionals to maintain continuing, high-quality interactions with influencers, journalists, clients, and partners no matter where they are.” (2010, Perkett) In addition, social media aids in the improvement of community interactions. “More than new/digital media, social media must be at the center of public relations efforts because social media can improve organization-public relations by developing and improving community relations.” 2012 (Duhe) The use of social media is on the rise.

It’s also a great tool for internal communication. Consumers have been empowered by social media since it allows them to openly communicate their views or opinions on a product or service to their networks. “The power pyramid has moved, and the consumers and employees who were formerly at the bottom have become the new influencers within a peer-to-peer network,” Burns explains. 2008 (Burns) As a result, if a business does not participate in social media, it is missing out on a chance because their customers are already circulating words about them, sometimes even negative comments.

2010 (Siepel) Nowadays, a company’s reputation, brand image, success, and failure are all determined by the company’s social media image, as well as its own performance in the globalised market system. As a result, the future of public relations and corporate communications is predicated on communication professionals’ ability to learn and adapt to new technology and methods. 2012 (Breakenridge)

Despite the rise in popularity of social media, there are few studies that look at how it can be used for public relations (Briones et al, 2011). Grunig and Hunt (as stated in Kamerer & Morris, 2011) describe public relations as an organization’s attempt to control communication with its publics. The development of internet-based social media has increased the ability of a single person or organization to communicate with thousands of other people (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas (2009) conducted a content analysis of 275 Facebook accounts of non-profit organizations to see how they used social media to promote their mission and programs. They wanted to know how non-profits apply connection development tactics into their Facebook pages, among other things.

They discovered that most of the various interactive Facebook applications had not been incorporated into the non-profits' profiles. They failed to leverage on social networking's interaction, and as a result, Facebook. They also only seldom disseminated organizational information.

McCorkindale (2010) also conducted a quantitative content analysis of 2008 Fortune 50 company Facebook sites to see how they used the social media platform. The research looked at 55 Facebook pages to see what was said or written about the company. The study's findings revealed that few companies were using Facebook as a route for conveying information, among other things.

Furthermore, conversation on the Facebook page was largely one-sided, like a monologue, ignoring Facebook's two-way, relationship-building potential. According to McCorkindale (2010), Fortune 50 corporations were not fully utilizing Facebook and needed to add relationship-building techniques into their social networking sites.

Furthermore, Briones et al (2011) did a study in which forty members of the American Red Cross were interviewed to learn how social media is utilized to communicate with crucial audiences. The goal of the study was to see how two-way discussion was achieved, mostly using Facebook. The study's participants were aware of the value of social media and how it might be used to strengthen ties with publics such as volunteers and the community, according to the findings.

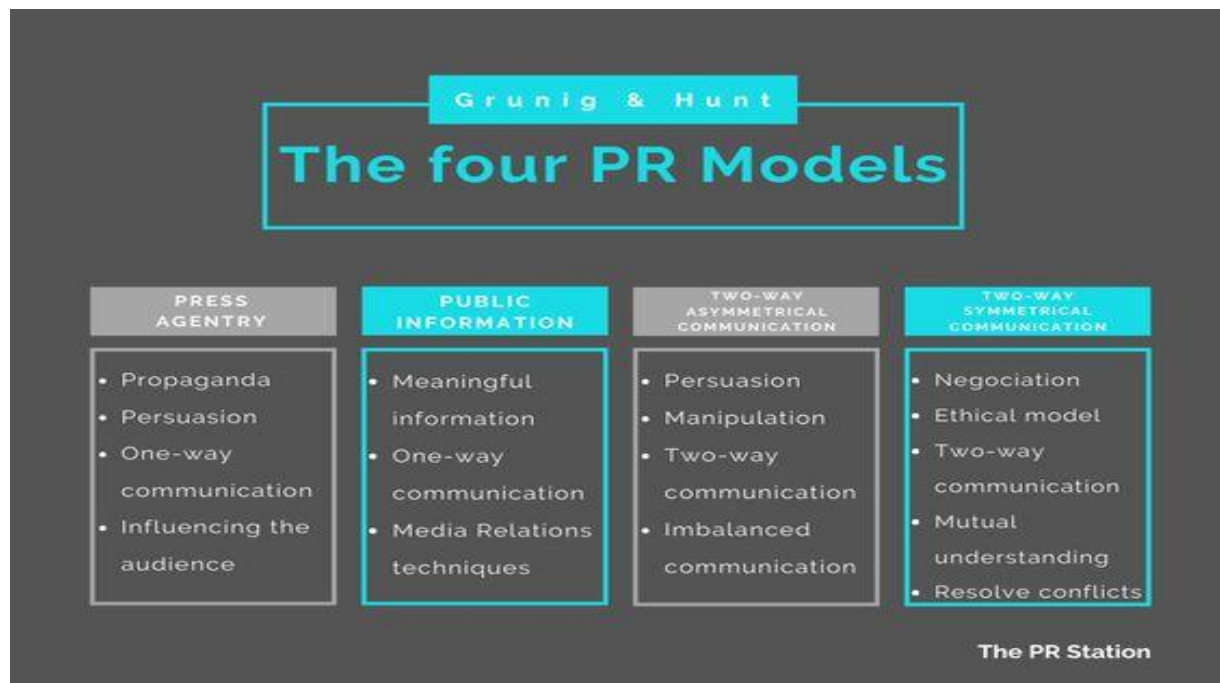
Insurgency, defamation, news releases, and crises, among other things, have made social media a crucial task for corporate PR. People are overburdened with information because it is available online 24 hours a day, seven days a week; second, unlike traditional media, information cannot be hidden or regulated. In terms of crisis communication, the usage of social media platforms such as Facebook as tools has drastically altered how people communicate and connect with their online communities.

According to Kaitlin (2012), millions of individuals use social media networking sites like Facebook to share information, broadcast the news of their life, and distribute news items from all over the world.

The study wanted to know what social media, namely Facebook communication experiences were in place to help the PR efforts of ET and the aviation sectors in general during the crisis period. As a result, the researcher discovered that there is a void in local social media research, particularly in the aviation business.

2.7.PR Model

Public relations techniques are used by a variety of companies and organizations to increase sales and clientele. The best public relations strategies, however, are what will help many of these businesses prosper. In 1984, Grunig and Hunt created the four public relations models, which focus on various managerial and organizational techniques. These models assist numerous firms in creating policies, strategies, and plans to keep one step ahead of the competition.



2.7.1. The Press Agent/Publicity Model

This model is mostly used by communication specialists to win the audience's hearts and minds. There is no survey or research involved, and it is based on propaganda. This model's major objective is to influence the audience's response to certain information. Since the recipients of this sort of communication are not given the opportunity to respond, the publicity model is a one-way communication paradigm. Instead, the emphasis is on forming a favorable impression of the business in the minds of potential customers. Persuasion is a technique used by communicators to influence the attitudes and beliefs of important audiences. In this strategy, organizations do not ask for audience input or do audience analysis research, and accuracy is not a priority.

2.7.2. Public Information Model

The public information model delivers more accurate information while eschewing the press agent model's deceptive strategies. The pattern of communication is still one-way, though. Research on audience analysis is not conducted by practitioners to inform their strategies and techniques. When audiences are not specifically targeted or pre-researched, some press releases and newsletters are generated using this methodology.

The goal of the public information model is to inform the general public about a business or organization. Brochures, publications, press releases, and newsletters are a some of the formats used to communicate this information. Public relations professionals frequently communicate this material to a variety of prospects in an effort to increase brand recognition.

2.7.3. The Two-Way Asymmetrical Model

This kind demonstrates a more "scientifically convincing" method of addressing important audiences. Here, content makers carry out research to better comprehend the attitudes and actions of the target audience, which in turn influences the development of the messaging strategy. It is still asymmetrical or unbalanced because this paradigm uses persuasive communication to the organization's advantage rather than the audiences. The approach is especially well-liked in consumer marketing and advertising, two industries that are keenly engaged in boosting an organization's profitability.

In a two-way asymmetric public relations paradigm, the sender (an organization) and the receiver (prospects or audience) must communicate. With this strategy, PR professionals also study their target audience to understand their habits and viewpoints. The communications given to them are better crafted as a result.

The organization-beneficial adjustments are still included in this model, though. After learning about the audience's behaviors, the audience is typically persuaded to behave in a way that the organization desires. Due to this imbalance, the model is unfavorable to customers. Because it increases their profit margins, it is seen as a model that marketing and advertising companies prefer.

2.7.4. The Two-Way Symmetrical Model

According to the two-way symmetrical model, a public relations professional should function more as a bridge between an organization and its important audiences than as a persuader. Practitioners operate as negotiators in this situation and use communication to make sure that everyone involved, not just the company they work for, benefits. The model aims to establish a mutually advantageous condition, hence the word "symmetrical". According to experts, the two-way symmetrical model is the most moral model, and practitioners should strive to employ it in their routine tactics and methods (Simpson, 2014). Some professionals view public relations in a broader sense. For instance, they can claim that political lobbying is a sort of public relations since lobbyists advocate for clients and engage in communication efforts to influence Congress' perspectives (Berg, 2009). But the emphasis of this book is on a public relations strategy that places a strong emphasis on writing for the media. Additionally, the objective is to spread communication using the two-way symmetrical model put forth by Grunig and Hunt (1984).

This paradigm differs from the others in that it enables interactions between organizations and their audiences. The model does, however, require in-depth study, and it mandates that any dispute between a business and its customers be resolved peacefully.

The framework guarantees that an organization and its audience both gain. Customers now have a forum to voice their complaints, and businesses are now held accountable for doing everything properly to protect their reputations.

Bottom Line

Before utilizing these public relations (PR) strategies, it is best for corporate organizations to have a thorough understanding of each prospect's behavior and attitude. This is because choosing the incorrect model will make corporate organizations unworkable.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design and Approach

In a bid to gather and analysis information for this research, mixed research approach, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were employed by the researcher. Quantitative research was based on the measurement of quantity or amount which is applicable to phenomena that can be expressed in terms of quantity (Kothari, 2004). Moreover, this research is designed as a cross-sectional research design. This is because cross-sectional research design allows data to be collected at one point in time. The design also has greater degree of accuracy in social science studies than other design. This design perfectly goes hand in hand with the purpose of this research; assess the use of Facebook in corporate PR

Qualitative approaches to research are concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinion and behavior.

3.2. Data types and Sources

Both Primary and secondary data were used as a source of data for this particular study. The researcher has put effort to get the primary data sources from the employee and/or staffs of the Ethiopian flag carrier. This was made possible with all restless effort as the time due to Covid-19 Protocol limited physical presence of the researcher.

Intensive zoo conferencing and Skype communication were put in place to gather the primary sourced data to communicate staffs Members of the PR directorate at the Ethiopian airlines. Besides, the researcher was able to meet some of the staffs physically to learn the reality better.

Furthermore, Secondary facts and figures were collected from Publications, Facebook page review (<https://www.facebook.com/EthiopianAirlines>) and other publications sources from the PR department of the airlines.

3.3. Sampling Technique

A preliminary assessment was conducted deeply. This is expected to generate over all information on the profile of the respondents at the PR department. To this end, a guideline that requires both quantitative and qualitative information is prepared and employed to serve as a tool for determining sample size, combination of respondents, information type, and the practical organization of the data collection activities.

The researcher Implemented non probability sampling technique for the selection of key-informants.

Here, the specific individuals to be included as key informants of the study was decided by the researcher based on certain criteria .These are PR directorate, Deputy directorates and PR officers of the ET.

3.4. Data Collection Instruments

For quantitative data

A. Questionnaire

In this research questionnaires were distributed to all respondents as a quantitative approach to cross validate the qualitative one. Accordingly, the researcher employed open and close ended questionnaires for this study and this is used as a main data collection tool because it is easier to handle and simpler for respondents to answer within short period of time. Therefore, questionnaire survey is employed to collect quantitative data from PR practitioners and specific techniques also used for each specific objective.

The researcher administered research questions for the listed respondents. The researcher also distributed some of the questionnaire giving to 10 respondents. (5 PR experts from ET, 3 from ET online Facebook page admins and, 2 from department heads.

For qualitative data

A. Key informant interview

KII is conducted to generate in-depth information with regard to the use of Facebook, about the uploaded contents , the design feature of the Facebook page, PR practitioner's attitudes, feelings, perception and experiences in using of social Media specifically ET Facebook page. Because it is

suitable when the researcher has a series of open ended questions and wishes to encourage research participants to explore the issue in a very detail manner (Jenny, 1995). The researcher therefore, conducted interview with seven key informants, 4 IT experts and web administrators, 2 PR professionals and one department head. The expected duration of the discussion was 30 Minutes. According to Flick et al. (2000:10), gaining adequate qualitative data requires that research participants pre-selected, based on their level of knowledge and experience.

B. Document analysis: This data gathering tool is also very important to get the real information from the documents of the annual reports of corporate communication department. Accordingly, this is also undertaken by the researcher.

3.5. Methods of Data Processing and Analysis

For analyzing the data, the researcher employed both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. As a result, the qualitative data has analyzed by making use of interpretations. The quantitative data also analyzed by making use of descriptive statistical tools such as (the mean, percentages, frequency, table etc.) this was helpful for the researcher to clarify more in easy way, without using any complicated mathematics formula.

CHAPTER Four

Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Data

In this chapter, the researcher tried to present, interpret, analyze and discuss research data based on findings. Efforts have been made to analyze data based on the research questions presented in the first chapter of this research work.

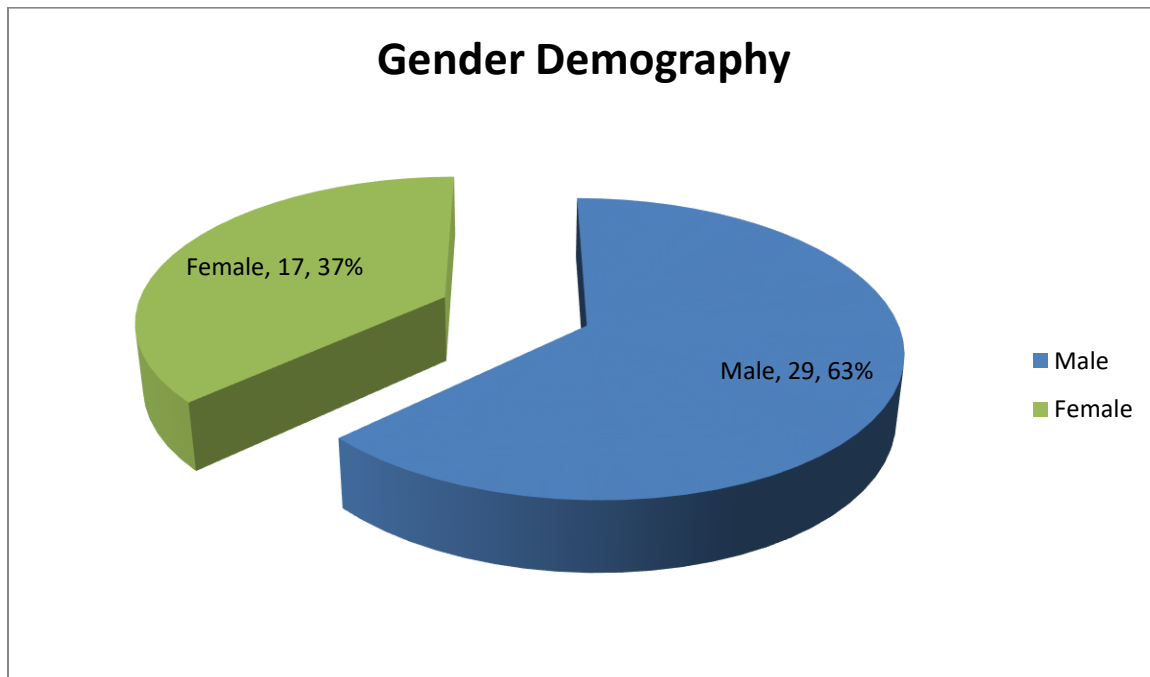
Hence, the chapter has two sections; with the primary one focus on presentation and interpretation of data while the second one dealt with analysis and discussions of the data.

4.1. Data Presentation and interpretation

4.1.1. Demographic information

4.1.1.1. Gender distribution of respondents

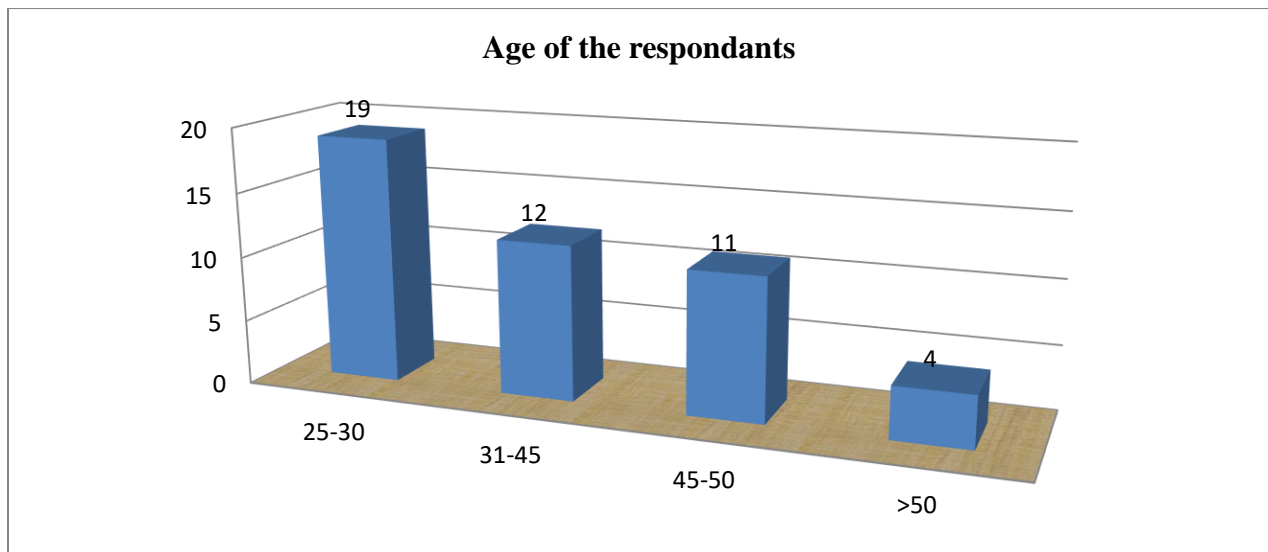
Figure 4.1: Gender distribution of respondents (N=46)



As it is seen from the figure above, the majority of respondents are males 29(63%) and fewer females 17(37%) participated in this study. This may indicate that a few females are participated in public relation activities in the aviation industry.

4.1.1.2. Age distribution

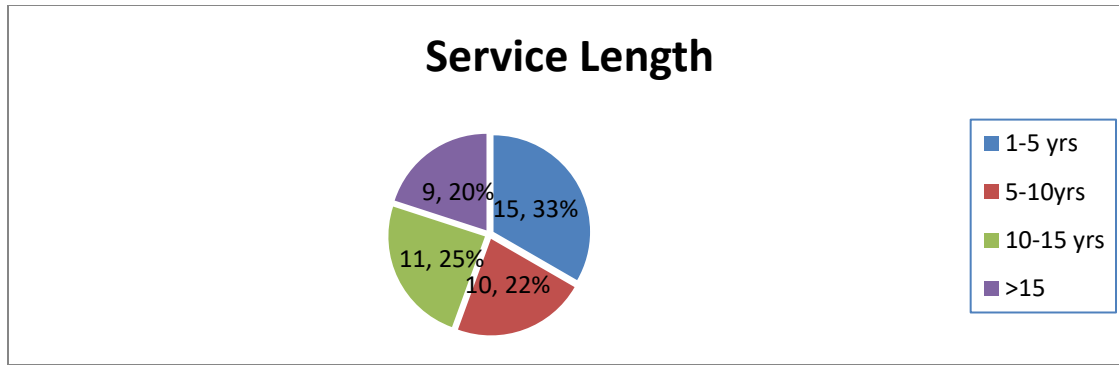
Figure 4.2: Age distribution of respondents (N=46)



As indicated in the figure above (figure 2), the overall age range of respondents are between 25-50 Years. The majority of this research participant aged between 25-30 years. Small age is above 50. This result points out that, the young adults, yet, are the central PR practitioners.

4.1.1.3. Length of service

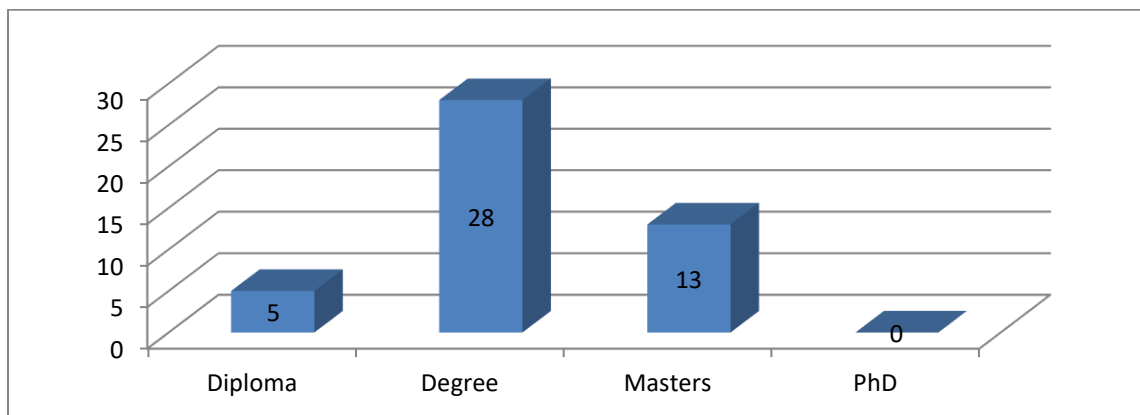
Figure 4.3: Length of service of the respondents (N=46)



As indicated in the above figure the majority number of respondents was found between the ranges of 1-5 years of services in the PR profession. Thus, as per the findings of this research as carrier experience ages, there is less interest in using social media (Facebook) for Strategic PR.

4.1.1.4. Educational Status

Figure 4.4: Educational Status of the Respondents



With regard to the educational level of respondents the larger number i.e 28 of the respondents has reported that they are with MA/MSC group. Whereas, there was no respondents who is above, MA/MSC level of study.

Among the respondents 13 of them owns MA/MSC degree level of study and only 5 of them were found to be with Diploma holder.

4.2. Data Analysis and Discussion

The researcher analyzed the existing practices of Facebook in ETA by using a Likert scale method. The Likert scale is a standard classification format for studies. A Likert scale is a one-

dimensional scale that researchers use to collect respondents' attitudes and opinions. Researchers often use this psychometric scale to understand the views and perspectives towards a brand, product, services or target market. The respondents provide their opinion (data) about the quality of a product/service from high to low or better to worse using two, four, five, or seven levels. (<https://www.questionpro.com/blog/what-is-likert-scale/>)

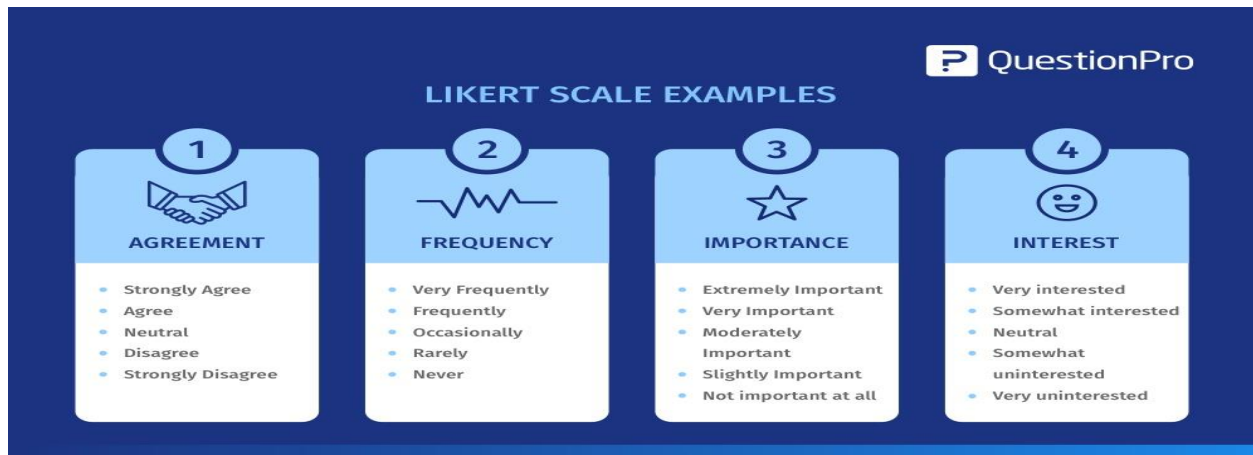




Figure 4.5 Likert scale examples


According to (Prayage, 2007) unlike a 7 point scale, 5 point likert scales reduces the level of frustration among respondents and increases the rate and quality of the responses. As a result, the researcher used a Likert scale that adopted a 5 point scale for this research work.


4.2.1. Ethiopian Airlines Facebook Page


Ethiopian Airlines has two officially verified Facebook pages. One operates in English while the other in Amharic languages. The page that operates in English was established in mid July 11/2011, while the Amharic page was established in June 12/2018. According to data communicated, these two pages have been serving as part of ETA's Strategic Communication Platforms for both internal and external customers of the Airline.

 ይህ የኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ ይፋዊ የሃገር ውስጥ የፌስቡክ ገጽ ነው። ስለገበያ ጸና መሰማሰን! አዳዲስ መረጃዎች እንዲደርስዎት ገጻችንን ላይክ ያድርጉ

 516,586 people like this, including 545 of your friends



 575,351 people follow this

 http://t.me/ethiopian_airlines






 011 617 9900


Figure 4.6 ETA Amharic Page


 Welcome to the official Facebook page of Ethiopian Airlines. We very much appreciate your thoughts and comments. While we keep you updated, we are at ... [See more](#)

 Ethiopian Airlines (Ethiopian) is the flag carrier of Ethiopia. During the past Seventy Five years, Ethiopian has become the continent's leading carri... [See more](#)

 2,016,333 people like this, including 400 of your friends



 2,067,568 people follow this

 <http://www.ethiopianairlines.com/>


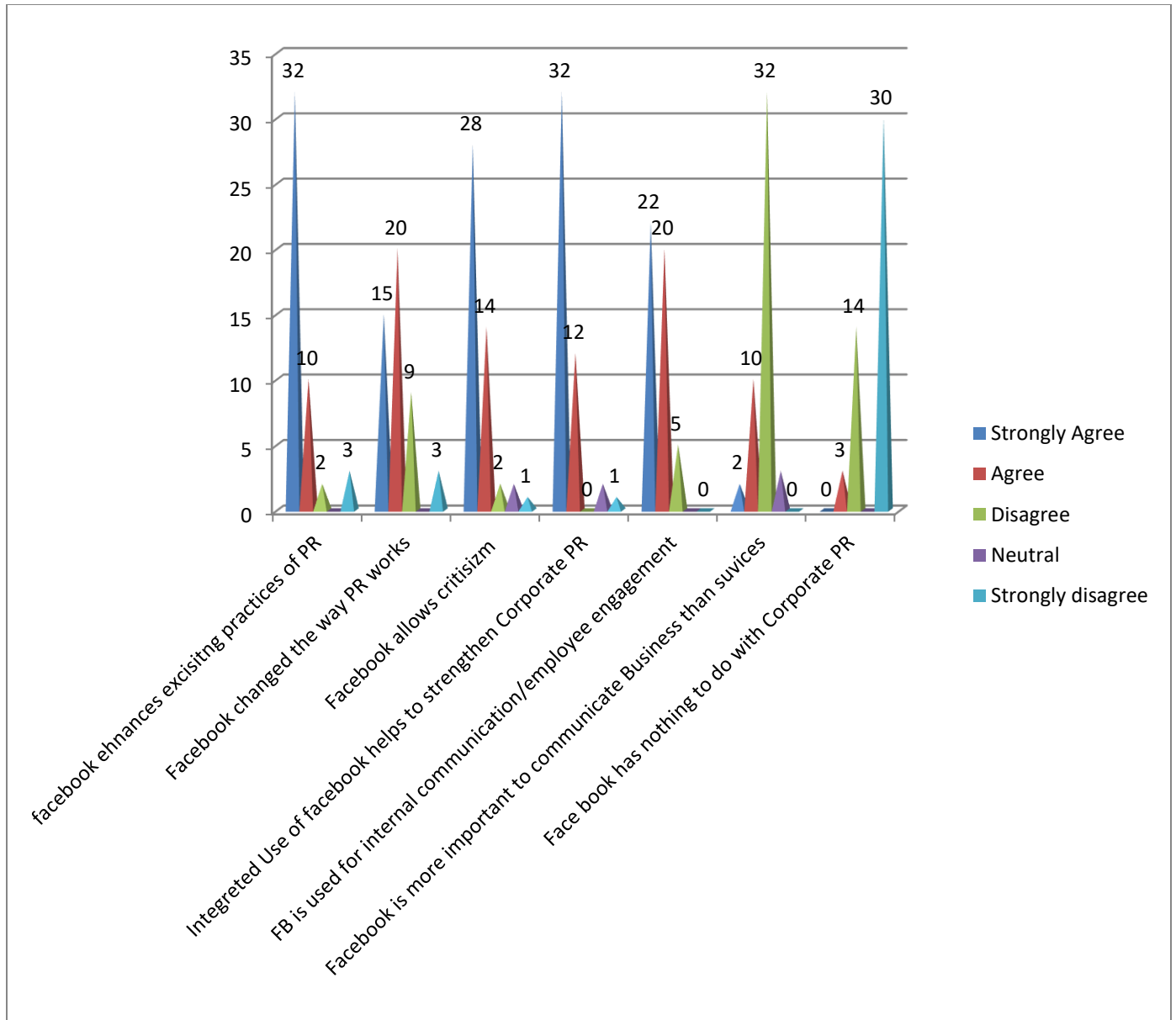
 011 617 9900

Figure 4.7 ETA English Page



As it can be clearly noted from the respondent’s analyses by Likert scale the Ethiopian Airlines Facebook page plays a significant role in Strategic communication of the Corporate PR in addressing the internal and external customers of the organization. Out of 47 respondents, 15 of them strongly agreed and 20 of them agreed that Facebook has changed the way PR works in corporate organizations.

Furthermore, 32 out of the 47 respondents do strongly agreed that the Integrated Use of Facebook helps to strengthen Corporate PR.

4.2.2. Facebook changed the way PR works

Social media has had a profound effect on public relations, creating new opportunities and challenges for brands. It allows brands and consumers to engage across a variety of channels in real-time, which has led to an increased demand for brands to address consumer inquiries quickly and effectively. www.matternow.com

Facebook, being one of those effective Social media platforms, has led to the emergence of powerful digital influencers hence, changed the way Corporate PR works these days. In the aviation industry, more specifically, Ethiopian airlines Facebook played a significant role in addressing key messages both to its internal (Staff) and external customers. ET also uses this platform to notify its flight schedule and declare its routine press releases via its Facebook.

With this in mind, the researcher gathered information from respondents to know their views as to how Facebook changed the way PR works. The result shows that Out of the 47 respondents 31.9% of them or 15, 42.5% of them or 20, 19.1% of them or 9 and 6.38% of them or 3 of them did strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and Strongly disagreed respectively. None of the respondents had neutral view on this.

4.2.3. Interactivity of Facebook

With respect to the platform's interactivity, respondents were able to provide their views. As it can be seen from the graph above 28 (59.6%) respondents have strongly agreed that Facebook is an interactive platform that helps organization to respond instantaneously towards criticisms and opinions. 14(29.78%), 2(4.25%), 2(4.25%) of the respondents responded as agreed, disagreed and neutral respectively. Where as, one (2.12%) of the respondents were strongly disagreed regarding the aforementioned criterion. To this effect, it can be concluded that the greater number of respondents accepted that Facebook allows organizations to interact with their customers easily and work on the opinions obtained from them.

4.2.4. Facebook enhances excising practices of PR

As it can be noted from the graph analyzed above, 32(68.08%) of the respondents did strongly agreed while 10(21.27%) of the respondents agreed regarding the issue in question. i.e *Facebook enhances excising practices of PR*. However, 2(4.25%) of the respondents disagreed whether Facebook enhances excising practices of PR. There were no respondents that replied towards

neutrality. Yet, 3 (6.38%) of the respondents were strongly disagreed against the issue in question.

4.2.5. Integrated use of Facebook helps to strengthen Corporate PR

Out of the 47 respondents who had participated in this research most of them, i.e 68.08% (32) strongly agreed that the integrated use of Facebook helps to strengthen Corporate PR. Furthermore, 25.53% (12) of the respondents agreed on the issue in question. However, 4.2% (2) and 2.12 % (1) respectively responded as neutral and strongly disagreed. None of the respondents put their views towards the '*disagreed*' option.

4.2.6. Facebook is used for internal communication/employee engagement

With regards to the internal communication, as indicated in the above graph, majority of the respondents 22 (46.8%) confirmed that they strongly agreed Facebook is used for internal communication/employee engagement in the organization. Further, 42.5 % (20) of the respondents agreed about it. In addition, 10.6 % (5) of the respondents disagreed. Yet, none of the respondents put their view if they were neutral or strongly disagreed about the matter in question.

4.2.7. Facebook is more important to communicate Business than service

As indicates in the above figure about 32 (68.08%) respondents disagreed if Facebook *is* more important to communicate Business than service. These respondents disagreed with more importance of Facebook to communicate business than services. Out of the 47 respondents 2(4.25%), 10 (21.27%), 3(6.38%) responded as strongly agreed, agreed and neutral respectively. None of the respondents strongly disagreed if Facebook is more important to communicate business than service.

4.2.8. Facebook has nothing to do with Corporate PR

None of the respondents strongly agreed if Facebook has nothing to do with corporate PR. As it can be noted from the Likert scale graph above, 63.8% (30) of the respondents strongly disagree if Facebook has nothing to do with corporate PR. Further, 29.78% (14) of the respondents also disagreed regarding the issue in question. However, 6.38% (3) of the respondents agreed that Facebook has nothing to do with corporate PR. Therefore, as the majority of participants confirmed, Facebook has strong contribution to corporate PR.

4.2.9. Kinds of Social Medias Experienced by Respondents of the Research

Table 4.1: Experiences of social media usage

Social Media Type	NO users	Percent	Remark
Facebook	45	95.7%	
Telegram	22	46.8%	
YouTube	38	80.8%	
TikTok	16	34.0%	
Twitter	10	21.3%	

The researcher tried to recognize the existing experience of the respondents in using Social media platforms and which type of social media they used. Accordingly, as it can be clearly noted in the table 4.1 above, Most of the responds had good experience in using different social media platforms. 95.7% of the respondents use Facebook among other social media platforms in their daily routine work and life. YouTube, Telegram, TikTok and twitter had 80.8%, 46.8%, 34.0% and 21.3% users respectively. This implies that among all social media platforms considered, Facebook has considerably a vital role in PR.

4.2.10. Frequency of Facebook Usage

Table 4.2: How often respondents use Facebook

Replies	frequency	Percent	Remark
Regularly/Always	36	76.6 %	
Rarely	9	19%	
Sometimes	2	4.3%	
Never	0	0%	
Total	47	100%	

As it can be noted from table 4.2 above 76.6% (36) of the respondents confirmed that they use Facebook regularly/always. There are no respondents who never used Facebook. 19% (9) of them responded as they rarely used Facebook whereas only 4.3 % (2) respondents sometimes used Facebook. Thus, there is a significant probability of Ethiopian airlines Facebook page to get viewed and accessed by the respondents.

4.2.11. The role of ETA Facebook page in easing Communication with its Employees and external customers

Replies	frequency	Percent	Remark
Yes	44	93.6%	
No	3	6.4%	

Table 4.3 Easing communication with staffs

The majority respondents 44 (93.6%) confirmed that ETA Facebook page play its role as a public relation tool in bridging and easing communication between the Organization, Employees and external customers

4.2.12. Response from the Interviewee

In order to gather additional information, the researcher had used interview method of data collection. The interviews has made in two ways. One, face to face with available respondents where as the second is conducted via webinar (zoom interview), considering the challenge of Covid.19 pandemics. Hence, mixed methods of data collection were applied.

The researcher interviewed six informants and four experts from Ethiopian airlines PR Directorate and their response is analyzed as follow.

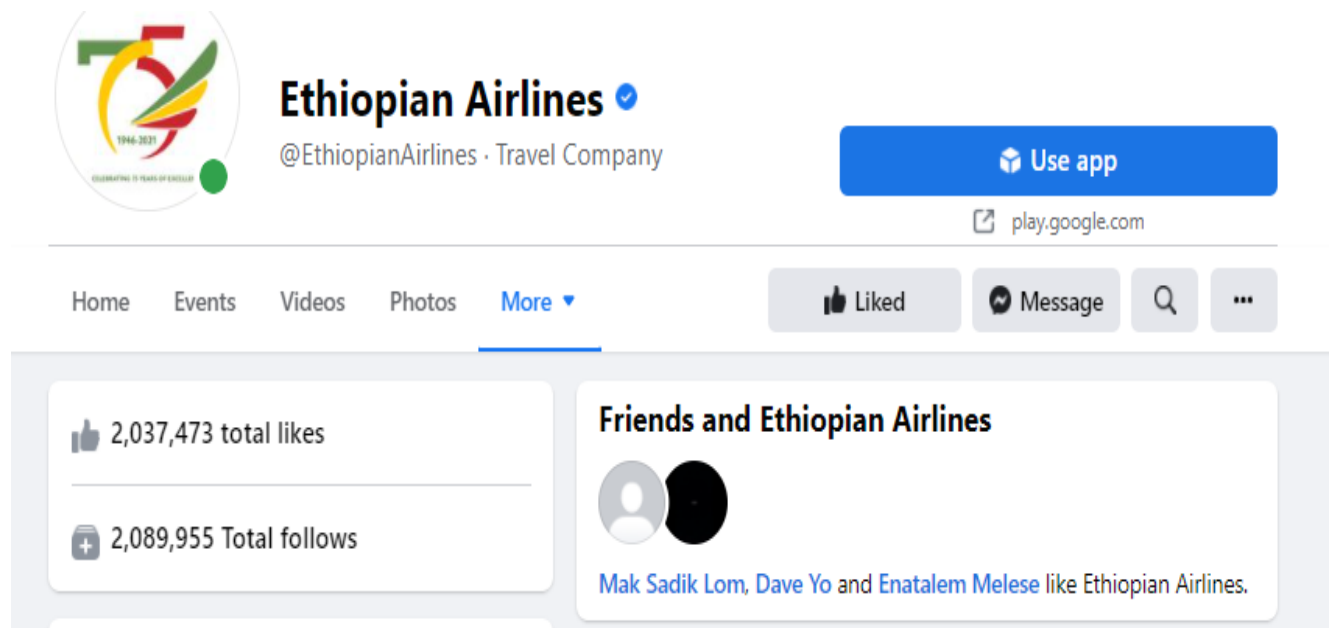
Consistency of contents updated via their Facebook page:-

Seven respondents, four from the informants and the other three from the experts of the PR department responded that ETA consistently updates information that has to be released timely via its Facebook page. Whereas two informants and one from the PR department responded that the Facebook page of ETA is sometimes lacks consistency.

Challenges and prospects of doing PR with Facebook:-

Three respondents of the PR experts from ET department responded that credibility of information released through Facebook page fails under question mark. Furthermore, there are many fake pages that are created in the name of Ethiopian airline that releases disinformation. Customers give calls to justify and confirm the credibility of information they notice on those pages for which we proved wrong most of the time, they added.

Yet, according to Ashenafi Kebede, PR expert and digital media professional of ETA, there are highly conscious customers who follow the real page of ET and got benefited from information and PR works released through their Facebook pages. As ETA currently reached more than two million Facebook page followers, the number of customer that is benefited from the information and PR works released through it, is not an easy count. Hence, Facebook has a greater future prospect in easing the corporate PR works, Ashenafi Added.



Technical difficulties:-

Six key informants that who explained technical difficulties of using Facebook responded that they have technical knowledge gap to administrate and tackle the Facebook page to which they are accountable. They further added that there is no training session otherwise well specialized trainer who can fill the gaps they have in knowing and practicing Facebook community standards, rules, terms and conditions which are key in using the platform safely and properly. Two of the respondents, also raised the regular network connection interruption problems in the country. Although they considered using mobile data as plan B, the high cost of internet connectivity become a challenge. Even when demanded, proper devices (tablets, laptops...etc) are not found in their office for the proper online work according to the respondents.

4.3. Comments analyzed from ET's Facebook Page post

Effectiveness of a Facebook post can be evaluated from the reaction of genuine followers. Increasing the reach of Facebook post can be largely dependent on getting people to talk about it. The gold standard for a post when it comes to Facebook engagement is its comments. Monitoring and analyzing comments given by ET's Facebook Page followers, under each post is part of the daily routine activities of PR personnel's in ET. Those monitored and analyzed comments are to be used in the department's decision making Process. Shares on the post signal that readers liked the posted content enough to share it, and likes might give a company more credible appearance where as Comments demonstrate genuine engagement and authenticity.

The researcher considered to review comments given under eighty-seven **87 posts** on ET's Facebook the Page. Those posts were selected randomly from the year 2019 till 2022. The varieties of the posts ranged among Photos, videos, text updates, and Press releases. Each posts had its respective number of likes, shares and comments that vary in number and content too. It's very important to mention here that the contents of the comments provided by followers seldom influence the Communication department of ET and get considered in decision making.

Among the Facebook posts that the researcher considered reviewing was the one that the Ethiopian airline updated upon the unfortunate and bad incidence that has happened on March 10, 2019.

"An Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 737 flight enroute to Nairobi Kenya crashed near Bishoftu town. The aircraft had 149 passengers and 8 crews on board. The Boeing 737 crashed six minutes after takeoff from Addis Ababa, on its way to Kenya's capital." right after this crisis news was made official, the whole world was paying attention to hear and read from the official source updates from ET.

Right away the press release was given and updates come from the official Facebook page of ET, Comments, likes and shares got viral over the Page. As it can be seen from the screenshot Picture taken from ET's page within few minutes the post update got more than 8.5K likes, 3.3k Comments and 5.9k Shares. Those comments backed by the severity of the incidence forced ET to provide frequent press releases. Answer questions rose from families, friends, relatives and

colleagues of victims' from different corners of the world. It was so through the careful Monitoring and analysis of Comments made by the PR department under each updated posts.



👍🙄 Haymi Masresha, Tesfa Tefera Ayinalem and 8.5K others 3.3K comments 5.9K shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

Most relevant ▾



የኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ ✓
18 May 2019 · 🌐

BBC on ET 302 accident
There was nothing more the pilots could have done.
As alarms sounded in their cockpit, the captain and first officer struggled to regain control of their stricken aircraft...

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/boeing_two_deadly_crashes?ocid=socialflow_facebook&ns_campaign=bbcnews&ns_mchannel=social&ns_source=facebook&bclid=lwAR1F5Q54_CZk1o_baCIPQ3I7bLr7DUABPv26tdrRJKkrcMUQRiSv8ViqZ_Y&fbclid=lwAR38TC15_2la9CshGjmXwz5srH-jBZAuy34-GAhC_jnsl5mbgcDqBvw_zQ

What went wrong inside Boeing's cockpit?



Fasil Abebe

ይህ የመከሰከሰ አደጋ የተፈጠረው በ Airbus እና Boeing አወርጥላን አምራቾች ፋክከር ምክንያት ነው Airbus a320 neo የሚባል ከቀድሞው Airbus a320 አጀግ የተሻሻለ አወርጥላን አምርቶ ገበያውን በከፍተኛ ቁጥር ሲቆጣጠር Boeing ወደ ፋክከሩ በመግባት Boeing 737-800 ወይም Max 8 የተባለውን ያመርታል ዲ ዲዛይኑም በጣም ከ Airbus ጋር ተመሳሳይ ነበር ችግሩ ግን Airbus ያመረተው ከመሬት ጥሩ ከፍታ ሲኖረው Boeing የሰራው ግን ከፍታ አልነበረውም ያላሰቡ ብሎ የአውሮፕላኑ ክንፍ በሞተርቹ ተከለለ ያም በበረራ ላይ አሸያለ አወርጥላኑ እንዲቀነሱት አደረገው ከዛም ለመከሰከሰ በታ።

Like Reply 3 y



Gezahegne Woldesenbet
#Boeing_must_explain.

Boeing 737-800 MAX 8 operated by the Lion Air crashed in November 2018 killing all passengers onboard and this happen 10 minutes after takeoff.... See more

Like Reply 3 y



Hirut Abe

በቃ ለዚህ ክንፍ አለም ለዚህ ደመና ህይወት ነው የኔ ነው አያልን የምንባለው ሲቀር ግን ይቀራል ዛሬ በሞት ያጣናቸው ወገኖቻችን እቅድ ነበራቸው በጉጉት የሚጠብቃቸው ቤተሰብ ነበራቸው ግና ሁሉም ነገር እንደጠበቁት አልሆነም ቀን ራትዋን አዘረጉ ላይመለሱ አሸለሱ እንደዚህ ወቶም መቅረት አለ ሁላችንም ያለ ምክንያት ወደዚህ ምድር አልመጣንም እስኪ ወደ እራሳችን እንመለስ ንጹህ ልብ እንዲኖረን እንጸልይ ሰ... See more

Like Reply 3 y



Henok Getachew

My real and heaviest concern at the moment is that the Ethiopian Airlines CEO has confirmed that 6 same type of Boeing 737 ET302 still delivering service. So having that in mind, the Board of directors of the Ethiopian Airlines must cease any operation... See more

Like Reply 3 y Edited



↳ 1 reply



Abeba Serebe

ለሞቱት ወገኖቻችን ነብስ ይማር ለቤተሰቦቻቸውም መጻፍትን እመኛለሁ ኮሜንቶች ግን በጣም በጣም ጉግርማላቸው የሞቱትን ነብስ ይማር ብላቸው እንደማለፍ ብዙ ጥላላቸው እግዚአብሔር አምላክ ልቦናውን ይሰጣቸዋል

Like Reply 3 y



Al-Men Sur

የሳምንት ወሬ ሰራመፍቻ ለናፈቀው ሁሉ ርዕሰ ተገኘለት በሉ እንግዲህ እዚህ ደቅ ብላቸው መላምት(መላቢስነታቸውን) አሰጥመዋቸዋል።

ለቤተሰቦቻቸው ሁሉ መጽናናትን ይሰጥልን!

Like Reply 3 y



Binandie

የመጨረሻው ምሳ!
(እሌክስ አብረሃም) ... See more

Like Reply 3 y



↳ 1 reply



Top fan
Yemi Ya Efi

ይሄን አያዩ ምናል ቀዝቀዝ ብትሉ ኮሜንተሮች አሁንም ክፋት ብቻ ሚወጣው ከእንደበታቸው ምናለበት ቀናውን ብናሰብ እግዚአብሔር ማስተዋል ይሰጠን የሞቱትን ነብሳቸውን ይማርልን!! 😞😞😞

Like Reply 3 y





Yosef Lisanework

Bye-Bye Ethiopian airlines ! It is not the safest in Africa anymore! This airline will crumble. Not that i wish thier doom, but the super rapid expansion will drag quality service, security and safty down. It is a matter of time before anther one go down ...

Like Reply 3 y



↳ 9 replies



Lemi Fikre

ለተከሰተው አይሮፕላን የአሜሪካ መንግስት ተጠያቂ እናደርገው ወይንስ የሌሎችን አገዛዝ ??? # MinilikSalsawi ስለሚከሰተው አይሮፕላን የ አሜሪካ መንግስት ቀድሞ መረጃ ነበረውን ??? በአዲስ አበባ የሚገኘው የአሜሪካን ኢምባሲ ከቀናት በፊት ባወጣው ቅድመ-መጠንቀቂያ የአሜሪካ መንግስት ተገዥ በዛሬው ዕለት በቦሌ የአየር ማረፊያ እንዳይዙ ምክር ሰጥቶ ነበር። ለምን ???

የጠቅላይ ... See more

Like Reply 3 y



Edilatu Aderra

I'm So sorry for the loss of all the lives. My deepest condolences to the families who lost their loved ones. Prayers to all of those affected by this horrible tragedy and the Ethiopian people 🙏🙏🙏 Rest in heaven!!!

Like Reply 3 y



Hiwot Getachew

የታቀደበት አይመስሉኝሁም

<https://et.usembassy.gov/security-alert-demonstration-in.../>



ET.USEMBASSY.GOV

Security Alert – Demonstration in Meskel Square and the Oromia Region (8 March, 2019) | U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia

Like Reply 3 y Edited



Tigist Alemayehu

This model Airline was crashed just in October 2018, in Indonesia and all passengers and crew were died. What the evil module is this? MAX Boing 737. My God your mercy hand upon us, Rest in Peace for those who lost their lives and my sincerely condo... See more

Like Reply 3 y Edited



Tizazu T Tilla

ለሞቱት ውገኖቼ አገ/ር ነፍሳቸውን በገነት ያነርዳን! እያልኩ...አርሰ በርሳችን ሰንባላ አገ/ር ፊትን ያዘርብናል! አሁንም በንግሥት... በጸቅር ባይነት... ክልብ በሆነ ፍቅር ካልተመለሥን...ከዝህ የከፋ ነገር ከፊታችን እለ! በሌላ በኩል የጌዲላ ህዝብ በርሃብ ጤኔ እየረገፈ ነው።

Like Reply 3 y



Similarly, there are various posts under which their comments was monitored and analyzed. The nature and contents of the posts ranges between good and bad, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, compliant and clarity questions and etc. Based on the nature of the posts made and reactions from the followers (Comments), ET's strategic Communication department seldom makes decision like responding for clarity, Press releasing and service improvements where the feedback implies.

4.4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the practical use of Facebook in corporate PR and communications at the Ethiopian Airlines. The findings of the research indicated that Ethiopian airlines like any other corporate organizations own Facebook pages whereby it reaches its organizational public and customers at large. Respondents of the research participants were able to respond towards key research questions.

The researcher tried to know if the implementation of using Facebook impacted and or changed the Way PR works in corporate organizations. The result shows that, 42.5 % (20) of the respondents agreed about it. In addition, 10.6 % (5) of the respondents disagreed. Yet, none of the respondents put their view if they were neutral or strongly disagreed about the matter in question.

Interviewees of this research were able to answer for questions raised regarding the types of contents uploaded on ET's Facebook page. They confirmed that they regularly upload *exceptional pictures* they receive from passengers, *promotional advertisements regarding new flight destinations*, and any advertisements that could work towards corporate reputation.

Interviewees from IT and PR Professionals of the department strongly emphasized that the contents that regularly uploaded are of reputational matters. *Short Videos* that may hook customer's attention as to why they should choose Ethiopian airlines to fly with are, part of the daily production works of the content producing team in the department. These contents are produced in a high standard and quality and uploaded accordingly. *ET's new flight destination, Pictures from passengers, staffs...etc* and flight preparations, old Memories (both in Picture and text), Vacant Post notice (for hiring staff), call for professional consultation bid and many more

are part of major contents which are uploaded on ET's Facebook Page. The researcher considered to review comments given under eighty-seven 87 posts on ET's Facebook the Page. Those posts were selected randomly from the year 2019 till 2022. The varieties of the posts ranged among Photos, videos, text updates, and Press releases. Each posts had its respective number of likes, shares and comments that vary in number and content too. It's very important to mention here that the contents of the comments provided by followers seldom influence the Communication department of ET and get considered in decision making. Social media has greatly impacted PR practice. The practice of PR benefits a lot from the interactivity, rapidness, and timeliness of social media. Hence, the purpose of this study is to know the use of Facebook, the most influential social media platform, in corporate PR practices cased at the Ethiopian airlines.

The advantages of Facebook are its multiform in presenting and easy access to the comments, as there are many online platforms that offering information, so PR practice should enhance their skills in collecting the useful data. Through the provision of chat rooms and feedback spaces, social media helps PR to strengthen the connection with the organization and brings the distance between the public and the organization closer.

In addition, it also enhances the involvement of PRs' work in the company. PR people always follow up the trend of the society by browsing and joining in the conversation on social media, which helps them easily forming relationships with the public. Being able to understand the public, they are qualified to join in the decision-making role of the company and also help improve the strategies. It is related to Bhargiven's (2010) study, because it concluded that social media can help PR practitioners directly communicate with the target public, improve the overall communication speed and enable them to achieve greater success in their career.

However, compared with the researches on the advantages of social media in PR practice, there are relatively few studies on the negative impact of social media. These cons include information overload, being too close to the public, and abuse and misuse of social media.

This research focused on the use of Facebook in corporate organizations. It particularly tried to know its implementation and usage in the case of Ethiopian airlines. The researcher tried to relate the findings of its research with previous research findings and reached upon its own

conclusions. The findings of this research work proofed that Facebook has played a significant role in changing the way Pr works in corporate organizations.

To this effect, the results discussed by the researcher are found to symmetrical with previous research works conducted by various researchers. To mention few, a research conducted in 2012 by a Brazilian researcher, Elias Goulart, indicated that Facebook plays significant role in various forms of Communication, *“The use of Facebook worldwide promoted new forms of communication, exchange of information and cultural production. Today, the social networking site represents not just a technological phenomenon, but also a social, cultural and PR communication.”*

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279435560> Facebook as an Organizational Communication Tool a Brazilian study

Furthermore, according to an assessment conducted by Etenesh Nigussie (2019) of Addis Ababa University, on *“the role of social media in public relations: a case of Facebook page in tigray public relations bureau in mekelle city”* Facebook plays role in PR and information communication between state government and regional people as well as the region and outside stakeholders.

In addition, according to a study reviewed on the improvement of PR workers' performance based on their use of social media, (Ju-Chieh Cheng, *Social media and Public Relations*, Stamford International University, 2018) PR practitioners are able to use those different social media to present their ideas and inform their PR activities or campaigns to the public. In the past, when there were no Facebook, or other social media, PR workers used radio, television, and print, relying on press releases, reputation management and attendance at trade shows.

Broom (2009) argues that traditional media cannot convey all available new information. He also noted that audiences have limited time and attention for millions of messages (cited in Oneya, 2010). At that time, it was hard for PR practitioners to track the audience and measure the results. In contrast, opportunities are offered nowadays for PR workers to reach consumers through a variety of channels such as Facebook.

To this end, the research found and proofed from the findings aforementioned that Facebook, is particularly a suitable platform for Ethiopian Airlines corporate Strategic Communication.

As what Stránská and Strítěský, (2015) mentioned in their research, Facebook improves the speed for making an issue public and can receive a reply significantly quicker than through hotline. On Facebook, PR workers engage the audience by acting as a conversational brand, and they set up their own pages for the organizations, which helps to establish a strong audience base. Viewers receive updates by following pages set up by PR workers. Unlike newspaper and television, Facebook users can read the content they are interested in, click the ‘like’ and ‘share’ button easily, and comment freely without the limitation of place and time. The researcher (I) also proved this to be real and justifiable in the section I was able to know how *Facebook enhances excising practices of PR* where by 32(68.08%) of the respondents did strongly agreed while 10(21.27%) of the respondents agreed regarding the issue in question.

On the other hand, by monitoring Facebook users' attitudes, inaccurate reviews that require correction and extra concerns among the target groups can be spotted (Wigley & Zhang, 2011). Owing to the advantage of having a huge user base on Facebook, posting on it enables PR workers to reach out to a wider audience and see if their actions are feasible. They can also find out whether the ideas and behaviors of their stakeholder groups are in line with what PR professionals want them to be.

4.4.1. Response from the Interviewee

Mixed techniques of data gathering were used in this study. In-depth interviews are used for the qualitative component. Thus, as was already mentioned in chapter three, seven important informants with various backgrounds and experiences participated in the in-depth interview. IT experts, PR Professionals and department heads were those with such professional background who participated. Interviews, whether semi-structured or in-depth, are used to supplement the questionnaire by filling in any gaps that are left because it only tries to answer the most fundamental questions.

4.4.2. Key informants group

Largely, the research tried to have critical answers for those questions raised in the research question to be answered so as to target and meet the research objectives. To this effect KII participants were questioned *if they can explain regarding the major contents uploaded on the Facebook page of ET?*

To this end, I have interviewed three IT experts, two PR professionals and one Department head totaling to six informants from the Strategic Corporate communication of Ethiopian airlines, and the following analysis is done on their reply: - According to the Head of Communication department's response ET's Facebook pages (both the Amharic and English) accommodates *press releases* of the flag carrier's communication strategically. Furthermore, according to the respondent, they regularly upload *exceptional pictures* they receive from passengers, *promotional advertisements regarding new flight destinations*, and any advertisements that could work towards corporate reputation.

Interviewees from IT and PR Professionals of the department also confirmed the head's response. They strongly emphasized that the contents that regularly uploaded are of reputational matters. *Short Videos* that may hook customer's attention as to why they should choose Ethiopian airlines to fly with are, part of the daily production works of the content producing team in the department. These contents are produced in a high standard and quality and uploaded accordingly. *ET's new flight destination, Pictures from passengers, staffs...etc* and flight preparations, old Memories (both in Picture and text), Vacant Post notice (for hiring staff), call for professional consultation bid and many more are part of major contents which are uploaded on ET's Facebook Page.

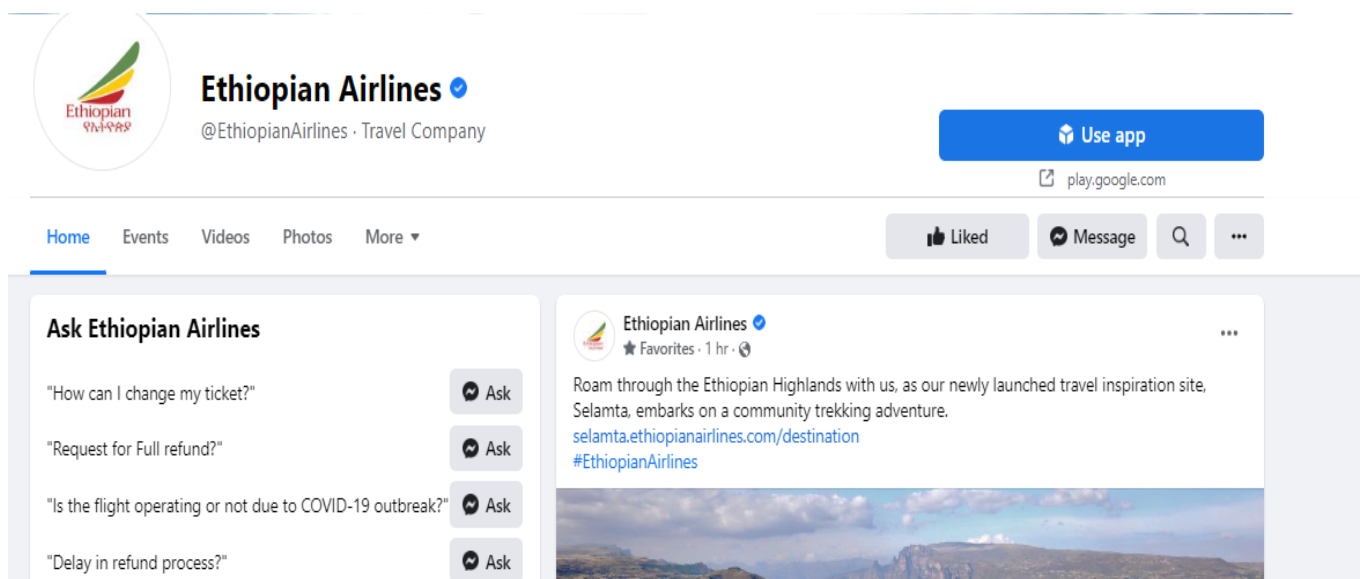
One of the PR professional responded that:-

“Created in July 11/2011 ET's Facebook Page followers are drastically increasing. Today, July 14, 2022 (an interview date of this data gathering) the page has reached to have more than 2,115,425 people followers for the English Page. This is so because of the regularly updated contents are of interest to the customers. I have experienced passengers competing to send Pictures from their flight experience to be posted on the official Facebook page of the Organization. They also visit the page to get updated about ET. The number of likes, comments and shares interaction per a single post counts in thousands unlike many other organization in the Country. Same holds true for the view counts of a video uploaded on the page. (Personal Interview, July 14/2022)

According to interviewee from the IT background, majority of contents uploaded on the ET's page are event based. He strongly believed that every post is backed by a strong and key message to be reached their audience or customer. *"ET's Facebook page is well known for its attractive and interactive graphic contents that catch the eyes of its followers, the interviewee added. Besides, every message is crafted and uploaded considering its target audience and the metrics whereby it will get viral.* (Personal Interview, July 14/2022)

According to the other interviewee for this research, the other most important Content uploaded and updated on the official Facebook page of ET is option for Q&A (question and answer) if Passengers Change their mind on flight and want to change their ticket, request for full refund, Covid updates, Delay on refund Process and etc.

"We regularly update such contents to ease communication with passengers to solve their difficulties online. Customers are hosted on live Chat so that they can get their problem solved and/ or ways are indicated", the respondent added. (Personal Interview, July 14/2022)



Does Facebook have impacted the regular work of PR professionals in ET??

Because there is so much at stake, public relations experts should handle Facebook campaigns proactively, especially in times of crisis. When the world is in turmoil, displaying emotional intelligence aids in demonstrating sincerity and understanding. In contrast to conventional efforts, experts in this industry can assess campaign's effectiveness fast. Facebook give results almost immediately when followers respond to a new post because it's so quick.

Facebook posts have taken on the role of an organization's face and act as a window for the public to see how successfully customer service concerns are handled because of their inherent accessibility and visibility. Customers frequently vent their complaints openly on Facebook page of organization rather than speaking with customer service agents directly. An organization may suffer negative effects or brand damage if these complaints go unresolved. Building trust for brands is a major concern for reputation management. Thankfully, ardent supporters occasionally intervene to defend a group and promptly correct critics. One of the interviewee of this research responded that:-

“Facebook has had a direct impact on the regular tasks of PR professionals in any organization, especially, in the aviation industry its intensity magnifies. This could be either positively or negatively. To effectively manage the impact of Facebook on public relations during times of crisis, tone and timing are key factors. Users use Facebook to advocate for causes that are important to them and to share their opinions on a range of subjects. Customers form bonds with brands and purchase goods and services that reflect their values and way of life. Strategically, people in communication, public relations, and Facebook Page jobs should be cautious when commenting on contentious matters unless they've first determined their target audience's position on such topics, he added. (Personal Interview, July 14/2022)

According to the interviewee from PR professional, who recalled upon the unfortunate and bad incidence that has happened on March 10, 2019. *“An Ethiopian Airlines Boeing 737 flight enroute to Nairobi Kenya crashed near Bishoftu town. The aircraft had 149 passengers and 8 crews on board. The Boeing 737 crashed six minutes after takeoff from Addis Ababa, on its way to Kenya's capital.”* right after this crisis news was made official, the whole world was paying attention to hear and read from the official source updates from ET. *“...I remember g the*

Facebook page's inbox being flooding with questions and unusual comments from whoever accessing the Page. It was a very difficult time to manage the regular PR work” he added. (Personal Interview, July 14/2022)

The other Interviewee has tried to address the importance of obtaining balance for PR practitioners during crisis Communication especially through Facebook page.

“Effective PR work on Facebook requires personal qualities like humility, compassion, and empathy. Successful corporate communication techniques urge professionals to abandon the pervasive hard-sell messaging in the midst of turmoil in favor of more pertinent posts that relate to the present situation. It has to be clearly known that may connect with people during crises by acknowledging that they don't have all the answers while demonstrating empathy. The biggest issue today, according to him, is striking a balance between currency, or remaining up to date with events, and empathy. You must be aware of when to speak and when to listen, as well as when to hurry up and calm down.

PR professionals more easily traverse Facebook platforms, promote their organization's principles, and open the door for fruitful connection with followers if they have the correct message at the right time. An organization can strengthen connections and encourage participation by learning about the causes and concerns that their target audience is passionate about. (Personal Interview, July 14/2022)

Form the respondents' point of view the research was able to reach upon the following conclusion.

In the era of 21st century, when digital media platforms are aggressively bridging the information gap between organizations and their public, the works of PR professionals are strongly impacted either negatively or positively. What has been learnt from Ethiopian airlines case was also affirmed the conclusion.

What are the challenges and opportunities of using Facebook as PR and communication tool? Respondents of the interview replied lists of advantages of using Facebook for PR as a communication tool. According to the head of communication department of ET, the Facebook page they managed to communicate their general public, has helped to ease their work a lot.

Furthermore, "... Facebook is a hundred percent free platform except for the internet cost. It eases our regular work with a spot to promote our business, post special offers and build relationships with the media and our customers. The only cost incurred for using Facebook is the time it takes you to post information, monitor responses and post replies" he added. (Personal Interview, July 14/2022)

The other interviewee confirmed and mentioned the opportunities of using Facebook for Public relation and strategic communication tool as it is the most convenient platform to reach the organization's public and its customer faster than ever (immediacy).

"...thanks to the technology that the era bring to bridge the communication world, both in time and cost. We, the PR practitioners, are now able to communicate our customers all at once within fractions of seconds. What has been posted to Facebook is "live" immediately. If you have breaking news, such as a new product and/or service announcement or a special sale, Facebook provides a great venue for that." (Personal Interview, July 14/2022)

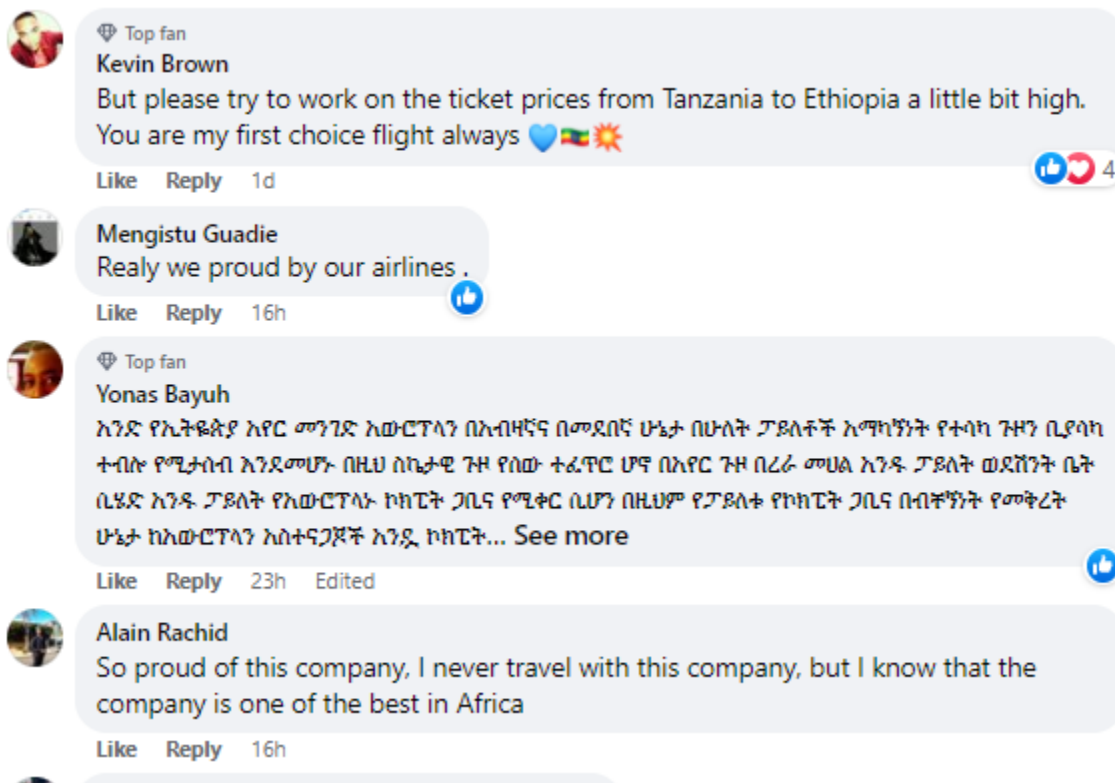
How ET's PR personnel Monitor and analysis comments reflected on their Facebook Page?



Effectiveness of a Facebook post can be evaluated from the reaction of genuine followers. Increasing the reach of Facebook post can be largely dependent on getting people to talk about it. The gold standard for a post when it comes to Facebook engagement is its comments. Shares on the post signal that readers liked the posted content enough to share it, and likes might give a company more credible appearance where as Comments demonstrate genuine engagement and authenticity.


In this regard, one of the interviewee replayed that: - "*If a user takes the time to remark on one of our Facebook post, it demonstrates their sincere interest in what we have to say. Be it positively or negatively commented. This helps us (PR professionals) to consider the comments forwarded from the customers and digest it as part of **Customer feedback analysis**, which thereby will help to consider in decision making process.*" Monitoring


Facebook post comments and analysis them as feedback gathered from customers is part of the daily PR practitioners work this days at ET. For instance, ET was forced to brief press releases and media briefings incidences of airlines crash, defamations occurred against its organizational activities, it's all rounded employment activities and ...etc. All based aggressively engaged comments enquiring for immediate clarity. (Personal Interview, July 14/2022)



The research has tried to visit the Facebook page of Ethiopian airlines and understand how Comments, shares and likes were trending over there. Accordingly, I found some critical negatively commented and questions rose from followers and/or customers to be answered by ET Personnel's. Meanwhile there are comments given thankfully for the satisfaction of services given by the airline. Below are some screenshot from comments given by customers.



 **Pele Christopher**
The most prestigious airline in Africa. I really enjoyed my best experience ever in life from Entebbe to the horn of Africa.
Like Reply 2d 


 **Anita Marshall**
Absolute false advertising.
Shocking at service. Shocking at luggage. Shocking at the call center. All round worst experience of my life.
Like Reply 2d
↳ 3 Replies


 **Mak Sam**
Make it more real asset of Ethiopia. Lets Go Out of the box and shall serve all about Ethiopia and its people. The only institution magnifying our unity. Look forward brights and keep going. Other parts of the planet is go far beyond what we think. Anyways hopefull by my Ethiopian airline.
Like Reply 2d


 **Naa Mahomey**
It time people need to use secret recording cameras in the bag to know who has been stealing or hiding peoples bags 😞 well for me that what i will do just to expose their face to the world ,bec we pay expensive tickets and trust them our luggage and boom it get missen?nooo most know what going on there and they share things among themselves so let start with the investigation then
Like Reply 20h 

 **Sa Sa Sa Sa**
The super of africa ethiopian fly
Like Reply 20h

 **Aurélie De Winter**
More than 45days without my luggage!
No contact
No news
No respond
Poor service I've ever had with a company!
Like Reply 16h  3

 **Birhan Beshe**
Super proud 🙌 we had an amazing flights with you from Ethiopia to USA.
Like Reply 18h

 **Sebte Mekuria**
what about with price this year comparely with others is an exaturated 4xas previous never happened in the other air ways.What is your cause?
Like Reply 21h

 **Aster Zaoude**
Proud of Ethiopian. Fly high!!
Like Reply 1d

Sadie Keboitse
 Your flights are comfortable yes....but handling of bags has left my heart torn into pieces....after what I have seen today with my bag, I am so shattered, dissapointed, hurt...
 Like Reply 21h
 ↳ 2 Replies

Sebrinah Opelo Lefutswe
 Yo people you are famous for losing or misplacigg people's luggages, i dont trust you and your tag line
 Like Reply 11m

Eyob Haile Mariam
 The pride of Africa 🇪🇹 !!! 🙄
 Like Reply 1d

Naa Mahomev

Ethiopian Airlines ✓
 March 18, 2020 · 🌐
 Overview Comments

Your safety and well-being is always our first priority.

Most relevant ▾

Dergu Aragaw
 The only good thing in Ethiopia next to victory of adwa
 Like Reply 37w

Filipa de Sousa
 We traveled with Ethiopian Airlines in June from Lubumbashi to Porto through Frankfurt.
 Ethiopian lose my luggage and since today I never found it and when we contact them, nobody can tell us where is it!!
 Same for Aurélie De Winter et Jessica Argazzi!
 The service is really really POOR!!!
 Maybe the worst company in the world...
 Never travel with them, you will loose your personal effect and nobody will assist you!
 Like Reply 17h Edited
 ↳ 1 Reply

Kevin Brown Top fan
 But please try to work on the ticket prices from Tanzania to Ethiopia a little bit high.
 You are my first choice flight always 🇪🇹 🌟
 Like Reply 1d

Those comments are meant to be strictly followed, monitored, reacted, gathered and analyzed for decision making in ET's customer service.

4.5. Opportunities and Challenges of Using Facebook in Corporate PR

One of the research questions to be addressed in this study was to investigate the challenges and opportunities of using Facebook as PR and communication tool. The researcher tried to address the question of what challenges and opportunities are there in Using Facebook in corporate PR, the case of Ethiopian airlines. Extended Webinar (Zoom) discussion was made Regarding the Opportunities and challenges. The discussion results are listed as bellow.



Picture 4.1 Webinar discussion

4.5.1. Opportunities of using Facebook for corporate PR

One of the research questions to be addressed in this study was to investigate the challenges and opportunities of using Facebook as PR and communication tool. To this effect, based on responses from the interviewee and Zoom Conferencing, the researcher has tried to identify opportunities of using Facebook for Public relation and Strategic Communication work. Hence, Facebook is a hundred percent free platform except for the internet cost. It provides PR practitioners with a spot to promote their business, post special offers and build relationships with the media and their customers. The only cost is the time it takes you to post information, monitor responses and post replies. Furthermore, what has been posted or is to be posted to Facebook is “live”

immediately. Facebook is a perfect platform to air issues such as breaking news, new product and/or service announcement or a special sale immediately than any other media outlets. It also helps to get and/or receive feedbacks regarding the updated/ communicated contents due to its interactive nature.

As Facebook has over 850 million users who spend more than 700 billion minutes a year on the site, the possibilities for a public relations wider reach are endless, according to an August 2011 article by Sarah Skerik of PR Newswire.

With such a large user base, one can connect to thousands of people on Facebook that might have an interest in once business, especially those than prefer the Web to traditional media. If you build relationships with people in your target demographic, they can do the public relations work for you if they like your messages and share them with others. Relationships fostered through Facebook tend to be more personal than those through other mediums. Many public relations professionals like to send out photos or other graphics with a press release. Facebook is a perfect platform for this. Public relations are about building relationships, and Facebook is an ideal medium for that if used correctly. Relationships are supposed to be mutually beneficial, so approach your Facebook strategy with an eye to what you can do for the people who like your page.

Furthermore, according to respondents, the future of PR work is with high prospects to be considered. Some of them are:-

- The number of internet subscribers is dramatically increasing from period to period in a global phenomenon.
- Help full devices for online information gathering are getting cheaper and available easily
- Everybody can create content and transmit information regarding its products and services,
- It gives freedom of expression and informing of new information.
- The platform, Facebook is in a position to dominate all other medias like TV and Radio users
- Years ahead are considered to be an era for digitalization
- Communications are considered to be a worldwide phenomenon

4.5.2. Challenges of Using Facebook for corporate PR

Every business can benefit from social media, but just because something is well-liked doesn't imply it is without flaws. If your company is thinking of expanding on Facebook for PR, there are a number of things to take into account, chief among them how much time and money you are prepared to invest in the platform. You might never know how much your page actually affects your relationship with the public because it is difficult to quantify the success of Facebook impressions. In principle, interacting with customers or followers on Facebook seems amicable; however some users might use pages to publish spam or abusive comments. Even worse, a user can make untrue claims about once company on its page for all to see. As a result, a company must regularly check its Facebook page, ideally going through each individual post.

Furthermore, according to the webinar discussion held with experts, there are challenges directly related to disinformation, misinformation, fake news and the like while using Facebook as a Corporate Public relation tool.

- Lack of available technological gadgets and equipments.
- Lack of fringe benefits and reward for those who are doing to the level of their best.
- Lack of posting consistently
- Skill gap
- Network problem
- Delay on uploading new information
- Lack of much attention given
- There are many Facebook pages that are created in the name of ET
- Lack of qualified PR specialists.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1. Conclusion

The research intends to assess the use of Facebook in corporate Organizations the case of Ethiopian airlines. In order to achieve this general purpose, both quantitative and qualitative data have been used. The researcher has reviewed materials related to this research title and context. Mainly, the research was made based on data gathered from respondents' i.e. PR professionals and customers of ET. Furthermore, both quantitative and qualitative research methods have been also used so as to achieve the general objective of the research.

The findings and the reviewed literatures reveals that the use of Facebook in corporate Public relation (PR) has impacted PR operations both positively and negatively.

Facebook has impacted and changed the way PR professionals work. i.e. it both eased and brought challenge to the PR work. Ethiopian airlines used the Opportunity that Facebook brought in the digital Communication to communicate its customer and organizational Publics.

It is also found that ET uploads contents that are of the costumers' interest, Photographs from Passengers, Press releases and adds regarding its new destinations and of course, flight information.

The major challenges of using Facebook for Corporate Communication which are reported by the majority respondents are related to exposures to disinformation, misinformation, fake news, lack of skills and availability of technological gadgets as per needed. In addition, this study found fundamental advantages and opportunities of using Facebook for pr Work. For example, it is cheap and effective platform to reach global audience shortly, the increase in the number of internet subscribers which will mean possibility of accessing information released via Facebook, It gives freedom of expression and interactions for specific information as years ahead are considered to be an era for digitalization.

The research further revealed that ET strictly monitor and analyze how comments, shares and likes under each post were trending and considers the scenario in decision making.

To this effect, it was found that ET is very responsive against comments and reactions from its page followers. Hence, most important comments are to be considered in decision making Process of the corporate Communication Department.

5.2. Recommendation

Modern public relations are significantly impacted by social media activities. In the good old days, PR specialists would disseminate news through conventional channels like newspapers, television, or radio. The topic and approaches altered as social media gained popularity. PR experts now have immediate access to bigger, more influential audiences and better networking opportunities.

Regardless of the findings in this research material, Ethiopian airlines should strive to achieve a more balanced and interactive use of Facebook as a public relations tool. In light of this, the following suggested recommendations can be considered:

- (1) An assessment of its existing corporate social media strategy in order to identify actions which generate the most feedback; and
- (2) An application of established industry best practices that foster online relationship building.

ET has two different Facebook pages based on languages which their primarily objectives are similar. I.e. reaching its customers with all the updates it has with respect to the services it delivers to customers.

Having more than two million followers, the ET's Facebook page is expected to be the primary source of information. As a result, limitations observed as findings of this research skill gaps, materials gaps, lack of updating on the page and related problems has to be resolved. ET serves multinational customers. Not just only for the English and Amharic speakers. Hence, it is also recommended to diversify the services on the page with various languages in addition to the existing ones.

It's also recommended to equip the digital media team of the PR department with all technological gadgets and infrastructure to ease the working procedures. The research strongly recommends that to optimize page reachable, ET should sponsor the page and boost each posts so as to reach Millions at ones.

The content producing team at ET Public relation department needs to work on creative productions, post and updates. IT experts should also be brought to improve the interface of the

page. The other most important point to recommend is that it needs to make consistent updates on the Pages.

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<https://www.ethiopianairlines.com/et>

<https://www.oberlo.com/statistics>

Appendix 1

Questionnaire

INSTRUCTION I

Dear Respondent,

Please answer this questionnaire based on what you think about Ethiopian airlines Facebook **page**.

This is a questionnaire that attempt to know the use of Facebook in corporate PR: The case of ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES. You are requested to read each statement carefully and give your response by putting a tick (√) mark only that option which you find that is most appropriate and true in your case.

There is no right /wrong answer. All the information given will be used for academic/research purpose only and will be always kept with the greatest confidential.

Thank you for your cooperation.

With best regards,

Shumet Demneke, **Researcher**

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
College of humanities, language studies, journalism and communication
School of journalism and communication

**THE USE OF FACEBOOK IN CORPORATE PR: THE CASE OF ETHIOPIAN
AIRLINES**

Please provide basic information about your Personality.

Part I. Respondents Personal Profile

Please tick the square behind the next phrase before you begin responding to question as a confirmation

I agree to take part in this survey

DIRECTIONS: Please respond the information required here under.

1. Age ____ Gender ____ Length of Service: _____
2. Highest Educational Attainment:

BA/BSC MA/MSc PhD others

Department -----

SN	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Facebook changed the way PR works					
2	Facebook Allows Criticism					
3	Facebook enhances excising practices of PR					
4	Integrated use of Facebook helps to strengthen Corporate PR					
5	Facebook is used for internal communication/employee engagement					
6	Facebook is more important to communicate Business than service					
7	Facebook has nothing to do with Corporate PR					

12	How often do you use the ET's Facebook page?	never Always Often Sometim es Rarely Never	Rarely	sometimes	often	Always
13	The kind of social media you use?	Instagra m	LinkedIn	YouTube	Twitter	Facebook

INSTRUCTION II-

Open ended questions

1. Do you think that contents updated via ET’s Facebook page are consistent/regular?

A. yes

B. No

1.1.If your response is “Yes” how? -----

1.2. If your response is “No” why? -----

2. What are the major contents uploaded on the Facebook page? -----

3. What public relations model is reflected in the Facebook communication of the PR body?

4. Does the Facebook page play its role as a public relations tool in promoting communication between Ethiopian airlines and its general customers?

A. Yes

B. No

4.1.If say “Yes” explain-----

4.2.If say “No” explain -----

-----5. What are the challenges and opportunities of Using Facebook as a corporate PR tool?-----

6. Any other additional thought you may have to share?-----

Thank you!

Interview guidelines

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please answer all the questions honestly and exhaustively. All the information given will be used for academic /research purpose only and will be always kept with the greatest confidentiality.

- What is your educational background?
 - What is your work experience?
 - What is your role in the organization?
1. Are latest information continuously uploaded for readers?
 2. What is the main objective of the Facebook page?
 3. Are you satisfied with the contents uploaded with ET's the Facebook page?
 4. What efforts are made so that this uploaded information reaches the target audience?
 5. What are the obstacles that preclude/prevent this information from reaching the audience?
 6. Are there any technical difficulties that prevent the successful uploading of information?
If your response is yes, what solutions can you suggest?

Thank You!

Focus Group Discussion Guide

(Zoom Meeting)

1. When was ET's FB page started?
2. What are the contents uploaded?
3. Is the page currently sponsored and are the posts boosted?
4. Are you using this page as a tool of Corporate PR?
5. What problems and challenges have you faced?

Thank you for your time

Interview guide PR professionals and Experts

Instructions:

Hereunder are questions that are supposed to be very help full to gather information for the fulfimnet of my research work in the area of use of Facebook in corporate PR: the Case of Ethiopian airline. Please take time and answer all the questions as honestly as possible and exhaustively.

All gathered information will be used for academic /research purpose only and will be always kept with the greatest confidential.

- What is your educational background?
 - What is your work experience?
 - What is your role in the organization?
1. Did you regularly update your Facebook page and follow up feedback?
 2. How far it went practical to help address your PR work?
 3. Are you satisfied about it?
 4. What is the main objective of your Facebook page?
 5. Did any performance evaluations made regarding the services you provide on the page?

Thank You!

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Although the wide spread of Covid 19 pandemic prevented the researcher not to handle the planned focus group discussion, questions prepared for this purpose were managed to be included in webinar interview and discussion time.

Here is some of the question that was managed and prepared for FGD but considered in zoom discussion.

1. What were the major factors that pushed you to create this page?
2. What are the contents uploaded?
3. Were there skilled professionals during the commencement of the page?
4. How long it took to use this page as part of the PR strategic tool?
5. Is the page currently sponsored and are the posts boosted?
6. Are you using this page as a tool of online PR?
7. Are contents uploaded regularly in a programmed manner or it's just random?
8. What problems and challenges have you faced so far?

Thank you for your time and Considerations