

An exploration of Public Relation Practitioners' Use of PR Tools to Communicate with their External Customers and Associated Challenges: Agaro Town Public Sectors in Focus.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the tools that are used by the government public relations department practitioners and the challenges they encountered while using standard PR tools. Descriptive research design was used using both quantitative and qualitative research approaches with data collected from a sample of public relations practitioners from governmental organizations in Agaro Town, western Ethiopia. Samples were selected based on simple random sampling and questionnaire was the principal data collection instrument. Following the return of the questionnaire, the data was entered into SPSS software version 21, and the quantitative data was analyzed using percentages, frequency, mean, and standard deviations. The qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings of the study revealed that PR practitioners have adopted different media in reaching the external audience. They also partnered with the media to disseminate information, through community relationship programs and communicated the corporate social responsibilities of employees'. The findings revealed that political diffusion is affecting the practices of PR in the town; extreme media and public scrutiny; lack of managerial support for PR practitioners; and lack of training for PR practitioners about customers' satisfaction, among other things were challenges investigated. Based on the major findings, the researchers recommended that the government should spare adequate attention to help the PR practitioners use the right tools in the right place. The practitioners also should improve their commitment level to the customers' base service so that they satisfy their public.

Keywords: Customer satisfaction, PR tools, government communication, public Relations

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Background and statement of the problem

According to Sietel (2007), public relations are a planned process to influence public opinion through sound character and proper performance based on mutually satisfactory two-way communication. Natifu, Barbra, and Zikusooka, Amos (2014) see public relations as consisting of all forms of planned communication, be it internal between an organization and its public to achieve specific objectives concerning mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence. It involves management issues and assists management in staying informed, gaining public opinion; it serves as a continuation of social responsibility, assists in analyzing trends, predicting the future and consequences, counseling management, planning events, and making all projects and activities of its organizations known to the external public. Mohammed et al. (2010) cited in Benjamin (2012), stated that public service organizations agree that customer service is one of the vital factors that contribute to the establishment of reputation and credibility among the public. They also argued that the public's complaints about long queues, poor service delivery, and insufficient physical facilities might affect the image and level of service delivery in the public sector. However, the practice has its bottlenecks as well. Lack of creating awareness of the terms of the rule; quick claims settlement method; poor risk assessment as a result of an insufficient recommendation by the service provider to customers to minimize the loss; a delay in communication; unprofessional conduct; inflexible service; lack of staff for advice at the time of claims due to rigid working hours, which leads to dissatisfaction, Ethiopian Economic Association can be mentioned (EEA, 2012, p. 84).

The public relations tools implemented by the government public relations departments serve to have two-way communications with the target audiences or customers. Based on the nature of activities and different target groups, various tools can be used (Banik, 2004, p.76). Ki and Hon (2006) stated that government PR communication is carried out in many forms, including press releases, media interviews, and speeches. Contributions via action also occur in many forms, such as counseling management to alter organizational policy, forming partnerships with interest groups, or holding special events. This is consistent with perspectives on PRs stressing their relationship management function (Ki & Hon, 2006).

According to Smith (2003), public relations practitioners are expected to identify issues that may affect the organization. Liu and Horsley (2007) identified eight attributes that affect government public relations. These are politics; focus on serving the public; legal constraints; extreme media and public scrutiny; lack of managerial support for PR practitioners; poor public perception of government communication; poor professional development; and federalism (Liu and Horsley, 2007). Some countries have laws that influence the media and information dissemination, which have a negative influence on the effectiveness of the PR profession. Federalism, on the other hand, is a factor that affects the PR profession. This is due to the existence of decentralized rules and regulations which all spheres of PR work have (Cruckeberg, 2004). The general view of the community about government public relations knowledge and perception of PR has also played a negative role in the development of the PR profession. Institutional leaders and managers have little or no support for the professional ethos of the profession and may even have distorted views and expectations about the professionals. This has brought an ineffective function in the organization (Cruckeberg, 2004). From the perspective of other professions, the PR profession has been negatively affected by the fact that public relations skills are not what they want.

Statement of the Problem

In Ethiopia, the majority of public relations practitioners are government employees who aim to improve customers' satisfaction by employing public-interest techniques. As a result of this, practitioners will unavoidably apply public-interest ideals to their public-relations work. The practitioners' role is primarily to serve the government's narrow interests. Most of the time, the practitioners' duty is defined in terms of suggestive of mandated, satisfying external customers through effective communications. In doing this, practitioners will necessarily be applying the ideals of public interest within the public relations practice. Despite the efforts made by the government of Ethiopia, the service delivery and grievance handling systems of most public service organizations are not in a position to fully satisfy a large number of customers. Furthermore, studies that examine the tools used by public relations in communicating with customers and the associated challenges are lacking in Ethiopia. Existing studies conducted focused on customers' internal communication satisfaction in NGOs, and banks to maximize their profits, in the latter case. In other words, serving the public interests in the public relations function of government organizations doesn't seem to

be given due attention. Therefore, this study aimed to shed light on this important problem.

Objectives

Specifically this study aimed at addressing the following specific objectives:

1. To investigate the tools PRs practitioners use for the success of their communication
2. To evaluate the challenges PRs practitioners encountered

Materials and Methods

Study Design

A descriptive survey design was employed using quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Data were collected from a sample of public relations practitioners from governmental organizations in Agaro Town, western Ethiopia. The researchers assessed the tools used by public relations practitioners of government organizations while communicating with their external customers and explored the associated challenges using a cross-sectional descriptive study design.

Methods and Procedures of Data Collection

Survey research method was used. Structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from a sample of employees in selected public sectors in Agaro Town (such as Agaro Town Administration Office, Agaro Town Education office, Agaro Town Transport authority Office, town municipality office, Agaro Town Trade and Market Office, Public Service, and Communication Office). A comprehensive questionnaire was created originally in English and then translated into Afan Oromo, the language spoken by the local community where the data was collected. Following, that the researchers pilot-tested the questionnaire, taking 10% of the total sample size to ensure the validity of the instrument. After the pilot test, the questionnaire items were carefully edited, rechecked, and administered, by explaining the research objectives to employees drawn from the selected public sectors of Agaro Town. Interview guidelines for the qualitative data were also identified from related literature after a careful review process.

First-hand information was collected from the target population after determining the sampling procedure and sample size. To ensure data quality, selected public relations practitioners were briefed on the research, their role in the process, the content and themes of the

questionnaire, and discussions were made following questions of clarity from the participants.

Instrumentation

Both close-ended and open-ended question types were included in the questionnaire to know the tools used by public relations practitioners of government organizations in communicating with their external customers and associated challenges in Agaro Town. The reliability of the data collection instrument was established first through the test; re-test method (Bryman & Cramer, 2007). Keeping all these facts in mind, the researchers have made a reliability analysis using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. When checking the standardized items for reliability, the average score for the entire set of statements was found to be 0.914, which is much higher than the threshold value of 0.65.

Both structured and semi-structured interview guidelines were also developed through consulting previous literature and holding interview with managers and PR practitioners of selected public sectors in Agaro Town.

Sampling and Sampling Procedure

The public sectors studied have a total population of 249 public servants as of 2012/21. Since collecting data through questionnaires from the whole population was expensive and time-consuming, the researchers purposefully selected 7 public sector organizations from 23 by using purposive sampling. The 7 public sectors chosen were Agaro Town Administrative Office, Town Municipality, Education Office, Trade and Market Office, Public Service Office, Transport Authority Office, and Communication Affairs Office. The selection of these institutions was based on some criteria like high customers' communication, large budget allocation, and their importance in the social and economic aspect of the city administration. However, the researchers employed simple random sampling to select the final sample size of the study after a probability proportionate to sampling size was employed to identify the maximum number of participants from each public sector. The sample size was determined by using Yamane's (1967) probability sampling calculation formula:

$$n = N / (1 + N * (e)^2)$$

Where, **n** is the sample size, **N** is population size and **e** is alpha value. The study intended to establish a confidence interval of 95% and alpha value at 0.05 and whose t-value is estimated at 1.96. This implication is

to accept the error of the study at 5%. Hence, the population size drawn from the seven offices were (249).

$$\text{Therefore, } n = \frac{N}{1+N*(e)^2} \quad n = \frac{249}{1+249*(0.05)^2} = \frac{249}{1+249*(.0025)} = \frac{249}{1.6225} = 153.46 = 153(n)$$

Moreover, the inclusion criteria was being a permanent employee and having more than one year work experience. A total of 21 interviews had been conducted.

Methods of Data Analysis

The data gathered through different techniques was analyzed and interpreted qualitatively and quantitatively. For the quantitative data, data clearing was done after the questionnaires were returned from respondents, and then the completed questionnaires data were inserted into SPSS software version 21 for computation. The quantitative data were analyzed using percentages, frequency, mean, and standard deviations. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis and presented in line with the quantitative data to add flesh to the bare bones of the questionnaire data.

Results

Socio-Demographic Information of Respondents

As shown in table 1 most, 98(65%) of the respondents were males, and the rest 52(35%) of them were females. This implies that males exceeded the women in the participation of PR practices in the sectors. Next, majority 85(57%) of the participants age ranged between 31-40, while 43(29%) of them were 20-30 years old, and 21(14 %) of them were between 41-50 years of age, minority 1(0.6%) of them were above 50. Therefore, this implies that majority of the participants were young who were mature enough to implement the regulations of PR in the sectors.

Regarding, the educational background of the respondents, majority 88(58%) of them were degree holders, 37(25%) of them were diploma holders, 8(5%) of them were certificate holders, 5(3%) of them were secondary school complete, and 12(8%) had completed graduate studies.

With regards the marital status, majority 120(80%) of the participants were married, 18(12%) of the participants were single, 1(0.6 %) of them were divorced, and widowed respectively. So, this implies that as most of the participants were responsible and capable in leading their family they are assumed to have better understanding of the practices of PR in the sectors.

| No | | Characteristics | Frequency (| Percentage |
|----|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------|------------|
| 1 | Sex of respondents | Male | 98 | 65 |
| | | Female | 52 | 35 |
| | | Total | 150 | 100 |
| 2 | Age of respondents | 20-30 | 43 | 29 |
| | | 31-40 | 85 | 57 |
| | | 41-50 | 21 | 14 |
| | | Above 50 | 1 | 0.6 |
| | | Total | 150 | 100 |
| 3 | Educational status | Secondary school | 5 | 3 |
| | | Certificate | 8 | 5 |
| | | Diploma | 37 | 25 |
| | | Degree | 88 | 58 |
| | | Postgraduate | 12 | 8 |
| | | Total | 150 | 100 |
| 4 | Marital status of respondents | Married | 120 | 80 |
| | | Single | 18 | 12 |
| | | Divorced | 11 | 7 |
| | | Widowed | 1 | 0.6 |
| | | Total | 150 | 100 |

Table 1. Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

PR Tools used for augmentation of external customer communication satisfaction

As it can be seen in table 2, item 1, on whether PR practitioners adopted different media in reaching the external audience, a majority of the respondents 144(96%) replied "agree," 4(3%) of them disagreed, and the rest 2 (1%) of them were "neutral," which signaled that PR practitioners in Agaro town used various media options so as to reach the audience and attempted to take reinforcement through various media. The data obtained revealed that public relations practitioners in Agaro town are well informed and aware of what is going on in the town's public sectors, which they use to educate customers about new things and certain decision-making processes carried out in the sectors. However, on item 3,

PR practitioners in Agaro town missed the opportunity to use sending out press releases, as a majority of 134 (89%) of the respondents disagreed while 6 (4%) of them replied "agree," and the rest 9 (6%) remained neutral, implying that the PR practitioners couldn't send press to reach out to their customers.

But, on the same table item 5, that inquires about the effective use of social media, majority 127(85%) of the respondents replied "agree," 15(10) of them replied "disagree," and 8(5%) of them said "neutral," indicating that the PR practitioners in Agaro town use social media more effectively than mass media because most customers are more exposed to using social media than mass media. As data on the same table, item 6, shows, majority 141(94%) of the respondents agreed about communicating with employees, whereas 7(5%) and 2(1%) of them disagreed and were neutral, and this implies that PR practitioners used better communication with employees of the sectors, which also facilitated conditions to reach the external customers as well. In response to a question about whether PR practitioners in the study area used other means of publication, the majority 141 (94%) of respondents disagreed on table 3, item 7, while 6 (4%) agreed with the others. This indicates that PR practitioners in Agaro town couldn't use other means of publication to reach their customers. In contrast, the data on table 3 item 8 shows that most of the respondents agreed that PR practitioners in Agaro town apply community relationship programs, whereas minority 23(16%) of them neglect this relationship, and the rest 17(11%) of them replied neutral. This means that PR practitioners in Agaro town were good at creating community-based relationships to foster communication satisfaction among their customers.

| Items | SD | DA | N | A | SA | M/n | SD |
|---|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|------|------|
| 1.PR practitioners adopted different media by public relations unit of the organization in reaching the external audience | 1(0.6%) | 3(2%) | 2(1%) | 50(33%) | 94(63%) | 2.38 | 0.87 |
| 2.PR practitioners are aware of any information program organized by Agaro town public sectors to educate its public on new changes, problems and decisions | 5(3%) | 2(1%) | 7(5%) | 59(39%) | 77(51%) | 2.32 | 0.83 |
| 3.PR practitioners use sending out press releases to endeavor of customers satisfaction | 78(52%) | 56(37%) | 9(6%) | 2(1%) | 4(3%) | 2.44 | 0.92 |
| 4.PR practitioners use partnering with the media | 4(3%) | 1(0.6%) | 10(7%) | 58(39%) | 77(51%) | 2.39 | 0.82 |
| 5.PR practitioners use social media effectively to deliver communication | 10(7%) | 5(3%) | 8(5%) | 64(43%) | 63(42%) | 2.24 | 0.86 |
| 6.PR practitioners applied communicating with employees corporate social | 4(3%) | 3(2%) | 2(1%) | 81(54%) | 60(40%) | 2.42 | 0.79 |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------|------|
| responsibilities | | | | | | | |
| 7.PR practitioners employ the publications through different means | 88(59%) | 53(35%) | 3(2%) | 2(1%) | 4(3%) | 2.23 | 0.75 |
| 8.The PR practitioners use community relationship program | 13(9%) | 10(7%) | 17(11%) | 74(49%) | 36(24%) | 2.22 | 0.74 |

Table 3: The PR tools used by practitioners (n=150)

Concerning the above quantitative data, interviewees revealed that the government is represented by the administrator of the town and that the government organization serves as a liaison between the media, the public, and the government. Press releases, panel discussions, meetings, and phone calls are led and produced by the head office and delivered to the public via the PR practitioner.

In this regard, one of the interviewees, who was a manager, commented:

We reach out to the public through media relations, news releases, and panel discussions with people from all walks of life. We established procedures for communicating with the media. We collect and evaluate public input from the page concerning the contents and forms of our news on social media. They were observed and assessed. The standard that we defined earlier is used to guide the monitoring and evaluation process. The town government's communication affairs department will also monitor and assess local discussion forums and events. (M.1)

The researchers also discovered that the office's primary communication tool is an announcement to the reporter. The reporter sends out a variety of messages about current events, community-based activities, development, and agreements, among other things. There are also limited quantities of fliers, leaflets, and publications in the office. The government entity employs digital formats of reporters' announcements and newsletters to reach an online audience. According to one of the top specialists, blogging allows the organization to build and maintain a relationship with the public as well as to foster two-way communication. Government organizations, on the other hand, use social media networks to establish direct engagement with the general public. According to one of the managers (M.2),

The public sector has various media partners, journalists who work for media organizations that are registered at the town communication affairs office with a means of delegation to maintain a continuous and mutual relationship with the general public.

The government organization's media partners, according to the interviewees, include print media, digital media, and the Agaro town local community. In response to this, one of the managers who participated in the study stated:

I believe we have a better working relationship with the local press. We invite media outlets to the media conversation when the town administrator remarks. They'll go straight to the top and ask their questions. We also issue press releases to the media (M.3).

Another manager added, "Media relations are one of the jobs that the offices must deal with." We allow the news to reach the public as quickly as possible. Some of the information we offer may be delayed. This is because it takes us a long time to verify the information obtained from the source." (M.4)

As it can be seen from table 4, item 1, while responding to political challenges, the majority 129(86%) of the respondents agreed about it, 12(8%) of disagreed, whereas 9(6%) of the respondents were neutral. In the same table on item 2 regarding challenges related to extreme media and public scrutiny, majority 116(78%) of them agreed, 21(14%) of them disagreed and others 13(9%) of them remained neutral. This data revealed that the PR practices of the practitioners in the study town had been affected by the politics, which could also be related to extreme media. Some people may impose their political interests through different extreme media so that political conditions and media influence somehow affect the PR practices of the PR practitioners. As the majority 123(82%) stated, lack of managerial support has challenged their PR practices, 17(11%) of them refused this notion, and the rest 10(7%) of them replied neutral. This implies that there is poor managerial support for PR practitioners although the tasks of the PR practitioners require the collaborative engagement of all employees and the management to ensure better external communication satisfaction among the customers.

In contrast to managerial related challenges, public perception of government communication on item 4 did not challenge the PR practitioners as the majority 120(80%) of the respondents disagreed, 14(9%) of them agreed whereas 16(11%) of the respondents replied neutral. Similarly, on item 5, majority 111(74%) of the respondents disagreed, 20(13%) disagreed, and the remaining 19(13%) became neutral. This indicates poor professional development and personal performance of the practitioners. However, on table 4 item 6, 110(77%) of the respondents revealed their agreement, and 20(13%) of the

respondents showed disagreement and 20(13%) were neutral. This signaled that legal constraints and poor implementation of the regulations are challenged by the PR practitioners indicating that the principles and regulations couldn't be applied, and there are constraints with relation to legal aspect in that some rules related with PR lack clarity. As table 4 item 7 indicates, the lack of training of PR practitioners challenged the majority. 115(77%) of the respondents agreed, 17(11%) of them disagreed, and 18(12%) of the respondents replied neutral and the result indicated that training provided for PR practitioners influenced the PR practitioners practices in the selected offices. The data in table 4 item 8 inquire about communication breakdown as a challenge. The majority 107(71%) of the respondents agreed, 21(14%) of them stated disagreement whereas 22(15%) of them replied neutral. This confirmed that communication breakdown among the employees and the management was the challenge that influences the practices of PR practitioners in Agaro town.

| Items | SD | DA | N | A | SA | M/n | SD |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------|-----|
| 1. The political diffusion is affecting the practices of PR in the town | 8(5%) | 4(3%) | 9(6%) | 80(53%) | 49(33%) | 2.44 | .82 |
| 2. The practice of PR is influenced by extreme media and public scrutiny | 15(10%) | 6(4%) | 13(9%) | 79(53%) | 37(25%) | 2.32 | .83 |
| 3. Lack of managerial support for PR practitioners is the great challenging | 3(2%) | 14(9%) | 10(7%) | 49(33%) | 74(49%) | 2.67 | .91 |
| 4. Poor public perception of government communication | 34(23%) | 86(57%) | 16(11%) | 9(6%) | 5(3%) | 2.52 | .89 |
| 5. Lagging professional development and personal performance of the practitioners | 66(44%) | 45(30%) | 19(13%) | 7(4%) | 13(9%) | 2.43 | .91 |
| 6. Legal constraints and poor implementation of the regulations | 8(5%) | 12(8%) | 20(13%) | 73(49%) | 37(25%) | 2.45 | .87 |
| 7. Lack of training of PR practitioners about customers satisfaction | 6(4%) | 11(7%) | 18(12%) | 83(55%) | 32(21%) | 2.44 | .93 |
| 8. Communication breakdown among employee and management | 13(9%) | 8(5%) | 22(15%) | 28(19%) | 79(53%) | 2.51 | .84 |

Table 4: Challenges that PR practitioners face (n=150)

The researchers discovered from the in-depth interview that political appointment of managers and practitioners, the public's negative perception of government communications, the lack of a communication strategy/institutional framework, limited communication and flow of information with zonal and regional states and other stakeholders, and a lack of professionalism are the major challenges that the government communication affairs office faces.

One of my interviewees, who is a public relations practitioner stated:

Politicians and politically appointed individuals currently perform public relations work. This is merely one side of the tale. Propaganda misrepresents professional activities. Politics and the profession are frequently at odds with one another. It's also difficult to reconcile the responsibilities of a politician with those of a professional (Pr.5).

In contrast to the practitioners' view, one of the managers (M.6) claimed that even if the political stand is the pre-requisite to be assigned in the department, being professional is also mandatory. Both the practitioners and the managers are expected not to reflect their political views, but rather they are expected to execute their professionalism. The manager said:

If practitioners and managers fail to put the profession into practice, it is their problem, not anyone else's. They are responsible for ensuring that the office is credible and acceptable to the public in providing timely, accurate, and relevant information. It is their responsibility to implement the profession solely and to keep politics and the profession separate (M.6).

Implementing the PR profession purely for someone who is driven by their political devotion and dedication is tough. The assignment exclusively takes into account PR and communication skills; the assignee's performance is completely ignored. As a result, the appropriateness of PR professionals' political assignments remains a point of contention. According to one of the managers,

The public always views PR professionals as government propagandists. People sometimes confuse PR professionals with the former Government Communication Affairs Office, which was reportedly used as a government propaganda factory. Repairing people's perceptions of government communication is a huge problem. Even if we come up with a new motto and organizational look, the public's response has yet to be determined. Rebranding is not an easy undertaking, as we all know (M.7).

The general public's thinking and perceptions of the profession of public relations have been skewed by a misunderstanding of what a public relations professional truly does. This misunderstanding is also prevalent among PR gurus. This has also contributed to the profession's non-renewal.

According to one of the managers (M.1), most people believe government communication is "spin-docked" or "propaganda," which presents a significant challenge to government public relations. Public relations, on the other hand, understands that it has a long-term responsibility and aims to convince and develop mutual understanding in achieving ready acceptance of attitudes and ideas. It can only succeed if the core policy is ethical and the methods employed are honest.

Throughout the research process, the researchers have observed that a lack of PR professionals is the major challenge of the town in general and the government office in particular. In this regard, one of the managers expressed his/ her feelings as follows:

PR as a profession is a recent phenomenon in the country. If I am not mistaken, Addis Ababa and Jimma University are the only universities that train PR practitioners. As a result, a lack of professionalism in the field of public relations and strategic communications is a problem not only in the sample offices but throughout the government. The main reason for dissolving the then-town government communication office was to professionalize the town's communication affairs (M.1).

One of the practitioners has a similar perspective as the manager. The managers said:

We have lack of professionals, especially in quantity. If you see the qualifications of the managers and practitioners, their educational background and work experience are directly related to the PR. Because government PR practitioners are the engine of the town's information flow, it must be organized into a sufficient number of professionals and qualified individuals (M.3).

The above result shows those selected government offices are highly challenged by the lack of professionals, especially in the number of practitioners.

Discussions

The findings of this study revealed that the main tools used by public relations practitioners are *media relations, news releases, social media, and panel discussions with people from all walks of life*. This finding is consistent with a study by Ki and Hon (2006), who stated that government PR communications is carried out in many forms, including press releases, media interviews, and speeches. Contributions via action also occur in many forms, such as counseling management to alter

organizational policy, forming partnerships with interest groups, or holding special events.

Concerning challenges associated with public relations officials' communication with external customers, the result of this study is agrees with the one by Liu and Horsley (2007), who identified eight attributes that affect government public relations. The challenges can be summarized as related to politics, focus on serving the public, legal constraints, extreme media and public scrutiny, lack of managerial support for PR practitioners, poor public perception to government communication, forsaken professional development, and federalism (Liu and Horsley, 2007).

Conclusions

The public relations tools implemented by the government public relations departments serve to have two-way communications with the target audiences or customers. A variety of tools can be employed to communicate with the public based on the very nature of activities and the target groups. The results of this study revealed that PR practitioners at organizations adopted different media in reaching the external audience. They also partnered with the media to disseminate information, through community relationship programs, and communicated their corporate social responsibilities. Concerning the challenges, the findings of the study also revealed that political diffusion is affecting the practices of PR in the town. The practice of PR is also influenced by media extremism and public scrutiny, a lack of managerial support for PR practitioners, and a lack of training for PR practitioners about customers' satisfaction. Furthermore, legal constraints, poor implementation of the regulations, and communication breakdown among employees and management are the main challenges in the study area.

Recommendations

Regarding the tools, from the conclusion we have understood that the target respondents are well aware of what tools to use for what purpose. However, concerning the challenges, the findings of the study revealed that political diffusion is affecting the practices of PR in the town. For this challenge, the government shouldn't let politics interfere with the professional practice of public relation experts. The practice of PR was also influenced by extreme media and public scrutiny, a lack of managerial support for PR practitioners, and a lack of training for PR practitioners about customer satisfaction. To alleviate such problems, the woreda PR authorities should discuss this issue with the academic

universities that offer PR courses like Jimma University. Finally, challenges like legal constraints, poor implementation of the regulations, and communication breakdown among employees and management can be resolved by engaging the practitioners in advanced short-term training and in preparing inclusive guidelines.

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