

ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF BUSINESS
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT

THE ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC RELATION PRACTICE
IN THE CASE OF ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES ENTERPRISE

BY
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JUNE 2014
SMU
ADDIS ABABA

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A SENIOR ESSAY SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT
FACULTY OF BUSINESS
ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS IN
MARKETING MANAGEMENT

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First of all I would like to thank the almighty God for helping me this far and giving me the courage to succeed in my studies.

Also, I would like to express my great appreciation to my advisor **Ato Abera Yilma** for his genuine advice, guidance, constructive criticism and all sided contribution to the successful accomplishment of this study.

Moreover, I convey my graduated to the employees of Ethiopian Airline public relation department for providing me information and sharing their time during the interviews.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my heartfelt and special thanks to **my wife, Azeb** and long live to **my sister Alemenesh Getahun**.

ACRONYMS

PR = Public Relation

TWA = Transport and Western Express

EAL = Ethiopian Airlines

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Public relations are an effort to identify and interpret policies and programs of an organization with the objective to establish a bridge of understanding and between an organization and its publics. (Banik, 2002; 39)

Public relations professionals use several tools one of the major tools one of the major tools is news. Public relations professionals find or create favorable news about the company and its products or people. Sometimes news stories occur naturally, and something the public relations person can suggest events or activities that would create news. Speeches can also great product and company publicity. Increasingly, company executives must field questions from the media or give talks at trade association or sales meeting, and these events can either build or hurt the company's image (Philip Kotler and Armstrong 2004; 517).

Ethiopia Air Lines (EAL), was founded on 21 December 1945, with an initial investment of br 2.5 million divided in 25,000 shares that were entirely held by the government. The company was financed by the Ethiopian government but managed by TWA (Transport and Western Express). At the beginning, it relied upon American pilots, technicians, administrators and accountants; even its General Managers were from TWA. Minister of Works and Communication Fitawari Tafasse Habte Mikaela became EAL's first president and chairman, whereas H.H. Holloway ... who was American ... was appointed by TWA as a general manager. The board held the first meeting on 26 December 1945, with a key point of the agenda being the deposit of 75,000 in a bank in Cargo for the acquisition for landing rights with Aden, Egypt, French, Somaliland, Saudi Arabia and Sudan and five Douglas C-47s were bought; these aircraft were flown to Addis Ababa in February 1946.³³

With the mission of providing fast, efficient and quality passenger and cargo transportation service to the local and global public. Ethiopian Airlines enterprise is currently operating internationally in wider scope and facility. Being one of the fastest growing African airlines the airline is playing a significant role in the development of the country's as well as Africa's aviation, trade and tourism activities.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Sam Black (2004: 5) public relations recognize a long term responsibility and seek to persuade and to achieve mutual understanding by securing the willing acceptance of attitudes and ideas. Under modern conditions no government, industry, company or organization of any kind can operate successfully without the cooperation of its publics. These publics may be both at home and overseas, but mutual understanding will be a patent factor for success in every case.

Public relations are the skilled communication of ideas to identify and interpret policies and programs of organizations with the objectives to establish a bridge of understanding and good will between the organizations and their publics. It aims at winning the good will of various constituents of the public. In doing so it promotes a better climate for industrial peace, higher productivity and cooperative discipline and also as covering the credibility, performance and potential of the company's image as well as the image of its products /services/. [Dr Banik G.C 2004;1]

Ethiopian Airlines is the fastest growing Airline in Africa. In its operations in the past close to seven decades, Ethiopian has become one of the continent's leading carriers. Although public relations have great contribution for the development of the company the Ethiopian airline has a gap that has social activities such as community interaction

public relation particularly. In domestic aspect therefore the student researcher is interested to conduct a research on Ethiopian airlines domestic focus.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to investigate the above problems the student researcher was try to answer the following research questions.

1. What does public relation practice looks like in Ethiopia Airlines?
2. What are the factors that affect the public relation practice the airlines?
3. What are the factors that should be considered to make the airline public relation practice more effective?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objectives of this research is to Ethiopian Airlines public relations practice and investigate associated problems and their root causes and come up with possible recommendations.

1.4.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The general objective of the study is to assess the public relation of Ethiopian airlines

1.4.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To assess the practice of Ethiopian airlines public relation.
- To asses the factors that affect public relation of Ethiopian airlines.
- To forwards possible solutions to enhance the public relation of Ethiopian airlines.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is believed to give insights about the problems on the airline's public relation because the airline is facing challenges from many competing carries. It is believed that this paper was contributed to the company in accomplishing the goals and objectives it has set by

improving its relation with its publics. Although currently the airlines is in good market position it can't be guaranteed to continue in the same way as there might be changes in political and economic situation. In terms of this the findings and recommendations which the student researcher came up with has assists the airlines to maintain its regulation and good will in the long run on the other hand, this study can be used as a secondary data source for other researchers who would be interested to conduct similar survey on the area.

1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The airline's public relations department is engaged with the administration of internal as well as external public relations. However, due to the size of the enterprise and resource limitation it was not possible to consider both groups. For this reason this study was on the analysis of the public relations practice of Ethiopian Airlines.

Although the airline is providing passenger and cargo services in different parts of the world, the scope of the study was specifically limited to the cargo & loyal passenger population situated in Addis Ababa. Besides the study did not include cargo and passenger customers located at foreign and outlying stations because of time and financial limitations as it requires mailing questionnaires and e-mail communication to seek and choose respondents and get their responses in goodtime.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

To accomplish the above objectives and to seek answer to the research questions descriptive research method was used. Because descriptive research is used to obtain information on the characteristics of particular issue and identify facts as well as response basic research questions.

1.7.2 POPULATION AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Customers who are doing regular business with the airline such as exporters, importers and individual passengers were as the airlines general manager of public relation considered as population for the survey.

SAMPLE SIZE

To seek responses to the research questions, samples of customers taken from population units mentioned above were survey in this research. In this regard much effort was extend to include the majority of respondents from importers, exporters and individual loyal passengers (Sheba mile members) who are regularly and actively using the airline's service. The student researcher believed that it is difficult to identify and access all the cargo and passenger customers of the airline. As a result, a total of 200 sample respondents were selected from Addis Ababa Airport cargo terminal and Sheba miles member passenger using the appropriate sample size suggestion give by Matholtra, (2007; 200)

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Among the non-probability sampling technique quota sampling technique was primarily employed to determine the size of sample for each unit i.e. a total of 70 samples from importers, exporters and 130 samples from individual Sheba miles member passengers were considered. The reason may larger samples were taken from passengers section is that the airline main line of business is highly concentrated on passenger services.

1.7.3 TYPES OF DATA COLLECTED

The study was conduct using both primary and secondary data collected from airline authorized person and portal.

1.7.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

Different methods of data collection were used in this research paper. As primary source, questionnaires were prepared in English and translated into Amharic using structured and semi-structure formats and distributed to the selected (importers, exporters and Sheba mile member passengers) customers. Also interview was conducted with public relation department head. Secondly information was gather through reports, internet sources, books, brochures, magazines and journals.

1.7.5 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Both the qualitative and quantitative data obtained from the survey were analyze using quantitative measurement method and computed in terms of frequency distribution. The quantitative data gathered from the questionnaires were checked for completeness and were presented in tables and percentage through cross tabulation of response categories. The responses obtained from interviews were summarized, grouped and presented as statements in paragraphs.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While conducting the study the student researcher had experienced certain limitations. Among others, the following are the major limitations encountered.

- Time and financial constraints.
- Electric power interruptions while duplicating questionnaires.
- Questionnaires were not returned on time.

1.9 ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER

This paper is organized into four chapters the first chapter deals with background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and delimitation of the study, limitation of the study, operational of the study, limitation of the study, operational definition of terms, research design and methodology. The second chapter deals with review of related literature. Whereas, the 3rd chapter is deducted to the presentation, analysis and interpretation of

data and the last chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendation parts of the study. Finally, the lists of reference materials (bibliography), sample questionnaires and interview check list are attached to the research paper.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 MEANING AND DEFINITION OF PUBLIC RELATION

Public relations can be defined as the development and maintenance of positive relationship between an organization and its publics. The development places the responsibility on the shoulders of the organization and the word maintenance identifies public relation as an on-going & continuous process (Milner, 1995; 184)

Further the institute of public relation defines public relations as the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. (Tony, 1996; 166)

Although this is the definition of the main professional body, we might take the following specific functions relating to public relations.

- Anticipating, analyzing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues which might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organization.
- Counseling management at all levels with regard to policy decisions courses of action and communication.
- Researching, conducting and evaluating, on continuing basis, programmes of action and communication to achieve informed public understanding necessary for the success of the organization's aims.
- Planning and implementing the organization's efforts to influence or change public policy.
- Managing the resources need to perform the functions of public.

Public relations with its well established network of techniques & tools, general activities which help an individual groups, business corporations, government and nation to build their image and to gain the good will to the public (C.S Rayidu & K.R Balan. 2010;3)

It is important to make a distinction, between public relations and publicity in simple terms, publicity may be any form of information from an outside source used by the news media. It is largely uncontrollable, since the source of the news item will have little control over how and when the story will be used and, most importantly, on how it will be interpreted. Although many public relations are concerned with the gaining of publicity, not all publicity derives from public relation. The responsibility of public relation is to create and influence publicity in such a way it has positive impact on the company for which the activity is undertaken.

2.2 OBJECTIVES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

The major objective of public relation is to reach different groups each with separate interest. According to Sahu and Raut (2003; 147) public relations is used in order to create a better environment for the organization and its activities. Some of the objectives may be to attract sales inquiries, reinforce customer loyalty, attract investors, attract merger partners or smooth the way for acquisition, attract better employees, dissolve or block union problems, open new market, launch a new product, reward key people with recognition, and bring about favorable legislation.

2.3 NATURE AND FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

The public relations practitioner has to conduct activation which concerns every public with which the organization has contact. The specific nature of such groups will vary according to circumstances. Jerkins in Sahu and Raut (2003; 145) identified even basic publics which include community, employees, government, the financial community, distributors, consumers and opinion leaders with the nature of such groups, nature of public relation practice will vary accordingly. For example, when public relation activity is done to consumers the purpose will focus on why consumers consume our product or service, why they buy from us and

the like with regard to this the nature of public relation varies accordingly with the target group.

Public relation may at different times, fulfill a variety of different functions. According to Tony Yeshin (1999; 167-170) the following list identifies some of the most important aspects of public relation but, undoubtedly, there will be a number of other activities which might be added.

a) Opinion Forming

An increasing thrust of contemporary society is the development of opinions concerning the activities of companies and organization beyond the nature of the products and services which those companies produce. To the extent that companies operate within the bounds of public attitudes it is likely that the products they manufacture will be well received (or at least favorably considered). The converse, however is equally true organizations must, increasingly, recognize that they can not set idly by ignoring the underlying attitudinal changes which are taking place within society. In fact, it is increasingly important that they take a proactive approach to shape and form those opinions.

b) More and more companies are recognizing that all aspects of their internal and external actions are likely to have an impact on the public's perceptions of their organizations. Senior management must be continuously aware that they must frame their activities in a way which makes them, as far as possible, both socially and politically acceptable. Public relations counseling can make an important contribution not only to the way in which companies behave, but also the way in which they communicate their activities.

c) Product or service publicity

The external perception of public relations is its involvement in the creation of publicity for the products and services which the company provides, whilst this is undeniably an important aspect of public relations, it is only one dimension of public relations activity.

d) Media relation

The appearance of positive publicity for a company organization does not happen by chance. Invariably, it is the result carefully nurtured relationships between the various media and the company over a long period of time, media people, like others, are people with opinions. How they interpret, for example, a press release will be affected by the underlying views of the organization responsible for creating the release.

e) Event management

An increasingly important aspect of public relations activity is the management of events either on a local or national level. Most often, such events are used to create positive relationship between the company and one or more of its target evidence, often of an information nature. The company may for example invite staff, key supplier, retailers or other to some “entertainment” event during which social relationships can be established to reinforce the day to day business relationships which exist.

f) Business sponsorship

A similar important area of activity is that of creating business sponsorship which serves to associate the company with some specific activity designed to enhance the image association of the organization. Inevitably there is some degree of overlap between this and the above mentioned area, although they may well be separate and distinct.

Rather more, Kotler (2000; 605) suggests that public relation department monitors the attitude of the organization’s publics and distributes information top build good will. To implement this effectively the public relation department will perform the following function.

- Press Relations:- Presenting news and information about the organization in the most positively.
- Corporate Communication:- promotion understanding of the organization through internal and external regulation.

- Lobbying-leading with legislators and government officials to promote order feat legislation and regulation.

2.4 DEVELOPING PUBLIC RELATIONS APPROACH

There are four factors to consider in developing public relations approach.

2.4.1 THE PUBLIC RELATIONS OBJECTIVE

First, the public relation objective must be clear. It could be to get a decision made in company's favor-permission to go a head with a new development, for example, this objective should then, ideally, be liked to one signal proposition. The proposed development will benefit the community ion the long run. The objective could however be to raise name awareness to improve the image of the company corporate public relation.

2.4.2 IDENTIFYING THE TARGET PUBLIC (OR PUBLICS)

Secondly, it is necessary to identify the strategic publics suppliers become a very significant pubic if a company is revising its purchasing policy whereas in thrun-up to a new product launch wholesalers, retailers, consumers & customers would matter most.

2.4.3 THE TARGET PUBLIC PERCEPTION

The third point to consider is the perception of the target publics towards the organization the target publics may currently perceive the company in a friendly, hostile or indifferent way.

2.4.4 DEVELOPING THE PUBLIC RELATION PLAN

Finally, the public relation plan has to be developed to identify what public relation tools the company uses to over come negative feelings, harness positive feedings and achieve its objectives.

2.5 PUBLIC RELATIONS SERVICE SECTOR

Public relations are the desired course of actions planned the organization to achieve public relation goals. According to Banik (2002; 35) the need for public relations intentions required for service sector to

achieved for public relations interventions required for service sector to achieved the desired goals are:

- To support the structure and strategic change made by the organization to have growth and expansion.
- Recognition by top management of the importance of public relation and their responsibilities to promote it for the good of the organization.
- To prepare to respond to the increasing problem faced by the organization both internally and externally.
- To help build a desirable image of the company by suitable public relation strategies and actions.

The service industry being more directly in touch with the user/consumers, public relation in service organizations is essential to their proper functioning.

2.6 PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PUBLIC

From the point of view of management, there are two aspects of public relation, internal and external. As Banik explained in his book of effective public relations in public and private sector (Banik, 2002; 46), the modern management of any business has to enlist the perception and support of its workers to realize its objectives, winning confidence and trust of its workers to realize its objectives, winning confidence and trust of its shareholders, clients and suppliers and the public at large there by fulfilling its internal and external obligations.

2.6.1 INTERNAL PUBLIC OF PUBLIC RELATION

The employees are the internal public of both public and private sector companies. They are important because they participate in its operation, production and formulation of its ideas. For creativity and productivity in an organization, a prerequisite is harmony between the employees and the management. Hence effective communication between management and employees are great important.

The objective of an internal communications program should be the creation of an atmosphere of understanding and merited support, of co-

ordinate interchange, of high morale and high efficiency. Public relations in public and private sector(Banik,2002;48).

An organization's internal image and the morale of the work force depend a great deal on the flow of communication. Organizations which have successfully launched a program for the flow of information through internal communication have been branded as modern and sympathetic and workers by and large, identify with the objectives of the organizations. The organizations which refuse to communicate with their internal constituents and take them for granted, fail to effectively handle the flow of internal communication and on many occasions are compelled to face undesirable consequences.

2.6.2 EXTERNAL PUBLIC OF PUBLIC RELATION

As the name implies, is concerned with people outside the organization. Since it is necessary to communicate with different groups of people it is very important to carefully identify the people to reach them effectively otherwise it may be difficult to achieve the desire objectives. generally Public sector undertakings are owned by the government and have normally four groups of people external to the organizations. These are Customers, Government, Shareholders and Opinion Leaders. On the other hand, private sector companies are owned by individuals or share holders interact with the following external public group Customers, Shareholders, Opinion Leaders, Mass Media, Community at large, Civic and Government bodies, Financial Institutions, Citizens action groups and public at large.strategy public relation management(Austin and bruce E.plenkletion,2001;82).

CUSTOMERS: Every public and private sector organization has its own set of publics to whom it sells its products, services or ideas. In today's competitive market customers look for products or services that are known and have an image, and are backed by quality and good after sales service. Public opinion on such aspects cannot be ignored. In the long run, unfavorable opinions certainly affect sales. Public Relation can help in controlling and setting right some of these opinions and helps to

solve problems generally protecting the company's reputation concerning the company's products or services among consumers or users. Public Relation is, therefore used to build an image.

SHAREHOLDERS: The shareholders are very important public of the private sector companies. The real owners of the companies a private organization cannot, therefore, afford top be unmindful of the interest of its shareholders.

OPINION LEADERS: This is altogether a new type of public in public relation. Ideally the function of the Opinion Leaders is to create public opinion on matters of public interest and build up public confidence. They try to provide information and create the climate and thereby influence attitudes. Public Relation must be very careful of the opinion and attitudes of the opinion leaders concerning their organizations.

MEDIA RELATIONS: Media Relations is a vital tool in Public Relation. A large amount of communication and Public Relation are conducted through the media-especially the press. Business is always vulnerable to attacks by the media. Media can often aggravate problems especially crisis. Media must be kept favorable. All efforts must be made to ensure this strategically. It takes years to build a good image, but to destroy an image, it needs just a few bad reports in the media. Organizations cannot afford unnecessary reactions and destruction.

Public Relation people are the link between the organization and the media. Their success and effectiveness depends on their ability to represent the company in the media to its satisfaction. Public Relation is a catalyst that helps to bring about a change in the corporate image through communication of appropriate information and the media are channels or vehicles to communicate with the target audience.

COMMUNITY: The organization should regularly interact with community and give them feedback about their suggestions and grievances to establish cordial and everlasting relationship. Companies have to consider the community as one of its prime target groups. The

environment of the community should not only be protected but it should be developed also for the common benefit of company as well as community.

Community should be provided with opportunities to share the fruits of the business of the company by getting employment, making supplies of raw material, distribution of its finished product and doing various contractual and allied jobs for the company. The objective of Public Relation is to be help build the image of the company, as a good corporate citizen, a good company to do business with and a good company to work for.

GOVERNMENT: The next important public of the public section is government. Government relation has two faces to it. First, the Public Relation for the government (as an organization) and second, Public Relation with the government as the target group. Public Relation for the government involves mobilizing public support for government's activities, to build relations with the government and also to help for the good of the community or society. Public Relation with the government involves, keeping the government on the company's side or favor. Public Relation is also expected to lobby in the government's policy.

FINANCIAL RELATIONS: The main target group of a company in financial Public Relation is its shareholders and potential investors. They have to be given information they are entitled to have, and they have to be kept interested in the company. Public Relation must establish, maintain and improve the company's image and reputation so that it can ensure financial backing from the public and the financial institutions.

PUBLIC AT LARGE: The term Public Relation for public at large has there major ramifications:- information given to the public, attempts to modify attitudes and actions of an organization to respond to the public and ascertain and convey the reactions of the public to the management. Creating favorable image all the time under the changed situation is the new job for Public Relation practitioners as the company may have to raise new capital from the marker. Public Relation is an indispensable

tool in today's management of both public and private sector organizations.

2.7 PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS

There is a wide range of tools available to the public relations practitioner none of these is, in itself, exclusive to public relations and any of them could be just as easily used in the context of a direct-mail, sponsorship, sales promotion or advertising campaign. The list includes.

- Competitions
- Exhibitions – in the most general sense, is organized presentation and display of a selection of items an organization provides to its customers.
- Demonstrations
- Lectures
- School and College visits
- Direct mail letters
- Open days
- Leaflets – are written or pictorial messages about an organization on a single sheet of paper.
- Posters – pieces of printed paper designed to be attached to a wall vertical surface and containing typically both textual graphic elements about an organization.
- Information service
- Sponsorships
- Press releases
- Press information packs
- Press conferences

These need not all be used in any one campaign, but they should be considered.

2.8 BENEFITS OF PUBLIC RELATION

According to Banik (202; 158), public relationships is an indispensable tool in today's management of both public and private sector

organizations. With the tremendous growth of business and commerce, the need for public relation has assumed a new meaning. In every field, be it a public or private sector organization, or an educational institution or a government department, there is a need for public relations. Indeed, it is an essential service to everybody who has ideas, products, services or a cause to promote.

Public relation can play a central role in the achievement of specific objectives at all levels in an organization's work by focusing, reinforcing and communicating an effective message. Used properly, public relations is an excellent and cost effective method of improving the image of an individual, organization or a product.

The modern management of any business has to enlist the participation and support of its workers to realize its objectives, winning confidence and trust of its shareholders, clients and the public at large, thereby fulfilling its social obligations. Therefore, in the modern management, public relations is the total communication activity of the organization to achieve its planned objectives. It is today accepted as a management function in the formulation of policy and decision making.

Public relation can see the benefits in terms of increase awareness of themselves and their products or services, better staff moral, customer loyalty and shareholder satisfaction among other things. Public relation for external; publics has today become a necessity to modern society. Every field, be it a public or private sector organization or an educational institution or a government department, there in need for public relation. Indeed, it is an essential service to anybody who has ideas, products or a cause to promote. Each organization or institution has its external publics, who patronize it, and those who constitute its potential customers. Public relations is, therefore, not only to communicate and create awareness but also to gain and hold communicate and create awareness but also to gain and hold favorable opinion of the external public for the organization.

2.9 EFFECTIVE PUBLIC RELATIONS

According to Bowman and Ellis is Sahu and Raut (2003; 148) for a public relations program to be effective its objective should be defined to be determine the progress success and to be reviewed. Even if it is difficult to decide the objectives of public relations the major objectives lives on informing the public what is new, persuading them by giving all the information about current situation and integrating with the whole public by developing a two-way communication in order to meet the desired objective William and others strengthen; effective public relations can be achieved in many ways. Some examples are supporting charitable (by supplying volunteer labour or other resources) participating in community services events, etc. To implement effective public relations practice the following three basic factors should be done correctly as much s possible.

- Setting specific objectives that are cap[able of evaluation.
- Fully integrating the public relations function in to the organization, and
- Selecting the right personnel to carry out the public relations.

The selection of the right personal is especially important for potential public relations practitioners. The selector personal sound have skills and attributes necessary to be successful including sound judgment, personal integrity, and communication skills, organizational ability, strong personality and team player.

2.9.1 MEASURING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

To measure the effectiveness of public relations is important. According to Blech and Blech (2003; 566) in addition to determining the contribution of public relations program to attaining communications objectives, the evaluation offers other advantages.

1. It tells management what has been achieved through public relations activities.
2. It provides management with away to measure public relations achievements quantitatively.

3. It gives management away to judge the quality of public relations achievements.

2.9.2 FACTORS AFFECTING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Hiebing and Cooper (2003; 383) suggest the following factors should well soon before any public relations activities performed.

- ❖ Setting objectives.
- ❖ Identifying the target group.
- ❖ Identifying the tools.
- ❖ Activities should be specific.
- ❖ Setting standards.
- ❖ Selection of personnel PRS department.
- ❖ Availability of technology.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter is dedicated to the presentation, analysis, interpretation of the data collected through questionnaires distributed to the target group, with the public relation officers & interviews made with the public relation manager.

3.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to respondents comprising of the airlines loyal customers (Sheba mile member passengers, exporters & Importers). Out of 200 questionnaires 130 (65%) targeted the passenger but 70 (35%) for importer and exporters. Out of the 130 questionnaires distributed to target passengers, 128 have been returned complete, whereas 2 questionnaires returned incomplete and as a result were not included in the analysis.

From the 70 questionnaires given to regular cargo customers, a total of 67 were returned back; 3 were returned complete by exporters & importers respectively.

The following table summarizes the number of questionnaires prepared and returned from the respondents.

Table 1 – Questionnaires distribute and Returned

Questionnaires	Number	Percent %
Distributed to passengers	130	65
Distributed to cargo customers	70	35
Returned complete in total	195	97.5
Returned incomplete	2	1
No returned	3	1.54

3.2 ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

In this section the questionnaire respondents are presented in tables with the percentages of respondents categories and analysis and explanation of results. In the following table, the external publics data in terms of gender, age, number of years of working with the airline and educational background are presented.

Table 2. Respondents' Background Information

Ser.No.	Item	External respondents	
		Number	Percent (%)
1	Gender		
	Male	120	61.54
	Female	75	38.46
	Total	195	100
2	Age		
	18-27 years	39	20
	28-37 years	76	39.77
	38-47 years	38	19.5
	48-57 years	22	11.3
	58 years above	20	10.3
	Total	195	100
3	Educational background		
	10 th complete	28	14.4
	Certificate	35	17.9
	Diploma	49	25.1
	First Degree	65	33.3
	Above first Degree	18	9.2
	Total	195	100
4	No. of years doing Business with the airline		
	Less than 4 years	25	12.8
	4-9 years	35	17.9
	10-15 years	76	39
	16 years and above	59	30.2
	Total	195	100

The data obtained from table 2 above shows the respondent's characteristics in terms of their gender there are 120 (61.54%) male respondents & 75 (38.4%) female respondents showing that the gender composition is fairly proportional.

With regard to educational level majority of the respondents (that is 65 (33.3%) are first degree holders and 49 (25.1%) of the total respondents have diploma or above first degree. This shows that most of the respondents have taken tertiary level of education. In terms of business relationship with the airline, 25 (12.8%) respondents have been using the airlines services for less than 4 years, 35 (17.9%) respondents have using the service for 4-9 years, 76 (39%) have been using the service for 10-15 years the rest 59 (30.2%) respondents have been using the services for 16 more years.

Table 3. Type of service used by respondents

Type of service	Number	Percentage
Passenger service	128	65.6
Cargo importer & exporter	67	34.4
Total	195	100

Table 3 above shows that passenger make 65.6% of the total respondents selected by the researcher this is done on purpose of the airline's main line of business in on passenger services. In addition to this, out of the respondents 34.4% from the total respondents cargo importer & exporter categories are again intentionally selected to reflect the airlines cargo market which consists of more of importing than exporting in the future.

Table 4: Ethiopian airlines image in the mind of its customers

Ser.No.	Item	Number	Percent
1	The airline good relationship with you?		
	Strongly agree	28	14.4
	Agree	38	19.5
	No opinion	99	50.8
	Disagree	18	9.2
	Strongly disagree	12	6
	Total	195	100
2	The information desk clerk of the company are knowledgeable		
	Strongly agree	37	19
	Agree	49	25
	No opinion	97	49.7
	Disagree	8	4
	Strongly disagree	4	2
	Total	195	100
3	How do you are the willingness of the employees of the information desk to provide information		
	Very good	27	13.9
	Good	100	51.3
	Some how good	46	23.6
	Bad	12	6
	Very bad	10	5
	Total	195	100

As show table 4, above respondents were asked total the image of the enterprise using there different items (questions) and gave their respondents. Accordingly is a summary of the responses for the three items in the table is the first item, only 28 (14.4%) respondents related the airline's effort in strongly agree, 38 (19.5%) related the effort as agree 99 (50.8%) of them rated some how good the remaining 18 (9.2%) & 12 (6%) respondents respectively . AS it can be seen here majority of the respondents (50.8%) rated the airline's effort as medium. From these relates it seems that the public relation department is not working

vigorously and as expected by its customers to ensure continuity of the positive image already created in dynamic business environment like the airline business image is very crucial to retain customers & to achieve a company's objective in the end.

Item 2, the information desk clerk of the company are knowledgeable this respondents 37 (19%) of strongly agree, 49 (25%) of agree, 97 (49.7%) no opinion, 8(4%) and 4 (32%) disagree and strongly disagree respectively.

In addition on the third item, respondents were asked if the airlines is working towards Grating common understanding and is standing, respondent 27 (13.9%) of very good, 100 (51.3%) good 46 (23.6%) some how good 12 (6%) and 10 (5%) bad & very bad respectively implies the information desk proved information to the customers.

In line with this claim suggestion by different authors support that one major responsibility of public relation office is facilitating and ensuring the availability of timely information for customers of the organization at a place and time convenient for them.

As opposed top the medium rating under item 1 and 2 item 3 good of table 4 to the airline's effort towards creating common understanding the responses under item number 2, 3 of table 5 above show the airline's poor service in establishing good communication with its customers. This implies that airlines effort is not satisfactory enough to build good communication and this is highly attributed to the manpower and authority constraints faced by the department as explained the public relation manager under table 4.

Table 5 Communication with customers and the use of information center

Ser.No.	Item	Number	Percent
1	How do you rate the airline's relationship with public media like, TV, radio, newspaper etc		
	Very high	32	16.4
	High	40	20.5
	Medium	95	48.7
	Low	17	8.7
	Very low	11	5.6
	Total	195	100
2	The airline used adequate marketing communication tools to available information and establish on going communication with its customers		
	Strongly agree	13	6.7
	Agree	20	10.3
	Average	48	24.6
	Disagree	100	51.3
	Strongly disagree	14	7.1
	Total	195	100
3	Dou you think that the airline has problem(s) in its communication with the external public?		
	i. yes	110	56.4
	ii. No	85	43.6
	Total	195	100
4	How do you rate the effectiveness of the airline's information centers in providing timely information to external publics		
	Very high	18	9.2
	High	25	12.8
	Medium	105	53.8
	Low	38	19.5
	Very low	9	4.6
	Total	195	100

Four items related with communication and information center are summarized in table 5 and their analysis presented of follows with regard to relationship of Ethiopian airlines public media 32 (16.4%) of the respondents related the relationship as very high 40 (20.35%) rated same as high, whereas majority of them 95 in number & 48.7% evaluated the relationship as medium 17 (87.7%) of them responded as low while the rest, 11 (5.6%) judged the airline's relationship with public media as very low. As it can be seen here most of the respondents amounting to the relationship from medium to very low showing that the airlines external public communication through media is not well established. In relation to this item the public relation manager and public relation officers agree with the majority of the respondents.

According to different communication scholars media relationship is one of the most important communication tools used by public relation offices to great and maintain a two way relationships with the public. The implication of these is that the office needs to improve its relationship with public media.

Item 2, of table 5 above summarizes the participants response given on the use of adequate communication tools to avail information and establish on-going communication with customers. Among the total respondents 13 (6.7%) strongly agreed 20 (10.3) agreed, 48(24.6) rated same as average 100 (51.3%) disagreed and the remaining 14 (7.1%) strongly disagree that the airline utilizes sufficient tools to provide information create continuous relationship with its customers.

Similarly, the public relationship officers who took part in the focus group explained the problem they have in this area by pointing the head count shortage lack of facilities and decision power to discharge their responsibilities effectively. The data here show that there exists lack of adequate communication tools & very limited public relation service. Also, the public relation manager cited that the airline that experienced shifting of some of its customers to others airlines namely emirates and

Kenyan airways in its middle east and west African markets mainly due to lacks sufficient tools to avail information and build an going relationship with its customers.

In the regard, the student researcher could learn that this problem is associated with the customer aware to a day to day communication deeply by press conference, meeting, domestically and internationally to balanced awareness to customer helps as social problem in the societies.

Item 3, respondents were asked is they think that the airline has problem(s) in its communication with the external public, particularly its passengers and customers doing (110 i.e. 56.4%) respondents think that there is problem while the rest 85 (43.6%) do not think there exists a problem in this respect. The respondents were asked to state the kind of communication problems they experience. The kinds of problems cited are summarized below.

- Lack adequate information centers.
- Unable to provide timely information.
- Lack of consistency between the media and ticket offices on information the provide.
- Customers are not updated on media on current & major uses.

Also, as explained by the public relation manager during the interview period, Ethiopian airlines is currently experiencing communication gaps with its customers to some extent. Even if the airline is the solo national flag carrier in the country and has good market share currently, the communication gaps will have an adverse on its future market. Regarding item 4 of table 5, majority 53.8% of the respondents rated the effectiveness of the airlines information centers in providing timely information as medium, while 38 (19.5%) of them rated as low, 9 (4.6%) very low rated 25 (12.8%) and 18 (9.2%) as high and very high respectively.

The public relation officers who participated in the focus group discussion also share this point. In connection with this, their mentioned

that currently only one information center is available in one of the ticket offices of the airline on top of this, compared to the size of the airline this information center is not effective is reaching its customers. The implication of all these is that the information center is not working very well enough in providing information to the airline's customers which in turn indicates limited public relation service being given by the enterprise.

Table 6, Customers relationships and participation in social activities

Ser.No.	Item	Customer Respondents	
		Number	Percent
1	The public relation practice has given me a better know how about the airlines current and future endeavors?		
	Strongly agree	15	9.9
	Agree	17	8.7
	No Opinion	24	12.3
	Disagree	100	51.3
	Strongly disagree	39	20
	Total	195	100
2	I became a customer because of the good credibility of the airlines		
	Strongly agree	40	26.5
	Agree	95	50.3
	No Opinion	21	10.8
	Disagree	20	10.3
	Strongly disagree	13	8.2
	Total	195	100
3	I tell about the airlines good image to others		
	Strongly agree	43	22
	Agree	88	45
	No Opinion	27	13
	Disagree	20	10.3
	Strongly disagree	17	8.7
	Total	195	100
4	I feel very confident about the service delivery of the airline		
	Strongly agree	28	14.4
	Agree	22	11.3
	No Opinion	99	50.8
	Disagree	32	16.4
	Strongly disagree	14	7.2
	Total	195	100

Summarized in table 6 above are the results obtained from respondents on matters related with the airline's relationship with its customers out of the total respondents, more than half related the airline as average in terms of four different items shown under question 1 through 4. Among the 195 respondents 15 (9.9%) of them strongly agreed that there is good relation between the airline and its customers, 17 (8.7%) of them just agreed, 24 (12.3%) were No Opinion about it, 100 (51.3%) of them disagreed and the remaining 39 (20%) of them answer as strongly disagree.

This indicate the airline's public relation office role in helping the enterprise retain its customers is very poor. The student researcher believes that this situation is highly related with the airline's limited inadequate public relation facilities and with the fact that the public relation office is not fully equipped with the necessary qualified staff /in terms of quantity/. To verify this, equation was raised to the public relation manager if the public relation department is equipped with qualified staff and the necessary facilities. While responding to the question, the manager stressed that although the existing staffs are qualified for their respective responsibilities that are not adequate in number to give the expected level of public relation service. He further added that the department also has facility problems that need to be brought to the attention of the top management. Under time 2, sample customers were asked to rate the good credibility of the airlines. Accordingly, 40 (26.50%) of rated credible being strongly agree, 98 (50.3%) of them rated it is agree, 21 (10.8%) of No Opinion rated, 20 (10.3%) of rated it as disagree white the, 16 (8.2%) of judged the credible strongly disagree from these findings it can be seen that the airline's public relations it is very good credibility then to increase credibility to strongly agree said keep up to the performance.

In addition, in the third item, respondents were asked if the airline shows the airline good image to others in supporting loyal customer's

events like trade fair etc out of the total respondents 88 (45%) of them replied as agree level, 43 (22%) of them rated it's a strongly agree, 27 (13.8%) of the respondents related it as no opinion, 20 (10.3%) and 17 (8.7%) disagree and strongly disagree respectively. These findings so that Ethiopian airlines good image in supporting customer's events is at healthy.

As a fourth item, respondents were asked to rate the service delivery of the airline customers with regard to this 28 (14.4%) of them rated it as strongly agree, 22 (11.3%) of the rated as agree, 99 (50.8%) of them rated as grater respondent to No opinion, 32 (16.4%) and 14 (7.2%) of disagree and strongly disagree. This implies that the company's service delivery we acceptable but its not enough they have to work more to create a better acceptance.

Table 7. Handling of customer's feed backs

Ser.No.	Item	Customer respondents	
		Number	Percent
1	The airline's willing to accept customers complaints suggestions?		
	Strongly agree	37	19
	Agree	106	54.4
	No opinion	32	16.4
	Disagree	15	7.7
	Strongly Disagree	5	2.6
	Total	195	100
2	How frequently does the company participate in social activities such as community service chartable, do nations, sponsorship and the like in order to create a better relationship?		
	Very frequently	15	7.7
	Frequently	22	11.3
	Medium	40	20.5
	Low	109	55.9
	No at all	9	4.6
	Total	195	100
3	You can easily gathers update information from the website?		
	Strongly agree	25	12.8
	Agree	42	21.5
	No opinion	98	50.3
	Disagree	18	9.2
	Strongly Disagree	12	6.2
	Total	195	100
4	The airline is capable to give immediate feedback		
	Strongly agree	38	19.5
	Agree	27	13.8
	No opinion	86	44
	Disagree	24	12.3
	Strongly Disagree	20	10.3
	Total	195	100
5	How do you rate the airline respond to complaints		
	Very high	36	18.5
	High	29	14.9
	Medium	97	49.8
	Low	28	14.4
	Very low	5	2.6
	Total	195	100

Table 7 accommodates that the company's effort towards addressing customers comments, suggestion and total respondents, 37 (19%) respondents strongly agree, 106 (54.4%) were agree 32 (16.4%) rated No opinion, 15 (7.7%) as disagree & the remaining 5 (2.6%) were strongly disagree 106 realize that the company's effort attempt in addressing customer comments, suggestion and complaints and making corrective action is in a high level. They have to work hard to make of very high level.

Item 2, regarding the frequency of the company in participating in social activities such as community service, charitable on actions sponsorship and the likes to create a better relationship customers' response is summarized as follows. Comments and total respondents, 15 (7.7%) of low level, 9 (11.3%) to frequently, 40 (20.5%) of medium 109 (55.9%) of low level, 9 (4.6%) of not at all from the above result it can be deducted that the airlines participation in social activities in the eye of customers is at low level. As we have seen in the literature part social activities are one of the most important public relation tools. It helps to enhance company's reputation in the mind of customers and the result will help to maintain the image of the company among its different competitors in the world then this category, Focused and immediate summarized to the department hade & responsible authorized.

Item 3, Respondents were asked you can easily gathers update information from the website, 25 (12.8%) of strongly agree, 42 (21.5%) of agree 98 (50.3%) of No opinion,. 18 (9.9%) of Disagree, 12 96.2%) of strongly disagree them majority respondents is moderate level. This is implies that, the airlines to good communicate to the networking system company's worked hard to the future.

Item 4, of table 7 summarized and presents the airlines is capable to give immediate feedback. From the total customer respondents, 28 (49.5%) of

them rated strongly agree, 27 (13.6%) rated agree, 86 (44%) of selected No opinion and the remaining 24 (12.7%) and 20 (10.3%) rated it as disagree and strongly disagree respectively there are respondents which say the airlines is prepared to give feedbacks to customer complaints and suggestions and also some who are not sure if its prepared as well as those who claimed that the airlines is not prepared to give complaints and suggestions. So, one can conclude from this that there is in consistence among customers this implies that the response of the customers is inconsistent or more deviated from the response of the average customer.

Item 5, of table 7 regarding how do you rate the airlines respond to complaint 36 (18.5%) of rated very high, 29 (14.9) of high, 97 (49.3%) of selected medium and the remaining 28 (14.4%) and 5 (2.6%) rated it as low and very low respectively.

There are respondents which say the medium level of evaluate this is good respond then always back of the wackiness fast respond to the customer. This implies that response of the customers is in consistent or more deviated from the response of the average customers.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposal was designed to the assessment of public relation practice in the case of Ethiopian Airlines Enterprise.

A descriptive research method was employed to analyze the result found from questionnaire and interviews from the airlines. In view of this the researcher focused on the public relation tools being used by the airline. If these tools are at sufficient amount, are they timely distributed, are they at a standard level or do they posses the right content in them.

From the analysis and interpretation made in the previous chapter the following summary, conclusions and recommendations are drawn up.

4.1 SUMMARY

- In terms of their characteristics majority of the respondents were male covering (61%) and in terms of age most of them (39%) were in the age range between 28-37 years. As far as their educational background is concerned (33%) first degree about (39%) of them have been doing businesses with the airline for the past ten to fifteen solid years.
- Generally, the data obtained form the study show that Ethiopian airlines has a moderate image in the minds of its customers and its effort of creating position image is also at a good level as rated by about (51%) of the respondents.
- One of the major points analyzed in this paper is communication and the use of information centers. Accordingly, nearly (51.3%) of the respondents think that the airline has adequate marketing communication problems. It can be summarized that the overall rating on the airline's communication level. This can be witnessed by the majority (56.4%) other responses obtained from the respondents. In addition, more than fifty percent responded from medium on the relationship public media like, TV, radio, newspaper, Similarly, respondents indicated that they are also the airline's information centers in providing timely information to external publics. AS

explained by the public relation manager during the interviews scission, the only information center available currently is not enough to address the needs of the airline customer.

- The student researcher has tried to assess the airline's relationship with its customers & its participation in social activities. In these regards, most of the respondents have shown similar views and evaluated public relation practice a better know how future endeavors. (51.3%) rated disagree this men's public relation department lack of used relation tools good credibility of the airlines as agree level. Respondents were also understand to this question. Similarly airlines good image to others the same to agree level respondent were confident has customers service delivery of the airline's respondents indicated agree level. As seen the findings there is lack communication and responsibility of the promotion and public relation department is handling customer events, meetings, conferences and get to gather
- Another main concern area in this research paper is the way Ethiopian airline's is handling feedback of its customers. Even if majority of the respondents (73.4%) agree that their comments update information from website medium level respond to complaints were as medium level comments, company participate in social activities such as community service, (55.9%) of them low level this men's public relation department is poor social activities practice the public relation manager the future communication focusing were interact social activity.

CONCLUSION

- From the research findings & major points the student researcher has come up with the following conclusions about Ethiopian airlines current practices & services. These conclusions will be used as basis for suggesting possible solutions and recommendations.
- Generally, in light of the majority of the responses, it can be concluded that moderate effort is being exerted by Ethiopian airlines public relation department to maintain the airline's image already established unless the public relation department's efforts are enhanced towards creating better image, it is very likely that customers shift to other competing airlines.
- Positive publicity for an enterprise is the result of carefully nurtured relationships between the various media and the enterprise over a long period of time. In the case of Ethiopian airlines relationship with public media is at medium level leading to a conclusion that the public relation office is not working effectively with media to reinforce publicity of the airline's services.
- The other conclusion that can be draw from this study is that the airline is not using sufficient tools to make information available and to establish continuous relationship with its customers. The student researcher come in to such a conclusion based on the average to strongly disagree ratings given by more than fifty percent of the respondents under table 5 item 2.
- On the basis of the findings of this researcher, it can be inferred that the inadequacy of the information centers have created information gaps between the airlines & its customers and consequently has resulted in locked of information & update. This in turn highlights that the role of the public relation office in linking the airline with its customers is insignificant. From the explanations given by the public relation manager during the interview the student researcher

concludes this problem is mainly associated with lack of due attention to the public relation department by the highest management.

- The airlines public relation practice has given me a better know how about current and future endeavors, that some a little that to seen communicate has opened destination then the greater respondent is strongly disagreement. Although is not addressing its customers need and expectation up to the desired level.
- The airline's public relation office experience and practice on customer relationship & participation in social activities is judged by the majority of the respondents from low to no at all level. The results obtained from respondents on public relation activities that help the airline build & maintain good and an going relationship with its customers including but not limited to sponsorship activities supporting customer events, arranging conferences generally show very low contribution of the public relation office on other hand, according to the research findings, the public relation department has no any program developed to recognize and incentive cargo customers (importer and exporter).
- The public relationship manager's and officer's responses also support these conclusions and concurs with the idea that the problems the department is having are constraining from doing its best level. The student researcher would like to point out that all these can make customers switch to competing airlines and eventually effect Ethiopian airlines long run market share.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above conclusions and overall research findings the following recommendations are given for the improvement of Ethiopian airlines public relation practice.

- Although the public relations department is trying to make efforts to create common understanding between the company and customers.
- In order to resolve the communication problems cited by the respondents, Ethiopian airlines enterprise should provide up to date information to all publics, update the public continuously on current issues that might affect the public through website, brochures, aggressive promotion and maintain consistency on information it provides through different source no matter how good the company may be if it does not communicate with it's publics, it will not put it's message across. As a result it will lose out so it's competitors who are using public relation more aggressively to ensure effective communication.
- The company's effort in creating and maintaining a favorable image in the mind of customers were at moderate level, the images of the company in the mind of its customers also a medium level. There for, in order to increase this image the company's public relation department should facilitate different events between the company and the customers to improve the company's image by doing different activities like customers get together, public seminar, counseling customers in the issue of their products and the likens that enhance the company's image.
- The public relation department should work hand in hand with the different media in order to get better access of the publics & strengthen the relationship between the airline and the public. On a way of improving the current media relationship status in increasing the frequency & coverage. To do this more authority should be vested up on the department.

- The other issue raised by the student researcher and need recommendation is frequency of the company participating and organizing social events and such activities were as low level. Since airline's is a largest company the result doesn't should participate, support and organize such activities. Activities like community service, charitable, donations, customers get together and other related activities helps the company to build better image and reputation in the mind of customer.

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Interview check list to public relation manager

1. What do you think about the airline relationship with its employees and customers?
2. How many information centers are there in the airline?
3. How the airline provide information center for the public? Do you believe it's enough?
4. How does the airline inform its public about its achievements?
5. What mechanism does the airline apply to get feed back from its internal and external publics?
6. What is the practice of the airline in supporting community activities and events?
7. What measures are taken by the company to minimize problems related to the public relations practice?
8. Which public relations tools are practiced in your airline?
9. Has the above mentioned tool helped the airline to achieve the image it wants in the mind of its publics?
10. What do you think the major challenges faced by the airline?
11. How does the overall public relation practice of the airline looks like in your own opinion.
12. What is the ultimate goal you high to achieve through your public relation campaign?
13. How many times does the airlines support community events with in a year?
14. What do you think your service camper and contrast other carriers?
15. What are the mines of delaying airline service?

Appendex

St. Marry's University
Faculty of Business

Department of Marketing Management

Questionnaire prepared on the Public Relations Services and Practice of Ethiopian Airlines Enterprise

Dear Respondents,

This questionnaire is prepared to conduct a study on the public relations practices of Ethiopia airlines enterprise aiming mainly at identifying the problems that constrain the public relation department in delivering the required level of public relations services & recommending possible solutions.

The student researcher believes that this objective can only be met through active participation of the airline's prominent customers like you. In line with this, the student researcher kindly requests you to spare some time to fill out this questionnaire as objectively & honestly as possible in order to ensure that the study is heading to the right direction.

N.B

- This questionnaire is to be completed by ShebaMile member passengers and regular import & export customers.
- Please answer the questions by putting a tick mark (✓) in the boxes provided.

I. Respondent's Background Information

1. Gender Female Male

- A. Very high B. High C. Natural
D. Low E. Very low
9. The public relation practice has given me a better know how about the airline's current and future endeavors?
- A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. No Opinion
D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
10. I became a customer because of the good credibility of the airline?
- A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. No Opinion
D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
11. I tell about the airline's good image to others?
- A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. No Opinion
D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
12. I feel very confident about the service delivery of the airline?
- A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. No Opinion
D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
13. How do you rate the airlines relationship with public media like TV, radio, newspaper?
- A. Very High B. High C. Medium D. Low E. Very low
14. The airline used adequate marketing communication tools to available information and establishes ongoing communication with its customers?
- A. Strongly Agree B. Agree C. No Opinion
D. Disagree E. Strongly Disagree
15. How do you rate the effectiveness of the airlines information centers in providing timely information to external publics?
- A. Very high B. High C. Medium
D. Low E. Very low
16. Do you think that the airline has problem(s) in its communication with the external public? A. Yes B. No
17. If you answer to the above question is yes, please specify the kind of problem.

18. What do you recommend to solve the problem(s) you mentioned above



