Factors that Affect the Overall image and reputation of Jimma University

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Abstract

Corporate image and corporate reputation have been topics for academic discussion since the 1950s and they are as relevant today as they were back then, since the image and/or reputation of an organization have greatly continued influencing its prosperities. The objectives of this study included identifying the main factors that affected community's views towards the overall image and reputation of Jimma University. Besides, the overall image and reputation that the community has towards Jimma University was separately investigated. This studywas conducted by hosting a survey questionnaire which was sent to a combined total of 400 respondents from Jimma city and 380 community members who participated in the research. After initial analysis of the questionnaire results was done, 30 respondents from nearby and far away Kebeles were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Thus, findings from the research exercise are grounded on empirical evidences promoting and recognizing community perception about corporate image and reputation. In general, the results revealed that community expectations, organizational behavior and experience/relationship had a strong direct impact on the overall image and reputation of the University.

Keywords: overall image, overall reputation, factors, community, Jimma University

Introduction

Public relations and corporate communication studies suggest different concepts about organizational image and reputation. But, still they were not argued on the definition and measurements strategies of the concepts. And, several definitions that are found in the literature differ from one to the other, depending on their field of studies. Communication scholars, Aaker & Keller (1990) defined corporate reputation as a perception of quality associated with corporate name. Furthermore, Keller (1993) defined corporate image as perceptions of an organization reflected in the associations held in consumers' memories. Other scholars (Gray & Fombrun, 2001) state that, corporate image as the immediate mental picture that audiences have of an organization. Reputation, on the other hand, indicates a value judgment about the organization's attributes (Gray &Balmer, 1998). They reflect the general esteem in which an organization is held by its multiple stakeholders (Fombrun, 1996). This value judgment is formed and updated along time through direct interactions or through information provided by other members of the society about experiences they had with that organization.

Reputation expresses ones seeking to be not just visible but trustworthy and believable among all stakeholders. Brent, researching reputation management in municipal politics, describes reputation as the "estimation in which a person stands in the opinion of others" (Dalton, 2005) describes reputation, as the sum values that stakeholders attribute to an organization, based on their perception and interpretation of the image that the organization communicates over time. In the reference of this and many other descriptions of reputation, some main elements of reputation aspects can be determined: stakeholders, organizations' characteristics and their interpretation among stakeholders, trust and expectations. Image is incident to short period of time; and reputation concerns with a long one. Like image, reputation can be discussed both in individual (for example, a politician's reputation) and organizational (some institution's reputation) levels.

In a broad sense corporate or organizational image can be conceptualized as people's overall impressions of an organization (Lievens, 2006) and is a function of organizational signs which determine the perception of various stakeholders about an organization's actions, activities and results (Riordan, Gatewood & Bill, 1997).

Given the specific relationship that stakeholders establish with an organization, different stakeholder groups may form diverse images and impressions about it (Carmeli, Gilat & Weisberg, 2006; Lievens, 2006). However, depending on the relationship individuals have with the focal organization, several other concepts have been used to address their perceptions and beliefs about an organization, namely identity and reputation. Although the concepts of image, identity and reputation are often used interchangeably, several authors have tried to distinguish them in an attempt to bring some definitional clarification to literature.

For instance, Fombrun and Van Riel (1997) proposed an integrative perspective of concepts, defining identity as the perception that members hold of the nature of their company, image as the perception of external observers have of the company, and reputation as the aggregation of these perceptions. A close look into the literature about what will be broadly mentioned in this dissertation as corporate image allows us to notice that companies' social performance is considered to be an antecedent of the image of organizations held by individuals and that these images influence their attitudes and responses towards it.

Similarly, (Fill, 2006), argues that accumulated images and experiences of an organization and its products /service result in corporate reputation. (Caruana, 1997), states that reputation is a far more enduring perception of an organization and results from an accumulation of stakeholders experiences. Fumbrun (1996) proposes that a key characteristic of reputation is that it is a snapshot that reconciles the multiple images of a company held by all its constituencies.

On the other hand these image and reputation can be influenced by different factors: internal as well as external factors that influence the organizations reputation and images. Factors such as target audience expectation and attitude could have immense impact on the organization image and reputation. For this reason, the management of their reputation and image must take into consideration the external factors which influence these judgments. Thus, conducting continuous research on corporate image and reputation is a must for those organizations that want to successfully differentiate their position in the public's mind.

There are scholars who worked in an area of factors that have been affecting the image and reputation of an organization. On the other hand, ccorporate image and reputation is considered to be a critical factor in the overall evaluation of any organization (Bitner, 1990, 1991; Gronroos, 1984; Gummesson & Gronroos, 1998; Andreassen & Lanseng, 1997; Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998; Kandampully & Hu, 2007; Keller et al., 2012) because of the strength that lies in the customers' perception and mind when hearing the name of the organization (Fombrun, 1996; Hatch et al., 2003; Nguyen, 2006; Bravo et al., 2009).

Corporate image and reputation in higher education institutions

Overall, reputation and image represents a fundamental source of the competitive advantage and offers benefits to higher education institutions external communication processes or strategies. These two concepts also considered more and more a precious and decisive factor for the competitive advantage of the organizations and for its sustainability (Grant, 1991; Cramer and Ruefli, 1994). In the Resource-Based external communication approach view it is considered as a firm-specific resource, among the rarest and inimitable resources, slowly accumulated through the years, during the history of a firm. On the other hand, it is considered to be a critical factor in the overall evaluation of any organization (Bitner, 1990). Because of the strength that lies in the customers' perception and mind when hearing the name of the organization (Fombrun, 1996; Hatch et al., 2003; Nguyen, 2006).

Accordingly, Organizational reputation is typically studied within a business context with the exception of Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001) and Theus (1993) but the literature on corporate reputation can be useful in conceptualizing university reputation, despite the contextual differences. Depending on the perspective, the concept of organizational reputation has been defined, in general, as (a) assessments that multiple stakeholders make about the company's ability to fulfill its expectations (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2003), (b) a collective system of subjective beliefs among members of a social group (Bromley, 1993, 2000, 2002), (c) collective beliefs that exist in the organizational field about a firm's identity and prominence (Rao, 1994; Rindova & Kotha, 2001), (d) media visibility and favorability gained by a firm (Deephouse, 2000), and (e) collective representations shared in the minds of multiple publics about an organization over time (J. Grunig and Hung, 2002; Yang & J. Grunig, 2005).

The intersection between such definitions is that the reputation of an organization refers to perceptions of the organization shared by its multiple constituents over time.

On the basis of such an intersection of definitions of organizational and corporate reputation, a university's reputation can be defined as collective representations that the university's multiple Constituents various internal and external constituents, including the media hold of the university over time. Applying general principles of reputation formation (Bromley, 1993, 2000; Caruana, 1997; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; J. Grunig & Hung, 2002), the researchers propose that a university's reputation can be formed on the basis of (a) direct or indirect/mediated experiences and (b) information received through a variety of channels of communication and symbols. Since information is acquired from university symbols (e.g., logos, architecture, and other visual attributes), in particular, a university's reputation can be significantly related to the visual identity of the university.

Factors such as communication sources, terminology, branding, logos and emblems, relations with media and customers, building architecture are effective in higher education image and reputation formation. Besides, the relations with customers and the actions and statements of top managers simultaneously affect organizational reputation and image (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). An organization's image and reputation is affected by this organization's accoutrements, attitudes and communication style. An organization's future image and reputation is shaped by the communication between management, employees and external audiences (Amon, 2004). Strong communicative factors such as the brand name, logo, advertisement and public relations can help create a good and strong corporate image/reputation (Gray &Balmer, 1998). Additionally, variables such as social and environmental responsibility, financial credibility, innovativeness, marketing, communication, management, product and service quality are effective in image and reputation formation (Lemmink, Schuijf&Streukens, 2003).

On the other hand, corporate image and reputation can be shaped but not controlled by an organization because factors such as media coverage, governmental regulations and surveillance, industry dynamics and other external forces also influence impressions of these firms.

Corporate image and reputation, whether it is taken as internal or external, is an important concept that has crucial outcomes for organizations. Moreover, corporate image and reputation of the University measured in terms of social responsibility, commitment to environmental protection, sponsorship issues in different community events and proving society problems through different programs and projects.

In general, corporate image and reputation is considered as an asset which gives the organization a chance to differentiate itself aiming to maximize its market share, profits, attracting new customers, retaining existing ones, neutralizing the competitors' actions and above all their success and survival in the market (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990). Organizations to create healthy public relationships should always focus on listening to customers' expectations, requirements, complaints and needs. Making polite suggestions, delivering promises and taking extra effort such as building an efficient customer service team and communicating customers are the right practices to retain them for a long period.

Although defining the role of higher education institutions in the community where established in it is a topic that has to be studied separately and discussed deeply, in order to make a comparison between higher education and traditional corporate, the responsibility of the higher education institutions can be summarized as transferring the knowledge to the new generations by teaching, training and doing research; determining a balance between basic and applied research and between professional training and general education; meeting the priority needs of their respective societies (UNESCO 1991). Moreover higher education are expected to function as social institutions actively for the development of individual learning and human capital, the socialization and cultivation of citizens and political loyalties, the preservation of knowledge, and the fostering of other legitimate pursuits for the nation-state. Thus the behavior and actions of the higher education institutions reflect directly back to the society through their alumni and through their daily operations higher education institutions have a direct and immediate impact on the society.

In addition to the production of goods and services, society expects that organizations will provide safety, improved lifestyle, employment, infrastructure, and environmental protection,

Without affecting cultural practices and benefits (Agarwal 2008). Social expectations for the improvement of lifestyles include the development of education, health, religion, political and modern technology. These expectations differ from culture to culture. Social and organizational expectations are quite different; organizations expect profit maximization, while consumers expect good quality, low prices and a range of services. This mismatch places pressure on organizations, since if these consumer expectations are not fulfilled communities may ban their products and enforce many restrictions.

Image and reputation is in the main agenda of an organization and corporate communication activities addresses the key questions of what distinctive attributes will be assigned to an organization. Reputation and image is formed over time by repeated impressions of the corporate image whether positive or negative (Gray and Balmer 1998). Therefore it is suggested that reputation has also need to be based on accomplishments or worthwhile efforts to gain public's goodwill, it has to be more than mere publicity efforts.

To the knowledge of the researchers, no public relation research to date has focused on the specific question that they posed. In this sense, the researchers have

Research Questions

1. How does the community perceive the overall image and reputation of Jimma University?
2. What are the major factors that could affect the community perceptions towards the corporate image and reputation of Jimma University?

Research Design

The design used to manage this research was a descriptive survey. The researchers had numerous variables to describe and explain. In addition, the researchers used descriptive survey research design, as they were solely interested in describing the situation under our research study. Therefore, this research was conducted by hosting a descriptive survey questionnaire which was sent to a combined total of 400 respondents from Jimma city and 380 community members who

participated in giving information. Similarly, this research was implemented by employing predominantly a qualitative research approach.

Target Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

Jimma City has 18 kebeles and out of these purposively (practically and relatively speaking the nearby kebeles are assumed to be benefited from the University), we chose the four Kebeles (Kebele 3 (Mendera Koch), Kebele 4 (Ginjo), Kebele 5 (Ginjo Guduru), Kebele 8 (Jiren)) as these are geographically closer to the university. Each kebele was selected by multistage (At the first stage, we divided the entire woredas of the city into the number of Clusters based on their distance to the university and then few weredas were selected randomly. At the second-stage, the chosen Woredas were further sub-divided into the number of kebeles and then the sample of few Kebeles were taken at random. At the third-stage, the desired number of households was selected from the Kebeles chosen at the second stage. Thus, at each stage the size of the sample has become smaller and the research study has become more precise.) Sampling technique. For the questionnaire a total number of 380 out of 207,573a total population were selected four from four kebeles, two, two from kebeles near to the main campus and the other two (2) from far away Kebeles from the main campus of JU. According to the data obtained from the records of the statistical office of Jimma city, there were a total of 207,573 people living in the city at the end of 2014. Besides, the sampled four Kebeles population size was 23,210 households with different population size in each Kebele.

In order to determine the sample size statistically, a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error was assumed. Given this level of confidence and the assumed margin of error, the sample size was determined using the following formula.

Where:- n = number size

n =   Z2. P. q. N   Z=degree of confidence 95% = 1.96

   (e)2. (N-1) +z2.p.q   e = standard error 5%

P = population proportion,   q = 1 –P

The total sample size calculated was 380. Of these, 33.9 per cent of participants were women, and 66.6 per cent of participants were men. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 years to 48 years or above. Regarding participants' occupations, the majority 161 (42.4%) of respondents were office workers. The second highest numbers were merchants 106 (27.9%) and 36 (9.5%) of sample were private business persons, 28 (7.4%) of the sample are house holders, the rest of respondents 49 (12.9%) reported 'others'.

Due to variation in the living areas of respondents in the city, in this study, the population was first classified according to their living areas by forming strata. Accordingly, a representative sample of each stratum in accordance with their proportion in the population was allocated as indicated below. The numbers of respondents from each stratum was determined according to Paul Newbold and W.L Carlson,(2000).

Where, r = respondents desired from a stratum, c = category (stratum) of populations = desired sample, p = population of all Jimma city.

Finally, after determining respondents, individuals were selected randomly from four Kebeles taking the population per each category divided by its allocated sample size.

Table 1: General description of the sample population by living area

Nearby kebeles to the main campus		Participants		Far away (kebeles) from the main campus		Participants	
		Number	%			Number	%
1	Mendera Kochi	94	24.7	1	Mentina	74	19.4
2	Ginjo Guduru	110	29.9	2	Bossa Kitto	102	26.8
	Total	204	53.6		Total	176	46.3

Data Collection Instruments

The primary data were collected by using a questionnaire and semi-structured interview. In both cases, the questions included are those accepted by scholars as an instrument of measuring the variables considered in this study, corporate image reputation. Consequently, data related to image and reputation perceptions were measured using an instrument used by researchers developed for the survey of the perceived organizational image and reputation (Kim Moffit & Kazoleas, 2001).

Interview

One of the instruments used was semi-structured interviews with various members of the community in Jimma City. The semi-structured interview was preferred as this method still allowed the interviewer to be the flexible regarding changing the questions or the order they were asked. The selected individuals were asked about how they perceive Jimma University corporate image and reputation from various perspectives. The interviews were designed to have a total of 7 questions. And, study participants drawn from selected Kebeles took part in the interviews. All interviews were tape-recorded based on the consent of interviewees. Comprehensive field notes were taken to complement the audio data. The interviews were transcribed verbatim by the same interviewer.

Questionnaire

The quantitative data were collected by survey questionnaire used to explore the participants' opinions and ideas towards corporate image and reputation of JU from different dimensions. The questionnaire was first prepared in English and then translated into Amharic and was retranslated to English by different individuals to check consistency and conceptual equivalence. The researchers employed this instrument, using both the existing scale which was developed by Kazoleas, Kim and Moffitt (2001) and his own new model developed for measuring higher education institutions image and reputation. The items in the Likert type scale were numbered as (1) totally disagree, (2) partially disagree, (3) agree, (4) partially agree, (5) totally agree.

Method of Data Analysis

This research is a descriptive survey research, for it assesses and explores the participants' perceptions towards the university's image and reputation of the single time. For the qualitative data that was gathered through interviews, a qualitative analysis method (Narrative analysis) was employed. This method involves the reformulation of stories presented by respondents taking into account context of each case and different experiences of each respondent. In other words, narrative analysis is the revision of primary qualitative data by researchers was employed. In addition, quantitative data that were gathered by survey questionnaire were analyzed by using descriptive statistic method through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Basic descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviations) and frequency distribution were computed for each variable

Result and Discussion

THE PERCEIVED OVERALL IMAGE OF JIMMA UNIVERSITY

In order to answer the research question above survey questionnaire and semi-structured interview were implemented and, discussed as follows.

Table 2: Respondents' overall Corporate Image perceptions

Scale items	Respondents' response	
	Frequency	Percent
Has the best possible image	73	19%
Has a very good image	77	20%
Has a fairly good image	125	32.9%
Has neither a good nor a bad image	31	8.2%

Could have a better image	6	1.6
Has an image that needs attention	68	17.9%
Has a bad image	-	-
Don't know	**-**	**-**
Total	**380**	**100%**

As seen from the above table, n=125 (32.9%) of respondents perceived the overall image of the University as fairly good image. And, n=77 (20%) respondents perceived as very good image and 17% of respondents views that the overall image of the University needs attention. Respondents from far away Kebele's are unfamiliar with the JU n=31 (8.2%) said their overall opinion is undecided. It is also important to note that more of the community member's familiar n=125 (32.9%) with Jimma University thought that Jimma University's image is fairly known and n=6 (1.6%) of the community members unfamiliar with JU thought neutral.

On the other hand, the respondents were asked 7 open-ended questions which allow them to express their options without burden regarding the perception towards the overall corporate image of JU in terms of its general activities in Jimma city. In this sense, when asking what respondents expect from JU to do for Jimma city or for the community in the city, n=26 (82%) of the respondents was answered that the activities of JU should go in line with its philosophy community based education or its motto 'we are in the community' and needs a better external communication system with the community.

As discussed in the literature review section, the organizational image refers to people's impressions of an organization and what comes in mind when one sees the logo and hears the name of an organization. From this point of view, when respondents were asked about their feeling in relation with the name and the logo of JU, reflected different impressions and feelings.

Table 3: Respondents' mind picture when hearing the name or seeing the logo of JU

Items	Respondents' response	
	Frequency	Percent
Its community involvement activities	**140**	**36.8%**
Its building/infrastructure	**67**	**17.6%**
Its corporate social responsibility activities	**7**	**1.8%**
Its external communication system with the community	**2**	**.5%**
Its commitment on environmental activities	**2**	**.5%**
Its philosophy, quoted 'We are in the community'	**152**	**40%**
I haven't any picture of this organization	**10**	**2.6%**
Total	380	100%

As seen in the above table, n=152 (40%) of respondents mind picture when hears the name or sees the logo of the University is its motto quoted 'we are in the community'. Besides, only n=2 (.5%) the respondents remember about the University external communication system and commitment on environmental protection activities. Besides, results from the interview show that, respondents did not shared similar points of view in relation to the overall perceived image. Moreover, when asking about what leads their perceptions towards the general image of the university, the respondents listed down the social responsibility, good community involvement, protecting environment, and the community external communication of the university main campus. In addition to this, majority of most of respondents n=154 (87%) did not know about its activities on environmental protection programs in the city.

On the other hand, respondents also identified their general views or image perceptions about Jimma University and defined the University based on the experience they had with the University.

Table4: Respondents' general view or perceptions about JU

Items	Respondents' response	
	Frequency	Percent
The University with good community involvement	104	27.4%
The University with beautiful building/infrastructure	133	35%
The University with good social responsibility	37	9.7%
The University with good external communication system with the community	3	.8%
The University with good commitment on environmental activities	40	10%
Undecided	63	16.6%
Total	380	100%

Evidence from the above table shows the following as with regard to the general image; there are significant differences between respondents view. According to the result, n=133 (35%) of the respondents view JU as the University with beautiful building/infrastructure and n=104 (27%) of respondents view as the University with good community activities. This can be explained by the difference of expectations and experiences with the University. And, n=63 (16.6%) of respondent's responded undecided about the University general view.

The interview result also indicated that respondents who have experience with the University were explained their general view about JU without burden. Since majority of the respondents n= 237 (62.4%) were at the University for the very first time some of them might have not formed a clear image of JU yet. It is normal that the more unfamiliar they are with JU or absence of information is the more neutral opinions the respondents have about the University.

THE PERCEIVED OVERALL REPUTATION OF JIMMA UNIVERSITY

In order to find out what respondents think about different activities of JU and how these activities were performed in Jimma city, 10 items under the overall perceived reputation was tested. These items can show the weak, but also strong points of the University performance from respondents' views.

Table5: Respondents' overall Corporate Reputation perceptions

Scale items	Respondents' response	
	Frequency	Percent
Has the best possible reputation	29	7.6%
Has a very good reputation	95	25%
Has a fairly good reputation	119	31.3%
Has neither a good nor a bad reputation	58	15.3%
Could have a better reputation	20	5.3%
Has a reputation that needs attention	59	15%
Has a bad reputation	-	-
Don't know	**-**	**-**
Total	**380**	**100%**

Evidence from the table above shows that, the community perceptions with respect to Jimma University overall corporate reputation were different. When n=119 (31%) of the respondents perceived that JU has fairly good reputation, no one of the respondents perceived JU reputation as bad. Accordingly, 25% of respondents perceived the overall reputation as very good and 15% of respondents stated that the University's overall reputation needs attention. And, it identifies the significance of the differences in perceptions between the respondents from far away Kebeles and nearby to the University's main campus. The results show that, there are significant differences between nearby respondents' perception and far away Kebeles respondents' perception as far as the social expectations and organizational relationships are concerned.

On the other side, the community members that participated in this study, more of householder respondents from nearby area perceived the overall reputation of JU as better, in terms of its income generation source for the community. Majority of the nearby area community member's income depends on Jimma University, as respondents' replied. And they believe that, JU is the backbone of the community in Jimma city in terms of creating job opportunities and generating incomes. The nearby and far away Kebeles respondents also shared their views that there should be changes in the community life quality due to the existence of this University in Jimma city. With regard to their own experiences, respondents were grateful in that the establishment of the university has brought a lot of improvements in the physical infrastructure, value of property and economic status which has also improved their quality of life. It is, therefore, concluded that the establishment of the University can led into positive changes in the socio-economic and physical development of Jimma city.

This opportunity had been regarded as great to help an unemployed and vulnerable population with empirical knowledge on new business creativity to reinitiate their live project with better opportunities of economic and social development. Contrary, respondents suggested that by fulfilling its social responsibility activities that may go in line with its philosophy community based education or its motto 'we are in the community', the university would more practical or reliable.

RQ4:- What are the major factors that affect the community perceptions towards the corporate image and reputation of Jimma University?

FACTORS THAT AFFECT IMAGE AND REPUTATION PERCEPTIONS

To identify the factors that most likely could affect community perceptions, the relationship and relationship status, residence and expectation of respondents were tested by survey questionnaire and interview as well.

Table6: Respondents' relationship/experience with JU by their living areas

Indicators of relationships	Respondents' Responses			
	Yes (Familiar)		No (unfamiliar)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Respondents from nearby Kebele's	183	73.4	31	23.6
Respondents from far away Kebele's	66	26.5	100	76.3
Total respondents	249	65.5	131	34.5

As seen in the table above, when asked if respondents are familiar with JU or not, n=249 (65.5%) of respondents answered that they are familiar and n=131 (34.5%) respondents are unfamiliar with the University. From the total respondents those familiar with JU, n=66 (26.5%) were from far away Kebeles and n=183 (73.4%) respondents were from nearby Kebeles from the main campus.

These results show that nearby area community members have more relationships or experience than far away area community members. Besides, from the total respondents' who responded unfamiliar n=100 (76.3%) were far away and n=31 (23.6%) from nearby Kebeles. Accordingly, the result showed that the perceived image and reputation of Jimma University in terms of general activities depends on the relationship or experience they have as well. Besides, it was found out that those respondents who have relationship or experience with JU, & those above the age of 24 years were more likely informed about the activities of the University.

In relation to this, they referred to the general view they have about JU depends on the experiences they have or their relationship status matters. According to the finding, respondents' those who have direct or indirect relationship with JU, have different perceptions towards image and reputation.

Table7: Respondents' relationship/experience status with JU by their responses

Experience/relationship status	Respondents' response		Perceived CI and CR	
	Frequency	Percent	M	SD
I'm worker or staff of JU	75	19%	2.6	.93
I'm student	10	2.6%	3.00	1.15
I was worker/staff	41	10.8%	2.4	.53
I graduated from JU	46	12.1%	3.11	1.02
One of my family member or my friend is staff of JU	79	20.8%	3.3	1.31
I haven't any relationship with JU at all	129	31.9%	3.1	1.71
Total	380	100%	3.14	1.21

As shown in the above table n=79 (20.8%) of the respondents have no direct relationship with JU and n=129 (31.9%) haven't any relationship at all. The results showed that there is a strong relationship between the perceived image and reputation and the community members' relationship status towards an organization's performance. This implies, the higher the community levels of relationship/experience status, the more unfavorable the respondents' perceptions about JU corporate image in terms of all activities and external communication system.

The respondents were also asked to state the factors that affect their perception. Majority of the respondents n=24 (76%) replied that the first set of factors influencing the corporate image and reputation perception is community expectations from the University. The more they expected from JU, the more their perception would be affected. On the expected activities JU completely has not accomplished, the respondents have medium image and reputation perceptions. But, all respondents have different expectations from the University in terms of social and developmental issues. More than the fulfillment of educational objectives that JU succeed in; the respondents evaluate JU by its performance on expected activities in the community. This implies that, as stated by respondents to refer to elements that influence an individual's perception when forming an image and reputation, cognitive and emotional attributes were also valued.

In addition to this, some of the most common answers are: 'that the activities in Jimma city by JU focus more on educational purpose', 'its environmental pollution by its waste disposal',(more of in nearby Kebeles). Some also refer to other CSR issues when speaking about JU: 'I have good image perceptions about JU because it's socially responsible organization in some areas of the city'. Additional reasons for good image perceptions are: respondents past experiences, expectations, organizational philosophy and organizational relationships.

In contrast to the findings in the survey questionnaire data, the respondents identified the main factors that may affect perceptions towards the overall image and reputation which are more related to the University's external communication system.

This implies that, their perception drawn from information they have about the University and they compare its performance with their expectations. The highest level of expectation from the University the perceived image and reputation is low or bad.

When looking to the perceptions that the members of the community have about JU performance as a single organization or group that lead the developmental projects, it was found that respondents recognized JU as the only leading institution of the community based project interested in giving resources and initiatives to a vulnerable community.

Table8: *T-Test Results Concerning the overall perceived corporate Image Level of JU By respondents residence*

Image dimensions	Residence	No	Mean	SD	T	P
CSR activities	Nearby K.	204	3.21	2.24	-1.53	.067
	Far away	176	3.55	2.05	-1.54	-
CE activities image	Nearby	204	3.33	1.93	**-.901**	**.002**
	Far away	176	3.50	1.63	**-.912**	**-**
COEP activities image	Nearby	204	3.00	1.60	**-5.43**	**.000**
	Far away	176	4.06	2.21	**-5.308**	**-**
ECS activities image	Nearby	204	3.24	1.64	**-1.778**	**.000**
	Far away	176	3.57	1.98	**-1.75**	**-**

The table above shows that respondents were largely undecided with regard to the overall image perception. As regards the general image, there are significant differences between nearby and far away Kebeles in terms of other image dimensions.

Except CSR activities image, with other dimensions, namely CI activities, COEP activities and ECS image, the perceptions of nearby kebele respondents are lower than far away Kebeles. The perceived CSR activities image among far away Kebele respondents is higher than nearby Kebeles. This can be explained by the difference of expectations. No significant difference was found between nearby and far away Kebele respondents in terms of ECS image.

Accordingly, among community members from nearby and far away Kebeles, the perceived image of JU was medium. Moreover, T-test results indicated that there is a significantly meaningful difference between nearby and far away Kebeles respondents in terms of perceived image (Table 20). Perceived image of JU among far away Kebele respondents is higher than nearby Kebeles, which may be explained by the fact that nearby Kebeles respondents are more affected by the activities of JU when compared to the far away Kebeles and they have more familiarity with JU than the respondents from far away Kebeles. Another factor which explains this difference may be the level of expectations in that far away Kebeles respondent's expectations may be less than nearby Kebeles community groups.

Besides, results from interview indicated that the perceived image and reputation differ by respondents living area or location as well. For instance, respondents from far away area perceived that JU has only proposals than implementations. Other respondents n=13 (26%) also stated that most of the activities handled by JU in Jimma city focused only for its educational success.

Table9: T-Test Results Concerning the Perceived Corporate reputation Level of JU by respondents residence

Reputation dimensions	Residence	No	Mean	SD	T	P
CSR activities	Nearby K.	204	2.96	1.63	-3.53	-757
	Far away	176	3.53	1.50	-3.55	-
CE activities reputation	Nearby	**204**	**2.88**	**1.38**	-3.30	**-000**
	Far away	**176**	**3.43**	**1.84**	**-3.23**	-
	Nearby	**204**	**3.08**	**1.54**	**-1.35**	**-000**

COEP activities reputation	Far away	**176**	**2.84**	**1.86**	**-1.33**	**-**
ECS activities reputation	Nearby	**204**	**3.28**	**1.50**	**-5.54**	**-495**
	Far away	**176**	**2.45**	**1.39**	**-5.57**	**-**

As indicated in the table above, respondents' residence and relationship causes' difference in general perceived reputation. However, with CSR activities and COEP activities, residence causes significant differences. In both dimensions, the perceived overall reputation among nearby Kebeles respondents is higher than far away Kebeles respondents. The perceived image of far away Kebeles respondents on the general CSR activities of the University was more than nearby Kebeles respondents. The results concerning external communication system image is similar. And, the Nearby Kebeles respondents don't think that the University has good performance on commitment to protect environment. As for the perceived general image of the University, unfamiliar respondents' perceptions are lower than familiar respondents. With regard to CSR activities and CI activities image, the thoughts of nearby and far away Kebeles are similar.

In another case, there was also complaint forwarded by the respondents from nearby Kebeles on some students who fail to exhibit positive personality in which they have not only tarnished the university image and reputation but also offended the community. From the interview, it is learnt that the respondents showed their great concern and were very critical towards activities related to supporting social and cultural events. Apart from the social responsibilities achievement, the community has a very high expectation on the students' balance personality and morality.

According to respondents view, it is important to note that even though disciplinary offences were committed only by minority number of students and have not been taken as representing the general quality of the students. Nonetheless, the university should also focus on enhancing students disciplinary cases. The students' misbehavior can offend the community's feeling apart from tarnishing the image of the university.

Surprisingly, educational status and the profession also causes difference in image and reputation perception. As for the perceived image of the University in terms of CSR activities, respondents above High school perception (M=3.30 & SD=2.26) are lower than below high school (M=3.53 & SD=1.85). Besides, profession causes significant difference in CSR activities and external communication image perceptions. On the other hand, when compared to males, female respondents perceived CSR activities (M=3.11 & SD= 1.71) and commitment on environmental protection image (M=2.56 & SD=1.22) of the University as medium. With external communication system and community involvement image, the thoughts of male and female respondents are similar.

In contrast to this, gender didn't cause any difference in general reputation perception. However, with CSR activities (M=3.26 & SD=2.09) and community involvement performance (M=3.40 & SD=1.80) , gender causes significant differences. In both dimensions, the perceived reputation among male respondents is higher than females. Both male and female respondents perceived JU reputation as medium, in terms of all dimensions.

RQ3:- How does the community perceive the overall image and reputation of Jimma University?

The analysis revealed that among the community members in Jimma city, JU is a fairly known University with clear image in the minds of the respondents, in terms of different activities and by its organizational philosophy/motto. And, considerably better and a mostly positive image of JU has formed as well as negative perceptions in community members' view. The key points given to JU are the incorporation of social responsibility activities as a part of the communication strategy to better reach all community members and all parts of the city, closer co-operation with associations regarding donating and organizing donation programs and projects for social and economic problems improvement, and a realignment of the sponsoring and corporate communication efforts towards youth centers, organizations, and social events.

RQ4:- What are the major factors that affect the community's perceptions towards the corporate image and reputation of Jimma University?

Research findings indicated that there might be numerous factors that come into the play in lowering image and reputation perception in stakeholders' mind (Budd 1994). Davies and others have found that factors such as expectations and communication system may affect stakeholders' perception and this eventually has a spillover effect on overall image and reputation (Davies et. al. 2001). Moreover, the findings of this thesis indicated that, experience, organizational relationship, expectation and communication system are the factors that affect perceptions of external stakeholders.

As Fombrun (1991,2) states in the literature how to affect an organizations image, external audiences form the corporate image of an organizations based on their perceptions and sometimes these prejudices aren't reflecting the organizations actual profile. Thus, Jimma University could control this by actively managing the information flow and not letting others passively develop opinions about them. In addition to this, as suggested in the literature, more and frequent appearance on media with positive content would not only help to promote company to external public, it will also help to sustain internal communications smoothly and swiftly among employees (Lewellyn 2002; Pharoah 2003).

Analyses of the data indicated that there are remarkable differences between the perceptions that nearby and far away Kebele respondents have about the corporate image and reputation of the University. Moreover, expectations and external communication system (information's they have about the University) are the main factors that affect community perceptions.

These findings on the other hand, corroborate Gelders' (2010) conclusion that gap analysis demonstrates the importance of expectations and perceptions in stakeholders' satisfaction with organizations communication, but also with other public policies. The multi causality of gaps between the nearby and far away Kebele image and reputation perceptions suggest that the University communicators should monitor more closely the environment in which they operate to ensure that they have mechanisms to understand community's needs and expectations.

In the case of the relationship or experience, the cognitive attributes are related to the degree of real knowledge that the members of the community showed about the nature and fulfillment of objectives of the community involvement programs of the University. The emotional attributes are related to the significance and positive assessments that the respondents assigned to the University related to better life, working opportunities and good learning conditions for them. Therefore, corporate image and reputation is really considered to be an issue of attitudes, feelings, beliefs toward the organization and it may play a critical role in selecting of one corporate brand over another.

Various studies revealed that a large portion of the Universities value is made up of intangible assets that can be up to 50 percent (Brady, 2003). Hence the need to identify factors affecting the intangibles (image and reputation) should be emphasized as it becomes more relevant. The reviewed literature identified ignoring perception factors may be causes for bad reputation of the University. With regard to the way external and communication office has been established and how the system is running so far, respondents asserted that such an organization is needed and has to be strengthened in the future. This finding is consistent with previous study by Bitner (2004). Consistent with the researcher's expectation, it was found that there is a positive relationship between corporate image/reputation and expectations. These results imply that good performance will lead to high image and reputation perceptions, and this in turn will produce greater willingness to recommend the organization.

DISCUSSION ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS GUIDED THE THESIS

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CORPORATE IMAGE AND REPUTATION PERCEPTIONS MODEL FOR THE UNIVERSITY

Figure 1 below shows the conceptual image and reputation model for Universities formulated as a causal model. It is specified as a structural equation model with eight latent variables, each measured by a set of indicators, observed by survey questions to community members. The development of the model is based on relevant theories and empirical surveys as well as practical experience with the measurement of corporate reputation and corporate image. The arrows in the model show the hypothesized relationships between the variables.

Figure 1: The University corporate image and reputation perceptions model
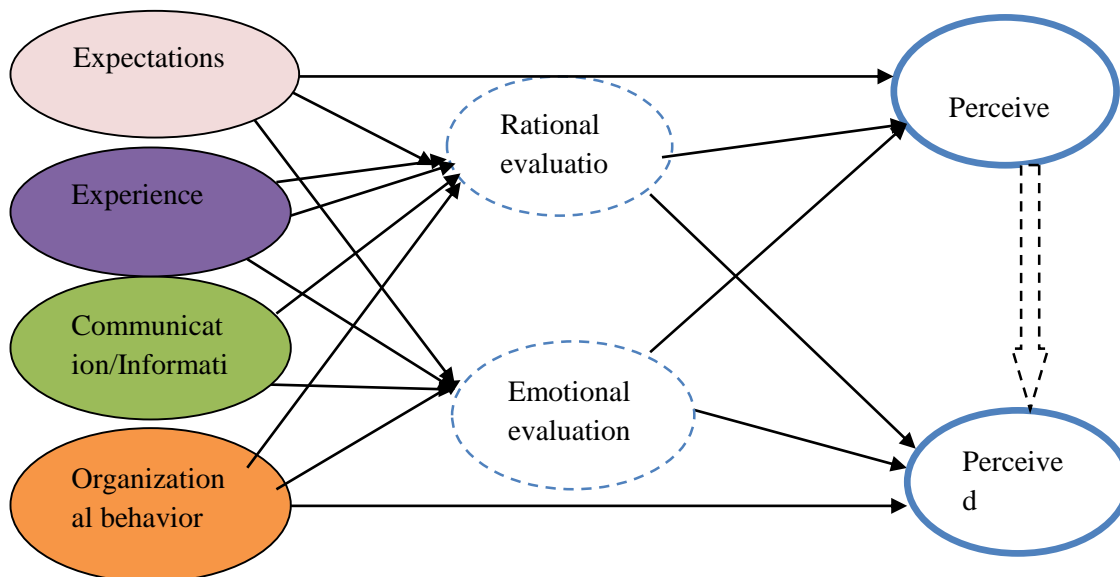
With the community members, this image and reputation are reflected in a rational as well as emotional evaluation in terms general perception of the communication and its actual behavior. Reputation is also a function of a series of mental associations with the community experience, which are linked to a number of determinants for the organization's image and reputation: the expectation and the communication of the University as well as their experience were the factors that could most likely impact reputation and image perceptions. As mentioned in the literature, the corporate image and reputation is determined by the way in which the organization consistently, credibly and coherently presents itself to its stakeholders/the community and the means by which it distinguishes itself from all other organizations.

Conclusion

The findings of the research suggest that Jimma University is beginning to have a positive impact within the community but from the recommendations it is clear that improvements are still needed in some areas of its activities and educational programs. The corporate image and reputation of the university should be measured and evaluated continually; good image and reputation dimensions should be maintained and lacking dimensions should be improved. If acknowledged and implemented, they could positively raise the public's opinion leading to more public confidence and good image and reputation. Moreover, the multi causality of gaps in perception between those in nearby areas versus those in distant kebeles suggests that the university communicators should monitor closely the community in where/which they operate to ensure that they have mechanisms to understand the community needs and expectations.

Finally, as stated in the literature, organizations with high images and reputation have social attractiveness and credibility (Fombrun, 2001). Moreover, organizational image and reputation are manageable and improvable. Therefore, as the university founded on community-based philosophy, Jimma University should measure its image and reputation continually and it should maintain the good features while improving lacking parts. By utilizing the knowledge acquired from this study into consideration, Jimma University will be able to devise a strategy that can greatly improve its corporate image and reputation among the community in Jimma city. In line with this, the finding of this research shows that further investigation is demanded. So, other researchers are advised to see these two points [which two points?] from the university's side.

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