

Jimma City Community's Perception towards Jimma University's Corporate Image and Reputation

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to assess the perceived image and reputation of Jimma University by the community in Jimma city from four dimensions, namely corporate social responsibility (CSR), community involvement activities (CIA), the commitment of environmental protection (CEP) and external communication system with the community (ECS). The researchers used descriptive research design, as we are solely interested in describing the situation under our research study. Therefore, this research was conducted by hosting a 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 questionnaires' results was completed, 30 respondents from nearby and far away Kebeles were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Thus, findings from this research are grounded in empirical pieces of evidence promoting and recognizing community perceptions about corporate image and reputation. In general, the results revealed that community expectations, organizational behaviour and experience/relationship had a strong direct impact on the image and reputation of the university. In light of these findings valuable, practical and theoretical implications are derived in order to define a more effective way to manage these two concepts: corporate image and reputation.

Keywords: Perceived Corporate Image, Perceived Corporate Reputation, Community' Background of the Study

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, many private and governmental organizations, potential service or product supplier companies and higher education institutions are focusing on corporate communication strategies, to meet their mission and vision effectively (Shandwick, 2006). An American organizational communication intelligence unit executive summary, (2005) explains that in today's competitive world, building and shaping a good corporate image and reputation through scientific communication strategies are important concepts for any organizations. To be innovative today requires universities to be more open and enter into closer and more committed cooperation on social responsibility activities and to involve the community and other stakeholders. Basically, up to the eighties, studies were dedicated to corporate image. From the nineties onwards, a great importance is progressively attributed to corporate brand and to corporate reputation. This increasing interest is, in part, consequent to

the success achieved by the programs for the management of organizational communications (Argenti, 1997; Bennett and Kottasz, 2000).

Moreover, globalization as well as technological development not only has had an immense impact on society's cultural and environmental changes but it also has created new challenges as well as opportunities for all sorts of organizations. In recent decades various organizational researchers have been interested in the range of effects that technological development as well as sociological changes have had on the organizational theories and model buildings. Thus, corporate image and reputation have become a prominent paradigm and have begun to be linked to strategic management decisions of organizations including higher education institutions. As Rao (1994) stated, the need increases for organizations to take environmental issues and the feelings of stakeholders towards these concepts into account. This leads companies to increasingly measure their assets in terms of o, such as knowledge, image and customer

reputation. It is not what an organization makes or does anymore, but how it is perceived that matters. The corporate image and reputation of an organization is now considered as a key variable in improving the organization's attractiveness and its capacity for retention of both clients and investors (ibid).

Researchers have also examined the importance of image and reputation of educational institutions, and that the concept is clearly important in order to gain good credibility (Arpan, Raney & Zivnaska, 2003). Higher education institutions depend on their corporate image and reputation to survive during crises (Kazoleas et al., 2001). Another communication scholar, (Theus, 1993) additionally, argues that one of a university's most important assets is its corporate image and reputation.

Indeed, for developing countries like Ethiopia, the concept is clearly important. In Ethiopia, the numbers of higher education institutions have increased significantly over the past decade. The government has also taken further actions to expand and reform the higher education sector. Many higher education systems are undergoing transformations in the face of today's highly changing environment. Higher education systems are required to demonstrate their value on widely diversified sets of criteria: basic research achievement, research contribution to industry, service to local communities, reproduction of the academic profession and promotion of lifelong learning (Henkel, 1998).

Accordingly, strong corporate image and reputation have a multitude of functions for higher education institutions. For example, a strong corporate image and reputation provides the possibility to attract and retain staff, customers, suppliers and investors; they enable institutions to win contracts and partnerships; manage crises; influence governments and the media; and achieve competitive advantages and social values. This study, therefore, focused on assessing the perceived image of the community about Jimma University in terms of four dimensions: corporate social responsibility (CSR), community involvement activities (CIA), external/community communication system (ECS) and environmental protection activities (EPA). The study also investigated factors that were likely associated to it.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The research on organizational image and reputation revealed that image and reputation

affect how people perceive the organization and their motivation towards favoring the organization. In the long term, these perceptions and motivation affect organizational behavior (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Additionally, organizational communication scholars state that the first impression that organizations make on consumers or stakeholders is highly effective in creating the good image and reputation (Collins & Stevens, 2001).

In addition to this, there are suggestions that other internal as well as external factors (in addition to organization actions and behavior) influence the organizations reputation and image. 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.

Indeed, to the knowledge (and capacity of searching appropriate researches) of the researchers, no public relation research to date has focused on the specific title at hand. This study, therefore, assessed the perceptions of the community in Jimma city towards the corporate image and reputation of Jimma University. It also explores how the current state of the community perceptions may affect the overall image and reputation of the University (JU). This is an important issue because the corporate image and reputation of the university, (especially in terms of corporate social responsibility activities, external communication system, community involvement and protecting the environment through designing different projects) has a great role in building mutual understanding between the University and the community. Specifically, the study attempted to address the following questions:-

- How does the community in Jimma city perceive the corporate image of Jimma University in terms of its social responsibility, commitment to environmental protection, community involvement activities and its external communication system?
- How does the community in Jimma city perceive the corporate reputation of Jimma University in terms of its actual behavior/performance on community

involvement activities, external communication system, social responsibility and commitment to the environmental protection activities?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, research design, data collecting methods, sampling techniques and data analysis methods are described

Research Design

The research was implemented by employing a mixed research approach. A combined use of the mixed research approaches: qualitative and quantitative can potentially improve the information that can be gathered through different data collection methods (Trochim, 2006). The researchers used descriptive research design, as we are 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.

Target Population 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 woredas 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 quantitative data a total number of 380 out of 207,573 a total respondents 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.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot P \cdot q \cdot N}{(e)^2 \cdot (N-1) + Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}$$

Where:- n = number size

Z=degree of confidence 95% = 1.96
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).

$$r = \frac{c \times s}{p}$$

Where, r = respondents desired from a stratum, c = category (stratum) of population, s = 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.

Table1. 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

In this section, the presentation, the analysis and interpretation of the quantitative and qualitative research data are provided. The data that address each research question are presented and described turn by turn

Data Presentation

In this section, the results of community perceptions analyses for JU corporate image and reputation were presented in order to address both research questions. The analyses were made on four dimensions namely, corporate social responsibility (CSR), community involvement activities (CI), commitment on environmental protection (COEP) and external communication system (ECS). In order to determine the corporate image and reputation level of JU in terms of the four dimensions, a descriptive analysis was carried out. During the interpretation of mean, the intervals were observed to be 1.00-1.79 "very low", 1.80-2.59 "low", 2.60-3.39 "medium", 3.40- 4.19 "high", 4.20-5.00 "very high" (Soner Polat, 2010). Other analyses were t-tests to find out if the perceived image and reputation differed

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significantly according to being familiar or unfamiliar, or, to find out if perceived image and reputation differed according to the respondents living areas.

RQ1:- How does the community in Jimma city perceive the corporate image of Jimma University in terms of discharging its social responsibility and community involvement activities?

The Perceived Corporate Image in Terms of Corporate Social Responsibility Activities

Table2. Corporate image perception in terms of CSR activities

Item order	Items	N	M	SD
1	I like JU for it creates new job opportunities for community	380	3.07	1.32
2	I like JU for its contribution in donation and volunteerism activities for the community	380	3.07	1.68
3	I like JU for its providing scholarships for the community	380	3.45	1.67
4	I like JU for it supports small business creation and technological creativity	380	3.70	2.03
5	I have good image about JU in terms of its corporate social responsibility activities in Jimma city	380	3.37	2.16

As seen in the table above, the issues raised in the survey questionnaire on the corporate social responsibility activities revolved around the questions of donating and sponsoring issues, creating new job and educational opportunities, the activities as regards supporting homeless elders and children in the city, the staff and the students' volunteerism activities and the general perceptions towards the university corporate image.

However, evidence in Table (2) showed that there was a significant difference between items under the CSR activities image. The analysis revealed that an average scoring of (M=3.07 and SD=1.32) for the surveyed respondents when asked about the new job creation opportunities for the community. An average mean score of M=3.7 and SD=2.03 was also recorded to the activities that supports small business creation and technological innovations in the community. The other CSR activities issue was the issue of donation activities. The majority of the respondents (75%) including the community from far away Kebeles, do not prefer the activities held by JU in donating and organizing donations program. When the respondents were asked if the university participated in donation and volunteerism activities, respondents gave JU a mean score of M=3.07 and SD=1.68 which indicates that they perceived JU's image as medium. As some respondents stated in the interview, the university has to consider organizing donation programs and homeless elders or children's should be given priorities in such activities. The respondents also gave for JU an average score of M=3.45 and SD=1.67 in terms of providing scholarships for the community which perceived as medium.

Besides, the perceived image of JU in terms of general CSR activities is medium which scored M=3.37 and SD=2.16.

Additionally, the respondents (83%) did not have clear information about the CSR activities offered by JU in the city. This indicates that respondents do not have adequate information on the various projects and CSR activities available in the city. These scores also showed that most of the respondents may not have experienced JU CSR activities or there is a gap of information-as illustrated in the following response.

Most of the time I heard about Jimma University academic issues or about students and research activities. But, I haven't any information about its social responsibility activities in Jimma city (Interview 2,5,8).

In sum, the interview results elicit three distinct views of a socially responsible university. For some individuals, a socially responsible university is a university that is both efficient and ethical in the development of its educational operations. For others, it refers to an organization that considers society as a whole and plays an active role in contributing to its well-being, behaves in an ecologically friendly way and acts in the field of social solidarity. For other group of participants a socially responsible University is one that assumes a set of human resources practices that demonstrate respect and concern for the community/society's well-being. In this regard, 63% of respondents stated that JU is a socially responsible university.

For this reason, conducting the CSR activity in some parts of the city area or absence of informing the community about such activities

leads to a bad image (negative social impact) and perception; CSR activities of JU are to be questioned. Respondents' further state that this might result in a negative reaction towards the university from its general stakeholders including the community, which is also evident based on respondents' experience. This is also in accordance with what is mentioned by respondents that a university is responsible to solve direct or indirect problems it causes, based on the respondents opinions, it can also be argued that the community in Jimma city perceived that, the University ignored the CSR activities while the focus is on its educational purposes only.

Other respondents also stated that CSR activities

create a positive relationship with the community and reflect the organization's status and activities with no due respect to its perceived societal obligations. However, the analysis above showed that JU's CSR communication has attracted critical attention towards image perceptions.

The Perceived Image in Terms of Community Involvement Activities

To identify the perceived image of JU in terms of community involvement activities, four items were tested with the general perception of respondents regarding this dimension. Table 3 below shows itemized mean and standard deviation scores for each item under this category.

Table3. Corporate Image Perception in terms of Community Involvement Activities

Item order	Items	N	M	SD
6	I like JU for it has good involvement in solving social and economical problems of the community	380	2.90	1.38
7	I like JU for its contribution in Jimma city image building activities	380	3.30	1.49
8	Organizing experience/ knowledge sharing workshops or seminars	380	3.41	1.89
9	I like JU for its educational programs/projects in Jimma city (CPTP and DTTP)	380	3.45	1.67
10	I have a good impression of JU in terms of its community engagement activities	380	3.41	1.79

As seen in Table 3, respondents scored differences in general image perceptions in terms of CI activities. From this image dimension, the most positively perceived item was the educational programs/projects handled by Jimma University in the city (M = 3.45), which is followed by the contribution of the university for the city image building activities (M = 3.30), organizing knowledge sharing workshops or seminars scored (M= 3.41), involvement in solving social and economical problems of the community (M= 2.90), and the general perceived image in terms of community involvement activities (M = 3.41 and SD=1.79). While the question under item 9 was perceived high, items 6, 7 and 8 were perceived medium. Apparently, none of the items under this image dimension was perceived very high.

Besides, the result from the interview showed that, one of the most known JU community engagement programs with the community is community based education program for the community, such as DTTP and CBTP programs. But the survey results showed that the participation of the University in developmental activities of the city was found to be low, n=58 (14.8%) and n=67 (21.52 %) in nearby and far

away kebeles respectively. However, it is found that many of the respondents' n=145 (42%) from nearby and far away kebeles were unaware of such programs. Some of them were quite informed but prefer similar programs organized by JU in different areas of the city. There are two major reasons that influence their perception in this regards: there are no activities of JU in their respective area or there is a gap of information about the program.

On the other hand, results from interviews showed that the respondents were generally under the impression that community based education programs organized by the JU are sponsor based. They acknowledged that such programs may impart on them relevant knowledge and skills as well as reliable credentials. However, some of them insisted that community based education should be regarded as university community involvement activities and thus the involvement of the community should be minimal. They recommended that JU has to establish a scholarship program for the community that does not focus on profit thus making lifelong learning education program successful.

Additionally, respondents perceived that the academic staff and students' community involvements in Jimma city social and developmental activities were low (n=143, 43%) Participants mostly shared their expectations that the academic staff and students have to participate more in informal activities with the community rather than via a well-structured and organized program. Such informal community involvements have been positively reported by the community group from nearby areas in comparison to the community group in far away areas. This means that community problems improvement measure should be made to encourage more participation among the academic staff with the community at all parts of the city.

Such informal participation as expected by the community, however, is not a complex endeavor. In fact, it is as simple as making educational projects and respondents from nearby areas compliment the academic staff who have offered various types of support informally through individual involvement efforts ranging from financial help, expertise and knowledge, human resources etc. Accordingly, it is vital that the university has to learn that community involvement does not need all the time to be formal and official. Indeed, it is through informal encounters with the community that the university's presence is

more felt and appreciated. On the other hand, according to respondents view (n=241, 67%) JU has to give an equal chance to the community far away from the main campus as well as those nearby in its community involvement activities.

With regard to the students, it is interesting to note that the respondents (n=23, 76%)from nearby kebeles reported positive feedback in comparison to the community from far away. The community has had fruitful engagement activities with the students through informal programs. The respondents from far away areas, however, expected that the university should engage more with them particularly in social and developmental oriented program organized by different associations and youth clubs. Based on their responses it was learnt that the community from nearby areas have had better engagement with the university students in comparison to the community from far away kebeles n=121 (46%).

The Perceived Image in Terms of Commitment on Environmental Protection Activities

To assess the perceived image of the University seven items were used with the general perception of respondents regarding COEP activities. Table 4 below shows itemized mean and standard deviation scores for each item under this category.

Table4. Corporate Image Perception in terms of Environmental Protection Activities

Item order	Items	N	M	SD
\	I like JU for its employee and students participation in environmental protection activities	380	3.30	1.56
11	I like JU for its commitment to environmental protection activities	380	3.30	1.51
12	I like JU for planting trees in the city and avoiding soil erosion	380	3.30	1.83
13	Responsibilities to contribute to environmental protection and preservation awareness	380	3.06	1.79
14	Organizing awareness creation activities	380	3.21	1.62
15	Avoids polluting the environment from its operations or activities	380	3.47	1.58
16	I have a good impression of JU in terms of its commitment to environmental protection activities	380	3.49	1.98

The results in Table 4 show that, so far as social expectation is concerned, respondents score is mean of 3.10with the JU activities regarding environmental protection that is concerned with the welfare of the society and they also score as medium with the protection of community from its west disposals and the University undertakes activities that affect the health of the society M=3.47 and SD 1.58. Respondents also scored M=3.21 and SD 1.62 for the question under item 15 regarding how the University is organizing

awareness creation activities related to environmental protection issues. On the other side, the employers and students participation in environmental protection activities scored M=3.30 and SD=1.56 as medium.

Accordingly, the overall mean score of the category is M=3.49 and SD=1.98. Therefore, it can be concluded that participants' perceived image in terms of its "commitment to environmental protection activities" is high. However, there were significant differences

observed between nearby and far away kebeles. In this dimension nearby kebele respondents perceived the University negatively (low) and far away kebele respondents as medium.

Concerning the perceived corporate image of JU in terms of COEP activities, interview results showed that most of the respondents, n=211 (42.68 %) in nearby area and n=202 (34.34%) in far away kebeles, mentioned its limitedness and carelessness. For this reason, findings showed that commitment of JU in socially responsible practices towards protecting against environmental damage also affected the community corporate image perceptions. Therefore, the greater the organization's perceived engagement in these types of practices, the more positive are the beliefs of respondent regarding outsiders' views of the University. These results are also in line with findings reported by respondents during interview when asked what they expect from the University. As all nearby and far away area kebele respondents view, the University has to focus or be committed on environmental protection activities. From this point of view, there is a relation between commitment to environmental protection activities and perceived image.

Moreover, questions about caring for the community by controlling its waste disposals had greatest variance among the interviewees. In terms of handling waste disposals from the university safely, respondents from far away kebeles perceived JU image as medium. Besides, nearby area respondents perceived JU image negatively (low). This implies that the communities in nearby kebeles are more affected by the JU waste disposals. As some of the responses stated, as a higher education institute, Jimma University should focus on controlling its waste disposals that affect the health of the community and gaining a positive corporate image. Doing something would be enough, like sponsoring environmental protection associations and environmental protection events, as respondents stated.

Furthermore, respondents' perception on questions about the community benefits from JU is quite different. According to the respondents who participated in interviews n=14 (43%), JU has great contribution for the community as an organization and higher education institution. Namely, it creates new jobs and education opportunities for the community, designing developmental projects, etc. On the other hand,

more of the respondents stressed that JU has great potential organize and manage sustainable projects for the community, scholarship issues and supporting youth for new business creation. But, when comparing its potential the real performance of JU is low and it is only struggling for its educational purpose. For instance, community based programs like CBTP and DTTP most likely the educational objectives rather than sustainable community benefits.

As respondents stated additionally, for the reinforcement of such projects, JU students request for 100% sponsorship from the community, mostly from merchant community groups. It doesn't include the other community groups.

The educational programs that benefit the community have to continue. But, the University has to design more controlling mechanisms when implementing community involvement programs. For example, the students who participate in this program only care about their educational success. They don't care about the projects sustainability or strength. (Interview 6, 15, 12, 10)

As the respondents' opinion reveals, the communication between the students and the members of the community stopped after the program ended. Additionally, most of the educational programs or projects handled by JU focus on some part of the city. For instance, respondents from nearby area to JU have complaints that the activities of JU more on far away areas (kebeles) of the city. This implies that the community living around the main campus perceived the image and reputation of JU negatively in terms of its general activities.

In fact, some of the young respondents stated that the great benefit of JU for the community is its educational opportunities in different fields of study: for the community groups those who want to continue their educational level in line with their work or business activities. This may be the other dimension of measuring image and reputation. However, a certain explanations can be provided for this outcome, as the respondents were thinking that the corporate image and reputation of JU is important in terms of educational opportunities for the community in Jimma city. Respondents, n=264 (74%) also suggest that JU has a long way to go and a lot of room for improvement in protecting the

environment. According to respondents from nearby areas, one of the biggest challenges they face is the bad smell of waste disposals, which at the moment is not being controlled successfully. They also suggest that there appears to be a lack of commitment from JU, at the different level areas of the city, with regard to JU and this is hampering the programs and

any potential impact

The Perceived Image of Jimma University in Terms of External Communication System

There are five items under external communication system dimension and Table 5 shows itemized mean and standard deviation scores for each items under this dimension.

Table5. Corporate image perception in terms of external communication system

Item order	Items	N	M	SD
17	I like JU for it has a good system to inform the community about its activities in the city	380	3.37	1.80
18	I like JU for it has good commitment to receive feedback from the community	380	3.51	1.97
19	I like Jimma University for its philosophy: "We are in the community"	380	3.05	1.53
20	I like JU for it uses proper language and accord the others with courtesy	380	3.15	1.37
21	I have a good impression of JU in terms of its communication system with the community	380	3.39	1.81

Evidence from Table 5 showed that respondents scored differently for the items under the external communication system image dimension. Respondents scored M=3.37 and SD=1.80 regarding the university's commitment in informing the community about its activities in the city. In terms of this item, respondents perceived JU as medium. Besides, for the item asked if the University provides a speedy response to their complaints, respondents gave JU a score of M=3.51 and SD=1.97 which indicates that they perceived JU as medium with its activities. In order to its communication language respondents scored JU as medium M=3.15 and SD=1.37. The respondents also gave for JU an average score of M=3.03 and SD=1.53 to Jimma University' motto "we are in the community" and its community based education philosophy.

The overall mean score of the dimension is M=3.39 and SD=1.81. Therefore it can be concluded that participants perceived the image of the University in terms of its external communication system as medium. There are no

significant differences observed between nearby area and far away area community groups in this category. However, the mean score of the item "its general communication system" is (M=3.00). This mean score suggests that the university should invest more effort in promoting its activities and its policies and practices to the general public.

RQ2:- How does the community, in Jimma city, perceive the corporate reputation of Jimma University in terms of its actual behavior/performance on community involvement activities, external communication system, social responsibility and Commitment to the environmental protection activities?

The Perceived Reputation in Terms of Corporate Social Responsibility Activities

In the case of perceived reputation in terms of CSR activities, nine (9) items were tested and Table 6 shows itemized mean and standard deviation scores for each item under this category

Table6. Corporate reputation perception in terms of CSR activities

Items order	Items	N	M	SD
22	It makes a valuable contribution in organizing volunteerism activities	380	2.66	1.59
23	Donating or facilitating donation programs for the community	380	3.07	1.75
24	Providing scholarships for the community	380	3.50	1.18
25	Building houses for homeless people, youth center and others	380	3.22	2.07
26	Creating new job opportunities for the community in Jimma city	380	3.77	2.24
27	Sponsoring different social events and support to cultural and educational events	380	2.90	1.48
28	Supporting new business projects (supporting creativity)	380	3.25	1.40
29	Its general reputation in terms of its corporate social responsibility activities in Jimma city	380	3.22	1.60

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As seen in Table 6, respondents scored differently for the questions under CSR activities reputation dimension. For the question raised under Item 22 respondents scored low ($M=2.66$ & $SD=1.59$), donating and organizing donation programs scored as medium ($M=3.07$ & $SD=1.75$). Accordingly, in terms of providing scholarship for the community, they scored medium ($M=3.50$ & $SD=1.18$) and Item 25, building up houses and helping elders scored as medium ($M=3.22$ & $SD=2.07$) sponsoring different social events scored low ($M=2.90$ & $SD=1.48$) supporting new business and creativity also scored as medium ($M=3.25$ & $SD=1.40$). The overall mean score of the category is $M=3.41$ and $SD=1.15$.

Therefore it can be concluded that participants perceived the University corporate reputation in terms of its CSR activities as medium. There are no significant differences observed between nearby areas and far away kebeles community groups in this category. However, the mean

score of the item "its general CSR activities performance" is $M=3.22$ & $SD=1.60$. This mean score suggests that the University should spend more effort to promote its activities and its policies and practices to the general public.

Similarly, when respondents were asked about JU's social responsibility, in their opinion, 27.44% of the respondents agreed Jimma University is socially responsible. Besides, most of the respondents in the interview stated that Jimma University should be involved with charity thought that any charity involving kids would be good.

The Perceived Reputation in Terms of Community Involvement Activities

The perceived reputation in terms of CI activities was also measured by 6 items. Table 7 below shows itemized mean and standard deviation scores for each item under this dimension.

Table7. Corporate reputation perception in terms of CI activities

Item order	Items	N	M	SD
30	Its contribution in Jimma city image building process/activities	380	3.55	1.74
31	Involvement in Jimma city developmental activities	380	3.50	1.88
32	Responsibilities to contribute to society's economic prosperity	380	3.32	1.84
33	Organizing experience/ knowledge sharing workshops or seminars	380	3.25	1.52
34	Facilitating lifelong learning education programs	380	3.34	1.79
35	Its general community involvement activities	380	3.13	1.63

As seen in the above Table 7, the mean score of all items in the category is different. Respondents scored ($M=3.55$ and $SD=1.74$) the actual behavior of the university in terms of its contribution in Jimma city image building activities as medium. In terms of its actual performance regarding involvement in the community developmental activities were scored $M=3.50$ and $SD=1.88$, which was perceived as medium. Respondents also scored $M=3.25$ and $SD=1.52$ regarding the actual performance of the university in terms of organizing experience and knowledge sharing programs.

Only the mean score of Item 30 ("Its contribution in Jimma city image building process") was found above the average of the category ($M=3.55$ & $SD=1.74$). This score indicates a slightly better performance as opposed to the other items under this category. Respondents scored $M=3.13$ and

$SD=1.63$ with its general activities that support worthy causes in the community, which was perceived as medium. The respondents also gave the university a score of $M=3.50$ and $SD=1.88$ with respect to the activities addressed in improving the social and economic problems with great motivation for maintaining a high standard in the way it treats the community respectively. There are no significant differences observed between nearby and far away kebele respondents in this category.

He Perceived Reputation in Terms of Commitment to Environmental Protection Activities

The result from respondents on perceived reputation of JU in terms of COEP activities was also indicated in Table 8 below. The table shows itemized mean and standard deviation scores for each item under each category.

Table8. Corporate reputation perception in terms of environmental protection activities

Item order	Items	N	M	SD
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36	Employee and students participation in environmental protection	380	2.96	1.54
37	Avoids polluting the environment from its operations or activities	380	3.49	1.66
38	Organizing events to care for environmental issues and donating environmental protection associations	380	3.22	1.83
39	Responsibilities to contribute to environmental protection	380	3.05	1.53
40	Organizing programs for caring the environment, avoiding soil erosion	380	3.15	1.37
41	Creating awareness on environmental protection for community	380	3.39	1.81
42	Its general performance on environmental protection activities	380	2.97	1.70

Evidence from the table above show that respondents who participated in the survey scored each item differently. However, respondents scored M=2.96 and SD=1.54 the actual performance of the university regarding its employee and students participation in environmental protection activities. And, avoiding polluting environment by its activities scored M=3.49 and SD=1.66, which perceived as medium. Respondents scored M=3.22 and SD=1.83 the university actual performance in terms of organizing events for environmental activities and donation for environmental protection associations. On the other hand, creating awareness in environmental protection for community also scored M=3.03 and SD=1.81 that influence their value judgments and consequently their satisfaction and loyalty towards JU activities. Finally, as seen in the table above, respondents scored M=2.97 & SD=1.70 the overall reputation of the university in terms of COEP activities in Jimma city. Therefore, it can be concluded that the

perceived reputation of respondents in terms of this dimension is low.

Evidence from the interview on the other hand, showed that there was a significant difference in perceived reputation among nearby and far away kebele respondents in terms of the general performance of JU on environmental protection activities. Far away kebeles respondents, (72%) have a positive perception as oppose to nearby kebeles respondents for this category. It may be considered normal because far away kebele respondents may not observe how the university is performing and they have no access to daily operational data.

The Perceived Reputation in Terms of External Communication System

In order to measure the perceived reputation of the University actual performance in terms of its external communication system, respondents’ were asked to indicate their perceptions based on the following 6 items

Table9. Corporate Reputation Perception in Terms of External Communication System

Item order	Items	N	M	SD
43	Informing the community about its activities in the city	380	3.27	1.56
44	Its commitment to receive feedback from the community(It takes complaints seriously)	380	3.30	1.51
45	It uses proper language and accords the others with courtesy	380	3.21	1.62
46	JU activities in the community are aligned with its philosophy, “We are in the community”	380	2.49	1.98
47	The trend of its media relation and flow of information	380	3.37	1.80
48	Its general performance in terms of its communication system with the community	380	2.9	1.51

The table above shows itemized mean and standard deviation scores for each item under external communication system category. The overall mean score of the category is M=2.9 and SD=1.51. Therefore, it can be concluded that respondents negatively perceive the University in terms of its external communication performance. There are no significant differences observed between nearby and far away kebele respondents in this category. However, the mean score of the item “JU activities in the community, go in line with its motto, quoted ‘We are in the community’”

M=2.49 and SD=1.98. This mean score suggests that the University should put more effort into promoting its activities in the community and its policies and practices to perform as its community based philosophy.

Results from the interview also showed that respondents from nearby areas familiar with Jimma University would perceive the lack of information higher than the community members far from the main campus. This is also shown in the results seen in the survey. In this case, n=16 (53%) of the nearby area respondents

feel they are getting enough information from Jimma University about its activities in the community and 34% of the participants are happy with the information received.

In addition to this, other respondents argue that good external communication for improving the corporate image and reputation creates suspicion and resistance towards the University intentions. In fact respondents raise the question “*if JU says ‘we are in the community’ why does it not focus too intently on communicating about its activities in Jimma city?*” Based on this view, it can be argued that the community considers JU activities as a scheme in order to divert the attention of the general public opinion from the University negatively perceived image and reputation. Many of the respondents have no contact at all with the university stating the gap of information that exists between them and the university. Due to this, the community in general was quite skeptical on how to send feedback to the University.

Based on the results, Jimma University should improve its information flow or external communication system since even the people who felt they were not getting enough information wanted to know more about its activities in the community.

On the other hand, the perceived reputation in terms of the external communication system has a significant gap between the respondents nearby to JU and those far away from the University.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, the conclusion and recommendation of the thesis have been discussed. Followed by an assessment of its significance and of its contribution to the University and community respectively, an overview of the study has been provided. Finally, based on the results, recommendations for the University (JU) were presented.

Conclusions

This study assessed the perceived image and reputation via the use of a mixed research approach. With the increased competition in higher education, the criteria by which institutions are judged are changing. While what goes into judging a higher education institution might continue to change and evolve, the building blocks of success in any competitive environment such as developing a positive image and reputation and differentiating itself from the competition remain constant. Setting a corporate social responsibility strategy, becom-

ing involved in community developmental activities and implementing the actions is one powerful way of achieving this goal. Besides, environmental protection activities and managing the external communication system create mutual understanding between the community and the university. This will not only be beneficial to the University itself but it will also be beneficial to the society in general.

As reviewed in the literature section, in order to compete in the changing education industry and also to fulfill their mission in a world in perpetual transformation, the University must recognize that their own actions should reflect the values and norms which they claim to embody. This means, deepening their commitment to activities in the community at the operational level as well as at the academic level. Thus, the most important element of an organization's corporate image and reputation management is the ability to see its current reputation standing and making proper projections. Thus, in this study clear definitions of the image and reputation are given, and how they are interrelated and influence the university is discussed.

The results of the study emphasize the importance of organizational image and reputation for universities. Moreover, they give clues about developing and maintaining an organizational image and reputation to university administration as well as for the researchers interested in image studies. Organizational image is the accumulation of perceptions of insiders and outsiders regarding that organization. A good organizational image is vital for any organization. Therefore, organizations should manage their images effectively. Individuals' needs should be satisfied in order to build a positive perception and achieve organizational objectives.

On the other hand, findings also bear out the complexities of the analysis of the cause-effect relationship between provision of information and the community. The more the community members are aware of positive university achievements, the more they expect and thus, the lower they rate actual performance and the less satisfied they are. Findings also suggest something about what kind of communication the community members expect from the University.

Recommendations

The findings suggest that Jimma University does not look at its activities as a University with a community based education philosophy

that is designed to enhance its image and reputation. For the organizations, it is part of giving back to society, not something that had been planned as such and upon which the very existence of CSR activities were based. It is the researcher view that JU should perhaps fully integrate its CSR initiatives into its corporate perspectives and operations. In other words, the University should openly engage in strategic community involvement activities. Besides, Jimma University could work more collaboratively with the media with respect to its general activities in order to attract more public trust and gain visibility and support of the community.

However, with the community's expectations growing, there may be more pressure on the University to be even more involved and adopt more environmental protective measures. Increasingly Jimma University will be expected to take responsibility for the community and discourage pollutions. This final stage in the environmental concerns may also drive community preferences in the future, offering opportunities for environmentally correct University (green technology, eco products, etc). In short, JU which has long been involved in successful community based education projects and takes a particular interest in any program regarding the community social and developmental problems, is in a good position to take the lead in such educational projects.

In addition to this, the university currently has an external and communication office/department. This should be reorganized to serve as a "corporate communications" department instead. This new department must work closely with a vice-general manager in order to gain more power authority. Besides, JU has to design communication channels to inform the community about its activities in the city. The research can be considered useful, even though the response rates remained very low. This research gives Jimma University an outline of their current image and if the university wishes, it can make major changes to its strategy based on the recommendations of this study.

- The University must work harder or find more innovative ways to engage with the wider public in Jimma city.
- More awareness is needed on the differing roles and activities of JU in the community. The public are confused and unsure about the responsibilities and activities in the community.

- Supporting and working with the youth would be further improved if the problems with information sharing were resolved. This would lead to a more joined up way of working between university and the community.
- Evidence from the research suggests that the university (JU) should participate in developmental activities by coordinating students, and organizing employers for volunteerism and donation activities (also involving the community) to a good corporate image and reputation.
- This has a consequence for the community who notice a lack of environmental protection activities.
- Creating a good communication system with the community

The findings of the research suggests 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 of JU 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 more closely the community in where 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 with the philosophy of community based education, 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 the study and taking into consideration, Jimma University will be able to devise a strategy that can greatly improve its corporate image and reputation perceptions 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 from the University's side.

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