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PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN SELECTED MEDIA ORGANISATIONS IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Observations reveal that most media organizations in Nigeria have not adopted effective public relations and the performance management concept as strategic instruments for the fulfillment of their organizational goals and objectives. This yawning gap seems to have remained unfulfilled over time. The focus of this study is to ascertain whether media organizations in Nigeria manage their organizations effectively through the use of public relations and performance management system and to determine the relationship between public relations and performance management in the media industry in Nigeria. Descriptive survey method was used and the sample size was randomly drawn from three media organizations in Enugu urban. The study found that the media organizations do not apply PR in pursuit of fulfilling their organizational goals but there was evidence of the use of performance management, which interfaced with public relations to achieve desired results. Based on the findings, the researchers recommend that media organizations should make conscious efforts to adopt PR and the concept of performance management system in their operations to achieve their organizational goals.

INTRODUCTION

Public relations and media organizations share a fundamental operational philosophy and the ideal of objectivity and truth. This is why the two are mutually re-enforcing and are sometimes thought to be one and the same thing. Similarly, public relations and performance management in media organizations are two distinct action tools which can mean different things to different people but both play important roles as tools for improved organization management. Both are powerful and influential channels for delivering desired messages to diverse and heterogeneous audiences.

Public relations remains an important social instrument used to create and manage favourable images for organizations using research-based techniques and strategies (Samuel & Ong et al., 2019; Cacciatore & Meng, 2022). Modern organizations which neglect to adopt public relations in their performance management will not long survive and grow in this age of scientific management. Public relations can be said to be a catalyst for organizational growth and the attainment of organizational goals. This is because "image is the message." Ehikwe (2002: P. 14) emphasizes the imperative of image to a social institution when he asserts that:

> There is nothing in the world that can compare with image when we want to look at ourselves and say exactly what we are, what we want to be, where we want to be and what any other person may see or know, or feel or imagine about us. The image creates all these pictures about us and compel others to deal with us as reflected by these images.

For media organizations to excel in their news gathering and dissemination function in the society, they must employ public relations strategies, practices and principles. Ndolo (2003; Ofuani, Sulaimon & Adebisi, 2018), citing McCombs (1972) and Shaw (1976), says, "audiences not only learn about public issues and other matters through the media, they also learn how much importance to attach to an issue or topic from the emphasis the mass media place upon it." Also McQuail and Winahl (1981) state that the medium held by the receiver causes expectations of the media content and may thus be assumed to have an influence on the receivers choice of content as well as on his way of experiencing it and responding to it (Paul, 2016).

Defleur D'Antonio and Defleur (1971) opined that the pattern of conceptualization and belief that exist in the individual's social environment are the principal sources from which he draws his own definitions of reality. Thus, understanding the place of public relations and performance management in the realization of the organizational objectives of mass media institutions and other institutions is crucial to planning for organizational success (Samuel, 2019; Sadia et al., 2018).

The success of any media organization in any contemporary business environment, therefore, is tied to the ability of the management to effectively harness employee performance and relate effectively with its numerous target publics. The practical implication of this paper is, therefore, to emphasize that the adoption of public relations practices by media organizations will greatly enhance their corporate performance, especially in the areas of management decisions and actions. it will also boost their corporate image and reputation capital. This has become necessary following the revelation that most media organizations in Nigeria have not adopted the public relations corporate culture as a performance management concept and strategic instruments for the fulfillment of their organizational goals and objectives.

Statement of the Research Problem

Currently, media organizations in Nigeria lack effective public relations and performance management skills that could engender the fulfillment of their missions. This gap has remained unfulfilled over time. Based on this, the study set out to examine the relationship between public relations and performance management. How can public relations help employee performance management in media organizations? Can this relationship facilitate media organizations' operations in Nigeria?

Research Questions

To examine the variables contained in this study, the following research questions were formulated:

a. Is there any relationship between public relations and performance management in the media industry?

b. Has the relationship between public relations and performance management enhanced good media image?

c. Do the media organizations in Nigeria manage their organizations effectively through the use of public relations?

d.   Have media organizations improved their news gathering and dissemination duties through efficient employee performance management system?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nature of Public Relations

Every activity of man involves public relations. This is why Nnanyelugo *et al* (1999) state that of all the known professions practiced around the world, public relations seems to be the most exciting and most cherished. This is because almost every activity of man is an attempt to impress the other person or at least to improve either their personal status or corporate status or image. Thus, Yahaya and Abubakar (2017), stressed that Public Relations performs a reinforcement role to organizational communication. According to Uduji (2012), the purpose of public relations practice is to establish two-way communication seeking common grounds or areas of mutual interest, and to establish understanding based on truth, knowledge and full information. Rex Harlow (1976) cited in Uduji (2012), states:

> *Public relations is the distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance, and corporation between an organisation and its publics; involving the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest, helps management to keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipated trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication as its principal tool.*

Apart from the already advanced definitions of public relations, most scholars describe it as a management function and a communication activity (Bowen, 2003; Gordon, 1997). The best-known definitions of public relations belong to Grunig and Hunt (1984) and Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2000) who respectively define it as "the management of communication between an organization and its publics" and "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics on whom its success or failure depends."

Hence, Fulan *et al* cited in Muhammad and Adamkolo (2018), affirms that information and communication are the raw materials while the internal and external publics are the market for information and communication services.

It would be convenient to adopt one of the current definitions of public relations which is broad and wide enough to capture all activities that practitioners carry out regardless of whether it builds relationships or not. Gordon's (1997) definition of public relations fits this worldview. She defined it as "the active participation in social construction of meaning". This definition is broad and inclusive of every type of communication. Gordon discussed her definition's failure to delimit the field to certain activities, believing that "the reconceptualization of public relations offers multitudes of opportunities for reassessing and redefining our assumptions". Mumby (1987) claimed that "power relations are chronically reproduced in the structures of social systems." As public relations practitioners, managers and technicians, we should counter this power through constant deliberations, boundary spanning, research, and acknowledgement and understanding of the publics to re-establish a balance of power and equity in the social system."

The Ideal Roles for Public Relations

Synthesizing the functions and definitions of public relations, Fitzpatrick and Gauthier (2001) remarked that the dozens of statements about the field included "a lot of people doing a lot of things for a diverse group of institutions and interests". Along with the definitions of public relations and perceptions of what public relations is and should be, many scholars have examined its role, especially within the media industry. Public relations acts as change agent, serves as the conscience of the organization, and gives voice to those without power in their relationship within the organization, (Holtzhausen & Voto, 2002). For practitioners who engage in such efforts, they want to see a change happen in the institution and become boundary spanners. He further noted that public relations practitioners as boundary spanners will inevitably be more in touch with the societal and cultural environment of organizations and will therefore be more susceptible to these changes than most others".

Meyerson (2001) identified an organizational role similar to the organizational activist. The tempered radical is the organizational leader, an "irritant"

who inspires and influences change through small actions. The tempered radical does not figure prominently on the organizational landscape; they do not lead the company or chair any board of directors. Instead they are the "quiet catalysts who push back against prevailing norms, create learning, and lay the groundwork for slow but ongoing organizational and social change in the organisation. They do this by creating a network of relationships among colleagues.

Holtzhausen and Voto (2002) found that practitioners lacking the backing or support from the dominant coalition were still powerful: these practitioners relied on personal characteristics, relationship building, expertise, and opportunity to gain power, hence inducing employees' performance.

Dozier and Lauzen's (2000) remarked the body of public relations research as one driven by managerial concerns: "Specifically, activism is largely studied by public relations scholars from the perspective of organizations with pockets deep enough to hire professional public relations practitioners". Traditionally, activists from outside the organization pounce on the corporation or group. Activism is seen as something that does not occur within the organization's public relations function.

Performance Management in Perspective

The term performance, among the various meanings adduced to it and as highlighted in the 21st Century Chambers Dictionary, is a manner or efficiency of functioning. On the other hand, the term management has been defined in various ways by various authors. Umoru-Onuka, (2004) defines management as planning, organizing, staffing, directing, co-ordinating, reporting and budgeting. He further posits that management performs the functions of forecasting, planning, organizing, implementing and monitoring. Henri Fayol, quoted in Agbato (1990) defined management as a process of functions with planning being the most important. It is the art of getting things done through others - both efficiently and effectively.

According to Akubue (1991), management is the method where a group of people at the highest level of organization, plan, organize, communicate, co-ordinate, control and direct the actions and activities of the people who work for the organization towards the achievement of organizational objectives.

Performance management is a systematic process where an organisation involves employees in improving organisation effectiveness by getting them to focus on achieving the organisation's mission and strategic goals. According to Kandula (2010), it is a process of designing and executing motivational strategies, interventions and drivers with an objective to transform the raw potential of human resource into performance. Weihrich and Koontz (2003), see the concept as the system of measuring performance against pre-established objectives.

In the words of Armstrong (1999), performance management refers to a systematic and integrated approach to delivering sustained success to an organisation by improving the performance of the employees and developing the capabilities of teams and employees' contributions. Performance management offers a feedback mechanism on employees' performance. This mechanism acts as a tonic for the employees to strive to improve their performance. According to Bartol and Martin (1994), this feedback guides, motivates and reinforces effective behaviour and reduces ineffectiveness. It also directs and supports employees to work effectively and efficiently to attain organizational needs.

Performance Management System

Organizations strive to succeed in a competitive environment. Often, people wonder why some companies are more successful than the others and what a company can do to enhance its productivity. Cummings and Worley (2008) advocate that performance management is an integrated process of defining, assessing, and reinforcing employee work behaviours and outcomes. Organisations that implement a good performance management have the tendency to outperform those that do not practice it. They provided a model of performance management that jointly influences the performance of individuals and work groups, hence the performance management system. According to Cummings and Worley (2005), when goals are difficult but achievable, goal setting prompts persistence over time. To ensure that goals are attained requires some kind of an orderly feedback. Hunt (2005) agrees that appraisal well managed, enables the organisation to be aware of what the individual is doing, and the individual to be aware that their contribution is valued, and perhaps that they will receive some reward. Shields (2007), opines that reward is given in return when the agreed objectives are met, but it is often misunderstood only as monetary pay back for good work done. Armstrong (2006) stated that:

A reward system expresses what an organisation values and is prepared to pay for. It is governed by the need to reward the right things in order to convey the right message about what is important in terms of expected behaviours and outcomes. The basic philosophy is that people should be rewarded for the value they create.

When people are rewarded for the value they create, it reinforces the likelihood that more value will be created. Armstrong and Barron (2003) stated that performance could motivate people by:

- Clarifying goals and expectations.
- Providing reinforcement through feedback.
- Providing opportunities for people to use and develop their skills.
- Facilitating job enlargement, empowerment and job enrichment.
- Helping people to increase their self-esteem through their work achievements and growth (intrinsic motivation).
- Providing opportunities for people to feel that they are valued through recognition and praise- (extrinsic non- financial motivation).
- Rewarding people financially – (extrinsic motivation).

Cummings and Worley (2008) suggested that performance management is an integrated process of defining, assessing, and reinforcing employee work behaviours and outcomes. They further assert that organizations that implement a good performance management can outperform those that do not. Armstrong and Barron (2003) stated that performance management is a process rather than an event, and so it operates in a continuous cycle. For performance management to be successful, Boxall and Purcell (2003) argue that it must have a positive, defining impact on the organisation's objectives, ensuring undeniable success, and highlighting the reasons for the difficulties arising in it and the process of developing its competences or achieving its objectives.
Williams (2005) advocates that:

From the minute you arrive until the minute you leave the company, everything you do is rated…your objectives are sent for you. You are measured against your objective throughout the year. Your promotions, your salary increases,

everything is based on your performance against those objectives. A high-performance culture is ingrained in the company. It is part and parcel of how we operate.

According to Jordan (2007) performance management is a wide-ranging process, which integrates many of the elements, which make up successful people-oriented management. Kandula (2010) views performance management as an ongoing, systematic approach to improving results through evidence-based decision-making, continuous organizational learning, and a focus on accountability for performance. He sees the system as:

The set of interconnected practices which ensure that a person's overall capabilities and potential are appraised, so that relevant goals can be set for work and development and, through assessment, data on work behaviour and performance can be collected and reviewed.

The definition of performance management by authors shows they have a common viewpoint about performance management; though Enache (2011) rightly pointed out the importance of highlighting any difficulties that might arise in the inability to achieve the objective.

Objectives of Performance Management
According to Lockett (1992) in Onyeneho (2007), performance management aims at developing individuals with the required commitment and competencies for working towards the shared meaningful objectives within an organizational framework. Its focus is on enabling goal clarity for making people do the right things at the right time. Apart from all these, the major objectives of performance management may include:
- To align the employees towards the achievement of superior standard performance.

- To help the employee in identifying the knowledge and skills required for performing the job efficiently as this would drive focus towards performing in the right way.

- Boosting the performance of the employee by encouraging employee empowerment, motivation and implementation of an effective reward mechanism.

- Promoting a two-way system of communication between the supervisors and the employee for clarifying expectations about the roles and accountabilities, communicating the functional and organizational goals, providing a regular and transparent feed-back for improving employee performance and continuous coaching.

- Identifying the barriers to effective performance and resolving those barriers through constant monitoring, coaching and development interventions.

- Creating a basis for several administrative decisions, strategic planning, succession planning, promotions and performance-based payment.

- Promoting personal growth and advancement in the career of the employees by helping them in acquiring the desired knowledge and skills.

Key Components of Performance Management System

Several key components that need to work together to make a system work and business strategy improved abound. Aina (2002) identified some of them to include:

- **Job Plan and Performance Expectation:** Document which outlines, in writing and by category, what is expected of a particular employee and might include things like company products and services, knowledge following internal processes, meeting required work schedules, team work, customer service, etc.

- **Performance Review:** Used to document the actual performance of an employee against criteria outlined in the job plan and performance expectation document. It usually has numerical specifics, rating system in addition to evaluative comments category.

- **Development Plan:** Document that outlines by each category what actions will be taken to improve performance.

- **Communication:** This is probably the most critical item in performance management system.

Key Concerns of Performance Management System in Organizations

There are several areas of organization to which performance management system is concerned. According to Oguguom (2009), these include:

- The output (results achieved) or outcome processes required for reaching the results and also the inputs (knowledge, skills and attitudes).

- Measurement of results and review of progress in the achievement of set targets.

- Defining business plans in advance for shaping a successful future.

- Striving for continuous improvement and continuous development by creating a learning culture and an open system.

- Establishing a culture of trust and mutual understanding that fosters free flow of communication at all levels in matters such as clarification of expectations and sharing of information on the core values of an organization which bind the team together.

- The provision of procedural fairness and transparency in the progress of decision making.

Reasons for Performance Management System

Every organization would want to get the best return on its investment and employees are probably the most expensive and valuable tool to have this achieved. Weihrich and Koontz (2003) write that the most plausible reasons include that performance management system enables organizations to:

o Get the best performance from the available employees;

o Get the best return on investment; and

o Move towards greater responsibility and reward.

According to Kandula (2006), the significance of performance management are outlined as:

▪ It creates the platform for competitive business environment.

- Brings an inter-relationship between business and human relations.

- Fulfils human resources needs.

- Personnel management is the core of human resources.

- Consists of a set of motivational tools that are capable of obtaining superior performance.

- Capable of institutionalizing high performance work culture.

- Long-lasting impact and sustainable results.

- Measurable management.

- Optimizing human capital.

- Consistent and continuous renewal of skills and competencies.

Mass Media Organisations as Watchdogs of the Society

Mass media organizations can be found everywhere. According to Hanson (2005: P. 24), as mass media consumption grew in the 1950s, scholars also started paying more attention to the particular medium being used to transmit messages. Most of the effects researches focused on the interaction between the sender, the message and the receiver, ignoring the influence of the message itself. But the medium used to communicate is crucial.

Relationship between Public Relations and Performance Management in Mass Media Organizations

Through proper understanding, two-way communication flow and truth, the appraisal of the management, control and performance of media organizations can be easily evaluated. This is based on the relationship, which exists among these three concepts- public relations, performance management and mass media organizations. Eluwa (1998) states that public relations is an essential aspect of management. As a result, performance management of media organizations ought to be based on the level of acceptance they (the media) have received from their publics through public relations activities. As Nwosu (1990) puts it, public relations is at the heart of modern management and communication is an indispensable tool of modern public relations. The inter-relationship existing among public relations, performance management and mass media organizations could be viewed in line with Ukozor (2004) statement when she opined that:

> Public relations is being regarded more and more today as a management process in itself. Like other management processes, professional public relations work demands setting clear objectives, planning strategies, mapping out appropriate tactics and techniques, the outcome of which are reflected in organisational reputation and subsequently in profit margins. The public relations functions is extended to the marketing, production, personnel, finance and services departments of an organization.

It is necessary to state therefore, that with this inter-relationship, the fact remains clear that the image-building effort of the media organisation rests on the shoulders of the media practitioner who must use all available means or strategies including public relations to attempt to build and sustain the image of his organisation. At the other end, his performance towards newsgathering and dissemination is not neglected because it is in the effort of this news packaging effort that the organisational image is made manifest.

Method of Study

A descriptive survey method was adopted for the study.

Population of the Study/Sample

From the population of staff from Enugu State Broadcasting Service (ESBS), Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) - Channel 8 Enugu and Prime Targets Public Relations Consultants ltd, 10 members of staff were selected from each establishment. Using convenience sampling method, the researchers selected 10 staff members each from the establishments. A sample size of 30 persons participated in this study.

Data Collection

The instrument for data collection was a well-structured questionnaire which asked specific questions based on the research questions of the study.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency and percentages).

Table 1

There is no significant relationship between public relations and performance management in the media industry.

Organisation	No of Respondents	Response Patterns				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ESBS	10	2	1	0	4	3
NTA	10	1	2	1	4	2
Prime Target	10	0	1	0	6	3
Total	30(100.00%)	3(10.00%)	4(13.33%)	1(3.33%)	14(46.70%)	8(26.70%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Research Question 1 sought to answer the question: Is there any relationship between public relations and performance management in the media industry? The results shown on the table answer this question in the negative. A total of 73.4% of the respondents disagree. It shows that there is little relationship between public relations and performance management in the media industry in Nigeria.

Table 2

The relationship between public relations and performance management has enhanced good media image.

Organisation	No of Respondents	Response Patterns				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ESBS	10	3	5	0	2	0
NTA	10	2	5	1	1	1
Prime Target	10	4	5	0	1	0
Total	30(100.00%)	9(30.00%)	15(50.00%)	1(3.33%)	4(13.33%)	1(3.33%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

The data presented in table 2, answered the research question: Has the relationship between public relations and performance management enhanced good media image? Twenty four of the respondents representing 80.00% responded affirmatively to the question meaning that the relationship between public relations and performance management has enhanced good media image.

Table 3

Media organizations in Nigeria manage their organizations effectively through the use of public relations.

Organisation	No of Respondents	Response Patterns				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ESBS	10	1	2	1	4	2
NTA	10	2	3	0	2	3
Prime Target	10	1	2	1	4	2
Total	30(100.00%)	4(13.30%)	7(23.33%)	2(6.67%)	10(33.33%)	7(23.33%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Data presented in this table answered in the negative Research Question 3: Do the media organizations in Nigeria manage their organizations effectively through the use of public relations? A total of 17 respondents or 56.66% responded in the negative. Based on this position, the inference is that the media organizations in Nigeria do not manage their organizations effectively through the use of public relations.

Table 4

Media organisations have improved their newsgathering and dissemination through efficient employee performance management system.

Organisation	No of Respondents	Response Patterns				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ESBS	10	2	5	1	2	1
NTA	10	2	6	0	1	1
Prime Target	10	1	2	1	4	2
Total	30(100.00%)	5(16.67%)	13(43.33%)	2(6.67%)	7(23.33%)	4(13.33%)

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Research Question 4 was: Have media organizations improved their news gathering and dissemination through efficient employee performance management system? Based on the responses which showed 18 respondents or 60.00% answering the question in the affirmative, it is proven that media organizations in Nigeria have improved their news gathering and dissemination through efficient employee performance management system.

Findings/Discussion

This study has shown that media organizations in Nigeria do not employ public relations as a tool to achieve their organizational objectives. However, they are shown to have used performance management to their benefit, particularly for enhanced news gathering and dissemination.

Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between public relations and performance management system in the mass media industry in Nigeria. The influence of these concepts and practices were however examined as to how they had been instrumental to the media in newsgathering and dissemination. The study has shown that public relations and performance management system are quite indispensable in the success story of any enterprising mass media organisation in the contemporary Nigeria.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

a. Mass media organizations should attempt to combine the principles and practice of both public relations and performance management system for the overall achievement of their organizational goals.

b. It is important for mass media organizations to furnish their audience only the truth in their broadcasts or publications and maintain a two-way communication flow with audience in order to excel in their profession.

c. It is also recommended that performance management should be used from time to time to evaluate the activities of mass media organizations in Nigeria in general and Enugu State in particular.

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