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Full Length Research Paper

Media and disaster management: Analysing communication trends in flood ravaged communities in Benue State, North Central Nigeria

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The need to communicate early and frequently with multiple stakeholders is to ensure effective communication towards enhanced preparedness and response efforts in order to reduce disaster fatality rate. The media are critical stakeholders in disaster management as their contents create awareness and educate people in building resilience, reducing disaster risk and vulnerability in pre, during and after disaster. This study analyses the trends of communicating disaster information by the media to establish the existence of departure from the media not living up to its social responsibility role of informing and educating the public and to find out to what extent disaster awareness is communicated to communities to understand the effect of media messages on the community. This study adopted survey method with questionnaire developed and distributed to one hundred and twenty respondents in six communities in Benue State living close to flooded area- New Kanshio Village, Rice Mill Wadata, Idye Village, Achusa Village and Wurukum Village. The study disagrees with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) (2009) assertion that disaster awareness is low in the developing countries. The result affirm that disaster information are delivered through radio and television and little attention was paid to the use of community-based disaster risk management approach that involve use of informal communication channels such as town hall meetings, community based seminars. However, timely and frequent sympathy message from various stakeholders dominated the media content, which is more top–bottom approach and not totally understood by the rural inhabitants, probably leading to high victims' level. The paper concluded that community-based communication process using communication forms such as interpersonal, seminar, town hall meeting should be used in creating disaster awareness and to complement effort of the media.

Key words: media, disaster management, communication trends, community-based communication process, disaster information.

INTRODUCTION

Disasters can be classified as natural disasters, technological disasters, or complex emergencies

(UNISDR, 2009). When disaster occurs, affected people are always in disarray during and after a disaster,

however, and perhaps if effective communication has been in place, preparedness and response efforts will not only reduce fatality rate, it will diminish secondary morbidity (Sellnow et al, 2012). Organizations must communicate early and frequently with multiple stakeholders to prevent panic and implement an orderly response plan (Perko, 2011). The government, decision-makers and stakeholders need to know what efforts are on-going, and what type of further assistance is available to coordinate relief. The public deserves information such as where to obtain assistance, what on-going personal risks they face, and how they can protect themselves and their families (Rubin et al., 2011). In the case of disaster information, early warning systems, local community engagement is crucial in reducing fatality as a result of disaster. Thus, to achieve sustainable disaster management, communicating at the right and appropriate time to the communities will reduce their vulnerabilities and serves as starting point for local system development (Capistrano and Singh, 2012).

Media effort is, therefore, critical in disaster management, as its contents create awareness and educate people. Its effort has assisted in building resilience, reducing disaster risk and vulnerability. According to the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) (2009), involvement of the media is needed in the three stages of disaster management - pre, during and after disaster. UNISDR (2009) argued that presently focus of disaster management organisation and media is mainly on during and after disaster.

Research findings have shown that the media in Nigeria have failed to bring environmental issues sufficiently and the danger it portends to the public domain. It has also not efficiently carried out its social responsibility roles of informing, educating and mobilising the public for actions that can engender sustainable development (Ebagare and Anyanwu, 2011; Nwanne, 2013). However, this study analyses the trends of communicating disaster information by the media, to establish the existence of departure from the media not living up to its social responsibility role of informing, educating and mobilising the public toward reducing natural disaster. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to find out to what extent disaster awareness is communicated to rural dwellers; and to understand the effect of disaster messages on the community.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Media and disaster management

According to Raufu (2003: 8), "mass media are the modern means of giving information to a large number of people". The modern mass media include newspapers, magazine, radio, television, internet, etc. However, in relation to rural community, Ebagare and Anyanwu (2011: 50) describe community media as publications or broadcast outfits which serve the needs of those who make up a community. Community media brings media close to the rural people, feel the people's heart beat and therefore is better placed to advocate solutions. The media must be perceived to be part and parcel of a community to enable the people to relate well with them and possibly benefit from them. At the moment, community media is been used to mobilize the rural populace for participation in the political process (Okoye, 2008: 267). Moemeke (1989) argued that rural media should be used to sensitise and mobilise rural populace on disaster-related issues.

Communication trends

The use of all forms of communication arts to transmit essential knowledge to wider community is especially appreciated in the informal settings of assemblies, and special events (Bhattia, 2006). This can take many forms, offering fun and engaging ways to introduce important knowledge, skills and competencies for all ages. Dissemination of written materials, and uses of posters and signage are important ways to share disaster risk reduction messages. Creative educational materials, whether toys and games, documentary and short videos, storybooks, comic books, puzzles, and computer games also can be creative ways to transmit awareness and knowledge. Cultural and performing arts, whether music, song, poetry, dance, puppetry, magic, street theatre, improvisation, pantomime, or artwork are creative ways to introduce disaster risk reduction messages. Setting up of "safety clubs", scouting badges, and project activities can develop interest and leadership among children. These provide an opportunity to develop awareness materials and displays, plan games and engage in performances and art projects to communicate with others. Small-scale models including, for example, shake table demonstrations are also powerful hands-on tools. Projects that bring the media into contact with local community and local government and community-service oriented clubs have been shown to be extremely effective for disaster reduction (Schick, 2007). These practical efforts help to develop populace analytic and problem-solving skills, as they research and identify hazards, tap into indigenous knowledge, oral history, public information, and scientific research and expertise to assess risks and identify solutions. Competitions, awards and commendations generate community and mass media interest and develop enthusiasm for the messages.

Community education and disaster management

Community has a great deal of local experience and

local knowledge of disaster. Historical local disaster prevention methods were passed on to other family/community members through daily activity (Takeuchi et al., 2011). However, the characteristics of disasters have changed due to climate change, thus necessitating that people now need to prepare for disasters of which they have no experience and about which they have difficulty in obtaining information. It is thus necessary for communities and families to know different scenarios of disaster (Takeuchi et al., 2011). Bongo (2010) stressed the gaps in the integration and linking of disaster-related information with the community level. He opined that, for effective community level dissemination of disaster information, there is a need for streamlining the 'jargon' used in the media as it impedes communication strategies to communities. He argued that communities should be given the opportunity to formulate and develop their own disaster communication strategies based on experience and adaptation strategies for community resilience. Thus, capacity building of community-level disaster management committees and institutional arrangements must be enhanced (Bongo, 2010). Capacities should be built on usage of portable satellite communication technology that would enable local communities to be better equipped and respond faster to disaster situations (Bharti, 2008).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is based on agenda setting theory by McComb and Shaw (1972) and social responsibility theory by Siebert et al. (1956). Agenda setting theory describe a very powerful influence of the media to inject on the public mind issues that are important. This study presupposes that mass media should bring more disaster issues to the public domain especially rural area. This will create more awareness and provoke disaster resilience. According to Dominick (1996), the social responsibility theory emphasises the responsibilities of the media to the society by adequately reporting balanced news on all public affairs, and giving voice to the voiceless. The theory is operationalized from the perspective that environmental disaster constitute serious threat to society's wellbeing and the media can avert disaster by making pre-disaster information available to the vulnerable communities.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted survey research method with open-ended questionnaire developed and distributed to one hundred and twenty respondents in six flood ravaged communities in Benue State. Purposive sampling was used to select 120 respondents who were the victims of flood disaster from New Kanshio village, Rice Mill Wadata, Idye village, Achusa village and Wurukum village, Welfare quarters in Guma local government of Benue State. The respondents which are mostly traders, artisans, civil servants and farmers are culled from population of 262,100 of the Guma local government. Out of the respondents, a total of 107 questionnaire were returned which reflects 89% response rate. Questionnaires collated from the field were quantitatively analysed with the use of descriptive statistics. Statistics were expressed in frequencies and percentages and presented in the table.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic socio-economic characteristics of the respondents show that more men responded to our questionnaire than women. Also, more married people showed willingness to respond than all other marital status. This could be because they are looking for ways to voice out their concern and solve the problem at hand. The age of the respondents revealed that most of them were within age 30-39 years, the age of very strong men, willing to work but being impeded by the flood that took place. Data on academic qualification shows that the respondents were mostly secondary school leavers looking for admission into higher institutions or cutting some jobs in the farm or fishing for survival (Table 1).

Trends of media communication on disaster management in Benue State

The result presented in Table 2 revealed that the respondents had experienced natural and man-made disaster in their life. Specifically, more respondents had experienced flood disaster than fire outbreak and riots. Most of the respondents, as evident in Table 3, agreed that they were aware of the disaster prior to occurrence. This disagrees with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) (2009) that disaster awareness is low in the developing countries. However, when further analysis was made on the medium at which disaster information is passed, result from Figure 1 affirms that most disaster information in Nigeria is delivered through radio and television. Little attention was paid to the use of community-based disaster risk management approach that involves use of town hall meetings and community based seminars.

The concentration on the use of television and radio to a large extent allow the use of jargon, which Bongo (2010) advocated against. Rather the use of 'jargon' could be replaced utilization of simple words or proverbs that can elicit better understanding by the community. This can only be done when information is passed more at community meeting and seminar rather than formalised setting like newspaper and radio/television platform. Also, since communities members are aware that there might be occurrence of disaster, better disaster management information need to have been passed to the likely to be affected communities. This can aid formulation of community disaster strategies based on their experience and adaptation thereby strengthening the community

Table 1. Demographic socio-economic characteristic of respondents.

Sex	
Male	67.29% (72)
Female	32.71% (35)
Marital status	
Single	20.56% (22)
Married	58.87% (63)
Divorced	9.34% (10)
Widow/Widower	11.21% (12)
Age	
20-29	13.08% (14)
30-39	39.25% (42)
40-49	20.56% (22)
50-59	25.23% (27)
60 above	1.86% (2)
Educational backgroud	
Primary Leaving Certificate	19.62% (21)
Adult Education	11.21% (12)
Secondary Education	44.85% (48)
National Diploma	14.95% (16)
Higher National Diploma	9.34% (10)
Major occupation of the respondents	
Trader	33.64% (36)
Artisan	14.95% (16)
Civil Servant	10.28% (11)
Farmer	41.12% (44)

Source: Field survey 2018.

Table 2. Kind of disaster experienced.

Natural	
Flood Disaster	75.70% (81)
Man made	
Fire outbreak	6.56% (7)
Riots	17.75% (19)

Source: Field Survey 2017.

Table 3. Community awareness of the disaster prior to its occurrence.

Is your community aware of the disaster prior to its occurrence	Yes	80.37%
	No	19.62%

resilience. Furthermore, the community disaster strategies can be strengthened by building the capacity building of community level disaster management committees and integrate such into local government or state government
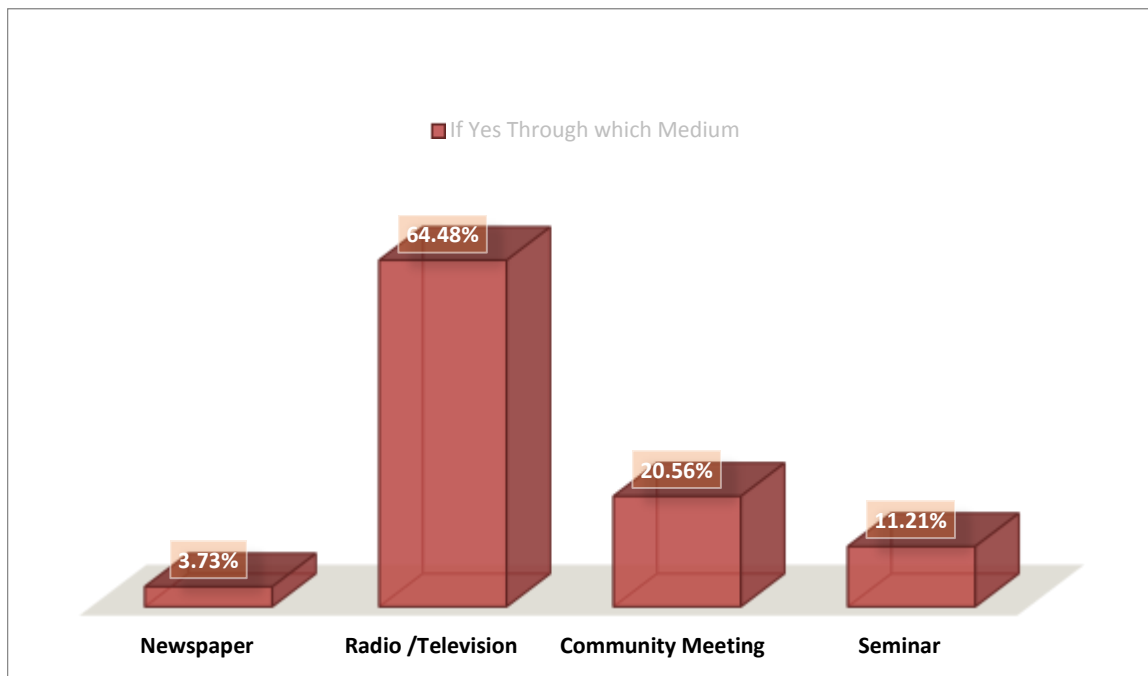
Figure 1. Medium at which disaster information is passed.

Table 4. Media messages community were exposed to:

What are the media messages exposed to, by your community during the disaster?	
(1) Timely and frequent sympathy messages from various stakeholders through the media	66.35%
(2) Inter-personal communication from stake holders at internally-displaced people (IDP) centres	18.69
(3) Government initiate relief effort to restore hope to the community	14.95

institutional arrangements (Bongo, 2010).

However, when considering the kind of messages media pushed to the community during the disaster, the respondents' responses in Table 4 show that timely and frequent sympathy message from various stakeholders dominated the media content. These messages are type of top–bottom approach to communication dissemination that is purely urban- based and may not be in the form understood by the rural populace who were affected by the flood. Other responses were inter-personal sympathy communication from stakeholders like visitation to internally-displaced people (IDP) centres as well as visitation and provision of relief material to the affected victims. The implication of data is that community based communication process should be given more attention. This, we argued, that the information gotten through radio/television, could have reduced the number of the victims of the flood disaster, if the community based disaster strategies, using communication process such as interpersonal, seminar, town hall meeting are in place, to complement effort of the media.

Conclusions

The study disagrees with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) (2009) assertion that disaster awareness is low in the developing countries. The result affirms that disaster information are delivered more through radio and television while little attention was paid to the use of community-based disaster risk management approach which involves use of informal communication channels such as town hall meetings, community-based seminars.

However, in line with Bongo (2010) the kind of communication required to link disaster-related information with the community level must be such that streamlining the use of 'jargon' and instead replace it with simple words or proverbs understood by the community. This can only be possible if the likely to be affected communities are mobilised to be involved in the formulation and development of their own disaster communication strategies based on experience and adaptation for community resilience.

Furthermore, relying only on the disaster information from television and radio may not motivate the victims to take urgent action. This is because disaster information from television and radio may be considered general compared to when such information is obtained at the community meeting, and probably delivered in their local language.

Moreover, the idea of timely and frequent sympathy message from various stakeholders which dominated the media content is top-bottom approach and shows that the post disaster information is still lacking in the country. It is the opinion of this paper that this perhaps could account for the reason why the flood victims was unable to learn from past events and so may fall victim next time.

This paper concludes that community based-communication process using communication forms such as interpersonal, seminar, town-hall meeting should be used in creating disaster awareness and to complement effort of the media. Effort should be geared toward development of appropriate post-disaster information strategy like lessons learnt from the perspective of the victims. This approach will strengthen pre-disaster information material that should serve in the overall disaster prevention programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommends that more disaster information should be delivered through radio and television perhaps using local dialect. However, to achieve more impact at the community level, the Nigeria Emergency Manage-ment Agency as well as her State and Local Government counterparts should develop community-based disaster risk management that would involve use of informal communication channels such as town hall meetings, community-based seminars etc. Part of the strategies to be deployed should be to involve the communities likely to be affected in the formulation and development of their own disaster communication strategies based on experience, and resilience developed as a result of disaster in the community. As part of the broad community-based disaster information management to be developed, post disaster information must be such that will gather experiences from local community and package as post disaster education packages in local dialects as a way of reducing the victims' exposure to disaster. It is also recommended that capacity building

programme should be organised for the selected community level disaster management members that will be involved and deployed especially on the use of portable satellite communication technology that would enable local communities to respond faster to disaster situations. It is recommended that community-based communication process using communication forms such as interpersonal, seminar, town hall meeting should be used in creating disaster awareness and to complement effort of the TV and radio stations being used presently.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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Public relations in corporate reputation management: A case of Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation

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This study aims to explore the practice of public relations management in maintaining relations with the public who interact with a corporate organization. To investigate the role of public relations in maintaining good reputation, a mixed method approach was employed taking Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate as a case study. Data were collected from different instruments such as questionnaire, document review and in-depth interview. The questionnaire was administered to 50 participants, while in-depth interview was done with the public relations department officers of EBC. The findings of this study indicated that the public relation campaign of EBC is not research oriented and the outcome of the campaign is not measured. In addition, survey of the audiences' perception indicated that audiences have negative perceptions towards the organisation. Hence, it is possible to extrapolate that the efforts made by the public relations department of EBC to manage organisational reputation is not successful. This could possibly be due to lack of research-oriented public relations campaign and lack of research on return on investment.

Key words: Corporate communication, public relations, corporate organization, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate.

INTRODUCTION

Public relations are the management function that evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with public interest, and executes a program of actions to earn public understanding and acceptance (Miller and Dinan 2007; Siriramesh and Vercic 2003; Gruing 1992). This indicates public relations being a part of management function dealing with organizational communication activities by measuring public attitude, analysing policies, executing program of action, where upon keeping public interest to win public attention and acceptance.

Similarly, Seitel (2017) Newsom et al. (2004:3) placed corporate or organization reputation at the center of public relations functions. A public relations function is the discipline which looks at reputation with the aim of earning support and influencing public opinion (Seitel 2017; Guth and Marsh 2016; Botan and Hazleton 2010). It is the people who form an opinion over a period of time (about a firm) that gives the organization its reputation. So, maintaining good relations with all the concerned publics

is important for an organization. In sum, public relations is all about maintaining relations with the public. The corporate organizations need to maintain, enhance and foster good relations with their prospective customers (public) to succeed. The role of public relations in this aspect becomes very important (Seitel 2017; Theaker 2017). From the above premises, one can understand that reputation is the essential and inevitable part in the world of public relations business. Thus, the current study makes an industrious effort to investigate the role of public relation in managing public opinion to develop organizational reputation, using EBC as a case of study.

Research problem

If an organization does not deserve a good image which is really a good reputation, public relations must do something about organisational communication (Jefkins, 2004). This implies that good reputation is essential and requisite to develop good image. Thus, public relations must be alert to convert negative states to positive ones, which lead to goodwill and reputation.

Deficiencies of managing reputation may jeopardize a well-deserved and long cultivated favourable image and identity (Stacks 2016). Some organizations may not even much value reputation, supposing that they may meet their objectives without bothering overly about it. For public relations practitioners, this trend raises serious challenges to their assumed role as the function, which is in control of the corporate reputation (Davis, 2004).

This means failure to emphasis on the reputation of an organization could possibly lead to the destruction of corporate or organizational image and identity, which could possibly in turn convert public opinion from positive to negative (Botan and Hazleton 2010; Siriramesh and Vercic 2003). These could possibly pose a challenge to organization from achieving its objective and success. Even if the concept of reputation is the core in public relations and different theories has indicated correlation between organizational reputation and public relations, different studies suggested the importance of exploring the practice of public relation in different contexts. Thus, the current study makes an industrious effort to explore the practice of public relations from the perspective of reputation management by taking EBC as a case study.

Objective of the study

The objective of this research paper is to investigate the role of EBC public relations in managing corporate reputation. Based on this, the specific research questions were formulated to:

1. Investigate the practice of EBC public relation in managing corporate reputation.
2. Investigate the perception of audiences on EBC.

Review of literature

An overview of Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporate (EBC)

It is agreed that certain events occurred at different times and occasions in the country, considerably contributing to the introduction of television to Ethiopia, similarly, the contribution of foreign corporations and companies. This was so significant in the process of introducing the medium to the country (Teshome, 2006).

As Leykun (2004) indicated, the first attempt to introduce the concept and purpose of television in Ethiopia was made in 1956, when silver jubilee exhibition took place. The main objective of the exhibition, which was carried out by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) television, however was to indicate the existing political and social developments in the country. In order to achieve the required output in a closed-circuit system, the corporation presented two cameras, four monitors and a few telecasts (Leykun, 2004). Equally important, the founding of the Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa was another event for television to be introduced in Ethiopia. In 1963, on the founding of the organization, a temporary closed-circuit television was made.

As a result, some people could follow the proceeding of the meeting on monitors fixed on lobby in an open space in front of organizations hall (Ibid). A year later, on November 2, 1964, as indicated by Leykun (2004), the Ethiopian Television was established by British firm named *Thomson Television International limited.* It is also noted that the transmission time, during its establishment, was only two and half hour a day.

During this time, mass media in general and television were owned by the government. The legislation stated that ministry of information would check whether the public is really informed, entertained or educated by programs aired by the station though checking mechanisms are not stated (Abel, 2005).

When the Derg regime took the state power, television was under its full command and censorship of the government was severe. It was used as a full mouthpiece of the government under the shadow of unity and solidarity. During this time, Ethiopian Television leaped to a full color system. And it covered main towns and cities of Ethiopia, especially in relation to the establishment of worker party of Ethiopia (WPE) in 1983 (Abel, 2004).

Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency currently operates in radio, television and online. Ethiopian Radio was established in 1935. Almost three decades later, Ethiopian Television (ETV) launched its regular operation in 1964 (ERTA, 2000). Ethiopian Radio and Television were merged in 1995 and then it was termed as Ethiopian Radio and Television Agency (ERTA). Following some arrangements in the working environment and structural arrangements, the corporation was named

Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC).

As clearly articulated, service guidance of EBC and the role, structure and functioning of public relations department of EBC encompasses (ERTA, 2000):

1. Focusing on nurturing and managing reputation of agency using multiple medium.
2. Facilitating smooth relationship between the organisation and external publics and within internal public.
3. Responsibility of announcing the vision and mission of corporation for internal and external public for its achievement.

Public relations and reputation management

Many scholars have their own understanding on public relations and often agree on what it is. Up until now there is no uniformly accepted definition for it. However, one common denominator lies on the entire concern of definition. This is all about communication, thereby mutual relationship and understanding between the organization and its publics. A public relation practice is the discipline which looks after reputation with the aim of earning understanding and support, and influencing opinion and behaviour (Stacks 2016).

In other words, it is a discipline that deals will the interaction between organization and its publics. That is what the organization communicates to its publics and in turn, what they react or respond to it. This is because it creates a better understanding and change unfavourable opinion to favourable. Similarly, public relation function is planned effort to influence and maintain favourable opinion through acceptable performance, honestly presented, and with reliance on two-way communication (Etang 2008).

In addition to this, PR to some extent, at its core can be understood as the department which cares and responsible for reputation. The primary function of public relation is the long-term assurance of the survival of the agents involved. This presupposes that these agents can position positively as possible in their field of action and also distinguished from any competitor. This is precisely the function performed by public relations. It is the product of the social process that assigns their agents in raking in society. To this extent, PR can at its core, be understood as reputation nurturing (Etang, 2008).

So, from the above definitions of public relations and its function forwarded by different scholars, one can understand that, it is the nucleus and core department which keeps the reputation of an organization positively for further achievement of its objectives, by changing unfavourable attitude and opinion of client to favourable.

In addition, according to Ahuja (1989) as a management function, the role of public relations includes the following activities:

1. Anticipating, analysing and interpreting public opinions,

attitudes and issues which might impact good or bad operations and plan of the organization.
2. Researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, program of action and communication to achieve informed public understanding necessary for the success of an organizations aims. This includes employee or community relations and other programs.
3. Knowledge that may be required in the professional practice of public relations includes communication arts and technical knowledge and skills required for opinion research and public issue analysis

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to investigate the role of EBC's public relations in managing organizational reputation. To achieve this objective, mixed method research approach was employed. Based on this, an in-depth interview, document analysis and questionnaire were used as a data collection tool.

In-depth interview

Despite some limitations of interview as a data collection tool, the advantages of interview are: the use for intensive investigation of information in greater depth and its opportunity for follow up questions to get clear and detailed answers (Creswell 2014; Kothari 2004:98). Thus, an interview was conducted with the public relations practitioners of EBC. Semi-structured in-depth interview guide was prepared to manage the overall interview procedure. The purpose of in-depth interview is to achieve research objective one focusing on the investigation of the practice of public relations of EBC in managing the reputation of the corporation.

Document review

In addition to in-depth interview, document review was used as a tool of data collection to achieve research objective one concerning the investigation of the practice of public relation of EBC in managing reputation. The documents related to the plan and report of the practice of public relations are significant to explore the practice of public relations in one way and cross-check data gathered through in-depth interview. In sum, document review is significant to achieve research objective one and thus employed in this study.

Questionnaire

Questionnaire was used as a means of data collection tool. With such purpose, questionnaire was administered to 50 randomly selected respondents. The instrument was developed from the literature and items were developed in both open-ended and closed-ended questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The qualitative and quantitative data are presented and analysed separately. For the qualitative approach data from in-depth interview, documents are were presented and analysed in an integrated method. Whereas, for quantitative approach, data collected from questionnaire is presented and analysed quantitatively separately.

In-depth interview and document analysis

The in-depth interview was made with the public relations officer of EBC. The questions presented during an interview were concerned about the practice of the public relation department in managing organisational reputation. In other words, the central focus of interview was to explore the role and experience of public relations department in managing the reputation.

The first question of the interview was on the investigation of reputation management as a key role of public relation department of EBC. The interviewee answered....*one of the major responsibility of the public relations department of EBC is to manage the reputation of an organisation....It is clearly indicated on the guideline or job description of this department…*in line with this, the pamphlet produced and distributed by EBC indicates that the public relation department of EBC is in charge of managing the reputation of an organisation.

The second question forwarded to the interviewee is on the practice of public relations in manging the reputation. The interviewee goes on to say that …*we are doing the best in nurturing the reputation of our organisation…we are doing this in different approaches and mechanisms. For instance, we use TV advertisements, radio advertisements etc…* consistent to with the public relations tools used to manage organisational reputation, the report of the department to the organisational management indicated that "different means of communication (for instance, TV advertisement, radio advertisement and brochures) has been used to communicate with our audiences mainly with the intent to develop the image of our organisation.

In response to the third research question focusing on how well the public relation campaign is research oriented, the interviewee goes on to say that…*well, as I spook earlier, our department is responsible for keeping and protecting the reputation of this organisation. We have been working on this since the establishment of the office. No research has been done concerning public opinion and on how to manage the problem… because we simply identify the problem. Concerning this,* "Every public relations program or solution should begin with research. Most do not, which is a shame" (Sietle, 1995). In addition to this, according to Moore and Kalupa (2000), every public relations programs or solutions should begin with research which seeks to understand how well a company is known, its reputation and what public thinks about its products.

Question four was to explore the effectiveness research. Do you really measure the effectiveness of your campaign? The interviewee replied *…we have not measured the effectiveness of our campaign at all. We have no experience regarding the evaluation of our programmes…*similarly, the job description regarding the role of public relations department of EBC, there is no specifications and responsibilities of public relations to evaluate return on investment. In other words, the public

relation department has no decree of evaluating and reporting the outcome of the campaign.

In general, the data gathered through in-depth interview and document analysis indicated that the mission and the major role of public relation department of EBC are to nurture organisational reputation. Hence, the department is working to manage organisational reputation which is in harmony with the theoretical recommendations. However, the approach and mechanism of reputation management is in contradiction with the theory.
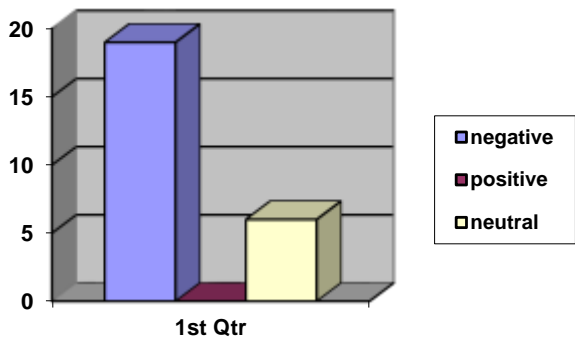
Even though research is essential in every public relations function including assessing and evaluating public opinion towards a company or agency as forwarded by different scholars of public relations, no research have been conducted by the department. Whatever is done by the PR department, it is not research oriented, it is not supported by evidence and facts. What is done is for the accomplishing of job descriptions outlined by the top management.

Not only application or performances of programs are not research oriented but the public relations campaign outcomes do not evaluate whether they are effective or not. In this regard, Moore and Kalupa (2002) firmly argued that effectiveness research or surveys are used to measure the impact of company's public relations campaign on the perception of the audiences. Now, the question remains, if the practice of public relation department of EBC is in contradiction with the theory in the field (which is not research oriented and the outcome is not evaluated); then it is very important to explore the perception of the audiences on the organisation. This seems significant to extrapolate the finding of the study with the theory.
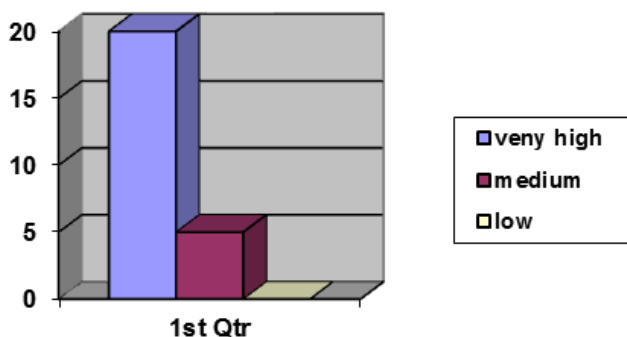
Data presentation and analysis of questionnaire

The quantitative part of this study used questionnaire as a data collection tool. Accordingly, 50 respondents were randomly selected for the purpose of exploring the perception of audiences or customers of EBC regarding organisational reputation. The first objective of the questionnaire is to explore the perception of audiences or customers on the organisation.

Graph 1 shows people's opinion towards an agency described as positive, negative and neutral. Out of the 50 questionnaires distributed to the selected 50 respondents, 39 (78%) have negative perception or opinion towards the organisation. Whereas, 11 (22%) showed neutral opinion. In contrast none of the respondents gave a positive opinion. Graph 1 demonstrates a marked difference of opinion, especially between the desired positive opinion and most probably, the hindrance to the realm of success and achievement which is negative opinion. According to Lippmann (2017), by negative attitude they mean, "giving the individual an unfavourable opinion of a person, issue or organization. It is accompanied by feeling of unpleasantness".

Graph 1. The opinion of people on an agency.

Graph 2. The eagerness of audiences to shift media.

Graph 2 shows how many of the audiences (respondents) are eager to shift the media due to different reasons. From the questionnaire distributed to 50 respondents, 40 (80%) of the respondents are shifting the media with very high degree; whereas the remaining 20% are in medium degree and 0% are not eager to shift the media. From these data, it is possible to conclude that most of the audiences of EBC tend to change their media preference. This will be a challenge to the organisational success and achievement of its objectives. on this regard, Sietel (2017) forwarded that "an important function of public relations research is watching the developments that may become the public relations problems in the future". Therefore, Ahuja (1989) put forth the essentiality of researching on a continuing basis to achieve informed pubic understanding necessary for the success of organizations aim.

In sum, from the quantitative data analysis, it is possible to understand the fact that the audiences (customers) of EBC have negative opinion or perception towards the company. Hence, they tend to shift their patronage. Significant number of participants' response indicated failure of the public relations campaign on EBC.

Conclusion

1. The public relations department of EBC is not capable

of changing negative attitude of people towards an agency to favourable or positive.
2. The department is not anticipating what will exist near the future regarding the public opinion and looking for solution.
3. The public relations activities, especially those related to public opinion are not research oriented; rather they are done by assumptions that are not reason and fact supported.
4. The department do not evaluate the outcome or the effectiveness of its campaigns.

Recommendations

1. The public relations department of EBC must be able to change the opinion of people from unfavourable to favourable state to create mutual understanding to achieve organizational goal.
2. As research is uncompromising concept in the public relations activity, it must be conducted in regular basis before and after the campaign.
3. Campaigns by the department must be evaluated, and based on this, it must identify the possible improvements.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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