

EVALUATION OF THE POTENTIALS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES IN THE FEDERAL AVIATION AUTHORITY OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study assesses the Public Relations strategies in the Federal Aviation Authority of Nigeria (FAAN). The objective was to find out the contribution of Public Relations strategies in the management of FAAN to promote service efficiency and growth. To ascertain the effectiveness of PR strategies at FAAN, this study used survey to elicit necessary data. The data was meticulously analysed to arrive at a finding. A sample size of 400 respondents was drawn through purposive sampling procedure across three major gate-away airports in Nigeria such as Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt. Findings indicated that PR strategies were effective in promoting service efficiency. Secondly, community relations activities were used to galvanise image building efforts of FAAN. The study, concludes that consistent counselling of FAAN's leadership will lead to better appreciation of PR role and will translate to improve service delivery and enhanced appreciation of public relations activities. The study recommends that FAAN should priorities constant training of PR officers and counselling of CEOs to promote growth and quality delivery of PR functions at FAAN.

Keywords: Public relations strategies, assesses, efficiency, community relations, counselling.

Introduction

Public relations formerly was seen as mere publicity tool to provide information for public consumption. Therefore, the forms of functions and nuances that the practice would take explain its impacts and nuances to organisations was not deciphered by scholars. This has led to the formation of different assumptions and theories such as Grunig and Hunts (1984) model of information and communication flow and several others all aim at finding explanations to the type of communication behaviour that public relations shall undertake to reflect its functions in the organisation.

At the backbone of this discussion was primarily the need for effective communication in organisations which public relations intended to anchor as special area of focus hence its classification as part of social science (Black, in Ogande, 2015). Black (1990, p. 1) submits that,

“Public relations has been practiced sporadically since the earliest time” The target was to use persuasion and rhetoric, Jefkins and Yadin (1998) to build public opinion around a certain goal. Encouraged by the early birth of democracy, public opinion was the target of governments and organisations seeking to build public confidence. Therefore, Black, (1990) attests that: “the Romans dramatised the importance of public opinion in the slogan, *vox populi, vox dei*; translated to mean, *the voice of the people is the voice of God*.”

Black's position is drawn from the fact that, public opinion was the test ground for the early practice of public relations. Early practitioners used their voices and pens to make a profound effect on the public opinion of their times. They circulated pamphlets, wrote in the press, lectured and spread their ideas by word of mouth.

A famous attempt at enthroning modern public relations practice was attributed to Thomas Jefferson, when as a president of America, in 1807, replaced the phrase: “State of Thought” in what is referred in Nigeria as “State of the Nation Address” with “public relations” in his draft speech to the 7th American Congress. It is worth noting that this feat brought almost instant recognition by the State on the importance of public relations in government of America.

Moreover, public relations practice in government started receiving a boost during the First World War under President Wilson of America. Wilson set up a Committee on Public Information (CPI) with pioneering members like George Creel, a former journalist and a close ally to him, and Edward Bernays. Their mandate was to publicise the war efforts including embarking on propaganda against enemies to boost morals and to generate good public opinion to the government to enable it prosecute a successful war (Jefkins 2007). Later, the Office of the War Information (OWI) was established during the Second World War which encouraged the expansion of public relations in the Armed Forces, Industry and allied fields (Black 1990).

In 1922, at a graduating ceremony of the Law students of the University of Yale in America, Bernays became the first man credited to refer to himself as “public relations counsel” and later wrote a book titled “Crystallising Public Opinion” This new book showcases the role of public relations in organization (Black 1990).

On the other hand, the lesson in public relations experiences in Africa particularly in Nigeria as captured in the 150 years of modern public relations practices in Nigeria, 1859-2009 by Otubanjo, Amujo, and Melewar, (2010), was not much different from the earlier position of Black (1990). However, it provided us with the lenses through which the developments in the modern practice of public relations within the Nigerian context

can be viewed. Consequently, public relations practice in Nigeria from 1859-2000 developed in phases. There was the phase of Enlightenment and the Political Propaganda, to Public Relations Broadcasting phase, the Public Information era and finally to Professionalism era of the modern time (Otubanjo, etal, 2010).

In all of these phases public relations activities had different purposes and that means it also had different functions at different eras. This captured pertinent reason for undertaking a study of this nature which is to provide insight into the development of public relations strategies in the Federal Aviation Authority of Nigerian (FAAN). It suffices therefore, that this study focuses on public relations strategies deployed in the management of the Federal Aviation Authority of Nigeria (FAAN).

Statement of the Problem

It is imperative to say that public relations activities and functions in an organisation take the nuances of the organisation’s broader task that is assigned to it. This has led to the formation of different assumptions and theories on what public relations meant for different organisations.

In the Ivy Lee’s “Public Relations Principles” he stated how public relations activities should be conducted through the disclosure of full information. In the 150 years of modern public relations practice, according to Otubanjo, etal, (2010), public relations grow in phases beginning from Enlightenment or Publicity phase, Political Propaganda phase, Public Relations Broadcasting phase, Public Information and finally to Professionalism phase. In these previous works, scholars and practitioners were preoccupied with publicity and the channels of information dissemination.

In Cook, (2018)’s “Measuring the effectiveness of Public Relations” he emphasised that public relations should be utilised as a management function requiring

the application of strategic planning, research and measurement instead of been seen as a tactical instrument for crisis communication. Under this perspective, scholars have consistently maintained that public relations' primary purpose is to build relationship both internally and externally through the use of communication. To do this better, public relations in organisations engaged in such activities as issues management, community relations, public affairs and lobbying in order to establish relationship with the publics. This paper therefore, investigates the potential contribution of public relations strategies in providing efficient service delivery in the Federal Aviation Authority of Nigeria.

Research Questions

For the purpose of this investigation, the following research questions are formulated to guide the study.

1. What are the public relations strategies used in the management of the Federal Aviation Authority of Nigeria?
2. How effective are the public relations strategies in the management of the Federal Aviation Authority of Nigeria?

Review of Literature

Public Relations Practice in Nigeria

Public relations practice in Nigeria has varieties of functions and strategies both in private and governmental organizations. This is because various organizations have different reasons to start the pursuit of public relations. Some desired to create awareness, while others are concerned with their reputation in the society. Public relations practitioners and authors often stated that the purpose of public relations activity determines the kind of method or strategies to adopt. What is important is that communication is always at the centre of every strategies adopted because public relations is all about effective communication.

The reason for the use of communication is not farfetched. A number of models which attempted to capture PR practice in the past are in the work of Grunig, (1976); Grunig, (1984); Grunig and Hunt, (1984). It appears that Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four models of public relations practice composed of: the press agency model; the public information model; the two-way asymmetrical model and the two-way symmetrical model. The two-way symmetric model is the most influential (Pasadeos, et al, 1999). The Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four models of public relations practice provide the basis for the practice of public relations by practitioners in both private and governmental institutions not only in Nigeria but across the world.

In an attempt to provide an analysis of these practices, Grunig and Hunt (1984) argued that these models were conceptual historical representations of reality and that while these models provide a good insight into the nature of public relations practice commonly found in relationship management, it would be proper to think that these models were capable and exhaustive enough to capture the diverse nature of public relations practice and strategies.

For example, *the press agency model*: offered a representation of how propaganda was used by the sender who usually gives out half truth. It is a one-way communication strategy, under this strategy, there is little or no concern for research.

The public information model: is similar to the press agency model because it is a one-way communication strategy which captures the sending of messages from the sender to the receivers with no regard for response or feedback. This strategy however, differs from press agency because it disseminates truth.

The two-way asymmetric model: unlike the press agency and public information model, which promotes a one-way communication strategy, the asymmetric

model recognises that communication is a two-way approach between the sender and receiver. This strategy is used to persuade the receiver to change a former behaviour or attitude or in some cases support a cause. Research about public attitude is undertaking to know how the nature of human being works in order to develop a more effective public relations strategy. The problem with two-way asymmetric model is that regardless of the feedback, the organisation goes ahead with its plan. Benevolent despotic government use this form of communication model, which pretend to give a listening ear but does not really bother even if the public reject government policy it will still be implemented anyway. The IBB's regime introduced Structural Adjustment Programme despite protest from Nigerians against SAP.

The two-way symmetric model: is another two-way communication strategy based on mutual understanding and dialogue between information senders and receivers. This model represents a strategy under which both senders and receivers are persuaded and their attitudes and behaviours modified in the process of the public relations campaign. This model is good for public relations practice as it has the tendencies to change behaviour from apathy to interest, prejudice to acceptance and ignorance to knowledge (Ajala 2007, Otubanjo, et al, 2010).

The lesson from this model is to provide a template for the discussion of public relations in Nigeria. The Christian Missionary Society (CMS) published the "Iwe Irohin" Nigeria's first newspaper (Salawu, 2004). The motivation for the creation of this newspaper was to inform parishioners of weekly Christian activities within the church. This newspaper, according to Otubanjo, et al, (2010) performed the first public relations function by providing up to date information concerning missionary activities as well as socio-economic and political activities

affecting Anglican parishioners, Abeokuta indigenes, the settlers (Creoles) and Europeans at large. The *Iwe Iroyin*, was said to be the first public relations medium in Nigeria included news about colonial administration, some foreign affairs, advertisements and public announcements (Salawu, 2004).

Nevertheless, by 1861 *Iwe Irohin* became a veritable source of information on crucial social, political, economic and international issues (Otubanjo, et al, 2010). They further contended that the paper succeeded in molding the opinions, world views and orientation of the populace, and had evolved a crop of intellectuals who could make informed opinions on salient socio-political discourse of the time. Its readers became public opinion leaders in their communities leading enlightened socio-political debates, discussions and arguments on prevailing local and international issues, persuading and mobilizing their communities against slave trade and British imperialism (Otubanjo, et al, 2010).

The introduction of the broadcasting services marked a watershed in the practice of public relations in Nigeria. It was the hallmark of political propaganda for the British imperialist government. This form of public relations practice conforms to Grunig and Hunt's (1984) press agency and two-way asymmetric model. The practice conforms to press agency strategy because the British imperialist government did not provide opportunities for feedback and objective truth to the people in its public affairs engagement. The communication strategy was mono-directional and the aim was to use the new broadcasting technology to change attitudes and gain sympathy of Nigerians to the Imperialists cause (Otubanjo, et al, 2010). Accordingly, Ajala, (2007) and Decker, (2005) concluded that this was the beginning of the error in using propaganda as tool of public relations practice in Nigeria.

The political propaganda strategy took shape in government relations equating it almost as public relations. The practice was dominated by information officers in government establishments seeking sympathy of the public to government actions and not understanding. The phenomenon surrounding this practice is still captured in Grunig and Hunt's (1984) press agency model, which allows for information passage to the people and not vice versa. It dwells mainly on the communication of specific messages by the sender regardless of whether the communicated messages are true or false. Leaflets, flyers, newsreels, newspaper advertisement, postcards and powerful tools of propaganda like films and cinemas such as *The Guns of the Desert* were used to mobilize support to the government (Short, 1983; Chapman, 1998; Ibhawoh, 2007).

In the *Public information era*, PR practice was used predominantly to disseminate information to the public. The use of public relations was not just to convey information as it was the case during the press agency and public information, public relations broadcasting and political propaganda eras, rather it was meant to change public attitudes. The use of public relations during this period gives a good representation of Grunig and Hunt's (1984) two-way symmetric model, which allows senders and receivers of specific information to be persuaded to modify attitudes and behaviours (Otubanjo, et al, 2010).

The PR strategy was repositioned to "to present a picture of Nigeria to the outside world as well as to assist the government in all communication activities" (Abodunrin, 1995, p. 9). In addition, the newly repositioned public relations department in ministries was to disseminate information and handle citizenship orientation services (Adebola, 1992). By 1954, the function of the PR Department was expanded to include the interpretation of social, political and economic trends to Nigerians and non-

Nigerians. This finding is important to this study as it shall assist in addressing the key research variables in the public relations strategies in the FAAN.

Effectiveness of Public Relations strategies at FAAN

Christensen & Cornelissen (2011) posit that "Why should scholars of organisational communication pay any attention to a managerial mind-set so clearly preoccupied with marketing or public relations concerns of visibility and linear persuasion and control" (p. 395). Public relations scholars have consistently maintained that public relations's primary purpose is to build relationship both internally and externally through the use of communication. Notable public relations strategies at FAAN are conducted in the following areas:

Issue management and lobbying strategy

Public relations in corporations play important roles in contemporary society in the form of issue management and lobbying. These activists often forms the nucleus of organisation's public relations business as it seek to deal with different issues that seek to challenge smooth operations at work places. In addition, public relations department at FAAN often tried to lobby and influence governments officials, politicians and stakeholders sometimes to gain favourable aviation legislations.

Strategic issue management at FAAN helps it to be more proactive to the legitimate demands of air travellers rather than being reactive and stonewalling. Lobbying is another significant part of PR job description around the world in their efforts to influence public policy as part of issues management. Proponents of lobbying defend it as a fundamental freedom of expression and the right to petition the government, while critics point to the quid-pro-quo that is often implicit in the interactions between powerful lobbyists and legislators.

Public affairs strategy

Public affairs have some overlap with lobbying but is more focused on creating and maintaining good relationships between organisations and relevant governments, lawmakers, officials, political parties, politicians, and other important public service decision makers and power brokers. Although previously included as a part of public relations, it has almost grown into a field in its own right with its own associations and journals. The relationship factor it gathers is frequently used to influence public policy legislation as part of strategic issue management.

Media relations strategy

Using the mass media for public relations purposes is as old as public relations practice itself. In many parts of the world, significant numbers of organisational managers and public relations practitioners erroneously equate public relations with media relations. Typically, practitioners spend most of their time developing relationships with members of the media with the sole goal of getting positive publicity in the media. Although members of the mass media have traditionally had a contentious, often explicitly adversarial relationship with public relations practitioners. The two sides work together because each needs the other. The term “information subsidy” refers to the use of information provided by public relations people to the mass media at very little, or no, expense to them.

Investor relations and financial relations strategy

Investor relations helps add value to aviation sector by keeping the key public of the industry such as shareholders, adequately informed of the “financial health” of the airline to gain and maintain their confidence. Investors are more likely to be supportive to the airline in which they have confidence. Maintaining relationships with investors is often done through investor relations activities. The growth of crowd-funding where communication is so vital, has also opened important roles for public relations strategies in attracting

investors and maintaining relationships with them and adding more visibility and value.

Employee relations

A general misperception exists that public relations practitioners only communicate with external publics. Employee relations strategy or employee communication strategy also falls within the realm of public relations in many countries. For several years, management and communication scholars have studied how to improve organisational culture because engaged employees tend to be more productive and generate greater profits. Good employee communication also helps align organisational goals with goals of individual employees, thereby creating harmony in organisational purpose and process (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002).

Community relations strategy

In this age when the public is questioning the right to exist of many institutions, especially those corporations considered “too big to fail” in the wake of the global financial crisis, the traditional public relations strategy of maintaining good relations with the community is more vital than ever. In the past decade, the need to exhibit “corporate social responsibility” has thrust the importance of being a good “corporate citizen” to the fore. Underlining the importance of being a good community citizen forces most FAAN to align its employment goal to community around the airports and air strips. FAAN often help the community by providing jobs, a tax base, and goods and services.

Corporate social responsibility

The nexus between CSR and public relations extends beyond the community relations function of public relations. Communication is integral to the success of CSR activities of any corporation, and public relations provides that key ingredient by helping define and execute CSR activities for FAAN including mobilizing

human and other resources to be responsive to passengers and other stakeholders.

Ogande (2017), in his analysis of Jefkins 1998's public relations functions, he stated that the PR practitioner in an organisation is capable of performing many functions thus:

- i. Researching into public opinion, attitudes, expectation and counsel organization on necessary action.
- ii. Establishing and maintaining two-way communication based on true and full information.
- iii. Preventing conflicts and misunderstandings through proactive action.
- iv. Promoting mutual respect and social responsibility.
- v. Harmonising the private and public interests of the organization and
- vi. Promoting an understanding of democracy

Theoretical Framework

Melvin Sharpe's Behavioural Model of Public Relations:

The Sharpe's model is hinged on the assumption that certain behaviours are necessary for good public relations. In this model Sharpe assumes that, there is goal which PR is set to achieve. Communication, to him, is a form of behaviour and when a particular communication behaviour is exhibited for or on behalf of an organisation, it is supposed to achieve a goal. In the case of PR strategies at FAAN, such goal is the achievement of mutual understanding between the organisation and its publics (Asemah, 2015).

Hence, Jefkins (2001) submits that: "public relations consist of all forms of planned communication, inward and outward (behaviour), made by organisation with its publics for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding" On this basis, Marvin Sharpe's Model, is relevant to this study because it's laid emphasis on communication behaviour of an

organization and what public relations roles should be both to the organisation and to the people. It reiterates that five cardinal behavioural principles are necessary for the performance of public relations. These are: honesty, openness, fairness, continuous communication, and continuous image analysis (p.80). They are fundamental to the smooth conduct of public relations strategies as a management function.

Thus, in public relations strategies the use of communication should serve the purpose of guaranteeing honesty, openness and fairness to all communicants. Mutual dialogue via interactive social media, creates environment for mutual understanding to give room for confidence building. This also presupposes social inclusiveness as communication gap can breed misunderstanding with the publics.

PR handlers, at FAAN engaged with employees through employee's relations strategy, top management members and indeed, the external publics such as stakeholders' relations about issues of mutual concern. This pattern of communication behaviour with the publics on a regular and timely basis has succeeded in mainstreaming the achievement of PR goals at FAAN. For example, through timely press releases, flight schedules and dedicated hotline to flight passengers, FAAN can leverage on feedback opportunities to assess its performance, analyse its image through feedback responses necessary for corrective adjustments in communication behaviour.

Review of Empirical Studies

Nwogu (2021) focused on the influence of public relations strategies on customer loyalty of Genesis Deluxe Cinema in Port-Harcourt and Owerri. The researchers employed both a survey and case study in the collection of data and a questionnaire was used. The population of movie-goers in Port-Harcourt and Owerri is put at 1,894,000. The selection of 450 respondents was done through the Taro

Yamane sampling technique. The main instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire designed by the researcher and with the help of the supervisor. Chi-square (χ^2) statistical analysis was employed to test the null hypothesis. The findings of the study revealed that public relations strategies have significant effect in sustaining customer loyalty and retain their patronage. This was achieved by providing adequate information on the up-coming movies, director and the leading casts in the movie. This information sometimes create anxiety to movie goers who cannot wait to see their idols.

Ekwochi, Orga, Ivom, and Ibeme, (2020) carried out a study to determine the influence of public relations strategies on the growth of Micro and Small Businesses in Enugu Metropolis. The population of the study was 812 made up of owners of registered micro and small businesses in Enugu Metropolis. A sample size of 261 respondents was determined using Stat Trek's sampling size formula. Findings from the study showed that there is a significant positive relationship between public relations strategies and the growth of Micro and Small Businesses in Enugu Metropolis ($r = 0.66$ at $p 0.05$). PR strategy like Event Sponsorship positively influences the growth of Micro and Small Businesses in Enugu Metropolis ($R^{**} \text{ calc} = .0939 > \text{at } p 0.05$). PR Social media strategy also significantly contributed positively to the growth of Micro and Small Businesses in Enugu Metropolis ($R^2 \text{ calc} = .516$, $F = 6.103 > \text{at } p 0.05$). The study concluded that, adequate and effective implementation of public relations strategies as deployed through Event Sponsorship, effective customer service and the social media in Micro and Small Businesses should be sustained.

Nwafor, (2014). In his study titled: Role of Public Relations in Crisis Prevention: Study of Union Bank PLC, Garden Venue Enugu. The survey research approach was utilised to explore the role of public relations in

crisis prevention at the Union Bank Plc. According to the research findings, public relations plays an important role in crisis prevention since it strives to develop two-way communication, seek common ground, and establish understanding based on truth, knowledge, and comprehensive information. Therefore, public relations are essential in any organisation and, when done well, can help with crisis management and prevention.

Chibueze (2019). Researched the use of public relations strategies in the management of herdsmen/farmers' conflicts arising from open grazing in Enugu State. Furthermore, the researcher surveyed the affected local government areas in Enugu State. The results of the study showed that Public relations strategies are applicable in the management of conflicts. Recommendations were made on how to stop further conflicts arising from open grazing.

Similarly, Agboola, Oladele and Oluwole (2016). In a study on Public relations: a pathway for the entrepreneur to achieve enduring client-customer relationship, evidence from three Nigerian SMEs examined the relationship between effective use of Public Relations and the attainment of organisational goals. It further examined how customer loyalty can be enhanced through the effective use of public relations, amongst others. The study applied a mixture of exploratory and descriptive designs. It involves administering a semi-structured questionnaire to sampled respondents. Information gathered from the field was analysed using correlation test statistics. This was due to the nature of the hypotheses. The findings of this study showed that there is a significant relationship between the effective use of public relations and the attainment of organisational goals. Findings further revealed that there exists a strong relationship between the effective use of public relations and the creation of client-

customer relationships. The study makes strategic policy recommendations that companies will find useful when implemented.

Methodology

The purpose of this research is to find out the effectiveness of public relations strategies at the FAAN to promote service efficiency. Therefore, the survey method of research was used with questionnaire as the instrument using sample size of 400 respondents. This instrument helped in the collection of data in finding out the effectiveness of public relations strategies

at the FAAN. This is relevant to the study because it had clearly established the measurable contributions of PR strategies at FAAN to promote efficiency. The data was collected using Google Form with structured questions to targets who were designated as pilots, flirt attendants, airlines staff, and air passengers. While the mode of distribution was via emails, social media and online forums such as the aviation week and LinkedIn platform. Through Google Forms analytics and response validation the responses were retrieved and subjected to statistical analysis using tables and percentages.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Key public relations strategies utilised at FAAN

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Does FAAN use PR strategies such as: | | |
| Media relations | 324 | 81% |
| Community Relations | 76 | 19% |
| Total | 400 | 100 |

Source: Field Study, 2024

Table 1 shows the understanding of the respondents on whether or not FAAN utilises public relations strategies like media relations and community relations. In this case, 324 (81%) responded in the affirmative that FAAN utilizes media relations. Similarly, 76 or 19% strongly agreed that FAAN also adopted community relations as part of her public relations function. This showed that there was strong agreement in the utilisation of Public Relations strategies at FAAN.

Table 2: Years of Experience in Public Relations Practice

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Less than 10 Years | 34 | 8.5% |
| 10 – 20 Years | 56 | 14% |
| 21 – 30 Years | 134 | 33.5% |
| 31 – 40 Years and above | 176 | 44% |
| Total | 400 | 100 |

Source: Field Study, 2024

Table 2: shows knowledge of the respondents on how long FAAN have been in existence and utilising public relations activities in Nigeria. The majority respondents of 174 (44%) stated that FAAN have been in existence for over 20 years. This confirms the fact that FAAN began

operations since 1976. This position agrees to the fact that FAAN has existed long enough to be a leader in the aviation industry.

Table 3: Image status of FAAN with the Nigerian Publics

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|------------------|-------------------|
| FAAN is seen as running a secured air travel. | 131 | 33% |
| FAAN is seen as maintaining clean, organised and efficient airports | 101 | 25.5% |
| FAAN is seen as enforcing strict regulation to maintain aviation standard | 182 | 45.5% |
| Total | 400 | 100 |

Source: Field Study, 2024

Table 3 shows the views of the respondents whether or not FAAN is efficient in operation. Majority of 182 (44.5%) respondents agreed that FAAN runs clean and efficient airports. While 131 (33%) collaborated that FAAN runs a secured air travel. The position of the majority aligns with this fact and shows that FAAN management gives attention to it credibility status as airline regulator.

Table 4: Other Public Relations strategies at FAAN

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Does FAAN has other public relations strategies in the likes of..? | | |
| Customer-care service | 201 | 50.5% |
| Community relations | 45 | 11.5% |
| Regular press briefing | 154 | 38.5% |
| Total | 400 | 100 |
| How does FAAN involves you in the formulation and development of its image? | | |
| Through employee's relations | 111 | 28% |
| Through safety and security education campaign | 211 | 53% |
| Through stakeholder forums and feedback mechanism | 78 | 19.5% |
| Total | 400 | 100 |
| Are these strategies effective in contributing to the growth of FAAN ? | | |
| Effective | 321 | 80.5% |
| Not effective | 12 | 3% |
| I don't know | 67 | 17% |
| Total | 400 | 100 |

Source: Field Study, 2023

Table 4 shows the perception of the survey respondents on the strategies of Public

Relations at FAAN. When asked whether or not FAAN has other public relations

strategies to enhance service efficiency to air passengers. Overwhelming respondents of 201 (50.5%) answered in the affirmative in passenger-care service, while, 154 or 38% responded that the status of public relations strategies is enhanced through regular press briefing. This implies that 89% of the respondents agreed that FAAN engages in Public Relations activities in the form of passenger-care service and press briefing. This means that these strategies helped FAAN enhanced the efficiency of public relations.

Secondly, the study sought to know whether the respondents were meaningfully involved in the formulation and development of FAAN's approach in public relations activities. To this, 211 (53%) respondents stated that they were meaningfully involved in the formulation and development of FAAN PR activities; This happened during security and safety education campaign and employees' relations activities like meetings where everybody brainstorm on suggestions that can improve service delivery at the airports. These data implied that majority of the respondents were involved in the formulation and execution of Public Relations activities at FAAN. With this, it means they understand the content and direction of PR strategies.

Thirdly, the study sought to know whether the Public Relations strategies were effective in contributing to service delivery at FAAN. To this, overwhelming majority of 321 (80.5%) respondents stated that Public Relations strategies were effective in contributing to service delivery, while a negligible 12 or 3% noted that they did not contribute to service delivery. These data implied that majority of the respondents perceived PR strategies to be important and immensely contributed to service delivery and growths at FAAN.

Discussion of Findings

Research Questions

The research question one which states that: what are the public relations strategies used in the management of the Federal Aviation Authority of Nigeria? The objective of this research question was to find out if FAAN engages in public relations strategies as part of its management activities? **Overwhelming majority of** the respondents answered in the affirmative. That is 201 or 50.5% of the respondents strongly agreed that PR not only exist at FAAN but are strategic activities deployed as part of management function in the form of customer service care, community relations, regular press briefings and media relations. Through these efforts, communication is enhanced and management efficiency achieved. This finding also confirms with the result of Ezenwugo (2012) who carried out a study on Improving Commercial Banking Business in Nigeria through Application of Marketing and Public Relations Strategies. The study discovered that most banks now consider marketing and public relations strategies in their overall planning activity to stay competitive in an industry characterized by fierce competition and rivalry, and increasing regulations.

Furthermore, the position of this study agrees with the findings of Ekwochi, Orga, Ivom, and Ibeme, (2020) who carried out a study to determine the influence of public relations strategies on the growth of Micro and Small Businesses in Enugu Metropolis. Their study provided enough data to support the fact that the various public relations strategies used through mass media application, event sponsorship, social media usage, effective customer

service had ensured growth in the organizations, especially in Micro and Small Businesses.

Moreover, research question two sought to find out if the public relations strategies of FAAN is effective. The question states: how effective are the public relations strategies in the management of the Federal Aviation Authority? **This is the central objective that embodied the study. The question was designed to determine the effectiveness of public relations strategies in line with the management's objective of achieving service efficiency. The generated data did provide answer to the question. This could be seen from those that either agree or strongly agree. Cumulatively, 97% of FAAN respondents stated that the company has derived the following benefits as a result of utilizing PR strategies: 120 (31%) respondents affirmed that PR strategies has helped FAAN in maintaining brand reputation, 101 (25%) on the question that if customers feedback provided satisfaction and increased revenue, the answer was to the affirmative. On the other hand, when the question sought to know if employees relations increased efficiency at ports, 136 (33%) confirmed that it improved secured air travel and maintained clean, organized and efficient airports.**

These findings agreed with the position of Falk (2021) who stated that public relations can help boost a business. It also aligns with the assertion of Zoe Talent Solution (2021) that public relations strategies help to boost an organisation's credibility and further noted that PR was not about designing name for the product or service but good and lasting impact on consumers' minds that will come again and again to patronise the organisation.

It also resonates with the result of Kalu, & Nma, & Ajike (2015) study. Their research found that public relations activities were powerful factors for the promotion of two-way communication that fostered mutual understanding, healthy relationships and individual commitment to the achievement of mutually-set goals. More so, this finding agreed with the core tenets of the Melvin PR Behavioural Theory. This theoretical position argues that the major force in interpersonal relationships was the satisfaction of the public and organisation's interests. According to this theory, the major force in interpersonal relationships is the satisfaction of both people's self-interests as the study has proved.

Conclusion

This study's main goal was to investigate the public relations strategies and the effectiveness of the strategies at FAAN. Based on the review above, which was supported by the data collected and analysed, it was clearly established that this goal was achieved as findings from the study revealed that:

1. Majority of the respondents acknowledged that public relations strategies existed and contributed to the efficiency of service delivery at FAAN.
2. Public relations strategies in media relations and employee relations were effective in improving secured air travels and improved maintenance of clean, organised and efficient airports.

In conclusion, the study has established that public relations strategies have boosted FAAN's credibility and further proved that PR promoted service delivery and efficiency.

Recommendations

Following the conclusion of the study, the paper recommends that:

1. FAAN should leverage on the efficiency of Public Relations strategies such as customer service relations, media relations and employee relations to sustain the current gain in service delivery.
2. Now that maintenance and air travels are more secured based on the finding, FAAN should invest on Financial Public relations to strengthen its investment portfolio to purchase modern airplanes and serve its customers better.

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